August 2020

THE OLD DOMINION SURVEYOR

VAS Convention
by Kevin Wood

What is your favorite part of the state convention? Is it a seminar on a topic of interest? Maybe exploring the
newest technology in survey equipment? I enjoy seeing some good friends. Others build on the experience to make a mini-vacation. I have worked to make the 2020 VAS Convention the very best experience that is possible. The event was revised earlier in the year and moved to October - more planning, but still a very strong event.

However, the times continue to change. We must adapt everything that we do to meet safety standards for all whom might attend. The current COVID-19 standards require social distancing and now limited attendance in any gathering. These state-mandated standards limit our classroom size to 26 at the largest. It also does not allow for large gatherings in the exhibit hall or banquet. Some of our members cannot travel because of COVID-19 restrictions in their office. Others are concerned due to safety issues in Virginia Beach or even outside of their own limited points of contact.

I have talked to the VAS Executive Board, the VAS Board, the Education Chair, and members in different chapters across the state. Our resolution is that the VAS Convention must move forward, in the safest way possible. A live or in-person convention will not provide the membership the opportunities they need. Nor can anyone guarantee a safe environment for the membership. The safest way to move forward is virtually. In that light, I have met with the VAS staff and canceled the hotel for our October event in Virginia Beach.

The plans are changing with the “where” of the convention. To the best of my abilities, the “what” of the convention will not change. You will still get education credits, a chance for socializing with friends, and opportunities to see the newest technology. The 2020 VAS Convention is happening in October. It may not be what we all expected coming into this year, but it will be special. It will probably include a few things that we have never done. How you choose to accept this change makes a difference. The VAS needs your support more than ever now. You will not have to leave home, but your presence will be felt all over the state. I will be working with the VAS staff, the Tidewater Chapter, and the Education Committee to reshape our convention for 2020, so stay tuned and be prepared to be a part of the experience.

Kevin B. Wood, LS
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Hotel and Registration Refunds by Khea Adams

The VAS staff will start processing refunds to individuals who had registered and paid for an in-person event. If you paid via credit card a credit will be issued to the card used for payment. If you paid by check, VAS will send you a check. Please address any questions or concerns to Debbie Birtwistle at 844-414-1466 debbie@vasurveyors.org. If you made a hotel reservation at the Wyndham, they have canceled all hotel reservations that were booked through the VAS block of rooms. However if you booked outside the VAS room block, please call the Wyndham to cancel your reservation.

Editor's Column
Can you believe it is already the middle of August? Summer is almost over, and in this crazy year, I almost forgot to take time and enjoy some of summer’s offerings. My wife Amy and I have been going to the local farmers market and getting fresh fruit and vegetables (while shopping 6 feet apart from other patrons, of course). With our local pools not opening, we have gone tubing on the Shenandoah River a few times. I haven’t done this in years, but it too has been a lot of fun. Whatever your summer interests are, please take time to enjoy them, especially with family.

It’s been said that “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery”. If that’s true, then President Kevin Wood should be extremely flattered! As Kevin explains in his article in this issue of ODS, we won’t physically be having the 2020 VAS Convention in Virginia Beach. Kevin did such a great job setting up a wonderful program that I have been working with the VAS staff on holding the 2022 VAS Convention at the Wyndham Hotel in Virginia Beach. We are hoping to incorporate (steal?) many of his ideas along with a few different ideas of our own. The Wyndham Hotel has offered us the same great rates we had on the rooms and other convention items for 2022 as we had for 2020, so we will be finalizing the details very soon.

A big thanks to Khea Adams of the VAS staff and as always, please keep in mind that this is YOUR ODS, and we are always looking for articles, ideas and pictures submitted by you. And please feel free to let us know how we are doing.

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Chris Jensen, LS, is VAS Second Vice President and Editor of ODS

**Fall Seminar to be Presented as a Webinar**

Due to the restrictions on attendance at group gatherings caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the VAS Fall Seminar will be presented as a webinar.

