

VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

MINUTES

VLCT Board Members Present (in person): Mary Ann Goulette, Charlie Hancock, Jessie Baker, Karen Godnick Barber, Mayor Doenges, Julie Hance, Mike Hogan, Delsie Hoyt, Tom Leitz, Georgette Wolf-Ludwig.

VLCT Board Members Present (via Zoom): Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak, Ann Lawless.

Guests (in Person): Bryan Young, Rene Bouchard, Josh Partlow, Partner JohnsonLambert, Taylor Kacur, Senior Manager, JohnsonLambert.

VLCT Staff Present (in person): Josh Hanford, Seth Abbene, Jessi Hill, Katie Buckley, Abby Friedman, Phil Latvis, Emmanuel Anjama, Carl Andeer, Elena Esteban, Kelley Avery, Ione Minot, Samantha Sheehan, Jeremy Weiss.

VLCT Staff Present (via Zoom): Ted Brady

Agenda Item #1: Call to order by the President

Vice President Charlie Hancock called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m.

Agenda Item #2: Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

No additions or deletions offered.

Agenda Item #3: Consent Agenda

Mayor Doenges moved to approve the consent agenda, including the meeting minutes of September 11, 2025, SimpleRoute contract, MissionSquare Secure ACT Election Form and Mission Square Provisions Election Form. Mike Hogan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #4: Organizational Update

Ted Brady provided updates on the health insurance exploratory efforts, governing for all with skill curriculum, executive recruitment services advancement, the Municipal Assistance Center, and Risk Management Services. He also provided updates on the Municipal Operations Support Team and the Northern Border Regional Commission grant related to the Community Housing Improvement Program.

Agenda Item #5: Building Committee Update

Ted recapped that at the previous board meeting, he had been tasked with returning to the Building Committee to expand its membership and reassess key assumptions. Aaron Frank was added to the committee as part of this charge. The committee revisited whether the initial goals, ownership of the property, establishing an Association Hub, and locating in the downtown core remained relevant, especially in light of updated cost estimates from the consultant, which now exceed \$7 million. The initial target budget had been closer to \$5 million.

Although no final decisions were made, the committee engaged in a productive conversation about the three preferred site options: the Federal Building at 87 State Street, the empty lot at 105 State Street (in front of the Thrush), and a newly considered option at 7 Court Street, a four-story brick building near the corner of Court and Elm Streets. All three options come in at over \$7 million, but the business model suggests that such an investment is financially viable.

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Ted emphasized that the organization's main objective is to secure better space in a prominent downtown location while maintaining or reducing current cost levels. Two of the three proposals meet this standard under the Association Hub model, with the third potentially viable depending on grant funding and other variables.

The committee generally agreed that the guiding principles, Association Hub, downtown core, and ownership, remain valid and should continue to shape the process. However, in response to a request from Aaron Frank, the committee opted to seek input from the PACIF Board to ensure alignment, particularly because PACIF may be considered for equity participation.

A special meeting with the PACIF Board has been scheduled for November to provide a full briefing and solicit feedback. Depending on the nature of that feedback, the committee expects to return to the full board with a recommendation, potentially as early as November, on how to proceed. This next step could involve selecting one or more sites for more detailed feasibility studies, budget refinement, and preliminary design work.

Agenda Item #6: VLCT Audit Report

Seth Abbene presented the VLCT Audit Report and introduced Josh Partlow and Taylor Kacur of JohnsonLambert who provided a detailed presentation of the findings. Jessie Baker moved to accept 2024 audit report and the 2025 audit plan. Georgette Wolf-Ludwig seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. At the next Board meeting, Seth will bring an engagement letter for Board approval in preparation of the 2025 audit.

Break: At 1:05 the Board took a break. No business was conducted during this time. The Board reconvened at 1:18.

Agenda Item #7: Approve 2026 VLCT Budget and Dues

Seth Abbene presented the 2026 budget. Mike Hogan moved to accept the 2026 VLCT Budget as presented and the proposed 2026/2027 membership dues. Mayor Doenges seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #8: Appoint VLCT Equity Committee

Ted Brady presented the Equity Committee appointment recommendations and asked the Board for approval. Jesse Baker moved to appoint the slate of candidates. Karen Barber seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The appointees included: Alyssa Johnson; Amanda Smith; Carol Caldwell-Edmonds; Cate Cross; Cymone Bedford; Deborah Wright; Jessica Alexander; Joe Major; Joy Dubin Grossman; Karen Goodnick Barber; Kristin Atwood; Marcy Carver; Mary Ann Goulette; Matthew LeFluer; Sarah Wraight; and Marylynn Scherlin.

