

# Maine Town & City

The magazine of the Maine Municipal Association

NOVEMBER 2022



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# Maine Town & City

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## FEATURES



**LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERCONNECTIVITY.** Contrary to popular television narratives, Maine's law enforcement system is not hierarchical but instead interdependent. This interdependence among state, county and municipal agencies has served Maine well by improving training capacity and encouraging efficiencies, while continuing to provide quality and comprehensive public safety services. **PAGE 7**



**THE IMPORTANCE OF SUMMER INTERNSHIPS.** The Maine Government Summer Internship Program at the University of Maine's Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center provides students with hands-on experience. However, according to Peggy McKee, the internship program's director, participation in this program benefits municipalities, as communities get important work done, while simultaneously exposing students to the employment opportunities that exist in local government. **PAGE 13**



**THE EVOLUTION OF RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS: A SERIES.** In this series, Maine Town & City explores the important role recreational programs play in communities across Maine. The second edition of this three-part series examines the financial aspects of recreational programs, including its role as an economic driver, and features the efforts underway in Orono, Bangor, Farmington, Windham, and Bath. **PAGE 17**



**EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS.** From brain drain to brain gain. One coalition's creative and collaborative effort to recruit refugees and immigrants to live, learn and work in Aroostook County. **PAGE 27**



**ABOUT THE COVER**  
Neal Goldberg interviews incoming MMA President, Elaine Aloes at the 2022 MMA Convention.

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# A MESSAGE FROM MMA

BY CATHERINE M. CONLOW / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Time for Renewal and Reflection

In literature, autumn has many meanings. It can be used to signal a time of change, renewal, or of letting go as the green of summer morphs into beautiful fall colors.

Here at MMA, fall represents the busy season as the Executive Committee and staff begin the strategic planning and budgeting processes, develop training calendars, prepare for the legislative session, and our Risk Management Services and the Health Trust governing boards review budgets and set insurance premium rates for the upcoming year.

Additionally, we look to autumn as a time of renewal as hundreds of municipal officials assemble at the annual convention. It is at the convention that we hear directly from our members, and that personal connection reinforces MMA's collective passion for our mission to support local leaders. Because of your participation, the 86<sup>th</sup> MMA Annual Convention was an inspiring success. It was wonderful to meet in person, celebrate local government, network with peers, and seek mutual solutions to ever changing local government issues.

The highlight and theme of this year's convention was "celebration." Listening and dancing to the music of Motor Booty Affair was capped off with a very special evening banquet recognizing our newest Ethel N. Kelley award recipient Judy Akers, Poland Town Clerk. In Judy's nomination, selflessness was the common theme, as she was consistently praised for her commitment to treating people with compassion and empathy. In her acceptance speech, we learned that Judy comes to her love of community through a tradition of volunteerism, as many of her family and friends have served Poland for several decades. There was a sense of renewal as we came together to celebrate Judy's accomplishments.

Our Wednesday keynote speaker, Rebecca Ryan, was inspiring as she discussed the future and underscored how societal disruptions and rapid changes in workforce behavior will demand leadership that continuously evolves to meet changing demands.

The lessons shared by Rebecca apply to MMA as well.

Prior to the convention, in September the Executive Committee meets in the hometown of the MMA President to review priorities from the previous year and establish new goals for the upcoming year. The City of Biddeford hosted the Executive Committee as it met to establish MMA's 2023 priorities.

Naturally, the Executive Committee remains focused on ensuring that the Association continues to aid local efforts to attract and retain a strong workforce; implement the Berry Dunn study to ensure that member training needs are met; amend our communication efforts to reflect the way our members receive information; and implement the technology that creates efficiencies and saves staff and member resources.

Implementation of expanded training opportunities consistent

with the Berry Dunn report and the identified training gaps to our members is perhaps one of our larger focus areas. Peter Osborne the Director of Educational & Affiliate Services is enthusiastically moving forward on implementing the Berry Dunn report. MMA continues to enhance video conferencing and webinar training, develop training opportunities for critical municipal positions, and define new partnerships that will help deliver important training opportunities to our members.

Retention, hiring, and training the municipal workforce is a continuing priority for MMA. To that end, staff is also actively seeking and evaluating partnerships that promote municipal jobs, both in Maine and beyond.

Not unlike like most of our members, the pandemic and inflationary pressures have had a profound impact on the workforce. We recognize the importance of MMA employees and have actively pursued targeted policies that offer a work environment that meets the differing needs and lifestyles of our staff.

To control the uncertainty of future energy costs, MMA continues to invest in energy reduction and best practices in building operations through implementation of LED lighting, purchase of more renewable energy, and evaluation of operating efficiencies.

Understanding the financial pressures facing municipal governments, MMA's dues formula is evaluated annually, in conjunction with the development and adoption of the Association's budget, which the Executive Committee continues to ensure is adopted in a transparent and fair manner.

Strengthening relationships with federal and state agencies is also a priority for the Association. While the state/municipal relationship has improved considerably over the last four years, opportunities to collaborate on the delivery of services will continue to be explored.

We will continue to provide municipalities with high quality legal advice, training, guidance, and technical assistance while monitoring emerging member issues and exploring potential new services.

Finally, a redesigned website, due to be launched next spring, will facilitate the implementation of more e-business opportunities. Our goal is to make it easier for municipalities to engage our services. In the same vein, upgrades to Risk Management and Health Trust services systems will also improve the member experience.

As the fall continues to produce warm days, cool nights, beautiful foliage, and warm fires, I encourage you to take time away from your important and challenging work to enjoy all that Maine has to offer. Self-care and renewal are necessary for the continued delivery of quality local government services.

I wish you a safe and happy holiday season. ■



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# The Interconnectivity of Law Enforcement

*The whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts, as all levels of law enforcement rely on each other to provide a comprehensive package of services.*

By Rebecca Graham, Legislative Advocate, Advocacy & Communications

Contrary to popular television narratives, Maine's law enforcement system is not hierarchical but instead interdependent. Interagency territorial disputes are largely fictional constructs based on a past that has long since evolved in policing. All agencies receive the same basic training together with more agency specific skillsets provided either in their communities or through longer residential and non-residential programs. As policy efforts attempt to focus more resources on prevention, diversion, and community policing; it has never been more vital to understand the capabilities of each agency and to ask what each community needs from each interdependent level.

Every law enforcement agency in Maine is struggling to recruit qualified applicants for open positions. Many municipal agencies are rethinking how to serve their communities and how to reallocate their dwindling human resources to better balance employees' lives while adequately providing public safety. As policing is a wholly human public service, and many obligations for the task are required by statute, resource allocation efforts require a human centric approach that balances both needs while acknowledging that exhausted people serve no one well.

Maine State Police (MSP) is facing recruiting challenges to fill vacancies in patrol staff levels that have not been increased in number by the Maine State Legislature in over 30 years. Like their municipal partners, MSP is evaluating operational capacity and mission objectives. Such a review includes how the agency trains new recruits and how to allocate dwindling human resources appropriately to meet statutory obligations. The law enforcement agencies, in all but two Maine cities, utilize the crime lab services, computer crime investigation, centralized criminal and driving records information, crash reporting systems, commercial vehicle enforcement, and homicide investigation resources of the Maine State Police.

Less known are many of the additional specialized response teams that require extensive initial and ongoing training to remain proficient. In many of our communities, such highly technical skills may never be necessary. However, statewide, public safety threats are evolving, and specialized response skills are needed, and must continually be reevaluated and improved from lessons learned in each deployment. As part of an ongoing conversation focusing on Maine's criminal justice system, this article looks at the MSP special response teams and their impact in support of county and municipal agencies which provide key local knowledge.



## A Brief History of Specialization

Arguably, the establishment of Maine State Police has been built on the need for specialized skills, response, and scalability in a largely rural state. Three months prior to the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand on March 28, 1914, Maine's Secretary of State was authorized to hire detectives to investigate violations of the laws around motor vehicle registrations. As a result, the Maine State Police agency was formed.

When highway construction began in 1921, the population of Maine was 775,000 and 35 additional officers were added to the ranks on a largely seasonal basis. Expanded enforcement powers were added by the legislature in 1935 to ensure compliance with all Maine laws. The ranks grew to 100 officers and transitioned from a motorcycle corps to vehicles in 1936, with statewide traffic safety education a priority across the five patrol districts. By 1937 the early use of forensic evidence in crime detection and criminal proceedings by a MSP captain laid the foundation for what is now the Maine Crime Lab.

The Criminal Intelligence unit was formed in 1968 to investigate organized and white-collar crime. The first aircraft became part of the tools available for specialized needs in 1975, following the tragic disappearance of four-year-old Kurt Newton in a very rural area. His disappearance necessitated borrowing a ra-



dar and infrared enabled plane from the U.S. Air Force to assist for several days.

Fast forward to 2022, at a time when the specialty teams are no less important, but require far more intensive high-level and ongoing training, expensive equipment and liabilities for activity that are cost prohibitive in communities. Rather than staff these teams exclusively, specialty team members wear multiple hats within the agency, assuming the extra specialized duties in conjunction with their normal patrol, training, or leadership roles. Response to an incident can create a significant draw on dwindling staff resources as successful outcomes require far more time on the scene than historically necessary. With a wave of retirements on the horizon and many vacant slots open, the agency has needed to reallocate staff priorities to those duties required by statute and provide services to support the people of Maine without local resources. What are those skills and what is their impact on statewide public safety?

**Dive Team. (URT)** The ongoing and enhanced training for an underwater recovery team is just as dangerous as the activation of the team; and advanced dive teams have many subspecialties. Initial training requires 40 hours for basic certification but enhanced skills necessary for underwater evidence collection, difficult temperatures, and challenging geographies add an additional 184 hours per team member annually. Dive gear for the URT needs to be OSHA compliant, and no operation can occur with less than four members. While dive teams do exist in other agencies, in 2020-2021, the team was deployed on 71 calls throughout the state, with 35 calls to assist other

agencies.