The education program will be on Friday, September 18 beginning at 10:00 AM, featuring two sessions of two hours each. A total of four hours of continuing education credit will be awarded. The sessions are as follows:

**The Surveyor in Court (or not)**
**Instructors:** Jerry Taylor, LS, Esq., and Steve Douty, LS

In this webinar, surveyors will learn how to understand, prepare for, and present as an expert witness in court and other formal presentations. In addition, it will focus on how to help your client avoid the litigation experience and how to market your services after the dust has settled. Mr. Taylor has represented his clients as both a surveyor and attorney in cases relating to land use and boundaries. Mr. Douty has served as an expert witness in federal and state courts, where he both succeeded and failed to properly represent his clients.

**Early Surveying Techniques and the Evolution of Surveying Equipment**
**Instructor:** David Ingram, LS

This webinar will examine early surveying techniques and the evolution of surveying equipment including directional devices, distance measuring equipment, and calculating...
As with all things COVID, the beginning of the school year will be virtual until Fairfax County Public Schools opens its facilities to live instruction, including the land surveying classes offered at Woodson High School. The instructors (Survey I – Yeoanny Venetsanos, Survey II – Chris Fillmore, Survey III – Brent Evans, Survey IV – Darold Burdick, Survey IV – Kerry Skinner) finished last spring’s remote classes successfully and feel confident in our abilities to deliver high-quality land surveying apprenticeship instruction remotely until the facility opens back up.

Details about the Virginia Land Surveying Apprenticeship program can be found here: [http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/uploadedFiles/MainSite/Content/Boards/APELS/LS%20apprenticeship%20GD%20and%20Min%20Std%20from%20Va%20Appr%20Council.pdf](http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/uploadedFiles/MainSite/Content/Boards/APELS/LS%20apprenticeship%20GD%20and%20Min%20Std%20from%20Va%20Appr%20Council.pdf)

Details on how to become a licensed Land Surveyor through an apprenticeship in Virginia can be found here: [http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/uploadedFiles/MainSite/Content/Boards/APELS/How%20to%20become%20a%20Land%20Surveyor%20via%20apprenticeship%207.02.19.pdf](http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/uploadedFiles/MainSite/Content/Boards/APELS/How%20to%20become%20a%20Land%20Surveyor%20via%20apprenticeship%207.02.19.pdf)

Registration details can be found here: [https://aceclasses.fcps.edu/SubjectListing.aspx?CategoryId=10008&ProgramID=103&ProgCatgName=Apprenticeship&IsCourse=1&SubjectID=10036&AreaName=Surveying](https://aceclasses.fcps.edu/SubjectListing.aspx?CategoryId=10008&ProgramID=103&ProgCatgName=Apprenticeship&IsCourse=1&SubjectID=10036&AreaName=Surveying)

Please reach out to me or any of the instructors if you or your staff have any questions. My email is [yeoanny@hotmail.com](mailto:yeoanny@hotmail.com).

Yeoanny Venetsanos works for the Fairfax County Government. He is VAS Region I Director and represents VAS before the VAMILIS.

**How is COVID-19 Affecting Your Business?**

Last month, we sent out a survey about how COVID-19 was affecting your business. [Click here](http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/uploadedFiles/MainSite/Content/Boards/APELS/LS%20apprenticeship%20GD%20and%20Min%20Std%20from%20Va%20Appr%20Council.pdf) to review the results.

**DOLI Issues Standard for Disease Prevention**

The Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) has issued an [Emergency](http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/uploadedFiles/MainSite/Content/Boards/APELS/LS%20apprenticeship%20GD%20and%20Min%20Std%20from%20Va%20Appr%20Council.pdf).
Temporary Standard related to the COVID-19 pandemic, published August 12, 2020. The standard is only in effect for six months and can be replaced by permanent standards. DOLI has issued a proposed permanent standard, with a request for public comments.

