

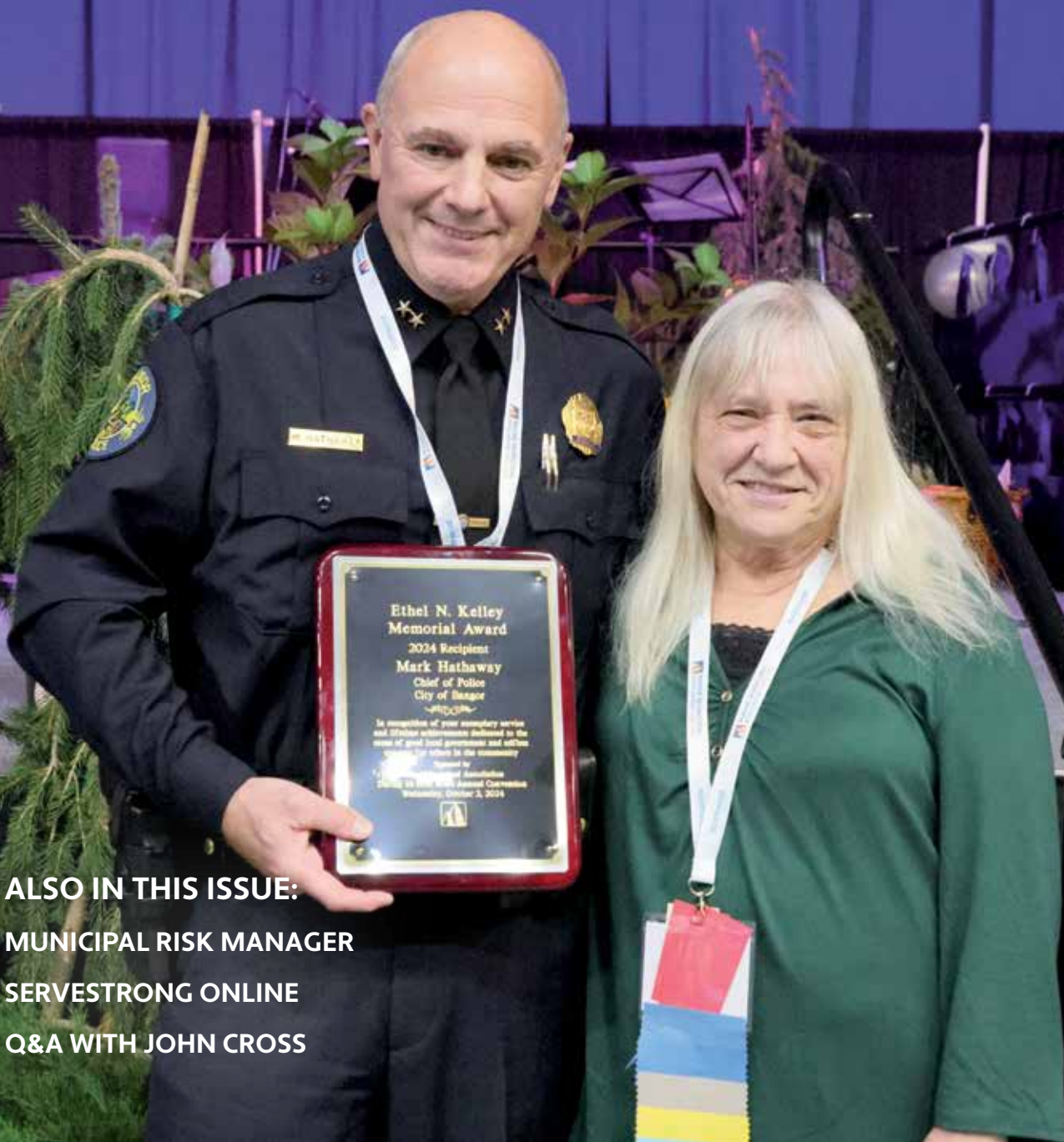
Maine Town & City

The magazine of the Maine Municipal Association

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UNSTOPPABLE

A recap of MMA's 88th Annual Convention.



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CONVENTION TAKEAWAYS. A recap of the featured speakers, sessions and recognition awards that made the 88th MMA Annual Convention a great success. **PAGE 27**

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Bangor Police Chief Mark Hathaway, recipient of the 2024 Ethel N. Kelley Memorial Award, photographed with Elaine Aloes, MMA immediate past president.

(Photo by Rebecca Lambert,
Maine Municipal Association)



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Building on Our Successes

By Catherine Conlow / Executive Director



Without a doubt, autumn in Maine is my favorite season. Crisp air, pumpkin spice, and of course, the MMA annual convention.

This year the Maine Municipal Association held its 88th annual convention in Augusta and hosted the largest attendance of municipal officials since before the pandemic. The convention brings together municipal officials from across the state to connect and learn. But more than that, this gathering brings together members for the annual business meeting to celebrate the successes of the past year and chart a course for future accomplishments.

For MMA specifically, 2024 marked a year of leadership transitions, significant staff contributions, and new initiatives, all of which demonstrate MMA's ongoing commitment to its mission of supporting municipalities across Maine.

This past year our Human Resources Department welcomed Rich Cromwell following the retirement of longtime director David Barrett. While the search for a new chief financial officer is ongoing, the ability of the staff in our Finance Department to maintain seamless operations during this transition speaks to the strength of MMA's financial management and commitment to ensuring clean audits and financial stability.

One of the most notable accomplishments this past year was the launch of the ServeStrong Program in partnership with the National League of Cities (NLC) and NLC-Risk Information Sharing Consortium. This web-based platform, including access to the Talkspace portal, provides behavioral health resources tailored specifically for first responders. We are proud to announce that within the first week of the launch, **SERVESTRONG** had several subscribers, reflecting its need and

immediate impact on our first responders. This program exemplifies MMA's dedication to addressing the unique challenges faced by municipal employees, particularly those in high-stress roles like first responders.

But that is not all.

MMA's Advocacy and Communications team tracked over 300 pieces of legislation affecting municipal government operations during the second legislative session; the Educational Services Department coordinated 37 workshops and conferences for MMA members, and 117 workshops for affiliate associations; the Legal Services team responded to over 5,500 legal inquiries from members, a testament to the critical role MMA plays in helping local governments navigate complex legal landscapes; the HR Department revamped its online presence to make personnel management related resources more accessible to our members; Risk Management Services (RMS) managed a record number of severe weather-related claims, highlighting their critical role in helping municipalities recover from disasters; and the Health Trust Services department delivered several positive changes for members, including an increase in the life insurance benefit at no additional cost to members.

A pivotal goal for MMA in 2024 has been increasing member engagement.

Earlier this year, the association sent out a member survey to over 2,500 clerks, managers, and elected officials. While a majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with MMA's services—citing the accessibility of resources and the professionalism of staff as key strengths—the process generated valuable and appreciated feedback. The two emerging key issues were


the inability to easily navigate MMA's modernized website and the frequency and methods in which the association communicates with its members.

As MMA looks toward the future, the feedback provided has already had an impact on the key goals and initiatives that are on the horizon, which include:

- Improving member resources with a focus on further facilitating access to curated information through website tools, portals, and checklists that allow members to find exactly what they need more easily.
- Refining communications strategies to ensure that information is delivered in a streamlined, efficient manner. This will include better social media integration, more effective use of YouTube, and more control over the flow of information.
- Expanding regional engagement, which will build on the success of regional meetings and MMA for a Day. There will be a continued push to engage municipalities across the state in meaningful discussions on key issues and opportunities for collaboration.

The 88th annual convention marks a year of great progress for MMA. Through strategic leadership, innovative programs, and responsive engagement

with members, MMA has positioned itself to continue thriving in the years ahead. The organization's commitment to supporting municipalities, coupled with the dedication of its staff and leadership, ensures that its best days are still to come. 🌲




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For Cross, rain is the biggest public works challenge.

By Liz Mockler



John Cross

Thirty years ago, a hearty Maine winter would be the highest concern of a public works director, but for John Cross, rain has replaced snow as the most challenging aspect of managing a climate-changed public works department.

In the Town of Standish, Cross said his department is spending millions to “upsized” culverts from 7 feet to 22 feet to accommodate the heavy rains that strain the smaller culverts and threaten roadways.

Three projects have been completed in a larger expansion plan at a cost of \$750,000, but the remaining two projects could cost up to \$1 million each.

As a result of these efforts, the town did not suffer any substantial damage from the back-to-back January wind and rainstorms that ravaged much of the state’s famous coast, causing \$70 million in public infrastructure destruction alone.

Working waterfront property and people bore the worst of it, with some unable to rebuild in time for the summer tourism season.

“We had some issues in January, but not like other towns. We didn’t lose any roadways, there was no water over the roads,” Cross said.

Cross has worked as the Standish public works director for 18 months, and previously served as a deputy sheriff for the Cumberland County Sheriff Office for 20 years.

Cross said his goal is to be proactive. None of the roads where the new culverts are being installed have failed. The town of 10,500 will vote in November whether to bond for the final two projects, which could cost nearly a \$1 million each, Cross said.

“My goal is to be proactive,” he said, “but you never know what we’re having to adapt to. It could be something else.”

To emphasize the culvert work, Cross noted, “anything over 20 feet is considered a bridge.”

Cross recently talked about the challenges of running a public works department and how the work is always changing.

Q Why did you choose a career in public works?

A. I chose a career in public works because I enjoy the seasons in Maine. Having different seasons brings different challenges to the job. From snow in the winter to drainage in the spring, our job is ever changing in what we do from day to day. No day is ever the same and the challenge is always changing.

Q What is the most challenging part of your job?

A. The most challenging part of the job is being prepared to handle whatever mother nature throws at you with a limited budget. I never want to burden taxpayers, but we have to have the equipment and staffing to handle the task at hand.

Q What is most important in running your department?

A. The most important aspect of running a public works department is communication. Whether it’s communication with my employees or the public, communication is key to having a successful department.

About the Author: Liz Mockler is a freelance writer from Augusta and regular contributor to Maine Town & City, lizmockler1@hotmail.com.

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Q How are the state and federal governments to work with; are they responsive and supportive?

A. State and federal governments can be very supportive at times, but it can also be very time-cumbersome to document everything needed for grants and FEMA events. There is a lot of administrative time that goes into these projects to get the funding back to the town.

Q What's the most difficult problem you deal with?

A. The most difficult problem I deal with is the feeling of not being able to meet the public's needs in a timely manner. My goal is to be proactive to the town's needs and less reactive, making it so the public does not have to call in their needs.

Q Which season is harder – summer or winter and why?

