



Opinions

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

Vol. 12, #4

April 2010

**Services to
Municipalities**
Page 10

**2010 Vermont
Public Service
Awards Schedule**
Page 9

Quote of the Month

You're not obligated to win.
You're obligated to keep
trying to do the best you
can every day.

Marian Wright Edelman

In this Issue

Quote of the Month.....	1
Voice From the Vault.....	2
Tip of the Month.....	3
Opinions of Opinions.....	4
Civics Behind the Scenes....	7
Municipal Calendar.....	8
Upcoming Events.....	8
Services to Municipalities...	10

A Message from the Secretary

A special welcome to all of our newest local officials. For many of you this may be your first *Opinions* newsletter. The *Opinions* began as a publication in 1981 as a way to help local officials and interested citizens navigate the ever-changing landscape of local government law and practice. I can tell by the number of e-mails, calls and cards we have received in response to the *Opinions* that local officials and citizens continue to find value in this publication. Perhaps it is because when we see our own town's challenges reflected in the stories of other communities, we feel less alone in our work.



Although I hope our *Opinions* are interesting to read and sometimes help you solve a problem or avoid a mistake, they are not rulings that are binding on towns or citizens like a decision of a court. Rather, when we issue opinions they are just that – our opinions. We have no power to force citizens or officials to do the right thing, to treat each other civilly, to follow the law. Rather, through our opinions, Deputy Secretary Bill Dalton, Director of Elections Kathy DeWolfe and I share with you what we believe the law requires based on our best legal judgment and from our many years of observing Vermont's local governments and following the decisions of our courts.

The thoughts expressed in our opinions also reflect our philosophy of openness and fairness in government and in the inherent value of local control. Whenever there is a question about what the law says or what is required of an official, our advice is conservative. We try to keep you out of trouble by counseling prudence over risk-taking, openness over secrecy and due process over bureaucratic expediency.

We believe that by publishing questions and answers from the previous month and by including a discussion of issues that we anticipate will arise in the coming months, it lets people know what is going on in local government around the state, and helps officials learn from the experiences of others. We also hope that this information will eliminate some of the telephone calls and e-mails that can – and sometimes still do – consume this office.

The citizen volunteers who run our local governments in Vermont deserve all the support we can give them. It is my hope that *Opinions* offers them that support and, in doing so, helps to strengthen our town governments.

Deborah L. Markowitz, Secretary of State

Voice from the Vault

by Gregory Sanford, State Archivist

The Private Life of Public Records

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*, famously laid out five stages of dying: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. I have long played with the idea of writing about the five stages of public records legislation: enthusiastic acceptance since who isn't for open records and government accountability; confusion since we understand so little about the context, meaning, and specific applications of our public records laws; anger once the participants realize that the laws, established or proposed, might actually apply to them; bargaining in order to craft bill language that clarifies the bill applies to everyone else; and once bargaining fails, rejection.

I don't have the wit or wisdom, or the requisite cynicism, to fully develop the categories of public record legislation. Still, over the years, I remain fascinated by how complex and frequently emotional our public record debates are.

I was recently a most reluctant observer of an effort to add an exemption to our public records law (1 V.S.A. §317) that would clarify that donors to university and colleges could be granted anonymity if wished. The proposal was initially greeted with strong legislative support. This, however, was followed by widespread negative editorials, creating legislative confusion/caution, leading to rejection.



Given the limited space of this column let me look at just one of the issues raised: the right to privacy. Vermont statutes mention such a right (1 V.S.A. §315) but never describe it beyond stating that "all people...have a right to privacy in their personal and economic pursuits..."



Several commentators asked why Vermont didn't have a stronger privacy provision. No answer was forthcoming, so come with me back to 1974 as Watergate was winding down and Nixon resigning. In Vermont two records bills were drafted. One, drawing on a new Federal Freedom of Information Act, set out a right to inspect and copy public records; the other addressed the protection of personal information in public records. The former bill became our public records act; the latter, Senate Bill 33 of 1975, died in committee.