**Incident Management Assistance Team. (IMAT)** Unified communications across multiple agencies and specialized responses are frequently necessary to handle large scale public events, or high-profile visits. Planning is key to managing public safety for large crowds that are frequently drawn to a specific area or spread across multiple communities such as the State of Maine Parade. The largest draw on this team's resources is often staff time during the planning stages leading to the event and the post-event evaluation. Team members receive 40 hours of ongoing training annually and 24 hours initially. This team supports logistics, communications, and acts as an interagency liaison to coordinate all the needs of the requesting agency.

For everything from crowd monitor-

ing to coordinating large scale search and rescue operations for other agencies, IMAT acts as a highly technical backbone supporting the efforts of other agencies and teams that may be involved with the response rather than assume command of an incident. Once such deployment is covered in our Potholes & Politics Episode # 3 in assisting the town of Orono to carry off Maine Days.

High profile events often include utilizing the **Crowd Management Team (CMT)** and a significant amount of personnel to safely manage and disperse crowds while protecting life and property in the community. These members receive 56 hours of initial training and 32 hours of additional training annually. As with all teams, training has the greatest impact on outcomes and is crucial to a safe and successful mission. This team

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played a critical role with the local civil uprisings that grew in Maine cities from the death of George Floyd in 2020.

**Bomb Squad** members receive 280 hours of initial Federal Bureau of Investigation & Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms training with another 208 hours of annual training, while also frequently operating as members of other vital specialty teams. This team often responds to assist local and county agencies when they discover suspicious devices or when they locate unexploded ordnance/ammunition.

Members of the **Evidence Response Team** receive over 100 hours of training annually and must maintain their certification as Crime Scene Technicians or Senior Crime Scene Analysts with the International Association for Identification. This team often operates in support of the homicide units and those who serve on this team are encouraged to specialize in mapping, trajec-

tory reconstruction, bloodstain pattern analysis, immersive imaging, and drone operation. All these aforementioned subdisciplines play a critical role to help document and reconstruct complicated crime scenes from homicide cases around the Maine.

The **Crash Reconstruction Program** enters its 45<sup>th</sup> year in 2022 and has grown substantially since its inception in 1977. Originally known as the Maine State Police Accident Reconstruction Program, it was comprised of specially trained troopers. Today, the program includes Maine Game Wardens, local police officers, and sheriff's deputies. The program is still supervised by the Maine State Police who bring one full time senior accident reconstruction specialist and two full time specialists who supervise the work of all state accident reconstruction specialists and oversee the program. In 2017, the full time Maine State Police members of this unit became FAA

certified remote pilots and began using drones to document crash scenes. The drones can map in minutes what would have traditionally taken hours with a tape or a total station.

**Canine (K-9) Specialties.** Dogs have been used at all levels of policing and are even seen in our municipal police agencies. Just like law enforcement personnel, police K-9s have a wide variety of specialized responses based on their natural skills which also require additional training and development. In conjunction with 560 hours of initial training and an additional 192 hours of training annually, K-9s require a lifelong commitment. However, specialties not needed in the local context frequently, including cadaver, explosive and narcotic detection, require an additional 320 hours. All dog handlers, municipal, county and state, are required to have the same level of training provided by certified instructors at MSP. Those trained instructors,

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while few, are frequently used to supplement the available training regardless of agency. Twenty-two K-9 teams responded to 207 calls for other agencies and 369 for MSP between 2020-2021.

**Tactical Team.** The tactical team response has many sub-disciplines to address the complex, high risk, criminal apprehensions where the threat of violence is often known or encountered during response. These include K-9 specialties, high risk entry skills, surveillance, hostage negotiations, and in some cases improvised explosive device detection and disarmament. The team operates under the assumption it will be a “long day” for each activation. More than half of the situations extend into a second day on scene, as time is necessary to attempt to deescalate an individual who has chosen to hold themselves or others hostage with a dangerous weapon. Increasingly, these situations are playing out in rural communities where little is known about the individual in crisis and community preventative supports are non-existent.

Members of the **Crisis Negotiations Team** are present at all tactical team

calls providing intelligence and coordination support as well as skilled communications and de-escalation methods to impact safe surrender in situations where individuals may be suicidal, have taken hostages or barricaded themselves in a building. This team requires 40 hours of initial FBI training with an additional 40 hours annually of ongoing education. Unlike the tactical team, many of the 70 other law enforcement agency assists they provided in 2020-2021 were to deescalate individuals with suicidal thoughts who had not committed a crime but posed an eminent risk to themselves.

In 2020-2021, the tactical team aided 89 other law enforcement agencies and responded to 39 calls directly to the State Police. Team members continually revisit best practices with national peers and debrief each activation, which are as unique as our communities and the individuals involved. Each member receives 96 hours of initial training and 272 hours of training annually, straining the understaffed patrol resources at the same time they are preparing for

ever increasing activations. Additional sub-specialty skills have been identified through situational need and require more extensive training.

Arguably, these skills are not something most communities desire to see in practice, however they would not exist absent an ever-growing obvious need. They are the response of last resort that also illustrates how little investment has been made in mental and behavioral health services. While tactical team readiness could be perceived as expensive, it pales in comparison to what is necessary to build the mental health resources which could make that readiness obsolete. Thirty years of dismantling and privatizing the mental health system will require decades of investment to rectify.

The policy question at play is not whether to invest or support such technical police skills, but where are they best situated in Maine’s law enforcement response system. Team members can only benefit from consistent on-going training, and exposure to a variety of situations that can reap lessons lead-

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ing to less lethal outcomes. Additionally, state-level resources can draw on revenue generated from the enormous population growth that occurs every tourist season. While fuel and sales tax revenue are collected in municipalities, their contribution to government coffers only trickles down through revenue sharing formulas at 5% of the total that is collected statewide. General revenue and highway funds support the budget of Maine State Police, and thus the special teams benefit from “all in” revenue not municipal property tax. Municipal and county police are funded nearly exclusively from the property tax and operate closest to the communities they serve. They provide vital local knowledge, community relationships and are key to the successful operation of any of the MSP teams.

Knowing how each level of law enforcement is funded and operated is equally important to reform efforts, as is understanding how a failure to adequately staff or support one level effects the other interdependent agencies. Overall, not including evidence collection teams, major crimes, computer crimes, or the crime lab and criminal identification services, Maine State Police provided specialized support for

490 incidents at the request of other agencies in 2020-2021. Each one of the 163 team members was provided an overall total of 1,296 hours of training to acquire their basic skill set and MSP provides an additional 1,468 hours to enhance those skills with new and best practices annually. This also includes services provided by the Honor Guard, Motor Unit, and Pipe & Drum teams.

The number of calls for service only tell part of the story both at the state and local level. Time spent on calls to the police have increased exponentially at all agency levels but often result in no action at all, thus this core police activity is not captured in sources used to determine public policy. More police time is spent trying to connect individuals in crisis to limited or non-existent resources, using arrest only as a last resort.

Meanwhile, public policy often points to conviction data as indication of success or failure of police responses or indicators of need for additional resources. Arrest data rarely matches conviction data, because whether to proceed with a case or not lies in the realm of prosecutorial discretion, a hidden factor. Missing from the public policy debate as well is how such decisions effect how secure victims feel in reporting crime based on

a stalled or dismissed result from a previous report.

For instance, the decline on OUI traffic stops is often interpreted as an indication that society is less inclined to use a substance and drive; however, prosecutors increasingly saw such arrests as low-level infractions and dismissed the labor-intensive cases, particularly under the pandemic back log. The result is law enforcement spent less time pursuing individuals who were unlikely to be prosecuted, not the absence of such illegal operation.

Municipal law enforcement is built in the community that they serve. They can build closer relationships with their community members, and their priorities are directly shaped by those same members. While every agency doesn't need a trained bomb squad or a cadaver detecting dog, they do need those resources to exist and to be at peak



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performance when needed. Rural patrol is no different. While county law enforcement has grown in concert with rural patrol need, MSP has not been allowed to add to its patrol numbers in over 30 years. Pressure is added to both agencies, especially without a commitment for replacement of services or understanding of response impacts when a community dissolves their smaller local police agency.

A hundred years after creation, the Maine State Police have less than 300 troopers on the road, while the population of Maine has grown to 1.34 million residents. In the same period, policing needs have become increasingly specialized. In response to ever growing vacancies, MSP has shifted away from expired, outdated, and inconsistently constructed call sharing agreements to reallocate human resources in areas of specialized response and at the same time fulfilling their statutory obligations with the remaining employees. However, local knowledge is key to the success of the specialized teams, and both county and municipal agencies foster relationships and have background knowledge of individuals that would be impossible for such a small statewide force to know.

This interdependence of law enforcement levels has served Maine well and improved with joint training and the development of best practices in law enforcement. As we move to the next incarnation of Maine's legislature, understanding the interdependence of this system will be vital to making policy decisions that move towards providing the best possible law enforcement system for residents, without dismantling interagency relationships for political expediency. This will require a new view of law enforcement as an interdependent vital system where dismantling one has a profound effect on another. Inside a small force imbued with statewide patrol responsibilities, the natural place to focus resources is on the needs of partner agencies and activities required by statute.

Like our system of interdependent policing resources, municipal officials benefit from understanding the needs and resources that exist and have a broad depth of experience outside our communities, and which services can be grown locally to foster deep relationships within the communities they serve daily. Municipal officials and policymakers would benefit from understanding the interdependency of each level of law enforcement in balance with their funding mechanisms and consider their impacts and abilities during policy development.