A. The hardest season is probably not the same answer you would hear 30 years ago. Thirty years ago, directors would probably have said winter due to long hours and snowfall. Now with climate change, I would say the most difficult season is anytime that we get significant rain. Our drainage systems were not designed to handle the amount of rain we are now getting. The water run-off from the rain can be very destructive to

roads making some not passable or causing significant costly damage to shoulders and ditches.

Q Is there anything you would change about your work or department?

A. The Town of Standish is very supportive of the Public Works Department. The town understands the need to update equipment and staffing needs. The only thing I would like to do better is to be more proactive than reactive to the public's needs for roadway maintenance.

Q Do you have any advice for someone interested in a career in public works?

A. The best part about a job in the Public Works Department is that the challenge is never the same every day. The job tests you daily on how to do a job more timely and less costly to meet the public's needs. 📈

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WHERE *in* MAINE?

By Rebecca Lambert / Municipal Issues Specialist



The ocean view from Bennett's Cove, Chebeague Island.

The "Where in Maine?" series showcases the more whimsical sides of our communities. Municipalities in Maine will be explored with a focus on their vibrant downtowns, historic landmarks as well as the things that make each Maine town or city unique.

Photos in this series by Rebecca Lambert, MMA

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CHEBEAGUE ISLAND, once part of the Town of Cumberland, sits in Maine's iconic Casco Bay. The newest town in Maine is a quaint New England community that holds a rich historical narrative spanning indigenous presence, early European settlement, fishing and maritime industries, and the island's transformation into a tight-knit year-round community. Chebeague's history is unique, founded in the strength of its community identity and adaptability to changing economic and environmental circumstances.

Long before the arrival of European settlers, Chebeague Island and the surrounding Casco Bay islands were frequented by indigenous people. The island was part of a broader network which was integral to their seasonal migrations and used Chebeague's forests, fertile soil, and access to the rich marine resources for hunting, gathering, and fishing. Interestingly, Chebeague's name is derived from the Abenaki word meaning "island of many springs."

English settlers were attracted by the island's natural resources and began to arrive in the late 1600s. Fishing and farming became the twin pillars of the island's economy. By the early 1700s, families began to establish permanent homesteads, developing a small but resilient community. These early settlers relied on maritime trade, with much of their economic output in the form of fish, firewood, and timber that was shipped primarily to Portland and Boston.

In the 19th century, fishing, shipbuilding, and farming became the primary sources of livelihood for the island's inhabitants and its deep natural harbors and proximity to Portland made it an ideal location for these activities.

During this period, the lime trade began to grow with ships from Chebeague carrying lime from quarries on

nearby islands and from the mainland to larger ports. This trade was essential for the construction industry, and Chebeague's sailors became well-known for their skill and reliability in navigating the often-treacherous waters of the Gulf of Maine.

Many families on the island were involved in building schooners and other vessels during the Age of Sail. Maritime commerce became so central to life that islanders would often trade fresh fish directly with the owners of merchant vessels. The island also became known for its role in transporting granite from nearby quarries to cities up and down the Eastern Seaboard.

Chebeague's population steadily grew throughout the 19th century, peaking in the mid-1800s. The island's self-sufficiency, bolstered by a strong farming tradition, made it largely independent of the mainland, though Portland and Boston remained key trading partners.

As the industrial revolution transformed the economies of coastal Maine, Chebeague, like many islands, began to see a shift in its economic base. With the rise of steam-powered vessels, larger ships could navigate the Casco Bay area more easily, however, with its cool breezes and scenic landscapes, Chebeague soon became attractive as a summer colony for wealthy mainlanders.

By the late 19th century, a pattern had emerged where wealthier families from Portland, Boston, and New York began to build summer cottages on the island. Tourism became an increasingly important part of the island's economy, supplementing the dwindling maritime industries. Steamboat ferries regularly shuttled summer visitors to and from the island, contributing to the development of hotels, restaurants, and boarding houses. The island's natural beauty, combined with its maritime heritage, made it a desirable summer retreat.

Despite the economic benefits, this period of increased tourism was also marked with a decline in the island's year-round population. Many younger residents left to find work on the mainland, and the fishing industry, once the backbone of the island, began to decline as lobster and fish stocks were depleted due to overfishing.

Yet changes were in the wind once again for Chebeague due to the Great Depression and World War II. The once-thriving summer tourism industry dwindled, and the island's economy faced serious challenges. Many families left the island for good, and the population continued to shrink. The fishing industry, while smaller than before, persisted. Lobstering, became a mainstay of the island's economy, and fishermen continued to adapt to changing ecological and market conditions.

The rise of the lobster industry in the latter half of the 20th century, combined with a renewed interest in Maine's coastal beauty, led to a modest resurgence of both tourism and permanent residency. By the 1970s and 1980s, Chebeague had carved out a niche as a desirable location for both seasonal visitors and those seeking a quiet, year-round life close to nature.

One of the most significant developments in Chebeague Island's recent history was its secession from the town of Cumberland in 2007. This decision followed years of debate regarding the balance of power between the mainland and island communities. Chebeague residents sought greater control over their affairs.

The secession movement was driven by concerns over local governance, property taxes, and education. On July 1, 2007, Chebeague successfully seceded from Cumberland, becoming its own independent town. This move allowed the island to establish greater control over its resources, particularly its school system, which had been a contentious issue for many residents.

Chebeague today is a small but vibrant community. The island's economy continues to revolve around lobstering, although tourism and the arts also play a significant role. Chebeague's residents are known for their strong sense of community and self-reliance. The island has maintained its year-round population, thanks in part to the commitment to preserving its rural character, maritime traditions, and their K-5 school. Middle and high school students study on the mainland.

Unless you plan to swim or take your personal water-



The Chebeague Island School is a pre-K through 5th grade, that has educated island residents for generations.

craft to Chebeague, you will need to arrange for a ferry or water taxi to get to the island. Casco Bay Lines out of Portland and the Chebeague Transportation Company (CTC), leaving from the Cousins Island dock, both offer daily ferry trips.

Something to keep in mind when planning your trip is that there is no parking at either dock. In Portland, for the Casco Bay Lines, there are municipal parking garages available. For the CTC ferry, there is a satellite parking lot off Route 1 in Cumberland with a shuttle provided to take you to the wharf on Cousins Island. You can find ticketing and schedule information on their respective websites.

Each company docks in a different area of Chebeague Island. CTC uses the wharf located on the northern end of the island, near the Chebeague Island Inn, while the Casco Bay Lines utilizes the wharf on the southern end of the island.

The island's food and lodging options reflect its deep historical roots, commitment to sustainability, and desire to maintain a strong sense of community amidst its seasonal influx of tourists. While the island's year-round population remains small—home to a few hundred residents—its dining and accommodations options are curated to meet the needs of both locals and visitors and emphasize relaxation and simplicity.

The food culture of Chebeague Island is understandably heavily influenced by its maritime location, rural landscape, and a longstanding commitment to local food systems. Seafood dominates the culinary scene, with lobstering and fishing continuing to play vital roles in both the island's economy and its fare offerings. Local farms and sustainable agriculture also contribute to the growing farm-to-table movement, reflecting the island's

efforts to remain ecologically conscious while providing high-quality food experiences.

Their reliance on lobster and seafood is balanced by a strong commitment to sustainable fishing practices. Chebeague Island, like much of coastal Maine, is part of the efforts to manage lobster populations and protect the marine ecosystem. This is reflected in the types of seafood available at restaurants, where locally caught fish, such as haddock, cod, and mussels, are often featured on menus. Some establishments offer guided fishing or lobstering tours, giving visitors a firsthand understanding of the island's fishing culture and sustainability efforts.

Chebeague has several small farms that produce vegetables, fruits, eggs, and herbs, often employing organic or sustainable farming practices. These farms contribute directly to the local food scene, with produce frequently found on menus at the island's restaurants. Seasonal ingredients—ranging from fresh greens in spring to root vegetables and squash in fall—are incorporated into dishes, highlighting the island's connection to its roots.

Second Wind Farm is a living history farm on the island, operated by farmer Chuck Varney. Their mission is to “offer a three-dimensional setting for visitors to learn about the island's significant agricultural past and its folk culture.” Visitors to the farm are sure to have an immersive experience, uniquely stimulating the senses, while providing a hands-on education about rural and agricultural life.

Chebeague Island is also home to a community-supported agriculture program, which helps sustain the island's small farms. Both residents and visitors can participate by receiving weekly shares of farm-fresh pro-

duce. This system fosters a direct connection between islanders, visitors, and the land, reinforcing the importance of local, sustainable food systems in maintaining the island's agricultural economy.

The most notable dining option on the island is the restaurant at the Chebeague Island Inn. The menu changes seasonally to reflect the availability of local ingredients. The inn's restaurant is known for its elegant presentations of lobster, seafood chowder, and dishes that incorporate locally grown produce. The ambiance, enhanced by the inn's stunning views of Casco Bay, adds to the dining experience, attracting both island residents and off-island visitors.

In addition to their food offerings, they also have lodging options with breathtaking views, all nestled alongside a beautiful golf course. It is the only full-service inn on the island.

For those seeking a more relaxed atmosphere, the Slow Bell Café is a spot offering a range of comfort food, from seafood baskets to burgers and pizzas. The café often features live music and community events, serving as a social hub for the island. Operating a café on an island presents unique challenges, from sourcing ingredients to maintaining a customer base. By offering a versatile menu that can appeal to both tourists and locals, the café has carved out a niche that is flexible enough to accommodate the island's seasonal rhythms.

Another local café option is Two Birds Café, which is located near the Casco Bay Lines ferry landing and serves as a welcoming entry point for visitors arriving at that end of the island. The café has become a gathering place for both islanders and tourists, representing a bridge be-



The Second Wind Farm, Chebeague Island Inn, and Two Birds Café are three businesses on the island that contribute to the local economy and community culture.



Trails that are well maintained and marked pepper the island, contributing to the wealth of recreation opportunities available on Chebeague.

tween the local population and the seasonal influx that sustains many island economies.

The Niblic, part of the Chebeague Island Boatyard, operates as a café, market, and gift shop, catering to both year-round residents and seasonal visitors. The boatyard is a family-owned marina that serves as a central point for the island's boating and fishing activities. Tourists and seasonal residents flock to the café for its locally sourced meals and beverages, and the market has become a key stop for provisions.

It's important to note that there are no large-scale grocery stores on the island and only one small convenience store, Doughty's Island Market, which has been family owned and operated for generations. Not only is this store essential for the needs of a small island community, but it also serves as a place for residents to gather and socialize, an integral part of the island community.

For what it's worth, it's best to plan and come prepared if there is something specific you will want.

Given the seasonality of Chebeague, several food stands and pop-up restaurants appear during the summer months. These pop-up establishments often focus on quick, casual dining with an emphasis on seafood, and cater to the day-trippers and summer visitors who frequent the island. These stands offer a convenient option for visitors to grab a lobster roll or fried clams before heading out on an island hike or boat trip.

