

BUILDING BRIDGES

Description



VLTA President, Julie Ann Rutledge, formed the 2021 VLTA Presidents' Building Bridges Taskforce (BBT) to develop cooperative relations between the VLTA Association and other industry related Associations. Past VLTA President, Kevin T. Pogoda, has been appointed Chairman of this Taskforce. The immediate assignment for the taskforce is to *Build Bridges* with the Virginia Association of Realtors® (VAR) and other real estate agent groups.

The mission of the VLTA Association is to advance the efficient and secure transfer of ownership of real property by proactively serving its members, the consumer, and affiliated associations. To further this purpose, the vision of the BBT is to Build Bridges with other segments of our industry that are not currently represented by the VLTA but are likewise concerned with the efficient and secure transfer of ownership of real property.

The VLTA Building Bridges Taskforce mission is to develop cooperative relations between the VLTA and other industry related associations and open the lines of communication and to:

- Collaborate on industry legislative and regulatory issues.
- Communicate industry related information between associations.
- Enhance and protect the value of its members, consumers, and the title industry.
- Raise public awareness and understanding of the land title industry.
- Support the American Land Title Association and its initiative to continually maintain and promote members to engage only in business practices that are lawful and consistent with high professional standards and ethics.

The 2020 shutdowns due to COVID-19 of Federal and State Government offices and area Businesses posed many issues for companies in the industry. The title industry was fortunate to fall under the category of essential businesses and allowed to remain open. However, changes in the way our companies functioned were needed to meet the many challenges. As a result, and in response to this situation, the VLTA hosted the first ever Virtual Town Hall under the leadership of Past President Megan Meloon. The June 23, 2020 meeting, moderated by Kevin T. Pogoda, Esq. VLTA Past President, with panelists from diverse segments of the real estate industry, including the VLTA, the Virginia Court Clerks Association, the Virginia Bankers Association, the Virginia Mortgage Bankers Association, the Virginia Bar Association, and the Virginia Realtors Association. The Town Hall was a collaborative effort to address the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic within Virginia and to further explore what the future may hold for the real estate industry.

The next *Bridge Built* also began in 2020 by Megan Meloon, when a relationship was established with the Virginia Circuit Court Clerk's Association. The door was opened for conversations to begin between the VLTA and the Circuit Court Clerk's Association to open lines of communication and discuss industry changes due to COVID-19. The VLTA continues this relationship, and in April 2021 hosted the first meeting with leadership of the Virginia Circuit Court Clerks Association, with plans to hold meetings in the future. This partnership is an invaluable opportunity, which allows us to come together, discuss topics, collaborate, and work on issues in our industry.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, all of us have experienced changes in our personal and business lives and in the way we transact business. The norm has become, *Change Is Here!* In response to the pandemic, with the many changes we have undergone, we have witnessed the creation of new standard features. Telecommuting is now the norm and with this comes the different needs of purchasers for home office space that is evolving in the housing market. We are still also evolving and changing to meet the needs of our clients, by utilizing virtual real estate tours and sales.

Many changes have occurred in the way in which we conduct settlements, and our companies are now enhanced by new technologies. With new technology, we can offer virtual notarization. Also, with new and evolving technology, we have the capability to conduct paperless settlements in a virtual setting. In response to courthouse closures, electronic recording of settlement documents is the new industry standard. The Circuit Court Clerks' offices quickly responded and enabled electronic recording in most jurisdictions to ensure the continuity of real estate transactions for the consumer.

Since 2020, it has become apparent that this pandemic has had, and will continue to have, far reaching effects on all aspects of life and in all segments of business in the Real Estate industry. When looking back over the last couple of years, one positive aspect that comes to mind, is that during these

changing times, the response has been the almost seamless ability of each segment of the title industry to quickly adapt to the changing demands and needs necessary for business continuity.

The Real Estate Title Industry is comprised of very different stakeholders which are intricately linked together. More importantly, is the knowledge that we cannot adapt to change in isolation. As we adapt to future changes, we need to understand what is important to each stakeholder in their segment of the industry. *Building Bridges* with other industry stake holders allows us to collaborate, work together, and open the lines of communication in order to meet the ever-changing needs in our industry.



Julie Ann Rutledge

Julie Ann Rutledge serves as the current VLTA President. Julie has served as President Elect 2019-2020 on has served on the VLTA Board of Directors and been a member and volunteer since 1996. Julie was elected to the VLTA Board of Directors 2015 through June 2018 to serve as the Director/Editor of the VLTA Examiner Magazine and then served as Treasurer June 2018. She is the President and owner of Land Title Research Inc. and a graduated of James Madison University. Julie developed the Virginia Certified Title Examiner classroom course in 2012 and is the instructor for the VLTA Virginia Certified Title Examiner (VCTE) Course. Julie then developed the online VCTE Course, which was launched in 2016. She has served on the VLTA Examiner Magazine Editorial Board since 1997, serving as columnist of The Abstract View & Title Tips & Trivia for the Examiner. Julie served as the Editor-in-Chief for two years from 2012 through 2014.

Category

1. In the News
2. Legislative
3. Members
4. Uncategorized

Date Created

2021/06/23

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