S. 33 came out of a report by the Committee on Administrative Coordination on "Confidentiality, Privacy, and Security of Information: Data Collection, Storage and Use By Public Organizations in Vermont." The report was delivered to Governor Tom Salmon in October 1974. It noted that "in recent years there has been a quantum increase in the amount of information collected, stored, used and dispersed by individuals and more importantly, by organizations." The committee reviewed the Vermont Statutes Annotated to identify laws governing the collection and use of information; it gathered agency forms used to collect information and interviewed agency heads; and it reviewed federal and state laws as well as the emerging literature on data gathering and privacy,

The findings are interesting and, in many cases, familiar. The committee noted the lack of coordination among agencies in managing information; a point often made in this column. It identified 341 separate agency forms used to collect personal information and identified those that were protected by statute, regulation, or by "the discretion of the administering officials."

The committee recognized that "the need for information by government is real and legitimate...but it is the responsibility of government to insure that personal information is selectively gathered, properly used, and protected against unauthorized, or authorized but unwarranted, disclosure and dissemination." The committee determined that "collected data must

serve a legitimate public purpose” and “the public purpose must significantly outweigh the potentially damaging results to the individual of untimely or unauthorized disclosure of the data.”

S. 33 incorporated most of the committee’s recommendations, including strong civil and criminal penalties for the unauthorized disclosure of protected information. It also included creation of a five member information review board that would:

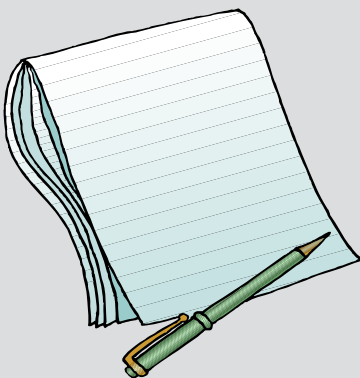
- Compile and categorize policy statements from agencies on the collection and use of personal information.
- Review such statements for consistency with statutes and require changes when necessary.
- Establish and maintain a central data element register (what data are being collected but not including personal identifiers);
- Hear and adjudicate specific agency or citizen complaints regarding personal information policies, and
- Report annually to the governor and general assembly.

The idea of an information review board, with numerous variations, is still periodically proposed in legislation. Those proposals, like S. 33, have not been enacted. It is one of the ironies of S. 33, the un-enacted companion bill to our public records law, that we do not know why it died in the Senate judiciary committee. The record is silent; the privacy bill died a very private death.

The privacy report and S.33 are on our spotlight on records section: <http://vermont-archives.org/research/spotlight/records.htm>.

PostScript: Another issue that came up in the recent legislative committee testimony was the number of exemptions that exist outside of 1 V.S.A. §317. The media complained that such exemptions were not compiled. Actually VSARA has a database to the records laws at <http://vermont-archives.org/records/access/index.htm>. The number of exemptions really depends on what question is asked: the number of statutes; number of exemptions (Sec. 317 is one statute but has 39 exemptions); or the number of protected record types (if you search our database by “exemption,” for example, you will find approximately 60 exemptions related to one type of record: client confidentiality).

Tip of the Month



Nancy Bushika, Stamford Clerk/Treasurer has created a detailed contact information form that she asks each new selectboard member to complete after each election. The selectboard member provides email, phone and residential address and indicates his or her preferred method for regular communication and for delivery of the agenda packets for board meetings.

You might want to consider having all newly elected public officials complete a contact information form. These forms will make contacting board members much easier, especially in emergency situations.

If you have a tip to share, contact Alison Kaiser at akaiser@townofstowe.vermont.org

Opinions of *Opinions*

by Secretary of State Deb Markowitz

1. Board members may participate by speaker phone. In the event that a board member is unable to attend a board meeting, he or she can still participate in the meeting by speaker phone. So long as the board member can hear what is going on and can be heard by those present, his or her vote will count. It doesn't matter that the board member is at home sick in bed or on vacation in Florida. 1 V.S.A. § 312(a).