Agenda Item #9: Amendments to VLCT Amicus Brief Policy

Carl Andeer, VLCT staff attorney, presented proposed changes to the VLCT Amicus Brief Policy. Carl explained the aim is to make it easier for the board to authorize VLCT legal staff to assist municipalities earlier in the legal process and in a wider range of cases.

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Currently, VLCT's amicus policy allows staff to file "friend of the court" briefs only at the Vermont Supreme Court level. The updated policy would allow amicus support at the Superior Court level, enabling VLCT to engage with cases much earlier. It would also permit the board to authorize support in cases involving non-member entities, so long as the legal issue affects Vermont municipalities.

Carl gave an example: under the existing policy, VLCT could not support a Supreme Court case involving the Essex County Sheriff's Department, despite the public records issue at stake having broad municipal relevance. The amended policy would fix this.

Board members supported the changes, with one noting that earlier involvement could help prevent cases from escalating unnecessarily. Carl clarified that VLCT doesn't have a formal system for tracking new legal cases but often hears about them informally or directly from towns. The amended policy would be paired with better outreach including a planned online form to make it easier for members to flag cases early and more prominent website visibility.

Delsie Hoyt moved to approve proposed changes to the VLCT Amicus Brief policy, as presented. Karen Barber seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #10: Legislative Update

Josh and Samantha provided a policy update on Act 181 of 2024, which established the Land Use Review Board (LURB), replacing the Act 250 Board. They explained that LURB is tasked with implementing significant land use reforms, including the development of a new land use classification system (Tiers 1A, 1B, 2, and 3). The conversation focused primarily on early policy implementation, upcoming legislative reports, and stakeholder concerns.

Josh highlighted that a key decision, whether appeals should stay in environmental court or shift to LURB, must be reported to the legislature by November 15, 2025. No consensus has emerged, and VLCT has not taken a formal position. He also discussed regional planning developments, including the first Tier 1B submissions through LURB's new portal. Tier 1A guidance, due by January 1, 2026, raised several concerns related to how existing Act 250 permits would be handled in exempt areas and the burdensome pre-application requirements.

Most of the discussion centered on Tier 3, which will apply Act 250 jurisdiction to areas with critical natural resources. Samantha outlined concerns about LURB's draft mapping and rulemaking, noting that Tier 3 could overlap with areas otherwise eligible for local control under Tier 1A. As of the last draft, there are no agreed-upon exemptions, and the rules being developed could impact homeowners and/or municipalities. The LURB is considering delaying rulemaking to late 2026.

Both Josh and Samantha emphasized that Tier 3, based on mapping available in September, could impact large portions of the state, requiring full Act 250 review for small-scale residential or infrastructure projects. These rules could limit development in rural towns and conflict with existing housing and planning goals. Josh and Samantha emphasized the need to slow down Tier 3 rulemaking and improve transparency, while keeping Tier 1A and 1B implementation on track.

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Some participants warned that broadly calling for a slowdown could undermine momentum for housing reform and local development in designated areas. Others cited examples of LURB disregarding community-led planning processes, creating tension with the original legislative intent of local empowerment. There was consensus that Tier 1A/1B designations should proceed where communities are ready and have appropriate infrastructure, and that temporary exemptions should be extended until Tier 3 rules are fully developed and clarified. A phased approach was suggested allowing Tier 1A towns to proceed with development while others remain under current exemptions.

Agenda Item #11: Town Fair Updates

Ted Brady and Jessi Hill provided an update on Town Fair.

Agenda Item #12 Board Resolutions

Two resolutions were presented, one honoring Stuart Hurd and another honoring David Atherton. It was noted that Stuart Hurd was the longest-serving current municipal manager, with 33 years of service. In addition to his tenure as a manager, he was active with VLCT, having served on the VLCT Board and the Trust Boards.

Similarly, David Atherton had served as a municipal manager in several towns and was also a member of the Trust Boards. His recent passing was described as unexpected and deeply felt by many in the organization.

The signed resolutions will be sent to the families of the honorees, along with certificates. A press release will also be issued following Town Fair.

Jesse Baker moved to approve the resolutions. Mayor Doenges seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #13: Executive Session

None

Agenda Item #14: Other Business

Mayor Doenges provided an update on the Public Safety Regional Task Force.

Agenda Item #15: Adjourn

Mayor Doenges moved to adjourn. Karen Barber seconded the motion. The motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 2:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy Weiss,

Membership and Administrative Coordinator

As approved by VLCT Board of Directors November 20, 2025.

View Meeting here:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84451234567>

* Due to an error, the recording began at 12:46 pm at the end of the Agenda Item #4: Organizational update.