All of Maine needs better investment in the mental and behavioral health system to achieve community goals in concert with preserving public safety. However, if any resident, official, or lawmaker would like a truly informed public policy impact experience, and a chance to make a difference in your community, applications are available for one of nearly 300 open positions at your closest law enforcement agency. ■



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All candidates will be subjected to psychological examination, personal financial audits, polygraph, and physical fitness tests. Successful candidates spend 18 weeks in a facility away from home to advance existing skills in a stress induced environment, with the possibility of eight more weeks of training, depending on the agency. Additionally, candidates will be required to pursue a minimum of 80 hours of training on evolving topics annually.

Daily duties consist of applying your advanced skills with perfection while consistently achieving negative results. While most workdays will find you grateful for your life, truly successful project outcomes are many times dependent on an outside overloaded system lacking resources, with great time and emotional distance from the incident, often leading to inaction or further harm for those requesting your help. Regardless of your proposed solution, hours of paperwork will be required.

Roughly 300 available positions are currently available statewide,

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# Summer Internship Programs

*It's a winning proposition, with communities getting assistance and students being exposed to the breadth of possibilities that await them in local government service.*

By Stephanie Bouchard

Municipalities everywhere are struggling to fill open positions today and are concerned about the pipeline of future municipal employees. A Maine government internship program established by the State Legislature in 1967 continues to be a dependable workforce resource for state agencies and, in more recent years, towns and cities across the state.

The Maine Government Summer Internship Program of the University of Maine's Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, at its core, provides students with hands-on experience, but internships are really a triple-whammy win, said Peggy McKee, the internship program's director.

Students get valuable experience, yes, but the state agencies and the municipalities get important work done that they don't have staff time to devote to, and, maybe most crucially given the workforce situation, it introduces students to opportunities in state and local government that the students didn't know existed.

"Most of the students that we place in municipal internships really don't know what municipal government does," said McKee. "Most students don't think of municipal government as a career path just because they don't know about it." Given that, the program encourages municipal supervisors to introduce their interns to all aspects of municipal government, not just whatever role they're filling in the internship.

"We ask the students at the end of the summer after they've finished their internship, 'Would you now consider government as a career path?' and most of them say yes," she said. "Most of the students come into their municipal positions really not knowing what's involved, and that's where there's a huge amount of learning."

Last winter, Evan Ma, now a senior at Bates College in Lewiston, went looking for a summer internship he could do in Maine. As an environmental studies major, he thought he may end up working for a land trust or an organization like



Peggy McKee



Intern picnic (Submitted photo)

that, but then he came across the Maine Government Summer Internship Program and was intrigued. "I really wasn't sure what to expect from it," he said.

He had no experience with municipal government, and when he considered his future career path, he thought if he worked in government at all, it would be for a national agency, such as the Environmental Protection Agency. But his summer internship for the city of Auburn as a planning and rezoning assistant expanded his thinking.

"I think that the internship over the summer kind of showed me that it might not be possible to always make the huge impact on that national scale, but the things that I was doing in the office were impacting, like, a whole community. It was about a public water supply for two cities. So, it felt really important," he said. "It felt like important stuff that I was doing."

Ma's internship centered around controversial and complicated zoning and ordinance changes that the city is still pondering, but not all internships need to be so high profile. Internship projects span a spectrum of jobs, from running a municipality's social media platforms to assisting the town manager to helping a community wrap their heads around potential climate impacts on vulnerable infrastructure, so municipal leaders shouldn't think that they can't request an intern because they don't have a "big" project to offer, said McKee. The program team is happy to help towns and cities flesh out internship ideas and to put people in touch with other municipalities who can share their own intern experiences, she said.

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Stephanie Bouchard is a freelance writer from Nobleboro and regular contributor to *Maine Town & City*, [stephanie@stephaniebouchard.net](mailto:stephanie@stephaniebouchard.net).



(Submitted photo)

To get you started, here are the basics about the program:

Go here for all program information: <https://mcspolicycenter.umaine.edu/for-students/maine-government-summer-internship-program/>.

Students and municipal/state supervisors apply to the program at the same time, beginning on February 1. The application for the 2023 program will be posted online before the application period begins, McKee said.

To be eligible for the program, students must be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program at a college in Maine or be a Maine resident attending college out-of-state. At the start of the internship,

the students must have completed a minimum of two years of college.

Interns work full-time for 12 weeks from mid- to late-May until mid-August. Municipalities are responsible for paying the interns a salary. The minimum rate is based on what the state pays entry-level employees, which in 2022 was \$15 an hour. The minimum rate for 2023 won't be determined until January. Interns can be paid more than the minimum rate, said McKee.

Municipalities pay a \$250 administrative fee that is billed to them during the summer and is only billed if the municipality actually gets an intern.



Interns in Senate (Submitted photo)

# Interns making a big difference in communities

*Last year, the Maine Government Summer Internship Program placed interns in 52 jobs. Sixteen of those interns worked for municipalities from all over the state, from Houlton to Bridgton. Here's a look at what three of those interns did for the communities of Auburn, China and New Gloucester.*

## Auburn

Intern: **Evan Ma**, Environmental Studies Major at Bates College  
Internship Role: City Planning and Rezoning Assistant

As the city of Auburn worked toward making some zoning changes and some complicated septic system ordinance changes that would impact the Lake Auburn watershed, many questions and concerns came from the planning board and residents. The planning and permitting department used Ma to answer those questions. He dug through property files, used GIS technology to build maps to illustrate various scenarios, compiled and analyzed data, and created a presentation of his findings and conclusions. It was incredibly valuable work for the city said two employees who worked closely with Ma, Eric Cousens, the city's director of planning and permitting, and John Blais, the deputy director of planning and permitting. The work Ma did brought clarity to many of the questions people had, they said, and has brought about amendments to some of the proposals. "Once he started wrapping his arms around the idea and getting information out to the community, he really took a real leap forward in terms of his engagement," said Blais. "I think he worked beyond what we expected in terms of abilities."



Evan Ma



Savannah Clark

## China

Intern: **Savannah Clark**, History Major at the University of Maine  
Internship Role: Cemetery Project Coordinator

As the interest in genealogy has grown, the town office staff have fielded more and more cemetery records requests, said Julie Finley, China's deputy clerk. Since the town of China's cemetery records were all paper, it took staff considerable time to dig through maps, records, and books to find information. They really wanted to put all those records online and make them easily accessible to themselves and to the public. The town used Clark to build a cemetery records database that's now live on the town's website. Because the front desk can get so busy, Finley

needed someone who could work independently, and Clark, who had done the same thing for Vassalboro when she interned there the prior summer, was just what Finley needed. "I was really, really pleased with the match (the program team) made for us because it was perfect," she said. Clark entered the information from the paper records, went to the town's cemeteries and got photos of gravestones, researched obituaries and added those to individual records, and even created a list of broken gravestones so that the town knows which ones need to be fixed. "She did a fabulous job," said Finley. "I can't say enough good about that girl. She was just incredible."

## New Gloucester

Intern: **Hung Nguyen**, Mechanical Engineering Major at the University of Southern Maine  
Internship role: Public Works Road Analyzer

The town of New Gloucester needed to have someone spend a few weeks analyzing, classifying, and entering road condition data into a program that the town can use to understand the condition of its roads and to plan road maintenance and upgrades, said Christine Landes,



Hung Nguyen with Christine Landes

now the town manager of Chelsea, but who was New Gloucester's town manager last summer when Nguyen interned in the public works department. It was the sort of project that was important but that got put off because staff time was taken up with other things, she said.

Within days of starting, Nguyen fit into the whole team, Landes said. The guys in the public works garage particularly took Nguyen under their wing - including teaching Nguyen how to fix a flat tire. "I think (the internship) definitely helped me with education," Nguyen said. And it provided a wide range of experiences. Besides being on the road inspecting road conditions, Nguyen also spent time with each department, from finance to the public library. By the end of the internship, the town had a valuable roads data set and a solid understanding of the conditions of its roads, said Landes, which will allow the town to better prioritize and budget. And if the town keeps the data up-to-date, it's a tool it'll be able to use well into the future.

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# The Unsung Economic Benefits of Recreational Programs

*While costs are part of the assessment of value, so is the return on investment associated with increased business activity.*

By Janine Pineo

Mitch Stone has a perspective on the role of recreation departments that might come as a surprise.

“You are doing economic development. You just don’t see it through that lens,” said the director of Orono’s Office of Community Development. “Every department plays a role in your economic development.”

Pride of place and quality of life play into the attractiveness that draws businesses, Stone said, for businesses want people to enjoy where they work. A parks and recreation department has a “vital role” of bringing people together to create that sense of community.

“If you are looking for money, you are looking in the wrong place,” Stone said. The key is to partner with economic development to sell not only events but other offerings, such as trails. It also has to have a business component, he said, pointing to an event like a downtown trick or treat that can bring hundreds to where the businesses are.

Orono has taken a different approach for its Parks and Recreation Department: It falls under the umbrella for its Office of Community Development, which also includes planning, assessing, code enforcement and economic development.

When one is looking at municipal functions as a team and



*Orono Bog Walk off City Forest in Bangor is a joint partnership between Bangor, the University of Maine and the Orono Land Trust. (Photo by Janine Pineo)*

“not looking at your budget in a vacuum,” Stone said, opportunities arise and not just within the municipal offices. Partnering with businesses and organizations can free resources for the department and expand what is offered.

Stone said parks and recreation don’t have to be the one to run the program, either, pointing to an Orono program at a horse stable. The riding lessons also financially helped the business, which had participation after the program ended, he said.

## The evolution of Bangor

Bangor Parks and Recreation director Tracy Willette can enumerate partnership after partnership that enhance the community and help stretch the department’s \$2.7 million budget, which is nearly half funded by program fees and facility rentals.