2. Incomplete minutes won't invalidate a meeting. The law requires minutes to be taken of every public meeting of a board. At a minimum the minutes must cover all topics and motions that arise at the meeting and give a true indication of the business of the meeting, and they must include the names of the members of the public body who are present and all other active participants in the meeting, all motions, proposals and resolutions made and what happened to them, and the results of any vote, with a record of how board members voted if a roll call vote is taken. Note that there are two purposes of minutes. One is to let the public know what occurred at a meeting, and the other is to create a record of what action a board has taken. Failure to keep minutes will not invalidate board action, except perhaps in an extreme circumstance in which a board is purposefully not keeping minutes in order to keep the public from knowing what is going on in its meetings. Rather, if there were ever a lawsuit against the town and the minutes were incomplete in some way the court would consider this as it tried to determine what action was taken at the meeting.



3. The law doesn't require approved minutes. Most boards will approve the minutes of the previous meeting as its first order of business. Failure to do so will not invalidate the minutes of a meeting or the actions taken at that meeting. Vermont law does not refer at all to "approving" minutes. Boards go through the routine of approving minutes because this will make them better evidence of what occurred at a meeting. It shows that the board judged them to be a fair representation of what occurred at the earlier meeting at a time that was close to when the meeting took place (while memories were still fresh).

4. Selectboard can delegate signing orders to one or more board members. Because bills often come due in between board meetings, the law permits the selectboard to authorize one or more members of the board to look at the bills and then to draw orders so the bills (or the payroll) can be paid. These orders must state definitely the purpose for which they are drawn and they will serve as full authority to the treasurer to make the payments. Whenever this is done, the full selectboard must be given a record of the orders drawn so that they know what money is being paid out on behalf of the town. 24 V.S.A. § 1623(1). In the alternative the

board can "Submit to the town treasurer a certified copy of those portions of the selectboard minutes, properly signed by the clerk and chair or by a majority of the board, showing to whom, and for what purpose each payment is to be made by the treasurer. The certified copy of the minutes shall serve as full authority to the treasurer to make the approved payments." 24 V.S.A. § 1623(2)

5. Board should not regularly decide new issues as part of "Other Business." It is typical for boards to include "other business" on their meeting agendas. This enables the board to deal with issues that are brought forward by members of the public - or issues that arise after the meeting agenda is prepared. Although there is no statute prohibiting taking binding action under this agenda item (as there is prohibiting such action at the annual meeting of the town), we recommend that towns postpone taking significant action that legally binds the town (such as entering into a contract or adopting an ordinance) until it can be placed on the agenda - and that any binding action that a board chooses to take under this agenda item be later ratified at a meeting of the board wherein the item appears on the agenda. This is because the purpose of the agenda is to let the public have an idea of what is going to be covered in a meeting so that, if it is of interest, they can attend and comment on the issue. It could be argued that without later ratification making decisions during the "other business" portion of the meeting violates the spirit of the open meeting law.

6. Special meeting cannot address "other business." When a board calls a special meeting it must publicly announce, at least 24 hours before the meeting, the time, place and purpose of the meeting. These notice requirements are designed to alert the press and public to the issues that are to be considered at the special meeting of the board so that they know whether or not they wish to attend. Accordingly, the board may only discuss the issues specifically noticed for the meeting. 1 V.S.A. § 312(c)(2).

7. Clerk must record copy. The general rule is that a clerk must simply record a document when it is presented for recording. If the document presented is a copy and not an original this presents some problems since, once copied into the town records a person

searching the records will have no way of knowing that what he or she is looking at is not an original document. Therefore, when given a copy for recording, the clerk should clearly indicate in the margin that the recording is of a copy. This will hopefully prevent someone from being misled later on. It is up to the attorneys to decide whether a recorded copy of a document has any legal force or effect!

