

VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, November 20, 2025

MINUTES

VLCT Board Members Present (in person): Julie Hance and Mike Hogan.

VLCT Board Members Present (via Zoom): Mary Ann Goulette, Charlie Hancock, Jessie Baker, Karen Godnick Barber, Tom Leitz, Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak, and Ann Lawless.

Guests (in Person): Steven Collier, General Counsel, Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Laura DiPietro, Water Quality Director, and Abbey Willard, Agricultural Development Director, Erin Jacobsen, Chief of Staff, City of Burlington.

VLCT Staff Present (in person): Josh Hanford, Seth Abbene, Jessi Hill, Katie Buckley, Abby Friedman, Kail Romanoff, Samantha Sheehan, Emmanuel Anjama, Phil Lavis, and Jeremy Weiss.

VLCT Staff Present (via Zoom): Ted Brady

Agenda Item #1: Call to order by the President

President Mary Ann Goulette called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m.

Agenda Item #2: Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

No additions or deletions offered. Ann Lawless moved to approve the agenda as presented. Jesse Baker seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #3: Consent Agenda

Karen Godnick Barber moved to approve the consent agenda, including the meeting minutes of October 7, 2025, the November Personnel Report, The Health and Dental Plans Addendum, and the VLCT 2025 Q3 Financials. Jesse Baker seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #4: Municipal Authority Related to Agriculture and Zoning Bylaws

Josh Hanford opened the discussion on municipal authority regarding agriculture and zoning, noting the presence of representatives from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture. VLCT staff Kail Romanoff summarized the recent *In re Taft Street DRB* Supreme Court decision, which clarified there has always been some limited authority for municipalities to regulate farms through municipal zoning. VLCT and the Agency have been working to identify areas of agreement and remaining differences.

Steven Collier, General Counsel, Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets outlined agricultural challenges statewide—farmland loss, aging farmers, financial pressures and emphasized avoiding new regulatory burdens on farms. They described their proposed framework: crop farming allowed statewide; livestock farming regulated by acreage thresholds, with state jurisdiction over operations on four or more acres. They also discussed concerns about increasing the gross sales threshold for Required Agricultural Practices (RAP), proposing \$5,000 rather than the current \$2,000. VLCT had previously proposed \$10,000. Farms that were required to follow required agricultural practices (RAPs) would be exempt from Municipal zoning.

Samantha Sheehan and Josh Hanford recommend that agricultural exemptions not apply within Act 250 Tier 1a and 1b growth areas, which represent 2–2.5% of statewide land and are intended for concentrated development. They stressed that agriculture would not be prohibited but *could* be regulated by municipalities in these areas. Because VLCT's policy platform currently asserts full local authority, any direction would require updates.

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Board members discussed parcel size versus acreage in production, the gross sales threshold, and interactions with the current use program. Neither VLCT's proposal or the Agency of Agriculture's proposal would impact current use eligibility.

Additional discussion addressed how growth area designations are made and how community planning processes evolve. Concerns were raised that tying regulation to designated growth areas could affect rural towns differently. VLCT explained that municipalities ultimately decide which eligible areas to designate for Act 250 exemption and can exclude farmland if desired by not pursuing Tier 1a or 1b status.

Board members asked whether municipalities could prohibit agriculture in Act 250-exempt areas. VLCT staff explained that cultivation of plants for food could not be prohibited but raising animals could be, under the most restrictive interpretation. They noted that municipalities already have broad zoning authority following the Court's decision, though few appear inclined to use it. The Agency representatives were thanked for their participation, and the board prepared to discuss VLCT's draft policy statement and next steps.

Jesse Baker moved to approve the following policy statement "Municipalities should have the authority to regulate agricultural operations in designated growth areas to reduce conflicts with state, regional and local goals of housing development. Municipalities support a state-led regulatory approach to agriculture outside of growth areas." Julie Hance seconded the motion. Charlie Hancock suggested a friendly amendment to strike 'growth areas' and add 'tier 1a or 1b areas'. Jesse Baker added, as another friendly amendment, 'or an area where a municipality has supported a state designation', which was agreed to. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #5: 2026 Municipal Priorities

Josh Hanford summarized the memo proposing a legislative set of priorities for 2026 and the committee held a far-ranging conversation on policy priorities. Charlie Hancock moved to adopt. Mike Hogan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The Board then took a break.

Agenda Item #6: Organizational Update

Following the break, the Board reconvened at 2:23 p.m. Ted provided updates on health insurance exploratory efforts, Governing All with Skill curriculum, the new IT managed service provider, Muni-pal delays, and Equity Committee changes. He also provided updates on the Municipal Assistance Center, Municipal Operations Support Team, and shared about some successful recent trainings.