Footsteps
By Troy Williams

Q - Please provide a short history of your education and work history.

A. I came to work for Doyle Allen at Hurt & Proffitt in the summer of 1989 immediately after graduating from Brookville High School. I began as most surveyors do as a rodman on a field crew, cutting line, pounding hubs, and basically doing everything the party chief directed.

I gradually worked my way up the ranks running the instrument and running a field crew until I transitioned inside as a survey technician. During this time, I also took survey classes at the local community college and was enrolled in some of ODU’s first distance-learning survey classes that were being offered.

Eventually, I sat for and passed both portions of the surveying exam, becoming licensed in 2000 at the age of 29. Currently, I am Senior Vice President of Survey and serve on the Board of Directors of Hurt & Proffit Inc.

Q - What drew you toward surveying?

A. In high school, I had taken four years of drafting which included some topographic mapping and site design. When I initially interviewed with Doyle, I mentioned that I was interested in the drafting and design side of surveying and engineering and he acknowledged that it was a critical part of surveying and something I could progress to. He failed to mention the amount of time needed for that progression but I’ve learned that is a mark of a good businessman when field help was what he really needed at the time.

One of the first party chiefs I worked with was a guy by the name of Mike Lewis. Mike had an HP48 that computed rectangular and polar to provide latitude and departures. He used this in the field and I was intrigued by it. Eventually, I saved the money and bought the same calculator. I have always been drawn toward the technology associated with surveying and over time that became my niche.

Q - What do you feel is your greatest achievement in your career?

A. It will sound odd but probably the fact that I remain lighthearted and don’t take the stresses that this line of work can produce too seriously. The nature of surveying and managing is one of constant motion and constantly
changing circumstances and I’ve found that remaining fluid and attempting to be lighthearted about things keeps everyone moving in the right direction. I have always attempted to be flexible with clients, coworkers, employees, etc. and I think it has produced a good working environment for not only me but those I feel privileged to work with. As I progressed into management at the company where I first started I have also remained dedicated to the employees and have tried to be a champion for the employees. I continue to enjoy working at a company that provides opportunities as they were provided to me.

Q - **What surveyors have been your mentors?**

**A.** Not an easy answer. I guess as a small group of professionals across the state I would have to first say Doyle Allen. He has always pushed for the higher standards for land surveyors and the profession. He has given so much of his time to the licensing board, NCEES, and mentoring staff to do their best, not only as a surveyor but as a businessman.

H.R. Terrell is currently the surveyor for the City of Lynchburg, but he was at Hurt & Proffitt for a lengthy tenure prior to taking the position at the city. H.R. was a mentor in my early years and one of the most intelligent and patient professionals I’ve ever been around. Regardless of time and circumstance, he would take the time to explain in detail the surveys and computations.

Q - **What was special about what you learned from them?**

**A.** Both of them, and others, have taken the time to teach, which is a critical part of the profession.

Q - **Would you recommend a career in surveying to other, and why?**

**A.** Absolutely, however, I think it has to fit. Most surveyors are passionate about the profession and their role within the profession, but I think often it is because of certain traits of the person. I’ve met very few surveyors that knew at a young age that they wanted to be a surveyor. Most happened into it and realized it fit their character. The interest and passion developed over time.

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Troy Williams works for Hurt & Proffit, Inc., is VAS Region IV Director and Southern Chapter President.

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**Committee Corner - VAMLIS**

*By Yeoanny Venetsanos*

The Virginia Association for Mapping and Land Information Systems (VAMLIS) is a professional association in Virginia designed to provide educational and networking opportunities for professionals who have an interest in the mapping sciences in Virginia. It is the only statewide GIS organization just as the VAS is the only statewide surveying organization.
VAMLIS primarily serves as a professional networking organization sponsoring numerous local GIS meetups and socials. VAMLIS’ main event of the year is the Virginia GeoCon conference. Similar to the VAS annual convention, it changes locations throughout the Commonwealth. It usually attracts a good mix of local and state government employees and consultants as well as many geospatial service providers and equipment vendors.