From something as simple as the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife stocking the pond with trout on the second hole of Bangor Municipal Golf Course for Kids Fishing Day to the building of in-town mountain bike trails with the help of

the Penobscot chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association, Bangor continues to ramp up an extensive variety of ways to draw not only its own residents to events and facilities, but to entice visitors from near and far to come to the city to recreate and, maybe, spend money.

Visitors and the money they spend can be difficult metrics to measure, even in a city with more resources than most Maine municipalities.

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*Janine Pineo is a freelance writer from Hudson and regular contributor to Maine Town & City, [jepineo@gmail.com](mailto:jepineo@gmail.com).*

Willette said it is not feasible to stand at a trailhead daily to count heads and ask everyone how much they will spend while in the city. “We don’t do gate clicks,” he said.

He gave the Orono Bog Walk as an example of one place the city can reasonably measure visitors, of which there are 26,000 to 30,000 yearly. “And it’s free,” he said. “It’s a free facility.”

Accessible via the 680-acre Rolland F. Perry City Forest, the bog boardwalk marked its 20<sup>th</sup> season this year and is yet another partnership the city has: a joint venture with the University of Maine and the Orono Land Trust.

Willette said the city does have one municipal event where it was able to survey attendees a few years ago.

The Kenduskeag Stream Canoe Race, which marked its 55<sup>th</sup> run this year, always draws a crowd – and that’s just the participants, which numbered more than 600 this year. “This department is where it started 50-plus years ago,” he said. “That’s a unique event.”

What the survey found, he said, was folks planned or expected to spend about \$75 each at Bangor businesses.

Perhaps the most recognizable transformation for the city is its waterfront. What traditionally had been an industrialized area along the Penobscot River is now home to walking trails, park benches and green spaces, as well as the Waterfront Concerts area.

Recreation was the spark for the

waterfront, coming 20 years ago in the form of the National Folk Festival. That first year, the three-quarter-mile venue had little lighting and unpaved access roads; today, paved streets, groomed lawns and well-lighted walkways stretch the length of the public area.

The National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) puts it this way on its website: “Recognizing that the National could be the catalyst to propel its revitalization plans into a reality, Bangor applied to host the festival. A partnership with the NCTA was forged that would transform the cultural, economic, and physical landscape of the city.”

Throughout its run, first as the National and then as the American Folk Festival, the late August event drew tens of thousands to Bangor for the three-day festival and generated tens of millions of tourist dollars.

“Without it, where would we be?” Willette asked.

#### Resources and relationships

When it comes to parks and recreation budgets, it becomes clear that funding is often a hodgepodge that extends beyond taxes: program fees, facility rentals, grants, donations, and fundraising, to name a few.

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Matt Foster, director of parks and recreation in Farmington, said funding and relationships go hand in hand. “Whether it is your annual budget from taxpayers, donations from generous individuals or grants from local agencies, it all starts with your connection and relationships to others, as well as the proof of how well gifts are utilized,” he said. “We try so hard to provide the best programming and facilities we can with the resources we are given, and I think that when people see what you can do with what you currently have, they entrust you with more.”

Farmington’s budget for this year was \$349,000, including reserve and capital improvement funds, and is completely tax funded. “I believe that our community has seen the proof of what good facilities and a good program can do for its citizens,” Foster said. “Farmington has chosen to invest in everyone, which is why we are able to offer low-to-no-cost programming.”

A week at Farmington’s summer camp costs about \$50 per child, while most programs average \$30. Foster said if someone cannot afford the fee, there’s a waiver box to check on the registration form with no other requirements beyond checking that box.

“We know that a child cannot help the situation their parent is currently in, so we don’t expect them to have

to suffer for that,” he said. “The participant is able to be treated like every other person and will receive the same products and services from our department and staff. That is the beauty, and honestly, the exact purpose of a municipally funded parks and recreation department.”

He added, “Inclusivity, not exclusivity, is our game.”

### MAINE BY THE NUMBERS

A study by the National Recreation and Park Association shows the economic impact parks and recreation has, including the value added, which is most equivalent to GDP, and the economic activity, which measures the value of the resulting transactions.

Here’s how Maine stacked up in 2019:

Employment: .....	2,464
Labor income: .....	\$92,567,722
Value added: .....	\$143,939,202
Economic activity: .....	\$303,230,532



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Linda Brooks, Windham's director of parks and recreation, said that relationships are integral to the success of the department and the well-being of the community. "Beyond the financial contributions we may receive from formal sponsorships, I feel that we work hand-in-hand with our local businesses and community organizations to advance the missions of each partner," she said. "By constantly seeking and nurturing these partnerships, there are other contributions provided to us in the form of in-kind donations, volunteer assistance, grant opportunities or shared costs that directly affect our budget lines."

As examples, she listed a string of partnerships that include school district student groups, scouting groups,

the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, the Legion Auxiliary, the regional chamber of commerce and the Windham Economic Development Corporation.

Windham's budget for next year is \$816,407, with 46 percent of that anticipated to be offset by revenue generated through user fees. "Taxes support all administrative costs of our department including salaries for all year-round, full-time employees. Taxes also support our parks and trails facilities, with the exception being Dundee Park, our waterfront facility," she said.

Sixty to 70 percent of funding for the park comes from daily admissions, group rentals, season passes and concessions, with the rest made up through taxes.

Windham also funds a scholarship

program for summer camp, school-year enrichment programs and all senior programs, Brooks said. Most of the town's large events are free of charge and funded through the budget or sponsorships.

Bath's recreation budget of \$561,000 is only 40 percent funded by taxes. "We have to be very creative in how we raise the other 60 percent," said Steve Balboni, director of Bath's Parks, Recreation, Forestry and Cemeteries Department. "That portion is raised through program fees, sponsorships, and donations. We know that as the prices of everything go up so does the cost of programs, which is why we try to get sponsors for all the programs we offer."

Bath, too, has a scholarship program, but Balboni said it is difficult to keep that funded. "Our Recreation Commission has recently set a goal to explore other revenue streams for the scholarship fund and is just starting down that road," he said. "We truly want everyone to be able to participate regardless."

Balboni said it is a fine line when it comes to increasing fees or asking sponsors for more money.

"There is a tipping point where you start to lose participation and, by raising fees, may actually decrease your revenue," he said. "With the rapid increase of just about everything, it is hard for families with kids to be able to keep up, especially if you have more than one child."

As for sponsors, Balboni said, the city reaches out continually to help offset increases. "We are very blessed to have supportive businesses here in the city, but we also understand that

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they are going through all the same increases in costs," he said.

That said, Balboni sees the economic benefit from recreation. "This is really the story here," he said, "everyday parks and recreation departments are involved with economic development."

When the city hosts sporting events from everyday games to championships that draw thousands of people, Balboni said, those folks "eat, shop and get fuel in Bath. Some of them even return for a future visit; that is an economic boost."

All of this stems from that \$561,000 budget, which covers six full-time positions, maintenance of all outdoor athletic fields, full maintenance of one building and labor maintenance for two others, programs, special events, outdoor ice skating and snowplowing, "to name a few," Balboni said.

"Our park and recreation workers are front line," Balboni said. "Their work and their interactions with the public are what draw people to Bath. We are the quality-of-life people and that is what draws folks to communities." ■

## ABOUT THIS SERIES

Often overlooked and underfunded, the municipal recreation department has a reputation of being the home of youth sports, possibly summer day camp and not much else. In this series, *Maine Town & City* looks at how directives guide the goals and programs of several municipalities to build a broad platform that welcomes all ages to recreate in a myriad of ways. Funding is always a top issue, as are fees that might prohibit residents from participating. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought staffing challenges even as interest in programs has increased and departments have found new purpose in new directions. The second installment examines the money side of recreation, including its role as an economic driver, and features Orono, Bangor, Farmington, Windham and Bath.

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# MMA Celebrates the Successes of Municipal Government

A recap of the 2022 MMA Annual Convention.

By Rebecca Lambert, Municipal Issues Specialist, Advocacy & Communications

For the first time since 2019, the Maine Municipal Association hosted an in-person Annual Convention at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor on October 5 and 6. Themed “Time to Celebrate,” municipal officials from across the state gathered for two days of professional development, networking, and socializing—and what a celebration it was!

The convention kicked off with keynote speaker, **Rebecca Ryan**, who provided a dynamic presentation on how local governments can figure out what’s coming down the pike and how to effectively plan for those changes. She touched on topics that included diversity, workforce development, shared signs to keep an eye on in the future and provided techniques to help officials anticipate outcomes.

Following the keynote, attendees spent time with the over 100 exhibitors participating in the event before heading off to the first round of concurrent sessions. The sessions offered provided information on economic development, explored alternative work schedules, and reviewed strategies for the retention, recruitment, and health of public safety officials. New this year, MMA offered additional “nuts and bolts” training sessions, exploring such topics as general assistance and comprehensive planning.

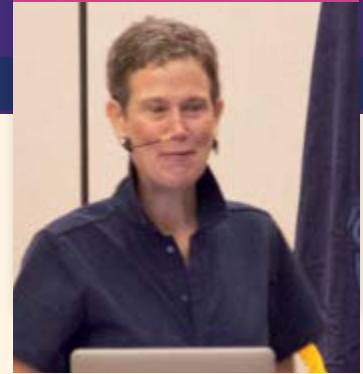
Throughout the convention, exhibitors showcased products and services that are critical to the success of local government. MMA’s Advocacy & Communications team set up a mobile podcast booth to capture interviews with a variety of attendees including Secretary of State, **Shenna Bellows**; MMA President, **Jim Bennett**; and Bangor City Manager **Debbie Laurie**, which can be heard on the “From the Convention Floor” bonus episode of the Potholes & Politics: Local Maine Issues from A-to-Z podcast.

During her luncheon address on Wednesday, **Heather Johnson**, Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner, provided an update on how Governor Mills’ Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan has allowed Maine to make significant headway in implementing the state’s

JAMES BENNETT



REBECCA RYAN



10-year economic development strategy. The commissioner reported on the progress made to bring broadband to rural areas, increase renewable energy and combat the housing crisis, among other topics.

