

# VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

## MINUTES

**VLCT Board Members Present (in person):** Mary Ann Goulette, Julie Hance, Jessie Baker, Karen Godnick Barber, Brian Shupe, and Tracy Borst.

**VLCT Board Members Present (via Zoom):** Mike Hogan, Mayor Doenges, Charlie Hancock, Ann Lawless, and Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak.

**VLCT Staff Present (in person):** Ted Brady, Josh Hanford, Jessi Hill, Abby Friedman, Phil Lavis, Carl Andeer, and Jeremy Weiss.

**VLCT Staff Present (via Zoom):** Seth Abbene and Samantha Sheehan.

### **Agenda Item #1: Call to order by the President**

President Mary Ann Goulette called the meeting to order at 12:22 p.m.

### **Agenda Item #2: Additions and Deletions to the Agenda**

Jessie Baker moved to approve the agenda as presented. Julie Hance seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Agenda Item #3: Consent Agenda**

Karen Barber moved to approve the consent agenda, including the meeting minutes of January 15, 2026, Mission Square Administrative Services Agreement, Amended Governing With All Skill Contract, and the February Organizational Report. Julie Hance seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Agenda Item #4: Legislative Update**

Josh Hanford and Samantha Sheehan provided an overview of the legislative session, noting a high volume of bills under consideration and significant municipal engagement across multiple committees. A major theme is education finance reform and continued pressure on the Education Fund, with indirect but substantial impacts on municipalities, particularly through property taxes. Josh reported increased attention to rising delinquent property taxes, something to keep an eye on, and an update on Act 181 (Act 250 reform), where there is emerging legislative consensus to delay implementation of certain provisions, including Tier 3 jurisdictions and the “road rule,” to allow for clearer rulemaking, improved coordination with regional planning processes, and greater public understanding.

Josh outlined VLCT legislative efforts to preserve reasonable municipal authority over agriculture and livestock within city limits. Samantha reviewed proposed Public Records Act updates intended to modernize administration without altering core transparency principles, including adjustments to response timelines, clarification of the appeals process, limited cost recovery for inspection-only requests, and a mechanism to address vexatious requests; a committee bill is anticipated before crossover.

Josh and Samantha also discussed the Transportation Fund shortfall and proposed reductions to town highway aid, noting declining revenues, an unresolved gap in the Governor’s budget, and the risk of losing federal matching funds. There is a preliminary Senate proposal that would authorize municipalities with existing local option taxes to add an additional one percent dedicated to transportation, with revenues shared between local governments and the statewide Town Highway

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Aid program; further analysis and member input will be needed before a formal position is determined. The Board discussed the future of funding for technical assistance.

Charlie Hancock moved that VLCT Board support the Vermont Council on Rural Development's appropriation request related to municipal technical assistance, and ask staff continue to investigate all options related to how we can continue to provide municipal assistance in the field. Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak asked to amend to include that VLCT will continue to work on funding request criteria for future legislative sessions which was accepted as a friendly amendment. This motion was seconded by Jessie Baker. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #5: Executive Session to Discuss VLCT/PACIF/VERB Administrative Services Agreement**

Jessie Baker made a motion that an evaluation and discussion of the Board's goals and strategies regarding the anticipated modifications to the administrative contract with PACIF and VERB was needed, and that public disclosure of these discussions would clearly place VLCT at a substantial disadvantage. The motion further stated that the Board find that public disclosure of the discussion of its goals and strategies would clearly place VLCT at a substantial disadvantage. Michael Hogan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Jessie Baker then moved that, in accordance with 1 VSA § 313(a)(1)(A), the Board enter executive Session for the purpose of discussing the PACIF and VERB administrative contracts, and that Ted, Bill, Jessi, and Seth be invited to join the session. Julie Hance seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously and the Board entered executive session at 1:23 at which point the recording was stopped and all other staff left the room.

At 2:31 p.m., the Board exited executive session with nothing further to report. Jessie Baker moved to allocate up to \$25,000 in net position to fund a consultant to conduct best practice research in league and pool governance structures. The motion was seconded Brian Shupe. The motion was approved unanimously.

Thereupon, Charlie Hancock moved that the VLCT Board formally express their thanks to and confidence in the VLCT Executive Director and staff for their shared commitment to the health and sustainability of the organization and our membership. The motion was seconded by Jessie Baker. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #6: Break**

At 1:45 p.m., the Board then took a break. No business was conducted during this time. The Board reconvened at 1:55 p.m.

## **Agenda Item #7: Acrisure Business Alliance Program Platinum Sponsorship Agreement**

No action taken or discussion.

## **Agenda Item #8: Health Insurance Consultant Scope of Work**

No action taken or discussion.

