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January 2015 Newsletter

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***Mission Statement: SVBR works with NAR and VR to provide members with resources to serve the public in a professional and ethical manner, and to support the benefits of real property ownership.***

Dear SVBR Member,

I have important and exciting news to share with all stakeholders in our local Realtor® Association. There are big challenges that lie ahead for us this year that demand our collective and individual action. I have every confidence that once we know what we're facing our organization will respond effectively and we'll emerge better and stronger for having done so.

Most immediately, SVBR is facing a pending deadline to retain its Realtor® Board status. To remain a local board we must act by May 30, 2015 to meet the minimum board requirements set by the new National Association of Realtors® (NAR) Core Standards. If we fall short, we face charter revocation. That would mean we would no longer exist and would be required to distribute our cash resources to a non-profit organization. Our members would then become Realtor® members of a successor board - either Vermont Realtors® (VR) or a larger regional board.

While the idea of merging is not particularly disagreeable, the Directors agree that our voice in VR and our present clout as the third largest board in the state will trickle away leaving us as a marginalized player in remote southern Vermont. We don't want to see that happen, nor do we expect you'll want to see that either.

This is why our Directors have developed a strategic plan around meeting the NAR Core Standards by the

required date and are now in the midst of organizing to enact the plan. We need your help in this effort. A brief survey will hit your inbox soon. If you feel, as we do, that SVBR is worth saving, please take the survey. If you can devote any amount of time in the coming weeks to participate in a task force to help get the job done, it will be time well spent.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

As part of the strategic planning exercise, the group of more than a dozen who participated crafted a formative mission statement. Our mission statement reminds us who we are, why we're here and what we're doing.

The new strategic plan is all about relevance - for both Realtor® members and the public. Our local Realtor® board has been challenged by the pace of change in our industry and the demands change places on us. The same is true at the national level. Any board that has nothing of value to offer its members faces demise. At the same time, it's harder for each of us to afford the time away from our sales activities to enact needed change.

But it's up to us to determine what works and what doesn't. And reshape what doesn't to serve our needs. In our case, change translates into delivering meaningful education opportunities, local consumer outreach, legislative advocacy plans, and other activities we have not pursued in the past.

We need to get moving quickly on the list of action steps to meet the deadline. The board has asked certain members to step up to the plate and lead the several 'task forces' that will get the work accomplished. And those we've asked have agreed to step up. These task force leaders will be successful provided they can rely on you to contribute an hour or several hours of your time to a task.

You might be asking what is a 'task force'? It's not a 'committee'. A task force works on a defined result and, once it's completed, it disbands. A task force could be one person or a number of people. A task force may have a meeting, but it's not about the meetings. It's about defining what steps are needed to complete each project and matching the work to those willing and able to tackle it. It's about making the changes we need to make to adapt and getting results. While we will continue to have standing committees, we have chosen to organize members around the specific tasks to get these action plans completed.

This will be a big change in how we manage our Association and what we are as an Association. We expect the process to be imperfect. But we'll learn from our mistakes and get it right over time.

You can read a summary of our strategic plan by [clicking here](#). You can also read about the NAR Core Standards at <http://www.realtor.org/ae/manage-your-association/core-standards-for-state-and-local->

[associations.](#)

Over time there will be more news about the specifics of the plan. Here are some highlights.

- Tailor CE courses to those that are needed the most
- Make a meaningful impact on local and national legislation
- Heighten our involvement and profile in local communities
- Provide more and better tools to help our members be successful

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

There will be a number of great CE courses coming up this year. Many of you have asked for the Mandatory Course to be included in the course offerings. For the first time, the Mandatory Course will be offered as a member benefit in conjunction with our March 19 member meeting at the Grand Summit Hotel at Mt. Snow. This course is new and was just approved by the Real Estate Commission. The instructors are Realtors®, not attorneys. I for one will be interested to observe how this course differs from others we've taken in the past.

Another new aspect of our educational plans will be the development of a program specifically for Designated Realtors® – 'train the trainer'. Ours is a profession in which practitioners can never acquire too much knowledge. Continuous learning is a given if we wish to provide our customers the best in real estate services. What better place to learn than in your office from your DR?

As a sidebar, there are two courses coming up that are being offered by VR in Brattleboro at the Marlboro Graduate Center. One is Water Quality Issues presented by Marie Degulis of Second Wind Water Systems on February 2. The other is Energy Issues in Existing Homes by instructor Bob Walker, a long time expert in this field. This course is being offered on March 5 for 3 hours of credit. These courses are not free, but the fee is modest: \$25. Registration and detailed info available at [www.vermontrealtors.com](http://www.vermontrealtors.com).

## **NNEREN MLS**

Another exciting development is NNEREN's plan to change over to a new MLS platform later this year – a change that will mean faster performance, seamless search capabilities, better analytics and more sophisticated charting – plus many more new and useful features. The Matrix platform is one that Core Logic has proven through years of experience in other MLS environments. It is already operating in parallel with the existing Innovia platform to debug performance before introduction. Jim Bellville and Laura Iezzi will be keeping us informed of this transition.

## **FINANCES**

We also face financial challenges.

You need to be aware that your dues of \$175 per year is virtually our only source of revenue and offsets

only half of our budgeted expenses. The other half of our annual expenses are paid out of our cash reserve. While we are fortunate to have a cash reserve equal to several years of deficit spending, it will not last indefinitely - nor is it prudent to spend our reserves on operational expenses. As part of our planning, we have set a goal to be deficit free within 3 years.

For this to happen, either dues will need to increase, free continuing ed courses will be discontinued, or we will need to find other revenue sources to close the gap. We have cut expenses and could possibly trim some more, but cuts are not the entire solution. In all probability, this course correction will require some of each of the above. Of particular importance is establishing other reliable revenue sources from affiliates and service businesses that are dependent on Realtors® for their income. We will be approaching business partners in real estate to sponsor our Realtor® events, educational offerings and web site advertising as a supplemental source of revenue.

To a large extent the added activities that will be enacted this year are low cost or paid for by grants from NAR.

## **FEEDBACK**

Our board is always interested in hearing your views about what resources you feel you need to improve your level of professionalism and help you succeed. Email me at [john.mcpherson@berkeleyveller.com](mailto:john.mcpherson@berkeleyveller.com)

While some key members have stepped up to contribute their time. We are always looking for more talented Realtors® to take on specific tasks ranging from marketing or finance, to working on your computer at home, to making a number of phone calls. You'll be receiving a short survey in your inbox soon. Please give it your attention. Even if you can offer only an hour a month we can match you to a useful task. We invite your participation.

## **THANKS**

I welcome all who have recently joined the leadership of our Realtor® Board of Directors or participated in our planning exercise, including Patricia Fitzpatrick, Jen Armstrong, Mike Thompson and Adam Granger.

My heartfelt thanks to those who have left the Board of Directors, especially Troy Richardson and Jim Bellville. Troy devoted many, many hours these past two years and pushed us forward to become a stronger, better organized Board of Directors. We have all also benefitted from Jim's participation on the board, his insight and wisdom. Fortunately, Troy is staying in the picture as Finance Committee Chair and Jim, too by representing us on the NNEREN board.

Sincerely,

John McPherson, SVBR President  
Berkley Veller Greenwood Country

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