The lodging options available are reflective of the island's character—simple, rustic, and focused on natural beauty. With the exception of the Chebeague Island Inn, most accommodations are small-scale and short-term rentals. Visitors to Chebeague typically come seeking

tranquility, connection to nature, and a more intimate experience of island life, which is complemented by the island's range of inns, rental cottages, and bed-and-breakfasts.

Recreation opportunities on Chebeague Island are focused on the natural landscape. With the entire island being roughly five miles long and one and a half miles wide, it is an easy place to walk or bike, and there are golf carts available to rent by the hour, day, or week.

Given its position in Casco Bay, Chebeague Island offers exceptional opportunities for maritime recreation. Sailing has long been a central activity and with the island's deep-water anchorage and access to the bay's protected waters, it makes it an ideal location for both experienced and novice sailors alike.

While the waters surrounding Chebeague provide a sheltered environment, the hundreds of islands, coves, and inlets in Casco Bay offer a complex and dynamic environment for seafarers to explore. The Chebeague Island Boat Yard provides docking services, boat rentals, and mooring facilities. For residents, boating is also a practical means of transportation to the mainland, with ferry services and private boats serving as key transportation links.

If you like golf, as mentioned earlier, located next to the Chebeague Island Inn sits the Great Chebeague Golf Club which boasts stunning views of the ocean from every one of the nine holes on the course. Founded in 1920, the club was conceived by a group of island residents who sought to create a recreational space that would complement the island's natural beauty and the project wound up becoming so much more.

Golf, as a social activity, fostered a unique intergenerational dynamic on the island. Older residents passed down their traditions to younger players, creating a continuity that reinforced the club's role as a community anchor. The club's inclusive atmosphere helped bridge the gap between seasonal and year-round residents, promoting a shared identity centered around an activity.

One of the most interesting aspects of their history is the club's enduring commitment to preserving the island's natural landscape. As development pressures increased across coastal Maine, Chebeague Island faced challenges related to land conservation and environmental sustainability. The golf club emerged as a key player in the island's broader conservation movement.

The course itself, designed to integrate with the island's natural features, became a model for sustainable land use. Rather than altering the island's topography through aggressive landscaping, the club's founders and successive generations of caretakers worked to maintain the course in a way that preserved Chebeague's natural beauty. This approach was particularly important in a fragile island ecosystem, where the balance between development and environmental preservation was—and remains—crucial.

Additionally, the golf club became involved in island-wide efforts to protect open space. In partnership with local conservation organizations, the club has played a role in maintaining Chebeague's rural character, ensuring that the island remains a haven for both residents and visitors. By advocating for responsible land use, the club has contributed to the long-term preservation of the island's unique environment.

As the club evolved through modern times, it faced new challenges related to membership retention, finan-

cial sustainability, and evolving recreational preferences. Demographic shifts, including the aging population and changing patterns of seasonal residency, had an impact on the club's ability to maintain its membership base.

In response to these challenges, the club adapted by diversifying its offerings and emphasizing its role in the broader Chebeague community. The golf club continues to host events that appeal to a wide range of island residents and visitors. Moreover, the club's leadership has remained committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, ensuring that the club remains accessible to both long-time members and to newcomers.

Several hiking trails on the island provide access to different parts of the island. Some trails are maintained by the Chebeague and Cumberland Land Trust and you will also see many small white signs at the end of gravel roads that indicate that the road is a right-of-way to the shore. I walked down many of these roads and, not surprisingly, they all led to an incredible viewpoint of the ocean, many with sandy beaches.

Most fascinating on Chebeague is the Indian Point trail, also known as "the Hook." This 16-acre protected area is shaped like a hook and offers an easy, mostly flat walk through wide grassy trails that lead you to beaches, campsites and historical sites. At low tide, you can cross the sandbar to Little Chebeague Island, a 100-acre island with approximately 1.2 miles of trails in its network.

Unfortunately, the tides didn't work in my favor during the visit, which is an important reminder to keep tabs on the timing of the tides, or you will get stranded on Little Chebeague. The harbormaster will rescue you, but expect to take a ribbing in return!

Deer Point is a trail located on the southeastern corner of the island and leads to a rocky outcrop with unbeliev-

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able views of Little Chebeague Island, Long Island, Hope Island, and Cliff Island. A short walk from the trailhead is Bennett's Cove, where I had the opportunity to sit on some driftwood and enjoy the serenity of the island and ocean air, with not another soul in sight.

It was pure bliss on a picture-perfect day.

Arguably the most important natural area on the island is Littlefield and Hamilton-Durgin Woods, an approximately 23-acre property that acts as a critical wild-life habitat, an essential recharge area for Chebeague's sole source aquifer for drinking water, and woodlands, in addition to popular and historic recreational trails. The trail culminates at an open grove with a picnic table under a huge chestnut tree.

If you are visiting in the fall, watch for falling chestnuts!

Interestingly, there is a geodetic marker adjacent to the property, which is a highly accurate surveying reference point established on the earth's surface by local, state, and national agencies, which identifies that particular spot as the highest point in Casco Bay.

Chebeague is a friendly and tight-knit community. Every person I passed said hello and anyone in every car or bike I passed waved to me. I felt like a celebrity, but then found out that it is just something that islanders and mid-coasters do.

Beyond outdoor activities, Chebeague Island also offers a variety of cultural and community-based recreational opportunities that reflect its unique identity as a year-round island community with deep historical roots.

A central cultural institution on the island, the Chebeague Island Historical Society offers exhibitions, ed-

ucational programs, and walking tours that highlight the island's rich history. Visitors can explore the museum featuring exhibits on the island's maritime past, indigenous history, and community development, or take part in lectures and storytelling events that connect the past with the present.

Chebeague's closely bound community is reflected in its numerous social and cultural events. The island's recreation center hosts activities ranging from yoga and fitness classes to art workshops and children's summer programs. During the summer months, outdoor concerts, farmers markets, and community dinners draw both residents and visitors together, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural exchange.

From the early days as a seasonal home for indigenous people to its development as a maritime hub, its transformation into a summer destination, and eventual secession to preserve its independence, Chebeague has remained an adaptable and resilient community. Today, it offers a wealth of recreational opportunities that are deeply connected to its natural environment, maritime traditions, and community values and stands as a testament to the enduring strength of small island communities in the face of changing economic and environmental conditions.

While capitalizing on its natural resources and beauty and continuing to foster a serene and simple way of life, Chebeague will continue to evolve—remaining steeped in its deep connection to the sea and traditions that ensure its history remains not only alive, but an integral part of its future. 🌲

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Profiles of Service...Ryan Pelletier, Aroostook County Administrator

“I hope to give back to people now in the role...”

By Stephanie Bouchard

Ryan Pelletier was a senior at the University of Maine at Fort Kent when he got his first job in municipal government, as, of all things, a town manager. “I was still living at home with my mother,” he recalled.

Today the county administrator for Aroostook County, Pelletier didn’t even know there was such a thing as a town manager before he entered the field of local government.

A failed attempt at winning the position of first selectman for the town of St. Francis when he was 18 or 19 prompted his political science teacher at UMFK, former state speaker of the house, John Martin, to suggest that Pelletier forget elected politics and instead apply for the part-time town manager position in Wallagrass.

“I [didn’t] know what that [was],” Pelletier said. “I thought being a first selectman was being a town manager.” After Martin explained the difference to him, Pelletier applied, and was hired. “I knew absolutely nothing,” he said. The future president of the Maine Municipal Association called MMA for legal assistance “just about every day.”

Within a year, Pelletier became the town manager of St. Agatha, where he and his family live today. “That’s really where I got my foundation, I would say, in the business,” he said. The larger town had the resources for Pelletier to take part in training and become involved in organizations like MMA, where he would learn more about municipal government, network with others in local government both in the state and across the country and grow both personally and professionally.

“He strives for growth within himself, but I think even more so, he strives for growth within the communities he’s worked for and right now for the county,” said Suzie Paradis, town manager of Fort Kent, who worked with Pel-



Ryan Pelletier

letier when he was town manager in Madawaska. “Anybody that’s worked under him can see that he’s always trying to, for lack of better words, get creative not with new ideas, but just new projects.”

Some of those projects include Madawaska’s Grand Plan, a long-term strategic plan to help revitalize not just Madawaska but the region; hiring multiple assessors at the county level that the communities can utilize instead of having to hire their

own; and, not related to his professional work, helping raise funds to support local cancer patients by volunteering for the Long Lake Ice Fishing Derby.

His love of fostering community and his sense of humor to ease the way are core to what makes Pelletier an effective administrator and leader, his colleagues say.

As an example of his sense of humor, former town manager of Fort Kent and longtime friend of Pelletier’s, Don Guimond, referred to a shared experience the two of them had when they were first getting to know each other. Not wanting to steal Pelletier’s thunder, Guimond let him relay the story, which goes like this:

About two years after starting his career, Pelletier registered for a new municipal leadership program that the Muskie School of Public Service and the Maine Municipal Association were running.

The event was being held at the University of Southern Maine, over 300 miles from St. Agatha, where Pelletier had been the town manager for about a year. Wanting to be frugal, he asked town managers in the area if they were interested in attending the program and carpooling and sharing expenses.

He got one taker: Don Guimond. The two men knew each other but they weren’t the good friends they would later become.

In the interest of saving money, the two agreed to share a hotel room. Pelletier made the reservations. When they

About the Author: Stephanie Bouchard is a freelance writer from Nobleboro and regular contributor to *Maine Town & City*, stephanie@stephaniebouchard.net.

arrived at the DoubleTree hotel together and checked in, it didn't register with either of them when the hotel employee said, "Is one king fine?" so they were both shocked when they walked into their room and saw one king-sized bed.

They quickly returned to the reception desk, where a different hotel employee found a new room with two beds. After getting their things settled in the new room, Pelletier and Guimond headed out to have supper. As they were walking through the hotel lobby, the employee who originally checked them in waved them over.

"He says, 'I'm so glad you guys came down and straightened out that room situation,'" Pelletier recounted. "And I said, 'Oh really? Why?' He's like, 'Well, I didn't think you guys made a very good couple.'"

In the 20-plus years since, Pelletier said, "I've told that story so many times. Usually when [Guimond's] around. He gets embarrassed every time and I do it just because of that."

Pelletier met Guimond when he walked into Fort Kent's town office looking for an internship to fulfill a requirement of his political science program at UMFK. After John Martin told Pelletier about the town manager position in Wallagrass, he went back to Fort Kent to talk to Guimond about applying.