I have served on the VAMLIS committee since 2018. I have been an executive board member with VAMLIS at the same time. I was interested in volunteering for this assignment because of my professional interest on the intersection of the surveying and GIS disciplines. I also wanted to have firsthand knowledge of discussions and decisions at the state level regarding the 2022 datum, which will profoundly affect both professions. My role on the committee is to ensure that I document any items pertinent to the VAS in our quarterly reports to the board. As a side benefit of serving on both association boards, I provide updates on VAS happenings to the VAMLIS board as well. Connecting these two Virginia geospatial organizations provides an opportunity to collaborate on issues, such as the 2022 datum, in a constructive and professional way that benefits both organization’s membership and allies.

Yeoanny Venetsanos works for the Fairfax County Government. He is VAS Region I Director and represents VAS before the VAMLIS.

Interested in joining a committee? All Committees and Chairs to contact can be found on the VAS [website](https://www.vamlis.org/).

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**Strategic Planning for A Survey Firm**

by John Palatiello

A strategic plan is a document that outlines the results of an organization's (including a firm, a nonprofit organization, or any other form of organization) process of defining its strategy or direction, and deciding on the allocation of resources to pursue this strategy. A strategic plan sets, goals, objectives, and priorities.

It is a roadmap that establishes a vision on where the organization hopes to be and how it proposes to get there.

One question that invariably comes up is what the life or horizon of a strategic plan should be. There is no definitive answer and many experts have differing opinions. In general, a three-to-five-year planning cycle is a good rule of thumb.

When I assumed the position of Executive Director of VAS, one of my first initiatives was...
The development of a strategic plan. In November of 2015, a group of about a dozen
surveyors who were officers of VAS at the time, as well as past presidents, convened in
Richmond to create a platform for the Society for the coming years. It has guided the
Board through improvements, new programs, and greater value and benefit for VAS
members. That plan was drafted, reviewed, revised, published for input and comment by
the membership, and ultimately adopted in 2017. It is currently under review by the Long
Range Planning Committee, chaired by immediate Past President Gary Faulhaber, and
the Board of Directors.

A strategic plan is a valuable tool for a surveying firm. The VAS strategic plan can serve
as an example of the structure of a firm’s own document. It should be drafted by a team
of firm leaders or principals, but input should be provided by every employee of the
firm. I’ve been retained to serve as an outside facilitator for several firms, helping to
guide their leadership team through an organized process. It is an assignment I
thoroughly enjoy, as I know enough about surveying to be a knowledgeable facilitator,
but since I am not engraigned in a firm, I am objective.

In many cases, the major development of a strategic plan can be accomplished in a
day. A number of documents are collected in advance (such as financial information, any
existing plans, and marketing materials) and used for historical background and general
reference. A leadership team is assembled for a one-day retreat. The facilitator leads the
team through an evaluation process, usually a review of the firm’s strengths, weaknesses,
opportunities, and threats, or “SWOT” analysis. There are no right or wrong answers in
this exercise. The goal, however, is to reach consensus.

By identifying the SWOT factors, the team can identify internal and external influences
on the firm. In order to address each, the team brainstorms goals, objectives, and major
action items to be taken to achieve the desires and intentions of the firm. For a surveying
firm, these include revenue and finances; new markets; training, workforce, and human
resources; equipment; and other factors that affect sustainability and growth.

Once completed, a strategic plan should be accompanied by an implementation
plan. That document should include the assignment of responsibilities for each item in
the plan, as well as identification of when each item can reasonably be implemented,
either through the establishment of a deadline or ranking each as having a short, mid, or
long-term timeline for accomplishment.

