

Vermont Land Trust Position Description

Paralegal

Team: Land Protection
Reports To: Staff Attorney
Ideal Start Date: February 7, 2022

GENERAL SUMMARY:

Coordinates and carries out a varied and wide range of legal and technical support functions related to the preparation and closing of all conservation and stewardship projects, including fee acquisition and sales, conservation easement purchase and donation projects, and stewardship. Provides consistent and accurate information to all other staff and external customers regarding projects in process.

ESSENTIAL JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Reviews and drafts purchase and sales agreements and conservation easements. Reviews and drafts deeds, leases, pledge agreements, title clearing documents, options, promissory notes, mortgages, corporate resolutions, approvals, and related legal documents, in collaboration with project staff.
- Reviews grant agreements and other funder-related documentation. Prepares closing documentation in compliance with requirements of funding agencies and in collaboration with staff. Prepares financial closing summaries, property transfer tax forms, real estate withholding forms, pre-closing memoranda, property tax pro-rations and as needed, current use enrollment forms and applications and other forms relating to VLT's transactional work.
- Processes incoming grant agreements.
- Orders title work, reviews title reports and commitments, drafts title clear letters to meet VLT's title clearing standards. Works with outside counsel to ensure that title reports and title commitments are accurate and meet VLT requirements. Performs title clearing for fee land sales. Maintains tracking system to ensure timely procurement of title work and policies in compliance with funder requirements.
- Coordinates with staff attorney, project staff, landowners, outside attorneys, consultants, funders, buyers, and sellers to close easement, fee acquisition and disposition projects. Resolves various problems related thereto, including permitting issues.
- Assists staff at the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), other land trusts, and conservation organizations with all of the above project aspects, as requested. Provides related information and forms.
- Sends documents for recording and disseminates recorded documents, following established policies and procedures. Notifies staff of pertinent information. Prepares donation and bargain sale easements and thank you letters, and completes any other related post-close tasks including maintaining clear records. Communicates with grant funders to disseminate deliverables after closing.
- Coordinates with GIS staff and project staff to ensure the timely and accurate production and execution of maps and Baseline Documentation Reports for conservation closings.
- Performs basic liaison functions with landowners, government agencies, community organizations, and other legal department internal and external customers. Provides callers and visitors with information on VLT legal services, policies, procedures, technical issues, and land inventory. Answers routine questions and routes inquiries to appropriate staff. Distributes information to landowners, and collects information needed to complete documents and files through phone calls, correspondence, and visits with a variety of sources.
- Keeps abreast of and maintains compliance with current VLT policies, procedures, programs, systems, and goals, as well as relevant current legal trends and applicable state and federal regulations and requirements. Maintains knowledge of appraisal methodology and reporting to enable retrieval of information needed for easement documentation.
- Coordinates, evaluates, and produces the legal work required for stewardship approvals, amendments, waivers, subordinations, enforcement, policies and procedures in order to support the successful stewardship of conserved properties.

- Confers regularly with staff and funding sources to coordinate and evaluate the processes, mechanisms, systems, and forms for project closings. Exchanges information, explains legal procedures and requirements, and investigates and resolves problems.
- Assists senior administrators and legal team with various policy, administrative, and organizational projects.
- Maintains a variety of documents, forms, and records, related to purchase and donation easements; title clearing; fee lands acquisition and disposition; and stewardship matters.
- Prepares and/or reviews relevant IRS tax forms for land sales, easement purchases, and easement donations.
- May review Probate Court documents and handles estates, trusts, and bequests of land or money from notice filing to final decrees.
- May participate in the interviewing, selection, and training of new staff and the review of some of their work. May assist in planning a variety of ongoing staff development and team building programs to enhance technical competency and team effectiveness.
- Attends staff meetings and serves on committees as requested.
- Performs special projects and other related duties as required, directed, or as the situation dictates.
- Coordinates input from necessary staff to notify the Board of Trustees of upcoming projects.
- Tracks 1099s for submittal in January and coordinates with Accountant to report information to the IRS.
- Creates project paper files. Purges both paper and electronic files as appropriate following established guidelines. Maintains offsite and onsite storage of paper files.
- Generates Tax Certification forms and submits to the State on a quarterly basis.
- Provides administrative support for Staff Attorney.
- Works with the Director of Finance to gather project related information for the yearly audit.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY: None.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE:

Job duties require knowledge equivalent to completion of an Associate's Degree in Business, Legal Studies, or a similar discipline, along with one to three years of relevant legal or real estate experience, including paralegal training and/or experience. Bachelor's Degree preferred. Another combination of education and experience providing comparable knowledge and skills may be acceptable.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Broad, in-depth technical knowledge and skills in real estate law, including title searches, title insurance, deed preparation and execution, mortgages and other liens, and general real estate closing procedures.
- Strong planning, administrative, organizational, data entry, record-keeping, filing, and general office skills.
- Strong time management skills with ability to meet deadlines while working under pressure.
- Excellent attention to detail, accuracy, quality, confidentiality, and a strong customer service focus.
- Strong writing, editing, and proofreading skills, including excellent grammar and spelling.
- Good math and general analytical skills.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- Ability to represent VLT and interact effectively with a wide range of organizations and individuals, both inside and outside the organization, and to work cooperatively with all VLT staff and Board members.
- Ability to effectively operate computers and assigned software, including Microsoft Office.
- Good general understanding of and interest in the land conservation work of the Vermont Land Trust.
- Valid driver's license required.

WORKING CONDITIONS & PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

Work is performed in a normal office environment not subject to extremes of noise, temperature, odor, etc. Operates computers, printers, multifunction machines, and other office equipment. Work requires extended sitting

and repetitive motion in the use of computer, keyboard, and mouse. Occasional lifting is required.

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by people assigned to do this job. The above is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities and duties required. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related, or a logical assignment to the position.

***External and internal applicants, as well as position incumbents who become disabled as defined under the Americans With Disabilities Act, must be able to perform the essential job functions (as listed) either unaided or with the assistance of a reasonable accommodation to be determined by management on a case by case basis.**

This job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and employee, and is subject to change by the employer, as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change.