The MMA Annual Business meeting, highlighting the Association’s 2022 priorities and accomplishments, was held after the luncheon as other sessions provided participants with tips on how to draft town meeting warrants, articles, and ballot questions and apply for EMS grants, as well as describing the tax relief programs



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available for seniors. Municipal officials also learned about the techniques and best practices available for recruiting, retaining, and supporting younger municipal workers.

**Peter Coughlin**, Director of Local Roads Center at MaineDOT, was on hand to answer questions about local roads and the Maine Fire Chiefs' Association hosted a session exploring topics ranging from liability issues to training programs. In between concurrent session blocks, participants visited with exhibitors before returning to sessions focused on practices to increase diversity, equity and inclusion within workplaces and the hot topic of the day...affordable housing development.

Trash to treasure was the theme of MMA President Jim Bennett's presentation, which recounted the transformation of the City of Biddeford's downtown from the host of a trash

incinerator to a destination hub brimming with arts, culture, and dining opportunities.

After a full day of learning, the excitement was still palpable as attendees gathered for the member appreciation reception sponsored by **Bangor Savings Bank**. True to the convention's theme, it became a celebratory event as people boogied and grooved to the music of Maine's "Ultimate Disco Party Band," Motor Booty Affair. Jim Bennett, MMA Vice President **Elaine Aloes** and the incoming Vice President **Diane Hines** were spotted on the dance floor cutting a rug!







The dinner banquet, sponsored by **Skowhegan Savings Bank**, was held immediately following the member reception where the winner of the MMA Ethel N. Kelley award, **Judy Akers**, Poland Town Clerk, was announced and **Elaine Aloes** was sworn in as the MMA President.

Day two opened bright and early with featured speakers from Maine Community College President **David Daigler**, and **Maureen O'Brien**, Workforce Development Coordinator. The duo shared how community colleges across Maine are tackling the need to find skilled workers through partnership between public and private sector employers and leaders.

Attendees spent a second day visiting with exhibitors, networking, and participating in sessions on PFAS, public safety official mental health and wellness, immigration, critical incident management, election worker safety and cybersecurity, to name a few.

Thank you to all who came out to share, learn and enjoy the 86th MMA Annual Convention. Plans are already in the works for the 2023 convention to be held at the Augusta Civic Center on October 4 and 5.

Save the date and see you there! ■



**Potholes & Politics** went on the road last month, traveling to the MMA convention in Bangor. Over the two-day event the podcast team caught up with iconic voices and personalities across our membership and beyond.

The lounge chairs and coffee table gave the podcast booth a late-night talk show vibe that really put our interviewees at ease. The result was a series of candid, humorous, and insightful conversations right in the middle of a lively exhibit hall.

To hear all the sounds and excitement from the convention, check out the bonus episode on the Potholes & Politics website, <https://potholesandpolitics.buzzsprout.com>, or find us on your favorite podcast streaming app.

To whet your appetite, here's a sampling of what municipal leaders from across the state had to say.

"We're thrilled to welcome folks back to Cross Insurance Center for the first time in many years!"  
– **Bangor City Manager, Debbie Laurie**

"I've got a number of projects that I want to put into my budget next year and I need to touch base with some vendors. This is the place to do it. When somebody contacts out of the blue with a service or a product, one of the first questions out of my mouth is 'Are you attending the Maine Municipal Convention?'"  
– **Turner Town Manager, Kurt Schaub**

"I'm here today on the issue of protecting election officials and election security."  
– **Secretary of State, Shenna Bellows**

"I had just seen them via Zoom, I had never met them before. So, it was really nice to be able to see them in person.... I met a few people from different communities, talked to them, tried to see what people are up to." – **Assistant to the Kennebunkport Town Manager, Yanina Nickless**

"[It's] my 13th Convention.... It's really nice to see everybody, networking is a huge piece of what we do here." – **Franklin County Administrator, Amy Bernard**

"Motor Booty Affair, I had never seen them, heard lots about them. It was a good time!"  
– **Chelsea Town Manager, Christine Landes**

"My first Convention was 1995... I have 17 years under my belt as town manager, so I am now a recovering town manager." – **VP of Government Finance at Androscoggin Bank, John Simko** ■

ALERT: MMA Offices will be closed on Friday, January 12 due to the winter storm.

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## Survey Says... MMA website is a valuable resource.

While staff is relieved to learn that municipal officials find tremendous value in the resources posted on the website, the evolution of technology necessitates upgrades and improvements to our existing platform.

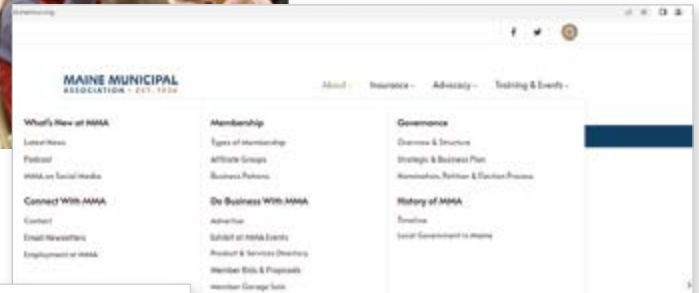
To that end, in the spring of 2023 MMA will launch its newly reimagined and far more modern website focused on improving the user experience. Once fully implemented, access to MMA resources, including manuals, Legal Notes and insurance claim forms will be a mere two to three clicks away.

According to Ben Thomas, MMA's Website and Social Media Editor, the "modernized layout, higher contrast, more legible text, and improved navigation are among the most noticeable changes. We added the ability to view job openings by location and job type, redesigned and modernized the news section a bit, and rebuilt the products and services directory and video training library. We also made improvements to the legal and training area of the website for our members."

To ensure that the product being built will meet both the current and future needs of our members, during the annual convention the Advocacy & Communications team polled municipal officials as they explored the exhibit hall.

The survey asked participants a variety of questions, including gauging user satisfaction with the current website, frequency of use, ease in locating information and needed areas of improvement.

Although the existing website was described as dated – a sentiment shared by MMA staff – municipal officials appreciate the one-stop shopping feature allowing members to access information on all things municipal. The ability to access legal resources, such as the manuals and info packets, as well as the around the clock



ability to file reports, claims and participate in Risk Management Services programs were frequently mentioned as the most valued resources on the website.

The website was also described as being a good source of important information allowing local officials to find answers to questions more promptly, encouraging participation in training sessions among municipal colleagues and serving as a good first stop for information.

Satisfaction with the current website was also reflected in the frequency of use statistics. Municipal officials participating in the survey log into the "members only area" an average of 215 times each year.

When asked about the resource's shortcomings, the search function was a common short, as the keywords used do not always yield results. The ability to easily locate articles, legal notes and updates published in the Maine Town & City magazine were also mentioned as problematic.

When asked how MMA could improve the services provided in the member only area, access to more manuals, examples of common documents used in a variety of different communities, and briefs on legislative issues topped the list.

With this feedback in mind, Ben Thomas is looking forward to sharing the new website with our members. "We've made a number of significant improvements to the navigation, improved search and filtering tools site-wide, redesigned online forms from the ground up, and implemented many other front end and aesthetic improvements."

Please stay tuned for updates on the website's 2023 launch. ■

# Growing Maine's Population

*Coalition to begin recruiting refugees and immigrants to live, learn and work in Aroostook County.*

By Liz Mockler

Aroostook County officials have launched a new initiative to bring refugees and immigrants to northern Maine to live and work, hoping to ease the ongoing labor shortage and stave off business closures.

Funding from the city of Presque Isle and Northern Maine Community College (NMCC) will pay to hire a workforce recruiter or coordinator, to look within the U.S. for immigrants and refugees already resettled who might want to relocate to Aroostook County.

The Northern Maine Growth Initiative (NMGI), a grassroots group of government, business, and education leaders, noticed something new in the 2020 census figures that moved them to action; for the first time, there are more persons living in the northern most regions of Maine over the age of 65 than under age 18.

The new dynamic showed up in the latest census, when the 18 and younger cohort represented 18.4% of the population, while the over 65 group reached 24.1%.

Those numbers in 2010 were 20.05% and 18.4%, respectively.

The NMGI, organized in 2018, is a group of 30 partners who all believe that without a real action plan to stem the population slide, Aroostook County will continue to falter and shrink. Many county business owners will eventually close their shops if the workforce does not grow, officials said.

Penobscot County is included in the initiative, and Eastern Maine Development Corporation will include Washington County in any immigration-related programs it pursues.

"There are challenges (with the plan), but we must help people understand that this region needs to grow," said NMCC President Tim Crowley. "A lot of people are comfortable with the way things are. (But) if things stay the same, we're only going to get smaller."

It was Crowley who pitched the recruiting idea to the



Tim Crowley

Presque Isle City Council, and Robert Clark, executive director of the Northern Maine Development Commission, who suggested the plan would make for a strong Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) proposal.

Galen Weibley, Presque Isle economic development director, along with members of the initiative coalition, petitioned the Presque Isle council to support the CDBG proposal. They found fertile ground and unanimous support by councilors.

"Mainers are makers and doers," Weibley said. "We need to think progressively about how we want to prosper in our economy. (Population growth) is crucial to our development in the future."

Weibley said the city has received a letter of approval from the state, and an invitation to file a more detailed CDBG proposal for final approval. If ultimately successful, the grant will be funded with federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) money.

The initiative will benefit low- and moderate-income residents, as well as meet the community development needs of the Greater Presque Isle area – two of only three reasons an application qualifies for CDBG funding.

"The beautiful part of local government is we get to experiment and try new things," Weibley said. "We saw a demographic change and we have an opportunity to overcome it."