"He said, 'I'm thinking of applying for the Wallagrass town manager position,'" remembers Guimond. "My response to him was 'Are you crazy?'"

"He never listened to me, right?" Guimond laughed. "He got an A on his course because of me, I told him not to do it, and he did it."

Over the years, the two built up a friendship and bounced things off each other, especially when they carpoled to events in the southern part of the state. "It was just good conversation," Guimond said. "Did we make earth-shattering discoveries? Probably not. But it benefited both of us in accomplishing the jobs that we were doing. Ultimately, the public benefited from our ability just to do that."

Having benefited from Guimond's mentorship and understanding the importance of having others to talk to about things and ask questions, Pelletier makes a point of fostering connection among his colleagues across the state, and particularly in Aroostook County.

Building a rapport seems to be second nature for him, said Scott Morelli, South Portland's city manager. At conferences Pelletier helps to organize, for example, he makes sure there's time for socializing so that people can get to know each other.

"It can be hard for a manager coming into the profession," Morelli said. "Eventually you might get to know some people, but if there's someone kind of rolling out the

welcome mat for you, that makes it a lot easier. I think that's as an important thing that Ryan does in our profession as his professional skills and acumen."

Paying back all those calls for help he made to MMA in his early days, today Pelletier's active on the listservs of professional organizations, offering advice, providing support, and sharing lived experience.

He encourages his colleagues to take steps they may not think to take on their own, whether that be to get additional training or to apply for new jobs, like he did with Suzie Paradis.

"In 2018 he gave me a call and he said, 'Suzie, you need to apply for the town manager position (in Fort Kent).' And I was like, 'I can't do that.'"

But he convinced her that she had what it would take to do the job well and she applied and got the job. "He's always mentored his colleagues and given us the best possible advice that he can give," she said.

Given all the support he got when he was starting out his career and didn't know a thing about being a town manager, today it's important to him that he can be a resource for others, Pelletier said.

"[Don Guimond] was a great influence on me," he said. "He gave me a lot of great insight and provided me a lot of mentorship over my early career, something that I hope to give back to people now in the role that I'm in and helping the younger ones coming up." 🏔️



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SERVESTRONG



MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

Connect with professionals
who understand.



MMA's ServeStrong Program

Providing tailored, web-based behavioral services to Maine's first responders.

After months of discussions, tests and refinements and with the full support of the association's Executive Committee, MMA launched the **SERVESTRONG** program on August 27.

What Is SERVESTRONG? The initiative—a collaboration among the National League of Cities (NLC), NLC-Risk Information Sharing Consortium, and MMA—it is specifically designed to provide first responders and their families with access to confidential, web-based behavioral services offered by professionals familiar with the stress and trauma experienced by law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services providers, dispatchers, and correctional officers.

Services Are Provided? The program provides two levels of services.

Services for All. A variety of self-serve resources are available for all employees to use, regardless of their position with the municipality. Through the platform, employees can set betterment priorities, complete self-assessment checks, and access resources on a variety of subjects, including families and relationships, professional development, and work-life balance.

Confidential Trauma-Based Telehealth Therapy for First Responders. In addition to the services outlined above, first responders have access to resilience training and therapy for trauma-based behavioral health support and 24/7 access to telehealth-therapy, as well as text services, offered by vetted and trusted experts. Supported by the Talkspace program, resource recommendations are based on the information first responders provide during an initial assessment. Participants who want to connect with a behavioral health care professional will receive profiles of appropriate providers to guarantee the best fit possible.

These services are 100% confidential. Employers cannot access, nor will they receive, data on who has registered for the program or obtain information on the services received.

How Do I Learn More & Register? Informational brochures describing the benefits of the program can be found on MMA's website at <https://www.memun.org/About/Serve-Strong>. On that page, members can also register to access program resources by clicking on the "Get Started with **SERVESTRONG**" link.

How Do I Access Resources? Once registered, municipal employees and their family members will be able to explore the options available. By clicking on "Explore" in the menu found on the left-hand side of the **SERVESTRONG** homepage, employees can access links to the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust's programs and services, including the Employee Assistance Program, Mental Health First Aid, Talkspace, and Aspire365.

First responders seeking more trauma-based services have access to a separate Talkspace link. Those resources are also under the "Explore" menu option and found by clicking on the "Connect with professionals who understand" tile. Once there, participants will be guided through the process for accessing tailored services and resources.

More to come. Please visit the **SERVESTRONG** website often, as the resources provided will continue to evolve to better meet the needs of first responders and municipal employees.

MMA's Executive Committee and staff encourage municipal officials, especially first responders and county correctional officers, to explore **SERVESTRONG** services and tools and take advantage of the 100% confidential care and assistance available. Your well-being is of great importance to the communities and individuals you serve and protect.

For questions about the program and services, please contact Kate Dufour at kdufour@memun.org.

MAINE MUNICIPAL BOND BANK

2025 SPRING BOND ISSUE SCHEDULE

Capital financing through the Bond Bank's General Bond Resolution Program allows borrowers to take advantage of the Bond Bank's high investment grade rating, low interest rates and reduced issuance and post issuance costs. Traditionally twice a year, in the spring and fall, the Bond Bank will consolidate eligible applicants and engage in a bond sale. From application to receipt of funds the bond issuance process usually lasts four months. Below is the schedule for the Bond Bank's Spring Issue. Applications can be found on our website at www.mmbb.com.

February						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

March						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

April						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

May						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Wednesday, February 5th – Application Deadline

Wednesday, March 12th – Application Approval (MABB Board Meeting)

Monday, April 7th – Preliminary opinions and loan agreements due from bond counsel of each borrower

Wednesday, April 9th – Last date for signing school contracts and rates in place for water district. PUC approvals due

Week of April 21st – Maine Municipal Bond Bank Pricing

Monday, May 12th – Final documents due from bond counsel

Wednesday, May 21st – Pre-closing

Thursday, May 22nd – Closing – Bond proceeds available

If you would like to participate in or have any questions regarding the 2025 Spring Bond Issue, please contact Toni Reed at treed@mmbb.com or (207)622-9386 ext. 213.



the Municipal **RISK MANAGER**

A PUBLICATION OF THE MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2024

FRAUDULENT IMPERSONATION ALERT

Risk Management Services has received numerous reports of fraudulent activities related to bank account change requests. If you receive a request to edit or update banking information from anyone, including employees, vendors, and contractors, please stop and review your entity's policies before proceeding. Recently, several members have been spoofed, which is an activity that involves using fake emails, display names, phone numbers, or web addresses to trick people into believing they are communicating with a trusted source. This has led to unauthorized changes in employee or vendor banking information. Therefore, it is critically important to confirm the request by utilizing pre-approved communication methods and known contacts. **NEVER REPLY** directly to the initial request as a form of verification. The bad actors are well trained and will reply to appear legitimate and ultimately trap you into sending them your money!

It is important to note that as public-facing entities, much of your information is accessible to the public. This makes it easy for bad actors to identify who works for your entity and their positions. They can also see bid requests and awards, making it easy for them to send emails that appear to be from legitimate contractors. If you are not careful, you could fall into their trap. Therefore, it is crucial to have proper communication arrangements in place to verify requests. Use a designated communication method such as pre-established verification phone numbers or email accounts to confirm the legitimacy of the request and do not reply directly to the initial inquiry. Additional protective measures include:

- **Using Multifactor Authentication (MFA):** Implement MFA for accessing sensitive systems and making changes to account information. This adds an extra layer of security.
- **Educating Employees:** Regularly train employees on recognizing phishing attempts and other fraudulent activities. Awareness is key to prevention.
- **Securing Communication Channels:** Use secure and encrypted communication channels for sharing sensitive information.
- **Monitoring Accounts:** Regularly monitor accounts for unusual activity and set up alerts for any changes to account details.
- **Implementing Strong Policies:** Have clear policies in place for verifying and processing requests for changes to account information. Ensure all employees are familiar with these policies.



- **Conducting Regular Audits:** Conduct regular audits of your security practices and update them as needed to address new threats.

By following these practices, you can significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to fraudulent impersonation. Stay vigilant and proactive so that together we can protect us all.

Strengthening Cybersecurity in Governmental Entities

In today's digital age, governmental entities face increasing risks from cyber threats and data breaches. Safeguarding sensitive information and ensuring continuity of operations is essential, and is achieved through robust cybersecurity measures and adherence to best practices. Public entities of all sizes are encouraged to implement the following key cybersecurity elements:

Written Acceptable Use Policy (AUP): A comprehensive AUP establishes expectations and guidelines for using computer systems within the organization. It outlines permissible activities, defines appropriate behavior, and details the potential consequences for policy violations.

Passwords: Entities should establish requirements for password complexity, length, and regular expiration. Implementing multi-

continued on page 26



YOUR COMMUNITY

Auburn Durham Greene Leeds Lewiston Lisbon Livermore Livermore Falls Me
 Chapman Crystal Wells Cyr Plantation Dyer Brook Eagle Lake Easton Fort Fairfield
 Hodgdon Houlton Island Falls Limestone Linneus Littleton Ludlow Macw
 Oakfield Orient Perham Portage Lake Presque Isle Reed Plantation Saint Agatha S
 Westmanland Weston Winterville Plantation Woodland Baldwin Bridgton Brunswick
 Medway New Gloucester Moscow North Yarmouth Portland Pownal Raymond
 Carrabassett Valley Carthage Chesterville Coplin Plantation Dallas Plantation Eustis
 Plantation Strong Temple Weld Wilton Amherst Aurora Bar Harbor Blue Hill B
 Hancock Lamoine Mariaville Mount Desert Orland Osborn Otis Penobscot Se
 Albion Augusta Belgrade Benton Chelsea China Clinton Farmingdale Fayette
 Vassalboro Vienna Waterville Wayne West Gardiner Windsor Winslow Winthrop
 Rockport South Thomaston Thomaston Union Vinalhaven Warren Washin
 Monhegan Plantation Newcastle Nobleboro Somerville South Bristol Southport V
 Dixfield Fryeburg Gilead Greenwood Hanover Hartford Hebron Hiram Lincoln
 Summer Sweden Upton Waterford West Paris Alton Bangor Bradford Bradle
 Drew Plantation East Millinocket Eddington Edinburg Enfield Etna Exeter Garland
 Lee Levant Lincoln Lowell Mattawamkeag Maxfield Milford Millinocket Mo
 Seboeis Plantation Springfield Stacyville Stetson Veazie Webster Plantation Winn
 Lake View Plantation Medford Milo Monson Parkman Sangerville Sebec Shirley W
 Brighton Plantation Cambridge Canaan Caratunk Cornville Dennistown Plantatio
 Kennebunkport Pleasant Ridge Plantation Ripley Saint Albans Skowhegan Smithfie
 Monroe Montville Northport Phillips Palermo Prospect Searsport Columbia
 Addison Alexander Ogunquit Baileyville Baring Plantation Calais Charlotte C
 Dennysville East Machias Grand Lake Stream Plantation Indian Township Jonesboro
 Sanford York Pembroke Pleasant Point Princeton Robbinston Roque Bluffs
 Buxton Eliot Hollis Kennebunk Kittery Lebanon Limerick Saco Old Orchard Beach

Risk Management Services is grateful for your participation in MMA's 88th Annual Convention. Your presence and participation were instrumental in making this event a resounding success.