A strategic plan is not etched in stone. Things happen that will upset the apple cart. The
current pandemic is a vivid example. Additionally, should never be a one-and-done
document. Rather, periodic reviews of the adopted plan in staff meetings can serve as a
reminder of long-term goals, as well as to benchmark progress, as well as to make minor
adjustments until the next comprehensive review and revision are conducted. When the
firm is confronted with a big decision, it is helpful to consider that issue in the context of
the plan’s goals and ask, “how will doing this help us meet the goals in our strategic
plan?” While the answer may be that it’s not consistent with the plan, but it a minimum
helps the firm’s leaders take a step back from day-to-day activities and consider the
question from a longer-term, strategic perspective.

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John Palatiello is Executive Director of Virginia Association of Surveyors and President
of John M. Palatiello & Associates Inc., a public affairs consulting firm based in Fairfax,
VA, providing government relations, public relations, association management, strategic
planning, event planning, and management and marketing consulting services to private
firms, associations, and government agencies with an emphasis on the architecture and
Upcoming Events

**Fall Board of Directors Meeting**
September 17, 2020

**Fall Webinar**
September 18, 2020

**72nd Annual Convention & General Membership Webinar**

Plat Competition Deadline Extended - Submit by September 1

Since the VAS Convention has moved to virtually, the plat competition has been extended to September 1. The new dates of the 2020 convention webinar series are October 8 - November 12, 2020. The categories are the same as the 2018 NSPS Map Plat Design Competition: Subdivision Plats, Topographical Maps, ALTA/NSPS Survey Maps, Miscellaneous Maps, Boundary/Cadastral Maps.

**New this year:**

Entries will only be accepted electronically in PDF format. Contest rules and entry forms can be found [here](#). The entry fee of $40 (for one to six plats) and completed entry form(s) are due no later than September 1, 2020. You may mail the entry fee to Virginia Association of Surveyors, 10340 Democracy Lane, Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22030 or to pay by credit card by [click here](#). Please make checks payable to Virginia Association of Surveyors and note in the memo section it is for the Plat Contest.

If you have any questions please contact Khea Adams ([Khea@vasurveyors.org](mailto:Khea@vasurveyors.org)) or Chris Jensen ([Christopher.Jensen@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Christopher.Jensen@fairfaxcounty.gov))

Safety Minute

With the everyday possibility of thunderstorms and flooding, please take a moment to review the following precautions and preparations for bad weather:

- Ensure you are in a safe location before the onset of strong winds or possible flooding.
- Allow extra time to reach your destination. Roads and bridges may be closed once
strong winds arrive. Check the latest weather forecast before departing and drive with caution.

- Always heed the advice of local officials and comply with any orders that are issued to assist with your decision making.

- Keep cell phones well charged.

- It is important to remain calm, informed, and focused during an emergency. Be patient and helpful with those you encounter.

- You could find yourself cut off by floodwaters during and after the storm. Heed the advice of local officials and comply with any orders that are issued.

- Never drive through a flooded roadway. Remember, turn around don`t drown!

- Listen out for Tornado Warnings issued for your area, be ready to respond. If driving, scan the roadside for quick shelter options.

- Closely monitor weather.gov, NOAA Weather Radio, or local news outlets for official storm information.
Virginia Association of Surveyors | www.vasurveyors.org

VAS is pleased to work with Land’s End to provide an opportunity to purchase quality clothing with the VAS logo embroidered on it. Go on, showcase your membership in VAS. To start shopping and place your order, **click here**.

Did you know that when you **recruit a new member** to VAS you will receive a 25% discount on your membership dues? Spread the word about the great work VAS is doing for the surveying profession and be sure to tell the new member to include your name on the **recommended by** portion of their application.

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**Submission Deadlines:** The first day of the month of the issue(s) selected

**Preferred Formats:** Ads may be provided in black/white or color; please send layout-ready copy (compatible electronic files include .eps or .pdf files with all fonts and graphics embedded). All ads must be digital. Please send ads via email to Khea Adams at **Khea@vasurveyors.org**

**All advertisements are non-refundable**

**If purchasing an Annual ad, you can change your ad monthly.**