8. Large commercial public events require state permit. The organizers of a commercial public event or gathering expecting 2,000 or more attendees must apply for a permit from the Department of Public Safety at least 30 days before the event is held. The Department of Public Safety may grant the permit, deny the permit, or grant the permit with conditions, such as providing a bond or other financial security. 20 V.S.A. § 4501 et seq. If a town wants to regulate smaller assemblies it must adopt a local ordinance. 24 V.S.A. § 2291.

9. Town accounts are public record. The law provides that accounts kept by the town treasurer must be available for inspection by interested persons. 24 V.S.A. § 1571. If a citizen has questions about town expenditures, he or she can visit the treasurer's office and review and copy the town accounts. 1 V.S.A. § 316. Note that payroll information is public – although the treasurer should be sure to black out all social security numbers and other personal personnel information.

10. There is no recall of elected public officials in Vermont. Generally speaking there is no way for voters to remove an elected official from office. With the exception of a few towns with charter provisions to the contrary, no law permits unhappy voters to petition for a vote to remove or recall a local elected official. Likewise, a board cannot require a member to step down. If voters are unhappy with an official their only options are to encourage them to voluntarily resign or to wait until their term has expired and elect a new person to the office. An exception to this general rule applies when a local official is charged with embezzling. When this occurs the official may be temporarily removed from office (by suspending their duties) by the court as a condition of release from imprisonment pending trial. 13 V.S.A. § 7554. In the event that an official is suspended from office, the legislative body of the municipality may designate a person to perform the duties of the office. 24 V.S.A. § 963.

11. Selectboard should avoid conflicts of interest when spending town money. Conflicts of interest can arise when an elected official is acting in an administrative capacity and makes decisions to spend government money or use government resources in a way that benefits the official or benefits his or her close family members. For example, it is inappropriate for the road commissioner to use town equipment to fix his own driveway, or a selectboard member to vote on a decision to purchase supplies from his brother's business. The Vermont Supreme Court has held that local officials act in a fiduciary capacity to the people of the town – so that they may not make a profit from their office. *Davenport v. Town of Johnson*, 49 Vt. 403, 407 (1877). To more specifically address conflicts of interest a selectboard or a town (by vote) can adopt a conflict of interest policy or ordinance. 24 V.S.A. § 1984.

12. Personal agendas are not the same as conflicts of interest. In many communities citizens confuse a board member having a “personal agenda” with a conflict of interest. While sometimes a personal agenda can rise to the level of a conflict of interest, it is not inappropriate for board members to have personal (or political) agendas. In fact, many of our board members join the board because of what they want to accomplish (lower the tax rate, improve the roads, improve the schools, etc.). It is only when a board member is acting in a quasi-judicial capacity (when an individual's rights are being determined by the board), that the board member must be sure that his or her personal agenda will not get in the way of making a fair and unbiased determination based only on the facts of the situation and the law or ordinance that applies. Here, a person's agenda may rise to the level of a conflict of interest requiring recusal from the matter if he or she cannot separate his or her own feelings enough to be an unbiased decision maker, or if it would create an appearance of impropriety.

13. Vermont's “Good Samaritan” laws offer protection from liability. Vermont law provides immunity for citizens, including local officials who are engaged in a variety of Good Samaritan acts. For example, volunteer emergency service providers are immune from liability under certain circumstances. 12 V.S.A. § 519; 24 V.S.A. § 2687. Volunteers or employees of a library will be immune from suit for information contained in any library materials or library services provided to library patrons in the course of his or her duties. 12 V.S.A. § 5782. Good faith donors of food are immune from liability. 12 V.S.A. § 5761-5762. Certain people who respond to actual or threatened hazardous materials emergencies are immune from liability. 12 V.S.A. § 5783. Municipalities which acquire public water systems or sources are immune from liability. 18 V.S.A. § 122 (e). And fire personnel responding to a fire or accidental or natural emergency are immune from liability. 20 V.S.A. § 2990.