Agenda Item #7: Break

At 2:11 the Board took a break. No business was conducted during this time. The Board reconvened at 2:23.

Agenda Item #8: VLCT Building Update

No action taken.

Agenda Item #9: Review 2025 Town Fair

Seth Abbene provided a review of the event and presented the Town Fair 2025 Financial Results. Allison Buckley provided an overview of the results from the 2025 Town Fair Survey and

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announced Town Fair 2026 will take place at the Double Tree in South Burlington on October 7, 2026.

Agenda Item #10: 2026 VLCT Organizational Meeting

Ted presented the 2026 meeting schedule:

VLCT meets on the third Thursday of the month from 12:20-3 p.m. It will not meet in February, May, July, or August, unless a special meeting is called. The VLCT Board will meet at the following times on the following dates for 2026:

Thursday, January 15, 2026 @ 12:20 p.m.

Thursday, March 19, 2026 @ 12:20 p.m.

Thursday, April 16, 2026 @ 12:20 p.m.

Thursday, June 18, 2026 @ 12:20 p.m. [In Person]

Thursday, September 10, 2026 @ 12:20 p.m. (Note: this is not the third Thursday)

Tuesday, October 6, 2026 @ 12:20 p.m. (Town Fair) [In Person]

Thursday, November 12, 2026 @ 12:20 p.m. (Note: this is not the third Thursday)

Thursday, December 17, 2026 @ 12:20 p.m.

*All VLCT Board meetings will be held using hybrid technology, even those in person meetings.
Lunch will be served to those attending in person.*

Nominating Committee

Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 1 p.m. (if needed)

Thursday, August 20, 2026, at 1 p.m.

Joint Investment Committee Meetings

Friday, March 13, 2026, 10-12 p.m.

Friday, September 11, 2026, 10-12 p.m.

VLCT Budget Advisory Committee

Friday, August 21, 2026, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

VLCT Equity Committee Meetings

Monday, January 12, 2026, 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 16, 2026, 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 18, 2026, 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Monday, September 21, 2026, 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 16, 2026, 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

The VLCT Executive Committee will meet monthly on the first Thursday of the month at 3 p.m., except for the months of May, July, August and October.

Ted presented the following recommended officer and committee assignments:

Town Manager Tom Leitz as VLCT Board Treasurer.

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Nominating Committee:

South Burlington City Manager Jessie Baker
West Rutland Town Manager Mary Ann Goulette
Thetford Town Clerk and Treasurer Tracy Borst

Budget Committee:

West Rutland Town Manager Mary Ann Goulette
Waterbury Town Manager Tom Leitz

Joint Investment Committee:

West Rutland Town Manager Mary Ann Goulette
Waterbury Town Manager Tom Leitz

Equity Committee:

West Rutland Town Manager Mary Ann Goulette
Huntington Selectboard Chair Karen Barber

VLCT Building Committee:

West Rutland Town Manager Mary Ann Goulette
Cabot Selectboard Chair Michael Hogan
Colchester Town Manager Aaron Frank
VLCT Director of Risk Management Phil Latvis
VLCT Director of Operations Jessi Hill
VLCT Director of Municipal Operations Support Katie Buckley
VLCT CFO Seth Abbene
VLCT Executive Director Ted Brady

VLCT Town Fair Committee:

Chester Town Manager Julie Hance
Wheelock Selectboard Chair Ann Lawless

Jesse Baker moved to adopt the meeting schedule, Treasurer appointment, and committee appointments as presented. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #11: Executive Session

Ted shared that he'd like to discuss information about the building search for a new VLCT home in executive session, as he would like to present information about possible purchase and sale agreements and other contracts. At 2:46 p.m., Charlie Hancock moved 'In accordance with 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(2) for the purpose of discussing contracts as premature general public knowledge may place VLCT at a substantial disadvantage that we go into executive session.' The motion was seconded by Mike Hogan. The motion was approved unanimously. Upon exiting executive session, there was nothing to report and no action was taken.

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Ted announced that VLCT Board Member Jackie Higgins became ineligible to serve on the VLCT Board of Directors on November 8th, when she left her job as Williamstown Town Manager. The Nominating Committee will convene before the next Board meeting and recommend a replacement for that opening.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m. when a quorum was no longer present.

Jeremy Weiss,

Membership and Administrative Coordinator

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/sXB3hdQIFF9gNlwO4pu3uI2YqV-e84yAsIbdlAitHS57TRWqKRMTP9CCXWeNpikLCKsiaY-8ueg6Aip2.fPp8-QpxxFVsB39->