Our convention was designed to provide valuable educational resources on a variety of critical topics, and we are thrilled that so many members took advantage of these opportunities. With sessions on important topics, such as essential protections for unforeseen threats and discussions on sustainability, the event was packed with insightful presentations and interactive workshops.

One of the highlights was the session on **SERVESTRONG: Mental Health Support for Emergency First Responders**. The well-being of our first responders is paramount, and it was heartening to see such a strong turnout and active participation in this important discussion. We introduced several online tools and incentive programs aimed at enhancing our communities' resilience and preparedness. Your feedback and enthusiasm for these resources were incredibly encouraging. Additionally, we presented tips and tools to simplify the Workers' Compensation payroll audit process, and we appreciated your participation.

We would also like to thank you for visiting our booth and to congratulate our raffle winners:

The towns of Fairfield, Union, Swanville and Milo are the winners of the personalized Waterhog absorbent mats. The winners of our automobile safety preparedness duffels are Bethany Child of Dixfield, Kylee Coburn of Parkman, Melissa Albert of Eliot, and Andy Hart of Carmel.

We hope that the knowledge and connections you gained during the convention will be beneficial in your professional and personal lives. Your commitment to continuous learning and improvement is what makes our community strong and vibrant.

Thank you once again for your dedication and support of MMA Risk Management Services and we look forward to seeing you at future events and continuing our journey towards safer, more sustainable, and supportive communities.

PROPERTY & CASUALTY ■ UI



COMMUNITY

OUR COMMITMENT

Mechanic Falls Ellsworth Minot
 Fort Kent Anson Frenchville
 Nahoch Plantation Madawaska
 Saint Francis Saint George
 Cape Elizabeth Casco
 Scarborough Richmond
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 Brooklin Brooksville
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Poland Harpswell Sabattus Turner Wales Allagash Amity Ashland Blaine Bridgewater Caribou Castle Hill Caswell
 Old Town Eastport Garfield Plantation Sullivan Glenwood Plantation Grand Isle Hamlin Hammond Haynesville Hersey
 Mapleton Mars Hill Masardis Merrill Monticello Moro Plantation Nashville Plantation New Limerick New Sweden
 Saint John Plantation Sherman Smyrna Stockholm Van Buren Manchester Wade Wallagrass Washburn Westfield
 Chebeague Island Cumberland Falmouth Freeport Frye Island Gorham Gray Harrison Long Island Pittsfield Naples
 Sebago Woolwich South Portland Standish Westbrook Windham Yarmouth Woodstock Avon Acton New Canada
 Jay Kingfield New Sharon New Vineyard Rangeley Harrington Rangeley Plantation Steuben Sandy River Beals
 Bucksport Castine Cranberry Isles Dedham Deer Isle Eastbrook Franklin Frenchboro Gouldsboro Great Pond
 Southwest Harbor Stonington Surry Swans Island Tremont Trenton Verona Island Waltham Winter Harbor
 Hollowell Litchfield Monmouth Mount Vernon Oakland Pittston Randolph Readfield Unity Rome Sidney
 Camden Cushing Friendship Hope Isle Au Haut Matinicus Isle Plantation North Haven Owls Head Rockland
 Boothbay Harbor Bremen Bristol Damariscotta Dresden Palmyra Edgecomb Jefferson
 Westport Island Whitefield Wiscasset Andover Bethel Brownfield Buckfield Byron Canton Denmark
 Lovell Mexico Newry Norway Otisfield Oxford Paris Peru Porter Roxbury Rumford Stoneham Stow
 Burlington Carmel Carroll Plantation Charleston Chester Clifton Corinna Corinth Dexter Dixmont
 Greenbush Hampden Hermon Holden Howland Hudson Kenduskeag LaGrange Norridgewock Lakeville
 Newburgh Newport Orono Orrington Passadumkeag Patten Penobscot Indian Nation Plymouth Morrill
 Abbot Beaver Cove Bowerbank Brownville Dover-Foxcroft Greenville Lincolnville Guilford Kingsbury Plantation
 Willimantic Arrowsic Bath Bowdoin Bowdoinham Georgetown Phippsburg Topsham West Bath Athens Bingham
 Embden Fairfield Harmony Hartland Highland Plantation Jackman Madison Mercer Moose River New Portland Beddington
 Starks The Forks Plantation West Forks Plantation Belfast Belmont Brooks Burnham Frankfort Freedom Islesboro Jackson Knox Liberty
 Stockton Springs Swanville Thorndike Troy Waldo Winterport
 Alfred Columbia Falls Cooper Crawford Cutler Danforth Deblois Cornish
 Lubec Machias Machiasport Marshfield Meddybemps Milbridge Northfield Dayton
 Topsfield Vanceboro Waite Wesley Whiting Whitneyville Arundel Berwick Biddeford
 Lyman Newfield Shapleigh North Berwick Parsonsfield South Berwick Waterboro



**MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION
 RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

EMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION ■ WORKERS' COMPENSATION



Strengthening Cybersecurity in Governmental Entities (continued)

factor authentication (MFA) adds an extra layer of security by requiring additional verification beyond just a password.

Backup and Recovery Procedures: In the event of data loss or system failure, having a reliable backup is imperative for restoring operations swiftly and minimizing downtime. Develop written protocols for regular backups of critical systems and data and test these backups periodically to verify their integrity and effectiveness.

Data Privacy and Security Training: Human error remains one of the leading causes of security incidents, underscoring the importance of ongoing education and awareness training for employees. The MMA Online University offers numerous training courses designed to help your team avoid cybersecurity traps.

Prohibition of Unencrypted Protected Data: Sensitive data, such as personally identifiable information (PII), healthcare records, and financial data, must be adequately protected to prevent unauthorized access and comply with regulatory requirements. Entities should strictly prohibit the storage of protected data on removable media.

Remote Access Security Measures: Entities should employ secure methods such as virtual private networks (VPNs), firewall protections, and multi-factor authentication (MFA) to authenticate remote users and encrypt data transmission.

Timely Application of Updates and Patches: Software vulnerabilities represent a common attack vector for cybercriminals seeking to exploit weaknesses in organizational systems. Ensuring timely application of updates and patches is crucial for maintaining security.

Regular System Vulnerability Monitoring: Continuous monitoring for system vulnerabilities is essential for identifying and addressing potential security risks proactively. Prompt remediation of identified vulnerabilities helps mitigate the risk of exploitation by cyber attackers and enhances overall system security.

Physical Security Measures: Physical security is paramount for protecting sensitive data and infrastructure. Ensure that data centers and other critical facilities are located in secure areas accessible only by authorized personnel. Access controls such as keys, swipe cards, and access codes should be strictly managed to prevent unauthorized entry and safeguard against physical threats.

Guest WIFI Access Security: Municipal entities should segregate guest WIFI networks from internal networks and implement access controls to prevent unauthorized access to secure data and resources.

Helpful resources:

CISA- Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency
<https://www.cisa.gov/>

FCC- Federal Communications Center- Model Plan
<https://www.fcc.gov/cyberplanner>

FEMA- Federal Emergency Management Agency
<https://community.fema.gov/ProtectiveActions/s/article/Cyberattack>

CIS- Center for Internet Security
<https://www.cisecurity.org/>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION?

Two-factor authentication is a simple tool utilized to protect your entity's computer systems from attacks. The tool strengthens access security by requiring two methods to verify a user's identity prior to allowing access. With two-factor authentication, only you can access your account on a trusted device, application or website.

HOW DOES TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION WORK?

Two-factor authentication strengthens access security by requiring two methods (also referred to as factors) to verify your identity. An example of two-factor authentication is utilizing something you know - like a username and password, plus something you have - like a smartphone app to approve authentication requests. Because the username and password alone are no longer enough to access your account, two-factor authentication dramatically improves the security of your devices and the information that you store.

IS THIS REALLY NECESSARY?

YES! As more and more municipalities, governmental entities and utility districts operate virtually and utilize remote storage or offer access to internal services from the outside, robust cybersecurity tools such as two-factor authentication should be implemented and constantly monitored to ensure protection from attackers that may have figured out (or stolen) an account and password.

Many of the attacks you read about in the news most likely could have been prevented if the account had been protected with two-factor authentication. As an example, imagine that you are away from the office vacationing with family when your phone beeps "Allow access?" The two-factor authentication is notifying you that someone is trying to access your account. But because you said "decline" or didn't respond, that person is not able to use your credentials to access your entity's resources.

Two-factor authentication is one of the best ways to protect against remote attacks attempting to access or takeover your accounts. This is simply the next necessary step to protect your data.



The Municipal Risk Manager

The Municipal Risk Manager is published seasonally to inform members of developments in municipal risk management which may be of interest to you in your daily business activities. The information in these articles is general in nature and should not be considered advice for any specific risk management or legal question. You should consult with legal counsel or other qualified professional of your own choice for specific questions.

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Takeaways from MMA's 88th Annual Convention

From building age friendly communities to responding to severe weather events, the two-day event offered municipal officials a variety of opportunities to learn and network.

By Betty Adams

Hundreds of municipal employees, elected officials and others working in and with local governments packed the Augusta Civic Center on Oct. 3 and 4 to learn more about how to better serve their residents.

Takeaways from the 88th Maine Municipal Association's Annual Convention included information about ways to craft local land ordinances so more housing could be built to meet an overwhelming demand.

One seminar talked about ways to become age-friendly communities so people can help each other; another discussed how computers using artificial intelligence (AI) can be used for some tasks, thus freeing up municipal workers to handle more complex situations.

Another showed benefits that code enforcement officers bring to both the municipality and citizens.

Vendors, too, packed the exhibit hall, demonstrating how their products and services can enhance municipal services, budgets and opportunities.

The "Unstoppable: Harnessing Resilience" theme permeated the convention, starting off with keynote speaker Larry Brudnicki, who was a U.S. Coast Guard captain during a catastrophic weather event on Oct. 30, 1991.

As commander of the Coast Guard Cutter Tamaroa, he was forced to make tough decisions in a rescue mission to save both sailboat and helicopter crews.

Those events and others during that historic nor'easter later formed the basis of a book by Sebastian Junger and were dramatized in the adventure/thriller movie *The Perfect Storm*, released in 2000.