Weibley said the NMGI is a first-of-a-kind for Maine. Unlike a similar effort in Greater Portland, the city's Skyway Industrial Park, home of 30 small businesses, has been folded into the initiative.

The NMCC campus abuts the industrial park, linking education, housing and job training and placement.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime model," Weibley said. "We're excited to be able to connect the dots."

If approved, the \$80,000 in CDBG funding, combined with \$150,000 from NMCC, will pay for a full-time recruiter for two years who will work with other immigration-relat-

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Liz Mockler is a freelance writer from Caribou and regular contributor to *Maine Town & City*, [lizmockler@hotmail.com](mailto:lizmockler@hotmail.com).



Galen Weibley



Robert Clark

ed agencies and organizations, municipalities, and colleges, to actively search for and relocate people to northern Maine.

### A shrinking workforce

Three years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the northern Maine labor shortage stubbornly hangs on. Many Maine businesses have raised hourly pay, sometimes twice the state's minimum wage, but that still hasn't lured enough essential workers to fill the hundreds of jobs that remain open in Aroostook

County.

Municipalities have also hiked wages to attract new local government staff as baby boomers continue to retire in significant numbers.

Compounding the workforce problem is another population loss in Aroostook last year, continuing the downward trend that began in earnest when Loring Air Force Base in Limestone closed completely in September 1994.

Aroostook County lost 7.1% of its population in the last decade, putting it last for population growth in the

state at negative 5.5%, or 4,840 persons. Last year, the number of people in the workforce shrunk to 29,056 workers, down from 29,199 in 2020 and 31,779 in 2017.

Since the start of the pandemic in 2019, which claimed a million American lives, another 20,000 workers have left the Aroostook labor force, the majority of them retirees.

Maine is the nation's oldest state, population-wise, and is projected to lose another 65,000 workers by 2029 as baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 continue to retire. Moreover, the number of people 65 years of age and older are expected to increase 37% by 2026.

The Mills Administration has developed a 10-year economic development plan to add at least 75,000 workers to the state economy by 2029. Themes of the plan include education and employment but do not delve into the state's housing crisis as it affects refugees and immigrants throughout Maine.

While Aroostook was losing ground, the state population grew 3.4% between 2010 and 2021 for a new high of nearly 1.4 million people.

Clark, the NMDC executive direc-

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tor, said his organization has already helped bring four families to northern Maine from hurricane-weary Puerto Rico, as well as Brazil and Afghanistan.

At least two families quickly relocated to Madawaska, he said, where they know people.

The development commission wants to focus on natural disasters, such as hurricanes and wildfires, Clark said. There are usually some people who want to start over somewhere new after losing their homes and sometimes all their personal belongings.

NMDC will also look to Ukraine for people wanting to escape their homeland, ravaged by the Russians who declared war on its neighbor 10 months ago.

Clark said a couple from Brazil, a nurse and a physician's assistant, has settled in the Presque Isle area and are working at Northern Light while they earn their credentials here.

### An investment

While some of the new residents might need to learn English, many will not. Afghan recruits, for example, are primarily those who helped the U.S. during the 20-year war and can already speak fluent English.

Afghans have expedited visas and the families from Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens, making the transition easier than it might be when recruiting from other countries.

Like the rest of the nation, Maine and Aroostook County need people to

fill jobs across the economy, including in manufacturing, tourism and hospitality, construction, and agriculture, among others.

The H-2A and H-2B work visas do not apply to immigrants and refugees. They allow businesses to hire nonimmigrants to fill temporary jobs, such as in tourism, the state's top economic driver.

The Biden Administration, meanwhile, has extended temporary protections to 475,000 Venezuelans, Afghans, Ukrainians, and Burmese look-

Percentage of Aroostook County Population by Age		
	2010	2020
Under 18	20.05%	18.4%
18 - 34	17.7%	17.3%
34 - 44	12.8%	10.4%
45 - 64	30.5%	29.8%
65 and over	18.4%	24.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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## Refugee, immigrant, or migrant?

The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) is the leader around the world in resettling refugees and immigrants. It works with myriad groups and partnerships to advocate for anyone “who has been uprooted,” and works to find them homes and work in their desired countries (international migration) or within the same country (internal migration). Following are the ICMC’s definitions for the three major immigration groups:

### Refugees

People who face a direct threat of harm or death in their own country.

### Immigrants

People who move to another country permanently. There is a set immigration process. Immigrants have certain rights upon entering the U.S.

### Migrants

People who move within their own country or migrate to another country for work and better living conditions. They may or may not return to their country of origin. Not all migrants “use legal pathways” to enter the U.S., leading to “undocumented” workers and a ban on receiving public assistance.

*\*There are 281 million migrants in the world population.*

ing for a second chance after escaping political turmoil, natural disasters and war.

People who have fled disastrous situations want a safe place to live and raise their children and they want work, Crowley and others said. Despite stereotypes, they do not intend to move to Maine for its public assistance. In fact, they often want to start working before other important aspects of their relocation are completed, including finding permanent or long-term housing.

There is a key difference between immigrants and migrants who often cross the southern border and immigrate illegally. Immigrants are in the U.S. legally and there is an established immigration process that leads to work visas and limited public benefits during their transition to a new home.

“This is an investment in the future,” Crowley said. “This is not a short-term fix. It’s going to take years.”

There are certain areas of the nation where immigrants tend to gather, including Florida, where immigrants make up 28% of the state population.

The natural disasters that have uprooted millions of people in the past

few years – both domestically and internationally – also provides Clark and others with more opportunities to sell Maine.

According to the American Immigration Council, there were 44.9 million immigrants in the U.S. in 2019.

### Far-flung effort

The Maine Community College System has approved Crowley’s request for \$150,000 for the novel proposal. He expects in two years the funding will become part of the community college system’s operational budget.

Meanwhile, the NMDC expects to receive \$200,000 from the state general fund over two years to finance its effort. Like the growth initiative, the commission will also hire a person to focus only on growing the Aroostook County population.

The NMGI recruiter will look for immigrants who have resettled in other parts of the state or country.

The far-reaching effort will benefit the college both by bringing in more students and by training new students. Immigrants and refugees with children will also help revitalize a stagnant school population in Aroostook.

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The college has some housing available, Crowley said, including room for families. The college has purchased a bus to augment available public transit.

“As we work with refugee communities,” Crowley said, “we hope that we can also connect them with education and training on our campus. ... (NMCC) has apartments on campus and family housing in place.”

He added, “The housing shortage is a challenge across Maine, but we feel we can assist them with education and housing that is already in place. This would allow a family to get settled in the community ... and (it becomes) a steppingstone to finding permanent housing in Aroostook County.”

Presque Isle City Councilor Craig Green, who attends NMGI meetings, said he thinks the new program will work, based on his own experience.

During the pandemic in 2020, taxi cabs were not running so Green decided to become a greeter to airline workers who landed in Presque Isle and were stuck at the airport. Green would show the airline staff some of what Presque Isle and the area had to offer. He took them hiking and bowling, showed them restaurants and snowmobiling.

He liked the idea of hiring a recruiter, whom he likened to a concierge, to not only find people but help them access housing, jobs, and services they need to make the resettlement a success.

Over time, airline staff began putting in for Presque Isle, where before it was their least popular destination. “They became enamored with coming to Aroostook County and just loved what we have to offer,” Green said.

Many airline staffers return to Aroostook County even when they’re not working. Four people have bought second homes or camps in the region, he said.

The new initiative will work, Green said, as long as someone leads the way. “I’ve seen it work once the place comes alive for them,” Green said.

### Covering the bases

For Weibley, combining job creation with education and housing is an opportunity to get families settled for success. Refugees and immigrants who find their own way to a desired location will likely take longer to thrive there.

“This model is the first in Maine history,” Weibley said. “Education, linked with the industrial complex and housing has never been (done) before.

“It’s a wonderful and fantastic opportunity to bring all three pieces together. This is a once-in-a-lifetime model that the state is exploring.”

Education, employment, and housing “have never been linked together in one program,” Weibley said. “We’re very excited to be able to connect the dots.”

The Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP), meanwhile, has been selected as one of only 10 agencies in the Northeast invited to work with other agencies in and out of Maine to share their immigration program model.

It was ACAP whom Clark contacted for help getting two families from Puerto Rico resettled in Aroostook County. They had survived Hurricane Maria in September 2017 and fled before this September’s Hurricane Fiona.

Clark said NMDC will focus on

recruiting immigrants and refugees who are already in the U.S. The NMGI coalition will look for immigrants already resettled in the U.S.

“That’s really our focus,” Clark said. “... There are opportunities out there to grow our population. We looked around and said ‘we really need to find a way’ to attract new citizens.

“We can’t allow it to continue,” he said.

Clark agreed with Weibley that the new initiative is crucial for Aroostook County’s economic future and vitality. “We’re going from brain drain to brain gain,” Clark predicted.

Jason Parent, ACAP executive director, said the current housing crunch in Maine is a challenge for his staff as they try to transition newcomers from homeless shelters and other temporary arrangements to apartments of their own.

Parent, who attends growth initiative meetings, said ACAP also works with refugees and immigrants to find education and work opportunities for them under a program called Crisis to Thrive. One aspect of the program, for instance, covers the salary of newcomers for up to 12 weeks, which allows employers time to train people for open jobs while providing an incentive for them to hire the new arrivals.

“At the end of 12 weeks you’ve got a trained worker ready to hit the ground running,” Parent said “... and benefiting a company’s bottom line.”

The 18-month program has been so successful that Parent and others travel to CAP offices across the state to aid and train employees on the Aroostook model.

ACAP works on behalf of the entire family, also helping with finding educational options for the children.

“We focus on the development of the family,” Parent said. “We really look at it as a multi-faceted approach.” ■



### POTHoles & POLITICS

MMA’s new podcast **POTHoles & POLITICS**, *Local Maine Issues from A-Z*, is now live!