14. Election of officers cannot be reconsidered. While 17 V.S.A. § 2661 provides a method for reconsideration of public questions and budgets, the election of officers cannot be reconsidered by filing a petition with the legislative body. The only way to challenge or contest an election of an officer is by filing a petition with the appropriate Superior Court. (17 V.S.A. § 2603) The

statute requires an allegation of error sufficient to change the outcome of the election, fraud in the process sufficient to change the result, or that for any other reason, the election is not valid.

15. When no one is elected to a position the office is filled by the selectboard. At a Town Meeting in a town that does NOT use Australian ballot for election of town officers, if no one is nominated from the floor, the office remains vacant and the selectboard must appoint until an election is held. The selectboard or moderator cannot “force” the town meeting to keep nominating until someone accepts the nomination by stating that the next article will not be considered until the election has been held. If there are no nominations for an office, the selectboard appoints except for school directors where the remaining board members appoint. If at a later date other interest arises in the office, five percent of the legal voters can always petition for a special election.

16. Delinquent tax collector may be paid salary instead of fees. 24 V.S.A. §1530 provides that a town may vote to pay a salary or other compensation for collection taxes in lieu of fees and commissions to the collector of taxes or collector of delinquent taxes. If this is voted at an annual meeting, the fees and commissions shall be turned in to the municipal treasurer at least once a month.



17. Voters may elect to reduce penalty paid to delinquent tax collector. If a municipality wishes to reduce the penalty paid to the delinquent tax collector it may adopt a smaller percent by vote at an annual or special meeting. 32 V.S.A. § 1674. The law would also permit the voters to establish a grace period or graduated commission schedule for taxes paid within a defined time frame after the established time of payment.

18. Voters may not elect to have selectboard appoint collector. Unless a town has a municipal charter or has adopted a municipal manager form of government the delinquent tax collector and collector of current taxes must be elected. (Although the town may elect to have the treasurer serve as collector of current taxes.) No law would permit the voters to elect to permit the selectboard to appoint a collector. Indeed, the law provides that if the town fails to elect a tax collector then the first constable will fulfill the duties of that office.

19. A taxpayer is not required to attend the board of abatement meeting. If a taxpayer requests abatement of taxes in writing, the board of abatement must meet at some time to consider the request. 24 V.S.A. § 1535. While a taxpayer has the right to attend the meeting or to have a representative act on his or her behalf at the meeting, if a taxpayer has made a

written request for abatement which states the reason and supporting information for the abatement request, the statute does not require personal attendance by the taxpayer. The taxpayer should be told that the board may want additional information, or the taxpayer may want to respond to other information presented at the meeting, but if the taxpayer chooses not to attend, the board must still consider the request and take action to grant or deny the request.

20. Board cannot eject member from executive session. In one town a dissenting member of the board routinely informed public and press about what was discussed during their executive session. The board cannot prevent this from occurring. Although the board can publicly express its displeasure, the law does not permit the board to exclude or eject one of its members from a meeting. 1 V.S.A. § 313(b)

21. School board follows Robert’s Rules; selectboard can create own procedures. Vermont law requires school board meetings to be conducted using Robert’s Rules of Order. 16 V.S.A. § 554. For small school boards we recommend that the board use Robert’s Rules for Small Boards. In contrast, the law is silent about what procedures the selectboard and other local boards should follow. Accordingly, these boards can adopt their own rules of order. This can be, but does not have to be, Robert’s Rules. We recommend that boards commit to writing the procedures they follow so that all board members and members of the public will know what to expect.

22. Appointment discussions can be made in executive session. The law permits a board to discuss “the appointment, employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee” in executive session. 1 V.S.A. section 313 (3). Because elected and appointed officials are public officers, the selectboard can go into executive session to consider various applicants for appointment to fill vacancies, or for appointment to town boards. Although the discussion and a straw vote may be taken in the executive session, the actual votes must be taken in the open meeting so that the public can see how board members have voted, and those votes must be reflected in the minutes of the meeting.

In our monthly Opinions, we provide what we believe the law requires based upon our legal judgment, years of observing Vermont's local government practices, and Vermont Court decisions. This information is intended as a reference guide only and should not replace the advice of legal counsel.