Brudnicki shared his real-life experience with assembled municipal leaders, telling them, "If you've ever had a situation beyond your control, you have a good idea of being in the perfect storm. The community is trusting officials to do what's best for them."

He added, "The principles of risk management are uni-

versal. It doesn't matter if a Coast Guard ship is headed out to sea on a rescue mission or if you have to decide what projects, services and jobs to cut because you don't have sufficient resources... There's a risk every time you add, cut or change anything, but there's a different risk if you maintain the status quo. What process do you use to make critical decisions?"

Another featured speaker at the convention, Hannah Pingree, director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, who is also co-chair of the Maine Climate Council, told attendees that increasing resilience to extreme storm and flooding impacts requires more state funding and partnering with communities. "That partnership requires trust and collaboration, and a critical ingredient is inspired local leaders," she said.

Pingree noted the largest part of the team she works with focuses on the challenges and solutions related to climate change, including resilience.

She said that hearing about the deaths from Hurricane Helene and watching images of the severe devastation was heartbreaking. "I'm sure you, like me, are shocked by



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what one storm can do to highways and bridges, downtowns and homes.”

She showed a slide of J.O. Brown’s Boatyard on North Haven, her hometown, shortly after heavy storms this past winter left the shop inundated with water and twisted a new wharf. The community united to help prevent more damage to the property, which Pingree noted was the only source for gasoline and heating oil on the island.

Pingree offered other slides showing damage along the coast as well as inland locations that had mudslides and flooded homes and talked of the importance of resilience and adaptation.

“Adaptation to a changing environment is crucial to our communities and our state economy,” she said.

Pingree also recognized municipal leaders for their efforts in responding to climate-related disasters: Jay Town Manager Shiloh LaFreniere; Stonington Town Manager Kathleen Billings and Economic and Community Development Director Linda Nelson; Kittery Town Manager Kendra Amaral; and the late Bill Kitchen, who was town manager in Machias. He died in September.

The next plan to prepare for climate change, known as “Maine Can’t Wait,” is scheduled for release Dec. 1, Pingree added.

She introduced Samantha Horn of Readfield, who was named director of the new Maine Office for Community Affairs. Gov. Janet Mills’ announcement about the new office said, “The Office will serve as a one-stop shop within state government to provide coordinated and efficient planning, technical assistance, and financial support to towns, cities, tribal governments and regional entities, which will help them better plan for common challenges, pursue solutions, and create stronger, more resilient communities.”

Erica LaCroix, Farmington town manager, asked if the new office could help find an easy way to notify the public in the event of an emergency.



Pingree responded, “We all know we need better communication systems during extreme weather events.”

Kennebunkport Town Manager Laurie A. Smith also weighed in and asked if something could be done to discourage what she termed “storm tourism,” adding, “They don’t spend money; they just get in the way.”

Steve Patterson, mayor of Athens, Ohio, and second vice president of the National League of Cities (NLC), told attendees at a luncheon about the efforts of the national group to advocate on behalf of municipalities, noting that it is taking up the issue of housing, which is a concern across the country. A resolution adopted by the NLC almost a year ago says, among other things, that it will “advocate for bills in Congress that seek to alleviate the housing crisis in America by creating better financing options for the developers and the cities in which they are building.”

He also suggested that municipalities whose grant applications are rejected reach out to the state or federal agency for a debriefing to see what needed to be improved on the next application.

Patterson also talked about the need for civility and

how he and other mayors and managers of Ohio cities and towns drove to Springfield, Ohio, to show solidarity and offer support and resources to leaders of that city as they combatted threats and abuse after a false story spread that immigrants there were killing and eating pets.

“This wasn’t a partisan thing,” Patterson said. “This was just mayors helping mayors, city managers helping city managers, town managers helping town managers.”

At one of the many concurrent sessions on various topics, Laura Mitchell, executive director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, talked of the need for housing that is affordable and accessible. “Housing is a hyper-local issue,” she said. “You have control over your land use and zoning and you get to decide and figure out how fast the permitting processes are and other ways to get involved in solving the housing crisis.”

In a slideshow, she offered a graphic that said, “Maine needs 80,000 new homes by 2030 to meet population and future workforce needs.”

She also noted that Bangor has a six- to seven-year wait list for affordable senior housing.

Another slide listed average wages in Maine for workers intrinsic to local operations: police officers, firefighters, teachers, nurses, bank tellers, and pharmacy technicians. It showed that few of them would be able to afford to rent or purchase housing in areas of the state today.

People nodded affirmatively when she asked if anyone in the room was struggling to fill those positions.

She urged municipal leaders to take action, saying they have “levers like financial investment, land donation and denser zoning.” She added, “Zone for village centers, and fill in empty spaces within community centers that look like they were built a long time ago . . .

Allow residential in commercial zones.” She suggested fast-tracking approval processes, having shorter timelines, “and consistency and transparency in the process for people who are trying to build housing.”

Cullen Ryan of Community Housing of Maine, talked of the effects of the housing crunch on those experiencing homelessness—one of the most stressful situations to be in—and on the public budgets that fund hospital stays and incarcerations. “Everyone does well with housing; and no one does well without housing,” he said. “No one wants to be outside. Everybody wants to be inside.”

He estimated some 300 people in Maine are chronically homeless and said they tend to ricochet between hospitals and jails – the state’s most expensive emergency systems. “The population that is unhoused is up to 29 times more likely to be in a hospital and up to 57 times more likely to be in jail when unhoused than housed,” Ryan said.





UNSTOPPABLE

"It costs us a great deal of money when we leave them unhoused," he said, saying that two weeks in jail costs more than housing a person for an entire year in permanent housing with support services.

The convention was the site of a number of awards, including the 2024 "Spirit of America" award given to the municipal clerks and ballot clerks. About two dozen of them lined up for a photo of the presentation.

Certificates for winning the annual Town Report Contest were staged on a table outside a large function room, and attendees at most sessions were able to earn certification credits from the Maine Town & City Clerks' Association and Maine Town, City & County Managers' Association.

Bangor Police Chief Mark Hathaway received the 2024 Ethel N. Kelley Memorial Award, given to honor the service and dedication of a municipal official. Hathaway has spent 37 years in law enforcement and been chief of police in Bangor since 2013. In a letter recommending Hathaway for the award, Bangor City Council Chair Cara Pelletier wrote, "He is an outstanding and resilient manager who works tirelessly to ensure his department is reflective of our community's goals."

As incoming president of MMA's executive committee, Melissa Doane, who is town manager in Bradley and a self-described "municipal geek," told attendees, "We will look for ways to not say 'No' to residents because we really do hate to say that word."

At a presentation on "Lessons Learned from Local Government Exploration of AI," Lena Geraghty noted that AI has been around since the 1950s, and that familiar uses are those that ask users to verify that they are human

and word processing programs that suggest words and phrases. A spam filter uses AI as well, she explained, and predicted that while AI may be used narrowly today, it is likely to expand.

She also talked about the use of AI in operating water infrastructure and AI-driven surveillance programs. A graphic noted the uses of AI for smart traffic management and waste management. In Millbrae, California, Geraghty noted that AI tools offer real-time translation into 24 different languages spoken in that city. AI can be used to take minutes of meetings as well.

She noted that MMA offers sample policies about AI use and that the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has resources on its site as well.

Chelsea Town Manager Christine Landes introduced the program titled "How Livable Communities and Age-Friendly Programs Help Your Municipality." The audience listened raptly, occasionally nodding, as she and Noël Bonam, the state director of AARP Maine, and others described efforts volunteers have made to connect residents in both fun and community-friendly activities.

In her presentation about why it was needed, she noted that the Senior Center in town had recently closed, "leaving nowhere for seniors to gather," community events were lacking, the town lacked a downtown, and "inter-generational connections were non-existent for a town of 2,775 people with an RSU school district."

Landes, who has been in municipal government for 27 years, said "The Reading Connection" was started between the town and the school where volunteers read to children. That led to another program where volunteers



go to the Togus VA Medical Center (which is located in Chelsea) and read to individuals in the dementia unit.

Volunteers also help distribute buckets of sand in winter to people who can't make it to the town garage, and a "Community Garden" was started near the Town Office and Chelsea Elementary School. Then there was the new "Summer Concert Series," where the school boosters group sold food.

The group is now working on organizing a warming and cooling center.

"I'm very, very proud of Chelsea," Landes said. "They are very active, very motivated and I think they have a great success story."

Bangor's director of community and economic development, Anne Krieg, talked about the Bangor Livable Communities Committee, which is also a member of the AARP Age-Friendly Communities Network. "It's a great way to get your public outreach funneled through a group of people." She said the committee also did a walkability audit of the city and added that the benefits of having such a committee include lending support to city projects, public education, and coordinating with partners in service, particularly nonprofit groups.

Candy Eaton, coordinator of Age-Friendly Sullivan, which is run by an ad hoc all-volunteer committee in the Town of Sullivan, said that among other things, it provides newcomers with a "Welcome to Sullivan" tote bag containing information about the government, committees,

nonprofit agencies, schools and businesses. It also sends birthday cards to every resident. "We consider ourselves Sullivan-friendly to all ages."

Denise Duperré, the Town of Madawaska's administrative specialist, told presenters that the border town has a Beautification Committee which placed decorative hanging baskets around the town.

"The Madawaska Beautification Committee is made up of hardworking individuals who volunteer their time, and our mission is to highlight the Town of Madawaska in the best way possible; to encourage growth and attract new people and families, as well as new businesses into our community, especially in the downtown area," according to the town website.

At a session labeled "We've Always Done It That Way Is Over; What's Next?" Patrick Ibarra told attendees, "The challenges of local government are enormous."

He added, "Each and every one of you, each and every one of your coworkers, elected officials, you're community builders."

He also told them, "Local government is where things happen" and "Money is not your most precious resource; time is."

Ibarra suggested looking at the character of the municipal workplace and what could be done to build a stronger and more vibrant community.

"At Women Leading Government: Leading in Male-Dominated Fields," Biddeford Police Chief JoAnne Fisk said,





“There’s no more glass ceiling; we’ve all been through it.” The session noted that a Maine Chapter of Women Leading Government is being organized. A booth at the convention offered more information on the group which was seeking board members, and a website indicated that memberships will be offered this winter.

Four code enforcement officers from different municipalities spoke on the topic of “The Code Enforcement Officer and Public Opinion,” agreeing that everybody has an opinion about them, and most are not good.

Lisbon Code Enforcement Officer Mark Stambach said he hoped to change public opinion and show the value of that work for the public.

“If you wind up having to go to the town office and pay for a permit, doesn’t it make sense to have somebody who knows what they’re doing take a look at the work that you paid for to be done, and doing it in multiple steps so that things don’t get covered up?” he asked.