Hosted by MMA’s Legislative Advocates, each episode will take deeper dives on municipal issues. Check out episodes here: <https://potholesandpolitics.buzzsprout.com>

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## Meet Our Attorneys Jonathan A. Pottle

Jon provides legal services to both public and private sector clients in the areas of environmental law, land use law, municipal law, utilities law, economic development, project development and finance, renewable energy, real estate, timberlands, and natural resources law. Jon's practice in these areas helps clients with their strategic and tactical planning, day-to-day operations and troubleshooting, project development and financing, real estate and business transactions, municipal and utility district governance, and resolution of related legal disputes, including representation before Maine and Federal Courts as well as Local and State administrative boards and agencies.

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# 2023 Holiday Schedule

The Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services released the following 2023 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 Observed
New Year's Day	Monday, January 2, 2023
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday, January 16, 2023
Washington's Birthday/Presidents' Day	Monday, February 20, 2023
Patriots Day	Monday, April 17, 2023
Memorial Day	Monday, May 29, 2023
Juneteenth	Monday, June 19, 2023
Independence Day	Tuesday, July 4, 2023
Labor Day	Monday, September 4, 2023
Indigenous Peoples' Day	Monday, October 9, 2023
Veterans' Day	Friday, November 10, 2023
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 23, 2023
Thanksgiving Friday	Friday, November 24, 2023
Christmas Day	Monday, December 25, 2023



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# MMA INSIDER.

## Responding to municipal risk management needs is a top priority

By Michelle Pelletier / Director / Risk Management Services



(l-r) Zachary Martel, Jennifer Harrow-Mortelliti, Michelle Emery, Sherry Tanner

**MICHELLE PELLETIER**, Director of Risk Management Services (RMS), started at MMA in May of 1990, just shortly after the Underwriting unit was brought in-house. Michelle achieved her associate degree in Underwriting in 1994 and completed her goal of becoming a Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) in 2012. She was promoted to Underwriting Manager in 2010 and Director of Risk Management Services in 2018. As director, she oversees Underwriting, Loss Control and both the Workers' Compensation and Property & Casualty Claims teams.

Risk Management Services was created when the insurance market abandoned local governments, leaving them without coverage and vulnerable to risks. To respond to this need, the Maine Municipal Association created self-funded groups to provide education, risk management resources and insurance for local governments.

In 1978 the Workers' Compensation Fund was designed to assist members in managing their workers' compensation cost through effective claims management and loss prevention services. The Unemployment Fund was created, also in 1978, to serve as a liaison to the Maine Bureau of Unemployment Compensation in the handling of unemployment claims. In 1987, the Property & Casualty Pool was created to provide members with a broad range of

property and casualty coverages - uniquely designed to include the protection of the Maine Tort Claims Act immunities and limits of liability - that were not readily available at that time. The advantages of being self-insured are cost savings and plans that meet the unique needs of its membership.

Local government self-funded groups serve municipal governments in a variety of ways and do not operate like commercial insurance carriers, where the priority is typically the bottom line. We are member-owned, and member driven. We are unified in our commitment to assisting local government members with their unique risk management and coverage needs.

The programs provide financial strength and stability through a partnership with over 600 local governments, providing coverage to over 40,000 public servants, and protecting more than \$6 billion in property. Maine local governments work hard to spend their public funds wisely and we share that goal. Each year, our team strives to achieve stable and adequate rates, allowing members to anticipate costs. The collective success makes us stronger together and we pride ourselves on serving our members with honesty, reliability, professionalism, and delivering excellent member service on all components of risk financing and loss prevention.

Have you ever sat back and considered how much local government work is conducted on a day-to-day basis that can put municipal property or employees at risk?

Did you ever consider your gym floor would be totaled because a soccer ball was kicked, hit the sprinkler in such a way the protective head cover would break, and water would cause over \$150,000 in damage?

Did you ever consider water would drip from a sink down three floors and cause damage in excess of \$300,000?

Did you ever go on a routine call that was anything but routine?

RMS has the unique ability to focus on these exposures by investing in its membership and offering services to enhance and improve community safety efforts.

Our team's experience is exclusively with local government operations, which allows us the unique perspective of providing individualized underwriting review, loss control services and professional claims management that understand the complex exposures that apply only to public entities. We adapt the coverage as exposures change and craft the language to meet the needs of our members. We take pride in assisting our membership by providing proper training, obtaining adequate property valuations, offering loss prevention service, and providing experienced claims management. Please review the quarterly Risk Manager, published in January, April, July, and October editions of the magazine, as we highlight the individual Property & Casualty/Workers' Compensation Claims Teams, Underwriting and Loss Control over the next year. I encourage you to get to know your RMS team and know that Maine is our home too.

RMS continually monitors and adapts our focus on where most claims occur. The data consistently identifies employee injuries through auto accidents, slips, trips, and falls, and lifting as the highest claim frequency. Our Loss Control team provides individualized claims trending and will provide recommendations for improvement. The Risk Management website provides access to our online training program, grants/scholarships, best practices, and "safety shorts" brochures to assist with your internal safety.

Property & Casualty Pool members have exclusive access to some value-added benefits including an Employment Law Hotline to assist with human resource questions; a Sewer Liability toolkit to reduce exposure to losses for members with wastewater exposures; a Risk Reduction grant to mitigate property and casualty losses, just to name a few. For members of the Workers' Compensation Fund, a virtual driving program has recently been rolled out and we encourage you to use this tool for all your drivers. All this information, and more, is available on the website to help get you started.

The Property & Casualty Pool is celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year and we are looking forward to celebrating the 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Funds in 2023. The success of these programs is an example of our members commitment and their good risk management practices.

Risk Management Services is developing a day long program geared towards the day-to-day, including step-by-step processes on program needs, services provided and website review. We hope to roll out this program in early spring. Stay tuned.



## Helpful Resources available to you!

### Exclusive Member Benefits:

- Property & Casualty Pool
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- Risk Reduction Grant
- Employment Law Hotline
- Driver training
- Dividends
- Workers Compensation Fund
- Safety Enhancement Grant
- Safety Scholarships
- Safety Incentive Program
- Employee Training
- Dividends

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### ABOUT THIS SERIES:

The MMA Insider is a special series focused on improving communications with our members and shedding light on the internal workings of the Association. Future editions of the *Maine Town & City* magazine will include articles written by MMA employees featuring the services provided to our members.

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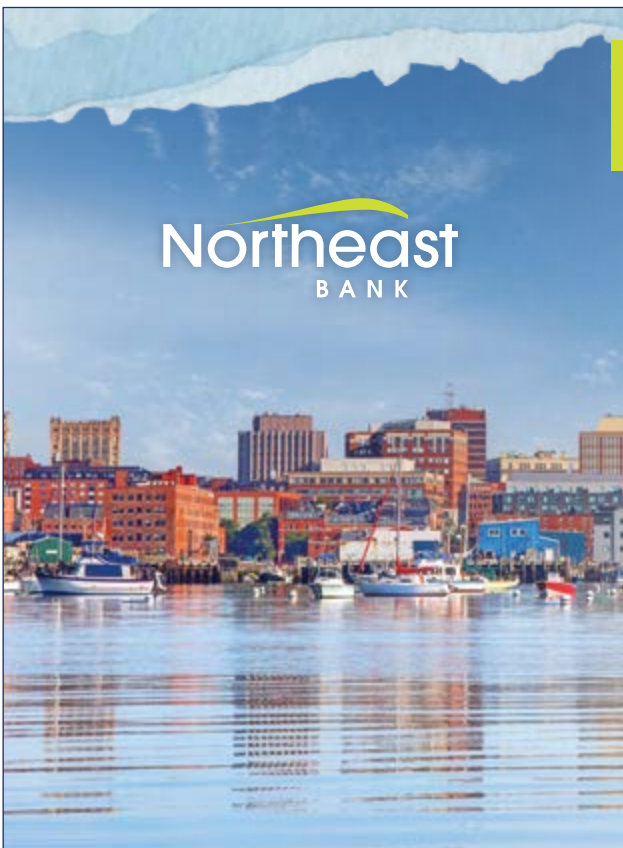
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# Training Opportunities

MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION & AFFILIATES GROUPS  
2022 TRAINING CALENDAR

## NOVEMBER

Tuesday, November 22 @ MMA (Augusta)  
Advanced Excel training  
Sponsored by MAAO

Wednesday, November 30  
Navigating the Legal Marijuana Landscape  
Zoom Webinar  
Sponsored by MMA

## DECEMBER

Friday, December 2 @ MMA (Augusta)  
MWDA Winter Issues Workshop  
Sponsored by MWDA

Tuesday, December 13  
Planning Board/Boards of Appeal  
Zoom Webinar  
Sponsored by MMA

Friday, December 2 @ Sheraton Harborside  
Hotel (Portsmouth, NH)  
MTCMA/MMANH Joint Workshop -  
Leadership Exchange  
Sponsored by MTCMA

Monday, December 19  
Understanding the Freedom of Access Act  
Zoom Webinar  
Sponsored by MMA

Thursday, December 8 @ The Green Ladle  
(Lewiston)  
MBOIA Training & Membership Meeting  
Sponsored by MBOIA

Small Claims (date & location TBD)  
Sponsored by MMTCTA

The 2023 Training Schedule/Calendar will be available in January.



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Percent Paid	100%	100%

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

# People



Angelynn Amores

**Angelynn Amores** has been hired as Lewiston's new director of marketing and communications. She worked in the communications office for the mayor of Chicago, the states of Indiana

and Illinois, the Indiana Attorney General's Office and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from St. Mary-of-the-Woods in Terre Haute, Indiana, and a master's degree in communications from Northwestern University in Illinois.