Civics Behind the Scenes

by Missy Shea, Civic Education and Voter Outreach Coordinator

High School Voter Registration Week

High School Voter Registration Week has been scheduled for May 17 -21 this year. The Secretary of State's Office designates a special week each spring, with the expectation that schools will use that time to either hold a voter registration drive, or plan for one in the future. The rationale goes something like this: high schools are a place of learning, a place where adolescents develop and prepare for the future. Regardless of their individual plans to head off to further education, work, or the armed services, each student will emerge from high school as a young adult, a citizen with an important role to play in our democratic society. Students who are informed about their civic rights and responsibilities, and are familiar with the process, are far more likely to participate, thus ensuring a brighter future for all of us.

At least one high school in Vermont includes a voter registration drive as part of a long-standing tradition to include it in the graduation ceremonies. At some high schools around the state, the administration heads the drive. At others, dedicated teachers, often from the Social Studies Department, facilitate the voter registration process. Many of the most successful high school voter registration drives in Vermont are organized by students themselves.

It doesn't matter who does it. What does matter is that it gets done. Did you know that any high school student can register to vote? S/he simply completes the registration form, which is available on our website, <http://vermont-elections.org/elections1/voters.html>. The paperwork must then be filed with the local town clerk. Anytime after the student turns 18, s/he goes to the town clerk to take the Voter's Oath (also known as the Freeman's Oath), and is then eligible to vote. Provided the student has reached the age of majority, this can even be done at the polls on Election Day.

Local town clerks and groups like the Vermont League of Women Voters are often available to help with voter registration drives and they can really streamline the process.

It's important to remind folks that elections happen every two years in Vermont, and not just in presidential years. In November 2010, we will be choosing a U.S. senator; a congressional representative; our state legislature; and all statewide elected positions including governor, lieutenant governor, auditor of accounts, attorney general, secretary of state, and treasurer.

The Office of the Secretary of State has everything needed to run a successful voter registration drive at your local high school (or anywhere else)! Please contact Missy Shea, Civic Education and Voter Outreach Coordinator, via email at mshea@sec.state.vt.us, or by calling her directly at 828.1296.



Census 2010 is here! The 2010 Census questionnaires were delivered or mailed to households across Vermont in March. Please encourage your neighbors to fill this out and return it as soon as possible. If not, a census worker will visit and collect the information in person.

Every person living in the United States must be counted in the 2010 Census – including people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens and noncitizens. Participation is vital and helps to provide a new portrait of Vermont and the rest of America – illustrating our changing population and demographics.

2010 Census: Why It's Important

- By completing and returning the census form, Vermonters are performing an important civic duty while helping to better define the future – for local communities and our state.
- Every year the federal government distributes more than \$400 billion to state and local governments based on census data.
- Census data guide local planning decisions, including where to provide additional social services, establish child-care and senior centers, and build new roads, hospitals, schools and community centers.
- Census data are used to reapportion congressional seats to states and assure proper district representation.
- Many businesses, social-services agencies and non-profit organizations use census data to make critical decisions that affect communities everywhere.

Easy. Important. Safe.

Participating in the census is easy, important and safe. The 2010 Census form is one of the shortest in history and takes about 10 minutes to complete. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau cannot share respondents' answers with anyone, including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities. All Census Bureau employees take an oath of nondisclosure and are sworn for life to protect the confidentiality of the data. The penalty for unlawful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

Encourage your neighbors to fill out the 2010 Census form and return it as soon as possible. Join us in helping to make our community a better place by participating in the 2010 Census. For more information visit www.2010.census.gov or call Helen Simon at the U.S. Census Bureau in Williston at (802) 264-0856.

