

# VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, December 18, 2025

### MINUTES

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

**VLCT Board Members Present (via Zoom):** Mike Hogan, Charlie Hancock.

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

**VLCT Staff Present (via Zoom):** Seth Abbene, Katie Buckley.

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

President Mary Ann Goulette called the meeting to order at 12:20 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. The Board proceeded with member introductions, extending a warm welcome to newest members Tracy Borst of Thetford and Brian Shupe of Waitsfield.

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

Karen Barber moved to approve the consent agenda, including the meeting minutes of November 20, 2025, and the December Personnel Report. Julie Hance seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **Agenda Item #4: Organizational Update**

Ted provided updates on the Northern Border Regional Commission Grant, health insurance exploratory efforts, Governing All with Skill curriculum, the launch of Muni-Pal, Equity Committee changes, training fees for 2026, manager recruitment update, and highlighting some recent and upcoming trainings.

#### **Agenda Item #5: Adopt 2026 Work Plan**

The Board next turned to the annual Work Plan, which is developed by the leadership team and grounded in the organization's strategic plan to serve as a guiding framework for the year. Ted highlighted progress made under the prior work plan and explained that the proposed plan reflects a more focused and realistic scope. The primary emphasis of the upcoming work plan is increasing member engagement, with initiatives centered on strengthening internal systems, staff development, office and IT planning, website improvements, and enhancements to the Association Management System to improve member interaction. Ted also described plans to evaluate transitioning certain trainings to a fee-based model and to develop a stewardship report demonstrating the value and breadth of services provided to each member.

Ted further outlined goals related to diversifying revenues, including pursuing state funding, reducing reliance on trust revenue, expanding fee-for-service programs, and increasing sponsorships for trainings and events. Additional priorities include strengthening local government capacity through updated handbooks, modernized education delivery, new programming, and expanded legal support for members, including evaluating opportunities for engagement at the judicial level.

The Board discussed the continued importance and workload of summer policy committees, noting opportunities to improve engagement and continuity without requiring a specific work plan

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amendment. Staff clarified that the work plan reflects high-level strategic priorities rather than all operational activities. Following discussion and an opportunity for questions, Charlie Hancock moved to adopt the work plan, as presented. Julie Hance seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #6: Appoint VLCT Board Member**

Jessie Baker presented the VLCT Nominating Committee report. The committee met the previous day and interviewed four highly qualified candidates for the open board position with a term expiring in October of 2027. Jessie Baker acknowledged the committee's work and noted the thoughtful discussion that took place during the interviews. The committee recommended the appointment of Holly Groschner of Corinth. Holly currently serves as Chair of the Corinth Selectboard and brings to the Board extensive professional experience, including her background as an attorney and prior work with Vermont Public, state regulatory bodies, and municipal-related organizations. Ann Lawless moved to appoint Holly Groschner of Corinth to the VLCT Board of Directors. Karen Barber seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The Board extended a welcome and expressed appreciation, noting that they looked forward to working with Holly beginning in January.

## **Agenda Item #7: Legislative Update**

Josh Hanford, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and Samanth Sheehan, VLCT Municipal Policy and Advocacy Specialist provided a legislative update which focused primarily on the state's transportation funding challenges and the broader affordability context of the upcoming legislative session. Staff reported on a lengthy Senate Transportation Committee hearing earlier that day, attended by municipal officials, which underscored growing concern about the Transportation Fund, declining revenues, delayed paving schedules, and unmet municipal infrastructure needs. It was noted that Vermont's reliance on limited funding sources, including a declining gas tax, combined with the diversion of other revenues, has made the problem particularly acute. Committee members sought a clearer understanding of municipal needs, and testimony from communities with completed condition assessments demonstrated that municipalities are well aware of their infrastructure challenges.

Staff reviewed the organization's legislative priorities, previously adopted by the Board, highlighting transportation funding as a top concern alongside housing, public safety, and continued implementation of recent legislation affecting road jurisdiction and classification. The priorities emphasize cost containment, administrative reforms, and legal changes intended to reduce pressures on local property taxes, while also advocating for expanded local revenue authority. Potential non-property tax revenue options discussed included local option taxes related to cannabis, gas, and short-term rentals, as well as revenue-sharing mechanisms. Staff stressed that these efforts are part of a broader affordability agenda addressing overlapping crises in transportation, education, healthcare, and municipal finance.