The presenters also noted the lack of certified code officers, which leads to increased workloads for officers who

serve multiple municipalities.

Stambach suggested education “for everyone across the board in the state, especially contractors. Not making the code enforcement officer the educator is important.”

The convention also served as the venue for the meetings of a number of Maine chapters of related organizations, including that of the Maine Chapter of American Public Works Association.

Attendees at that meeting heard an update from Dale Doughty, deputy commissioner of the Maine Department of Transportation, on the department’s progress on the three-year work plan which he said is “focused on preserving and managing the systems we have today.”

He also noted that Maine DOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note is seeking ways to make funding more predictable.

Doughty encouraged municipal leaders working on competitive grant applications with the state Department of Transportation to get them in promptly, noting that the five-year Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that funds many of them expires in 2026. 🏔️



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Maine Commission for Community Service
Maine Community College System
Maine Community Foundation
Maine Connectivity Authority

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Maine Emergency Management Agency
Maine Fire Chiefs Association
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Maine Local Roads Center -- MaineDOT
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Maine Resource Recovery Association
Maine State Agency for Surplus Property
Maine State Cemetery Preservation Commission
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2025 Holiday Schedule

The Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services released the following 2025 holiday schedule for state employees. As a reminder, state statutes do not require municipal buildings to close on these days, nor are employees entitled to paid time off. To the extent a municipality follows the State's or an amended schedule, a holiday that falls on a Saturday is observed on the preceding Friday, while a holiday that falls on a Sunday is observed the following Monday. MMA will be closed on the following holidays.

Holidays	Day/Date to Be Observed
New Year's Day	Wednesday, January 1, 2025
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday, January 20, 2025
Washington's Birthday/Presidents' Day	Monday, February 17, 2025
Patriots Day	Monday, April 21, 2025
Memorial Day	Monday, May 26, 2025
Juneteenth	Thursday, June 19, 2025
Independence Day	Friday, July 4, 2025
Labor Day	Monday, September 1, 2025
Indigenous Peoples' Day	Monday, October 13, 2025
Veterans' Day	Tuesday, November 11, 2025
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 27, 2025
Thanksgiving Friday	Friday, November 28, 2025
Christmas Day	Thursday, December 25, 2025

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TRAINING CALENDAR

Maine Municipal Association & Affiliates

NOVEMBER

11/1	Fri.	MUBEC Training: Co-Sponsored with the State Fire Marshal's Office & Maine Fire Chiefs' Association	Waterville - Elks Lodge	MBOIA
11/8	Fri.	MAAO Advanced Excel Training	Augusta - MMA	MAAO
11/12	Tues.	Fit for Duty Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MMA
11/14	Thurs.	The ABCs of Assessing - for Non Assessors	Zoom Webinar	MMA
11/19	Tues.	Elected Officials Workshop	Zoom Webinar	MMA
11/21	Thurs.	MMTCTA Cash Management Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA

DECEMBER

12/4	Wed.	Understanding the Freedom of Access Act	Zoom Webinar	MMA
12/4 & 5	Wed-Thurs.	MTCCA Athenian Dialogue	Zoom Webinar	MTCCA
12/5	Thurs.	MBOIA December Training & Annual Membership Meeting	Lewiston - The Green Ladle	MBOIA
12/6	Fri.	MWDA Winter Issues	Augusta - MMA	MWDA
12/6	Fri.	MTCMA Joint exchange - NH hosting	New Castle, New Hampshire Wentworth by the Sea	MTCMA/MMANH
12/10	Tues.	Planning Board/Boards of Appeal	Zoom Webinar	MMA
12/10	Tues.	MFCA Membership Meeting	Augusta - MMA	MFCA
12/11	Wed.	MTCCA Vital Records	Zoom Webinar	MTCCA
12/19	Thurs.	MMTCTA Small Claims Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA

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Troy Bires has been promoted to Ellsworth police chief, replacing Glenn Moshier. Formerly a deputy chief, Bires has 35 years of experience in law enforcement and has served as interim chief since Moshier's departure in March. The search committee, which included a retired police chief from outside the area, was impressed with Bires' dedication to the police force and the Ellsworth area. Meanwhile, the department is saying goodbye to a 45-year veteran, officer **Fred Ehrlenbach**, who serves as chairman of the Trenton Selectboard and an advisory member of the Acadia National Park Advisory Committee, among other volunteer efforts. A native of Ellsworth, he joined the city police force in 1979. He was promoted to reserve sergeant in 2016.

Also, **Nate Moore** has been named Ellsworth finance director, after a stint as acting director. He replaces **Anne Laine**, who resigned in April. Moore has 17 years of experience in nonprofit financial management and compliance. As the director, he will be responsible for the city's overall financial strategy, as well as budgeting and reporting. The city has also hired **Zachary Turner** to work for Moore as finance manager. He has seven years of experience in municipal finance and accounting and most recently worked as Orono finance director.

Gardiner City Manager **Andrew Carlton** has resigned to return to his career in education as special education director of Waterville public schools, effective August 30. **Denise Brown**, the city's finance director, has been named interim manager.



Shawn Esler

Waterville Fire Chief **Shawn Esler** has been hired as Maine's next fire marshal, effective in October. Esler has served the Waterville department for 16 years, the last six as chief. He was named fire chief of the year in 2023. Esler said the family-like culture he encouraged as chief will help him succeed in his new position.



Jay Feyler

Jay Feyler has been named the 2024 manager of the year in Maine. The prestigious Linc Stackpole Award recognizes integrity, leadership and social responsibility in a manager. Feyler has worked as Union town manager since 2009 and plans to retire after the November elections.

The award was presented by the Maine Town, City and County Management Association (MTCMA) during its annual conference in August. Feyler is a former president of the MTCMA, served for many years on the Maine Municipal Association's Legislative Policy Committee and several terms as president of the Maine Welfare Directors' Association. He served MMA for several years teaching Freedom of Information Act classes. He holds a degree in plant and soil science from the University of Maine at Orono.

Debra Kimball has been appointed to fill the seat



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left empty after the death of Gardiner City Councilor **Terry Berry**, whose term was set to expire on December 31, 2024. Kimball has lived in Gardiner for more than 40 years and worked for Central Maine Power Co. for 30 years. She is active in the Rotary Club and the Gardiner Tiger Food Pantry.



William "Bill" Kitchen

Machais Town Manager **William "Bill" Kitchen** died unexpectedly on September 9. He was 65. Kitchen served as Machais manager for three years. **Christina Therrien**, who preceded Kitchen in the manager's role, will return to serve as acting manager. Prior to his work as manager, Kitchen served on the

Machais Selectboard and as a photographer for the Machias Valley News Observer. Before his involvement with local government, Kitchen starred in "The Watch," a National Geographic TV series about living alone for eight weeks with no contact with the outside world in an abandoned amusement park in Princeton, West Virginia.

Wiscasset selectboard secretary **Jacqueline "Jackie" Lowell** has received the town's 2024 Spirit of America



Jacqueline Lowell

award for outstanding public service and commitment to community. Lowell has served 22 years on the town Planning Board and 20 years on the Ordinance Review Committee. She also has served for years on both the town Cemetery Committee and the Historic Preservation Commission. She has served as board

secretary for 22 years. Lowell said she was honored and thrilled to win the award.

John Palmer has been named Thomaston police chief, replacing **Tim Hoppe**, who retired in July. Palmer has 18

years of experience in law enforcement, including as a patrolman, a deputy sheriff and a Maine State Prison guard. Meanwhile **Joanne Moulton** has been named town clerk, a job she performed for the Town of Searsmont. She also has experience as deputy clerk and registrar of voters in the Town of Searsport. She will replace **Melissa Stevens**, who plans to move out of state.

Ronald Pendleton, who dedicated 70 years of his life to the Bristol Fire Department, died at home on August 22. Pendleton's father, Robert, helped found the Samoset Engine Co. in 1944 and his son joined 10 years later. He and his wife, Jeri, were honored in 2018 for a combined 100 years of service to the Bristol Fire and Rescue Department. Pendleton, a former small business owner, was an Army veteran who served mostly in Korea. Pendleton, best known as a firefighter and emergency responder, took over as chief in 1989 after serving 27 years as assistant chief.

Former Oxford Police Chief **Michael Ward** assumed the police chief's duties in neighboring Paris in September. Ward retired as Oxford chief in 2022 and has since been working, in part, for the Helping Hands food pantry. Ward has worked 35 years in law enforcement, including 10 years as a deputy sheriff for Androscoggin County. He also has worked for the Poland, Mechanic Falls and Auburn police departments. He was named Oxford chief in 2018. He replaces **Michael Dailey**, who resigned in July.



Mark Vaughan

Mark Vaughan has been promoted to Kennebunkport deputy police chief. Vaughan, who started his career as a reserve officer, was hired by the Kennebunkport department in 2006. He was promoted to senior sergeant in 2013. He succeeds **Kurt Moses**, who retired after serving the town for 34 years, the last 22 years as chief. 🏔️

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STATEWIDE

A new office in the state executive branch has been created to improve services to municipalities. The Maine Office of Community Affairs was approved this year by the Legislature and will be an independent office directed to help municipalities navigate existing state and local programs. The programs range from floodplain analysis to code enforcement and municipal planning. The Community Resilience Partnership is also included. The new office will assist communities with limited resources apply for climate resilience grants, as well as help municipalities confront the statewide housing crisis, for example. Samantha Horn, a former science director for the Nature Conservancy of Maine, has been named leader of the new effort.

BANGOR

The city council has contributed \$230,000 toward a three-year \$540,000 program to pay a private New York-based company to patrol and clean the downtown. A six-person team, which will most often get around on a bicycle, began its work in mid-September and is the brainchild of the Downtown Bangor Partnership. The Streetplus program is believed to be the first-of-its-kind in Maine. The company bills itself as a safety, hospitality

and cleaning service. The team, which wears blaze orange to be easily identified, will clean up litter, report vandalism and patrol downtown streets. They will also approach people who are homeless and try to connect them to the right agency for help. Once fully operational, team members will even walk people to their cars at night. The program is augmented by the city police department, which recently assigned a walking beat cop to the downtown.

HAMPDEN

The U.S. Postal Service has permanently abandoned consolidating services between the state's only two mail distribution centers in Hampden and Scarborough. The decision follows months of fretting by employees and members of Maine's congressional delegation, all of whom argued strongly not to reduce services in Hampden at the expense of timely mail delivery in Northern Maine. The Postal Service said it will generate billions in savings in other operational strategy plans that will allow centers like Hampden to remain open and unchanged. The Scarborough distribution center is 130 miles south of Hampden.