Municipal Calendar

April 2010

- 1 - Last day for voters to file petitions for reconsideration or rescission of articles voted on at town meeting (within 30 days of the meeting). 17 V.S.A. § 2661(b).
- 1 - Last day for dog or wolf-hybrid licensing. 20 V.S.A. § 3581(a).
- 1 - Base date for setting appraisal value and determining ownership of real and personal property. 32 V.S.A. § 3482.
- 1 - Last day for town clerk to furnish listers with transfer book for preceding 12-month period. 32 V.S.A. § 3485(a).
- 15 - Last day for legislative body to notify the commissioner of children and families of appointment of town service officer. 33 V.S.A. § 2102(a).
- 15 - Last day for U.S. Congressional candidates to file FEC quarterly reports for the April quarter (Jan. 1-Mar. 30). 2 U.S.C. § 434(a)(2)
- 20 - Last day for return of property inventories to listers. 32 V.S.A. § 4004.
- 25 - State Withholding Tax Return is due (actual date by which return must be postmarked is shown on the printed form) if reporting less than \$2,500 per quarter. More than \$2,500 requires monthly report; more than \$9,000 requires semi-weekly report. 32 V.S.A. § 5842.
- 30 - Last day for listers to receive applications for tax exemption due to disabled veteran status. 32 V.S.A. § 3802(11).
- 30 - Last day to file Form 941 (Quarterly Withholding Return) with the IRS.

May 2010

- 15 - Last day for town clerk to remit to state treasurer an accounting of dog and wolf-hybrid licenses sold and remit the license fee surcharge for a rabies control program. 20 V.S.A. section 3581(f)
- 31 - (Within 60 days of petition) If a petition for reconsideration or rescission of a question considered or voted at Town Meeting has been filed, this is the last day on which a municipal vote may be held at a duly warned meeting. 17 V.S.A. section 2661(b)
- 31 - In towns using Australian Ballot, town clerk may open and destroy used town meeting ballots and tally sheets, except as otherwise provided by law (90 days after town meeting election). 17 V.S.A. § 2590(d)

The Municipal Calendar is provided by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns/Chittenden Bank and the Secretary of State's Office.

Upcoming Events

Town Officer Education Conferences

Mark your calendars now for the 2010 TOEC, coordinated by the University of Vermont Extension:

- April 5** - St. Michael's College - Colchester
- April 8** - Lyndon State College - Lyndonville
- April 13** - Lake Morey Resort - Fairlee
- April 20** - Mount Snow, Dover
- April 28** - Rutland Holiday Inn, Rutland Town

Contact Sally Cleveland at University of Vermont Extension, Phone: 802-773-3349, Email: sally.cleveland@uvm.edu
Website for information and/or registration: <http://2010toec.eventbrite.com>

2010 Vermont Public Service Awards

We have scheduled the 2010 Vermont Public Services Awards on the following dates and times. Each award recipient will receive a personal invitation to their county's ceremony a few weeks before the event. If you have any questions, please contact Ginny Colbert at 802-828-2148.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Friday, April 23	4:30 p.m.	South Burlington High School Auditorium (for Chittenden Co.)
Friday, April 30	4:30 p.m.	Montpelier High School Auditorium (for Washington and Lamoille Co.)
Friday, May 7	4:30 p.m.	Georgia Elementary & Middle School (for Franklin and Grand Isle Co.)
Friday, May 14	4:30 p.m.	Middlebury American Legion (for Addison Co.)
Tuesday, May 18	3:00 p.m.	West Rutland Town Hall (for Rutland Co.)
Friday, May 21	4:30 p.m.	Damon Hall, Hartland (for Windsor Co.)
Friday, June 4	4:30 p.m.	Vershire Town Hall (for Orange Co.)
Friday June 11	4:30 p.m.	Persons Auditorium, Marlboro College (for Windham Co.)
Monday, June 14	4:30 p.m.	Manchester VFW (for Bennington Co.)

Not yet confirmed: Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties.

Services to Municipalities

The Secretary of State's Office wants all newly elected officials to know that we are here to help. We have many resources available to assist you in your job. Please do not hesitate to contact us!

Education and Training

- Leadership workshops for local board chairs.
- Training for boards of civil authority on tax appeals, abatement, marriage and civil unions, oaths of office, etc.
- Election workshops – training for election workers.
- Onsite and regional workshops on a variety of topics from A (authority of local officials) to Z (zoning and planning).

