

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** The Selectboard

**From:** Trevor M. Lashua, Town Administrator

**Date:** September 15, 2014

**Re:** Review of the 2015 Proposed VLCT Municipal Policy

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The proposed VLCT Municipal Policy for 2015 includes three core thematic components:

1. No unfunded or underfunded mandates.
2. Broader and more authentic collaboration and cooperation between local and state governments.
3. Respect for and enhancement of local control.

The review is further broken down by the applicable Municipal Policy sections.

### **Finance, Administration, and Intergovernmental Relations (FAIR)**

*Education funding/property taxes/taxes generally* –The section calling for a more comprehensive look at the State’s tax structure is borne from the awareness that many potentially resource intensive policy priorities – health care, education funding, and stormwater/total maximum daily load (TMDL) needs – will all be in search of substantial funding at approximately the same time.

*Open Meeting Law* – The proposed changes to the recently amended law all look reasonable and should assist in achieving the desired levels of transparency and access without unduly straining municipal resources. The Municipal Policy does not suggest this, but expanding the open meeting law to cover all legislative and state agency committees could further enhance access and transparency for all levels of government.

### **Transportation**

*Funding, flexibility, and control* – The focus throughout this section centers on sustainable and appropriate levels of funding, along with greater flexibility and control for project selection and management. The priorities do not include multi-modal improvements and programming or transit policy recommendations.

### **Public Safety**

*Opioid Epidemic* – Missing from the priority list is a more holistic approach to the opioid epidemic, specifically treating addiction as a public health issue and not solely as a law enforcement issue.

*Legalization of marijuana* – New to the proposed policy is language opposing the legalization of marijuana, as well as any expansion of exemptions to the relevant law (Act 76, decriminalizing small amounts of marijuana).

### **Quality of Life and Environment**

This section may be the broadest – it focuses on stormwater and the TMDL, energy efficiency, health care, air quality, affordable housing, and a number of other policy areas. New proposals focus on the core themes outlined above, with some more specific to urban and highly developed environments (the “removal” of urban soils, for example).

### **Summary**

Blending the policy desires of more than 246 municipalities and thousands of local officials, not counting the incorporated villages, fire districts, and other municipal members of VLCT, into a single, consistent, coherent legislative platform has never been an easy task. The proposed policy largely achieves that balance, though there are individual policy recommendations that could be amended, replaced, or deleted. Rather than seeking amendment to the proposed policy at Town Fair on October 9<sup>th</sup>, Hinesburg’s more effective path may be to engage in specific advocacy with and through the local delegation on issues of greater importance to the community.