The discussion further explored the risk that state transportation shortfalls pose to federal funding matches, noting that insufficient state revenues jeopardize the ability to draw down significant federal dollars for infrastructure projects. Board members and staff discussed the structural challenges created by evolving vehicle technologies, declining compliance with vehicle

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registration requirements, and the absence of county-level governance structures in Vermont. The update concluded with an overview of upcoming advocacy efforts, including regular legislative briefings and member engagement as the session begins in early January, and an invitation for Board members to raise additional questions or request deeper discussion on specific policy areas.

At 1:33 p.m., the Board then took a break. No business was conducted during this time. The Board reconvened at 1:38 p.m.

### **Agenda Item #8: Executive Session to Discuss contracts and Real Estate Contracts**

Following a brief recess, Ted introduced a discussion regarding the relationship between VLCT, the VLCT Property and Casualty Intermunicipal Fund (PACIF), and VLCT Employment Resource and Benefits (VERB) trust, Ted explained the structure of the administrative support agreements under which VLCT provides staffing and administrative services to PACIF and VERB, noting that these agreements are reviewed periodically and supplemented annually through addenda reflecting the jointly approved budget developed through the Joint Budget Advisory Committee. It was emphasized that these agreements are financially significant to VLCT, as PACIF and VERB funding supports approximately 70 percent of VLCT's overall budget due to the substantial allocation of staff time devoted to risk management and related services.

Ted reported that, following recent PACIF and VERB board meetings, the proposed annual addendum was presented as customary; however, after executive session, PACIF and VERB returned with a revised proposal providing only six months of funding at a reduced level and expressing an interest in renegotiating aspects of the agreement prior to approving a full-year addendum. Ted informed the PACIF and VERB Boards that he felt he would need to consult the VLCT Board before signing the document. Jessie Baker noted that elements of the requested review, including time accounting and staffing allocation, had already been discussed collaboratively during the budget process and referenced in the approved work plan. Given the contractual and strategic implications, Ted requested Board direction on how to proceed.

The Board determined that executive session was necessary as an evaluation and discussion of the Board's goals and strategies regarding the anticipated modifications of the administrative contract with PACIF is needed. The public disclosure of the discussion of these goals and strategies would clearly place VLCT at a substantial disadvantage. Therefore, Jesse Baker moved that the Board find that public disclosure of a discussion of the Board's goals and strategies would place VLCT at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Julie Hance. The motion was approved unanimously.

Jessie Baker then moved that in accordance with 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A), to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing the PACIF administrative contract, inviting in VLCT Executive Director Ted Brady, VLCT Risk Management Director Phil Latvis, VLCT Director of Operations Jessi Hill, and VLCT Chief Financial Officer Seth Abbene to participate. The motion was seconded by Julie Hance. The motion was approved unanimously.

Lastly, Jesse Baker moved that, upon the conclusion of the executive session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A), the Board enter into another executive session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(2) to discuss the negotiating and securing of real estate purchase or lease options related to the proposed Association Hub and new building project, inviting in the same staff. The motion was seconded

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by Julie Hance. The motion was approved unanimously and at approximately 2 p.m., the Board entered into executive session. At 3:35 p.m. the Board exited executive session.

## **Agenda Item #9: Authorize Signature of PACIF and VERB Annual Addendums**

Jessie Baker moved to authorize Ted Brady to sign a full 12-month 2026 Addendum with VLCT PACIF and VERB. Additionally, understanding that PACIF and VERB are interested in having an intentional conversation about the partnership, Jessie Baker moved to authorize the Board chair to sign the MOU Concerning Negotiation of 2027 Administrative Support Service Agreements as drafted with any administrative and non-substantive changes, as needed. The motion was seconded by Tom Leitz. The motion was approved unanimously with Karen Barber abstaining.

## **Agenda Item #10: Other Business**

The Board President shared that she would like the Board to hold time for a special VLCT Board meeting at 12:20 p.m. on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.

## **Agenda Item #11: Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Jeremy Weiss,*

*Membership and Administrative Coordinator*

## **View Meeting here:**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/CgNvsPaSsZvPaj8d5Xgn8pqpWGuBPgb67DOukt\\_1Pb\\_FmxPfTuEtcVstxCfOOGM8ObPNj7raMxoQjJwe.np18Bj7oIIMzHzk6](https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/CgNvsPaSsZvPaj8d5Xgn8pqpWGuBPgb67DOukt_1Pb_FmxPfTuEtcVstxCfOOGM8ObPNj7raMxoQjJwe.np18Bj7oIIMzHzk6)