Telephone Inquiries

Every year we answer thousands of calls from local officials and citizens about municipal laws and practices. You can call us at 1-800-439-8683.

Opinions Newsletter

A monthly newsletter is available to local officials and members of the public that includes articles on municipal issues and opinions on legal and practical questions concerning local government. *Opinions* is available at <http://www.sec.state.vt.us/municipal/opinions.htm>

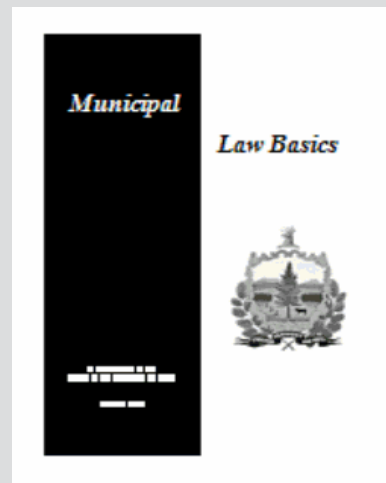
Publications

We publish numerous free handbooks and pamphlets on topics of municipal law and practice from the Law of Libraries, to the Rules on School Governance, to the Tax Appeal Handbook and more. The publications are available in hard copy by contacting Ginny Colbert at 802-828-2148 or gcolbert@sec.state.vt.us, as well as electronically on our website at <http://www.sec.state.vt.us/municipal/>

Municipal Law Basics

This handbook was written to be a resource for local officials and members of the public who want to better understand the legal context of municipal government. It does not cover all of the hundreds of specific statutes that govern the activities of Vermont municipalities but, rather, provides an overview of the laws that generally govern and limit municipal authority as well as those rules that govern the relationships of municipal officials to each other and which guarantee accountability to the public.

We hope *Municipal Law Basics* will be a resource that will make it easier for Vermont's local officials to effectively serve their communities. To order a hard copy, contact Ginny Colbert at 802-828-2148 or by email at gcolbert@sec.state.vt.us. You may download a copy at http://www.sec.state.vt.us/municipal/pubs/municipal_law_basics.pdf



Welcome New Town Clerks

Join us in welcoming the following newly elected town clerks:

Daphne Bartholomew - Benson
Karen Lathrop - Chelsea
Sam Swope - Guildhall
Patricia Dow - Halifax
Leanna Stickney - Royalton
Susan Krupp - St. Albans City
Nora Sargent - Wells
Carol J. Barrett, Winooski
Marcia McGlynn, Woodbury



Service Recognition

Please join us in thanking the following municipal officials for their service to the citizens of Vermont. These officials have recently left, changed positions, or will be retiring soon. They include:

Jan Ladd, Benson Town Clerk
Diane Mattoon, Chelsea Town Clerk
Laura Wilson, Guildhall Town Clerk
Laura Sumner, Halifax Town Clerk
Theresa Harrington, Royalton (now Treasurer)
Dianna Baraby, St. Albans City Clerk
Chuck Hafter, South Burlington City Manager
Katharine Bergen, Wells (now Assistant Town Clerk)
Larry Melen, Weathersfield Town Manager
Pauline Schmoll, Winooski City Clerk

We wish you well!

Mailing List Updates!

Help us keep our mailing list up to date!

Let us know if:

- your address needs to be updated,
- your name is misspelled, or
- you'd rather receive *Opinions* a week early via email.

Send us a note via fax: 802-828-2496,

email: gcolbert@sec.state.vt.us,

or post: 26 Terrace St., Montpelier, VT 05609-1101.

Be sure to include the information from your current *Opinions* mailing label as well as any changes that you would like to have made.

Thank you for helping us keep Opinions running efficiently!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Redstone Building
26 Terrace Street
Montpelier, VT 05609-1101
802-828-2363
www.sec.state.vt.us

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State
April 2010

Opinions

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage Paid
PERMIT NO. 147
MONTPELIER, VT
05609-1101