## **Agenda Item #9: VLCT Board Appointments**

No action taken.

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## **Agenda Item #10: VLCT Amicus Brief Policy Changes**

Ted Brady introduced the agenda item regarding the amicus brief policy, noting that approximately six months earlier the Board had amended the adopted policy to allow VLCT to weigh in on cases beyond the Vermont Supreme Court. Since that change, VLCT had been approached by the Town of Westmore requesting that the League exercise the newly adopted policy to weigh in on a court case related to the siting of a cell phone tower.

The Board was informed that, upon review of the amicus brief policy, it was not entirely clear whether VLCT should or could assist in that particular matter. Ultimately, VLCT declined to participate due to time constraints, as the 45-day response period coincided with the lead-up to Town Meeting and staff attorneys were fully committed. It was also noted that the Town was not a party to the lawsuit but had been asked by a group of concerned citizens to seek VLCT's involvement, and the Town supported the League weighing in on the policy issue. This situation prompted reconsideration of the amicus brief policy and whether it should explicitly require that a municipal entity be a party to the lawsuit in order for VLCT to file an amicus brief.

Further clarification was provided that the proposed amendment specifies that a municipal entity must be a party, rather than limiting eligibility strictly to towns. This broader language would allow VLCT to support other municipal entities when appropriate. An example was discussed involving a county sheriff's department that had been sued by the ACLU on a municipal issue, raising the question of whether VLCT might wish to weigh in despite the entity not being a town or city. The intent of the amendment was described as providing flexibility to support municipal entities in cases of importance to VLCT members.

Karen Barber moved that the Board approve the changes to the amicus brief policy. Jessie Baker seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #11: Approve 2026 VLCT Rates and Fees**

Seth Abbene reported that the organization is seeking to generate modest revenue from event registrations to help offset increased costs associated with offering more in-person events, particularly food and beverage expenses, while still keeping fees affordable for members. He explained that, although USDA cooperative agreement funds and PACIF subsidies are being used to reduce costs, there remains a \$28 registration fee for full-day hybrid events and a proposed \$20 fee for half-day events, should any be scheduled. It was noted that registration fees do not cover the full cost of events, as staff time is not included, and that fees generally offset venue expenses only. It was noted that full remote webinars will remain free for 2026.

Board members acknowledged the importance of continuing to provide training opportunities, even if they do not fully recover costs. The return to in-person programming following COVID was discussed, including a recent full-day town moderator training that drew approximately 90 participants in a hybrid format. Staff also described a new effort to secure event-specific sponsorships in addition to the existing Business Alliance Program.

Brian Shupe moved to approve the 2026 VLCT Rates and Fees. Mike Hogan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

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## **Agenda Item #12: Board Resolutions**

Jessie Baker moved to adopt the resolution honoring retiring town administrator Shane O'Keefe. The motion was seconded by Karen Barber. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #13: Executive Director Evaluation**

No action taken.

## **Agenda Item #14: Executive Session**

No further action taken.

## **Agenda Item #15: Other Business**

Ted reported that he had been approached by several towns and staff members requesting that VLCT issue a public statement on immigration enforcement and its impact on municipalities. Ted advised that he did not believe it was the appropriate time to make such a statement and that his intention was to focus on providing members with practical resources rather than issuing public statements. Ted noted that he has been reviewing actions taken by peer organizations.

Mayor Mike Doenges then announced that, due to his departure from public office, he would be leaving the Board. He expressed appreciation for his time serving on the VLCT Board, noting the value of the discussions, the opportunity to advocate for municipal control and awareness, and the collaborative efforts to address legislative challenges affecting municipalities. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve. The Chair and Board members expressed their appreciation for his service, wished him well in his transition to the private sector, and encouraged him to remain engaged, including attending future events.

Ted announced with Mike's departure there will be 3 Board vacancies as of the end of February. The Nominating Committee will be meeting to bring the board a recommendation for the upcoming March Board meeting.

## **Agenda Item #16: Adjourn**

Tracy Borst moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mayor Doenges and the meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Jeremy Weiss,*

*Membership and Administrative Coordinator*

*As approved by VLCT Board of Directors Thursday, March 19, 2026.*

## **View Meeting here:**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/XU3pRR3z6ODXO3wdyO0kTCPD9OBjQppkOvOsTj1\\_hc4D2SaYWEcDGigE16KxqBrgL5QSQ1p-mUUpaW9U.CYQMmsgJ3zXestL4a](https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/XU3pRR3z6ODXO3wdyO0kTCPD9OBjQppkOvOsTj1_hc4D2SaYWEcDGigE16KxqBrgL5QSQ1p-mUUpaW9U.CYQMmsgJ3zXestL4a)