LINCOLN

A start-up energy company, Form Energy, has been awarded a \$147 million federal grant to help finance the world's largest long-term energy storage facility on the site of the former Lincoln pulp mill, which was shuttered in 2015. The grant funding comes from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and was announced by Gov. Janet Mills and the Maine congressional delegation. The 367-acre mill property remains empty nearly a decade after the final 25 mill workers lost their jobs. Town officials said that if successful, the energy facility will take years to build before any jobs are created. The project would not only revitalize Greater Lincoln, but it would also feed power to the New England Grid, a prime goal of the federal funding program. The multi-day storage facility will be the first of its kind in New England and will capture the power produced by clean energy. Form Energy, headquartered in Somerville, Mass., will build the 8,500-megawatt-hour facility that will house a battery that uses iron-air technology that can be discharged for 100 straight hours. U.S. Sen. Susan Collins was instrumental in negotiating the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships Program, from where the funding was derived.

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STONINGTON

The town has established a “Resiliency Development Fund” that will allow private citizens and groups to donate money toward infrastructure projects that will be required because of climate change. Any money collected in the fund will finance initiatives to improve infrastructure, the working waterfront and housing stock. The town anticipates it will need millions of dollars to respond to rising sea levels and water surges, like what Maine experienced during two major rain and wind storms this past year. Town officials believe much of the funding will come from state and federal sources, and absent another plan, some of the expense will land on property owners. Even with grant funding, some awards are considered “reimbursable” grants because the project must be completed before the funds are released. In another “match” type grant, the town must put up half the cost of a \$1.4 million project to raise Oceanville Road. Some grant opportunities were passed up by the town for lack of matching or upfront funding.

WATERVILLE

The city council has approved funding three new housing-related programs with American Rescue Plan Act money, including a \$400,000 revolving loan fund aimed at revitalizing vulnerable neighborhoods. Other programs include \$125,000 in grants for home repair and \$25,000 for a strategic initiative fund. The revolving loan program would lend up to \$50,000 to nonprofits, at below market interest rates, that rehabilitate, build or sell homes to low- and moderate-income families. The programs were recommended by the Waterville Housing Committee to improve the city’s housing stock, boost homeownership and improve neighborhoods.

YORK

The selectboard has agreed to negotiate “an agreement of mutual respect” with its neighbor Kittery over a longstanding border dispute. In doing so, they agreed not to pursue legal action at this point, a move that was unsuccessful in 2022. There are an estimated 100 acres, which include 15 structures, that are being contested. York town records indicate the boundary should be moved south. Kittery officials, meanwhile, are concerned about the people living on the disputed land who could find themselves living in a different town. 🏡

Interested in having your community featured in the People or News segments of the Maine Town & City? Share your successes with municipal officials across the state.

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REMINDER: ARPA FUNDS MUST BE OBLIGATED SOON

The deadline for grantees to “obligate” unspent American Rescue Plan Act State & Local Fiscal Recovery (ARPA) funds is fast approaching.

ARPA grant funds must be “obligated” by **December 31, 2024**, and most must be expended by December 31, 2026 (except for projects under the Surface Transportation Projects and Title I eligible use categories, for which funds must be expended by September 30, 2026).

Generally, obligating funds requires more than a budget appropriation. U.S. Treasury regulations define “obligation” as “an order placed for property and services and entering into contracts, subawards, and similar transactions that require payment.” An obligation also means a requirement under federal law or regulation, or a provision of the ARPA award terms and conditions to which a recipient becomes subject as a result of receiving or expending ARPA funds. See 31 C.F.R. § 35.3.

The U.S. Treasury has updated its ARPA FAQs to provide more guidance on what constitutes an “obligation.” See the ARPA FAQs, section 17 for more information. For example, the FAQs clarify that interagency agreements may constitute an obligation if the agreement meets certain conditions (see FAQ 17.6). Some payroll expenses for positions existing and filled before 12/31/24 may be obligations (see FAQ 17.7). Also, certain future monitoring, legal and administrative costs may be deemed obligations (see FAQ 17.10).

In addition, U.S. Treasury has created a YouTube webinar and written slides with specific illustrations. For example, the webinar clarifies that the following are generally NOT considered obligations: an adopted budget or budget amendment; an appropriation of ARPA funds; an executive order or resolution; a written or oral intention to enter into a contract; a grant of legal authority to enter into a contract; merely claiming funds under the revenue loss category; or moving ARPA funds to a general fund as revenue loss but not further establishing an obligation with those funds by 12/31/24.

Note that if ARPA funds have already been expended for an eligible use, they have also been obligated.

Recipients are required to return unspent ARPA funds that have not been obligated by December 31, 2024. Funds that have been obligated by the deadline will be reported in the Project and Expenditure Report that (for annual reporters) is due by April 30, 2025.

For more information and links to all the resources mentioned above, visit MMA Legal Services’ ARPA Information Packet, available in the “Legal” section of MMA’s website. (By S.F.P.)

WHO CAN SERVE ON A BUDGET COMMITTEE?

(Updated from the June 2013 Legal Notes)

Question: Can municipal officers (select board member or councilor), municipal employees or other local officials serve on a municipal budget committee? If so, can they vote on recommendations concerning their own program?

Answer: Membership on municipal budget committees is not governed by state law. Whether a municipality has a budget committee, and if so, its composition and its duties depend entirely on the charter provision, ordinance or town meeting vote that created it.

Unless an appropriate local enactment addresses the composition of the committee, neither municipal officers nor other local officials or employees are disqualified from serving on a budget committee under state law.

It is sometimes argued that having a municipal officer or other local official or employee on a budget committee is a “conflict of interest” or an “incompatible office,” but no statute or legal theory supports this view. This is because budget committees in almost all instances are strictly advisory – they have no final decision-making authority. It is the municipal legislative body (town meeting or council) that actually adopts the budget.

Similarly, because budget committees produce non-binding recommendations, there is no conflict of interest under state law for a budget committee member who happens to be a municipal employee or official to discuss or vote upon recommendations for that person’s own program budget or for the budget of a spouse or family member. A local charter, ordinance or ethics policy, however, could prohibit the committee member’s involvement in that situation, or the member may choose to abstain to avoid an appearance of bias in the eyes of the public.

On a practical level, it may be advantageous to include municipal officials or employees on a budget committee because they may bring special knowledge and expertise to the table. Also, having a municipal officer on the committee provides a liaison to the select board or council, which could prove helpful as that board prepares the budget. Still, if this is deemed inappropriate, the charter provision, ordinance or town meeting vote creating the budget committee could designate a municipal officer to serve *ex officio* and without a vote.

Finally, as noted above, state statutes do not even mention municipal budget committees except in one context. For those municipalities governed by 30-A M.R.S. § 2528(5), that statute requires that if a budget committee has been established, its recommendation

must appear on the warrant and the ballot for any secret ballot referendum vote on an appropriation of money (along with that of the municipal officers and in some cases, that of the school committee).

For more on budget committees, see our “Information Packet” on the subject, available in the “Legal” section of MMA’s website. (By S.F.P.)

HAVE YOU REVIEWED YOUR SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE LATELY?

Here’s a reminder to municipal officials to periodically review and update local subdivision ordinances and regulations. It is important for these documents to be consistent with the state’s Municipal Subdivision Law (30-A M.R.S. §§ 4401 – 4408), because the law overrides local enactments in several areas.

For example, the state Legislature occasionally amends the statutory definition of “subdivision” and related exemptions. One notable change was the 2018 repeal of the longstanding “leased dwelling unit” exemption and its replacement with a similar but different exemption that applies to divisions of existing structures (30-A M.R.S. § 4402(6)).

It is important to review local ordinances whenever changes to the statutory definition of “subdivision” occur because municipalities have no home rule authority to use a different local definition or to maintain local subdivision exemptions that deviate from the statute. See 30-A M.R.S. § 4401(4)(H-2) prohibiting local ordinances that expand or conflict with the definition of subdivision. Moreover, any local ordinance or regulation that would narrow the reach of the subdivision law or allow purely local exemptions would be entirely ineffective because the subdivision law expressly requires subdivision review of any activity that is not exempt under *the statute’s* definitions, and this directive applies regardless of any municipal ordinance or regulation to the contrary. In practice, the state law trumps any inconsistent local definition or local exemption.

Similarly, the subdivision law sets out a minimum set of review criteria that planning boards must consider before they may approve a subdivision application; these are also periodically revised by the Legislature. See 30-A M.R.S. § 4404. Although municipal ordinances may impose additional review standards (e.g., road standards), planning boards may not exclude or overlook any of the criteria set out in § 4404 during their review process. The current statute should always be consulted when a subdivision application is under review, and all statutory criteria should be addressed even if not included in a local ordinance.

MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 11 – Veteran’s Day, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051), observed Monday November 11, 2024.

BY NOVEMBER 15 – Monthly/quarterly/semi-annual expenditure statement/claim for General Assistance reimbursement to be filed via online portal, faxed to (207) 287-3455, emailed to GeneralAssistance.DHHS@maine.gov, or sent to DHHS, General Assistance Unit, #11 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333-0011 (22 M.R.S. § 4311).

NOVEMBER 28 – Thanksgiving Day, the last Thursday in November, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051).

BY DECEMBER 15 – Monthly/quarterly/semi-annual expenditure statement/claim for General Assistance reimbursement to be filed via online portal, faxed to (207) 287-3455, emailed to GeneralAssistance.DHHS@maine.gov, or sent to DHHS, General Assistance Unit, #11 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333-0011 (22 M.R.S. § 4311).

DECEMBER 25 – Christmas Day, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051).

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER – In towns that elect officials by secret ballot per 30-A M.R.S. § 2528, nomination papers must be available 40 days before the filing deadline, which is 60 days before the election date. Most towns with March elections must make papers available during November or December, depending on the date of the election.

Inconsistent local ordinances create confusion and legal uncertainty for applicants and planning boards. For that reason, we strongly recommend that local officials keep track of statutory changes and update local ordinances accordingly. (Careful ordinance drafting may minimize the need for updates – for example, it is not necessary to restate statutory definitions in their entirety in a local subdivision ordinance.)

One final note, the Municipal Subdivision Law should not be confused with the state’s Site Location of Development Law (38 M.R.S. §§ 481 – 489-E), administered by the Department of Environmental Protection, which also uses the term “subdivision” although with much different meaning. (By S.F.P.) 🏡



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- DEP Update: EPR and Universal Waste
- Food Waste Solutions here in Maine
- SafetyWorks! Training: Fire Extinguisher/Emergency Action Plan.
- Grant Session: Hear some Ideas and about the process to apply for a grant
- SafetyWorks! Training: Supervisory Safety.
- A virtual tour of Recology in San Francisco.



Maine Resource Recovery Association

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. - Kate Dufour, Editor



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