Pittsfield Police Chief **Harold "Pete" Bickmore** retired last month after working five years for the town's police department. Bickmore, who was diagnosed with lung cancer last winter, said he plans to focus on his health and spend time with his family. Before taking the Pittsfield job, Bickmore worked for the FBI for 26 years, retiring as the director of the bureau's domestic terrorism division. Sgt. **Marty Cochran** will serve as acting chief.

Boothbay Harbor Police Chief **Robert Hasch** was set to retire on November 4, after serving the popular summer town for 28 years. Hasch is a former recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Character Development Award from the Boothbay YMCA. He will remain on the force as a reserve officer and to help in the transition to a new chief.

The Lincoln County volunteer firefighters' troops have lost two comrades within a month: Whitefield Fire Chief **Scott Higgins** who died on October 17 at the age of 63; and Bremen Fire Chief **Donald "Donnie" Leeman** who died on September 17 at the age of 55. Both deaths were unexpected and shocking to the firefighter groups. Higgins retired from the Whitefield force in October 2021 after 29 years on the job. Meanwhile, what Leeman loved most about his career was his ability to serve numerous towns in Lincoln County. He held all the ranks before being asked to take over the Bremen Volunteer Fire Department.

After four months as Lisbon assistant town manager, **Glenn Michalowski** has been named manager, effective immediately. Michalowski's tenure begins after two fruitless searches to replace Diane Barnes, who resigned last January to manage North Yarmouth. Police Chief Ryan McGee served as acting manager during the 10 months. Michalowski, a New Jersey native, moved to Portland in 2021 and started applying for assistant manager's openings. He holds a master's degree in public administration from Rutgers University and comes to Lisbon after working as the principal administrative officer in Portland's Information Technology Department.



Phillip Richardson

Hermon voters will elect a new town councilor on Nov. 8 after **Phillip Richardson** resigned in late July due to relocating to the town of Carmel. Richardson, who owns a towing company, said his new location will allow him to combine his work and home. Richardson said he is thinking about running for a Regional School Unit 87 school board seat. Carmel, like Levant, sends its students to Hermon High School.



Mike Roy

**Michael "Mike" Roy** has won the Legends designation at the Maine Sports Legends Hall of Honor. The former Waterville manager was one of just seven inductees for 2022. Roy, who retired in December 2020, is a former Maine Municipal Association president. He has dedicated 34 years to coaching, beginning with pee wee hockey in the 1960s. Roy was a standout in three sports in Waterville. Roy began his public service in 1978 as community development director for the Town of Fort Fairfield. He would go on to manage Vassalboro and Oakland before taking the Waterville job. He served the Elm City for 16 years.

The coastal towns of Damariscotta and Newcastle will begin sharing the cost of town planner **Isabelle Oechsle's** salary after Boothbay Harbor officials voted in September to end their shared agreement with Damariscotta. Oechsle started her work in Newcastle last month. Under the agreement, the costs for Oechsle will be shared evenly and each town will provide office space. Officials think the new arrangement might serve the town better due to their proximity.



Ernest Steward

Livermore Falls Police Chief **Ernest "Ernie" Steward Jr.** has resigned his municipal job to work as an officer for the University of Maine at Farmington. Steward, 68, has worked in law enforcement for nearly 50 years, serving as Livermore Falls chief for 34 years. Steward has worked part-time for the university for 19 years. Prior to his Livermore Falls service, Steward worked as a Jay patrolman for 13 years. His last day as chief was Oct. 16.

**Simon West** has been appointed to fill a vacant seat on the Gardiner City Council. West, 35, who will serve the rest of this year, said he plans to run for the seat outright this month. He replaces **Kerstin Gilg**, who resigned in June when he moved out of Gardiner. The vote to appoint West, a Winslow native, was unanimous. He graduated from the University of Maine with a business degree and recently earned a master's degree in business administration from Thomas College in Waterville. West already has an assignment: the Solid Waste Committee. He moved to Gardiner in 2020 and was looking for opportunities to get involved in the city.

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# NEWS from Around the State

## BANGOR

Things are going to get small in Bangor after the city council last month voted to allow developers to create tiny home parks as one solution to the state and city housing crisis. Planning Director Anne Krieg said the idea grew from the 2019 affordable housing study it conducted that showed the need for diversification of housing stock and the need to give developers more options. Tiny homes are all the rage for people looking to downsize, do with less or just simplify. Tiny homes must meet the same standards for building, plumbing and electric. There may be a developer ready to convert a mobile home park into a tiny house community, officials said.

## BIDDEFORD

The city will receive \$3.5 million in a federal grant to find and fix homes and apartments built with lead-based paint prior to 1978 when it was banned. The abatement program will improve the lives of Biddeford families; Maine continually ranks near the top states for lead paint contamination in the nation, U.S. Sen. Susan Collins said in announcing the grant. "For decades, childhood lead poisoning has negatively affected the lives of many in the Biddeford community," Collins said. "This funding will be transformational ... and improve developmental outcomes for children by limiting exposure to lead." The grant money will be used to target 95 privately-owned homes with families with children. Biddeford has the fourth-highest cases of lead poisoning in Maine, followed by Lewiston, Auburn, and Portland.

## ELLSWORTH

The city council has approved leasing a building near the Trenton/Lamoine town line for a new police station. In all, the city will pay the owner of a defunct hardware store \$3 million in annual rental payments over 20 years to convert the store

to a workable police department. The city has searched for a site for years without luck. Ellsworth, the gateway to Down East and Mount Desert Island, offers few parcels of land that could accommodate a police station. The building is 8,400 square feet and will take a projected \$900,000 over the lease amount to make renovations. Rent the first year has been set at \$113,400, with a 3% increase annually.

## FALMOUTH

Myriad cities and towns in Maine are taking on the housing crisis with both solid ideas and concerned citizens. Falmouth is no different. The town council's Visions and Values project recently reported the need for affordable workforce apartments, with the suggested site behind the police department on 20 acres of town-owned property. Falmouth's problem is the gap between house values and people's ability to pay the mortgage. In 2021, the median sale price of a Falmouth home was \$750,000 and the median income was \$128,723. A person needs to earn \$202,2033 to afford a median priced home. In a survey done by Visions and Values, 60% of respondents said they support more affordable housing for lower-to middle-class workers. Twenty percent want the town to remain the same, and work to enhance and preserve the existing homes.

## GRAY

The Town of Gray is tired of being a thoroughfare for people just passing by to access the five major highways and two interstate exchanges that converge in the downtown and can take a person most anywhere. The five roads are fed traffic from two Maine turnpike exits. In addition to congestion, nearly unbearable at rush hour, parents are too afraid of the traffic hub to let their children walk to school or dance class because they would need to cross all five lanes. Town officials have an early plan, one that would narrow the streets, redirect some of the truck traffic

and lure new developers and businesses to the downtown. Gray's population is 8,300.

## JONESPORT

Looking to avoid a lawsuit, the town council voted on October 27 to disregard the outcome of a November 8 referendum on liquor sales because the wording of the initiative did not jive with state law. The ballot question was meant to ask whether voters approve of Sunday liquor sales to be consumed only on the premises of a licensed establishment. Instead, the wording would have allowed liquor sales on all days of the week, including Sunday. The town attorney said the ordinance would be vulnerable to legal action. The results of a second referendum, asking to allow liquor sales Mondays through Saturdays, will stand, officials said. The town can place a warrant on the June ballot for Sunday alcohol sales.

## MADAWASKA

The new Madawaska-Edmundston (Canada) bridge is finally taking shape after sitting on the drawing table for years. The new \$97.5 million bridge will span 1,800 feet, twice as long as the old bridge because it's being built at a diagonal angle. The new structure will feature sidewalks, wide travel lanes, and six-foot-wide shoulders on both sides. Madawaska is New England's third busiest port of entry for automobile traffic and sixth for truck traffic. The new bridge will connect the Madawaska port of entry to the new custom stations being built in Madawaska and Edmundston.

## PRESQUE ISLE

More applicants were interested in emergency management training than there were openings, an optimistic sign according to Presque Isle Fire Department officials who won a \$220,000 grant to train 30 new EMTs. Within two days of posting the free EMT training opportunity, nearly 40 had registered and 30 more were interested. The Presque Isle department will work with the Northern Maine Community College to screen and train recipients in Fort Kent, Presque Isle and Houlton. Municipalities have struggled to find certified EMTs because of the COVID-19 pandemic and a steady stream of baby boomers retiring after decades of public service.

If your municipality submits a news item for the *Maine Town & City*, consider sending a corresponding photo to:

Sue Bourdon: sbourdon@memun.org or

Kate Dufour: kdufour@memun.org



# Legal Notes

## NEW PROTECTIONS FOR ELECTION WORKERS

Maine law now makes it a crime to intentionally interfere by force, violence, intimidation, or any physical act with any public official performing an official function relating to a federal, state, or municipal election. See PL 2021, c. 568 (eff. 8/8/22). Violation of the law is a Class D crime punishable by up to 364 days in-carceration and up to a \$2,000 fine.

The new law also directs the Secretary of State (SOS) to provide election officials with training on the de-escalation of conflicts and the process for reporting threats or harassment of public officials conducting a federal, state, or municipal election.

Beginning February 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, the SOS must report the number and types of threats to, or harassment of, public officials during the previous year to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over election matters. (S.F.P.)

## PROHIBITED EMPLOYMENT FOR MUNICIPAL OFFICERS

*(Reprinted as revised from the November 2015 Maine Townsman, "Legal Notes.")*

For many years Maine law has prohibited a municipal officer (select board member, councilor) from being hired for any employment position or appointed to any "civil office of profit" with the municipality if the position was created or the position's compensation was increased by action of the municipal officers during that person's term of office. See 30-A M.R.S. § 2606.

The purpose of this prohibition is obvious: Elected officials should not be allowed to use their office to create for themselves an employment opportunity or a paid appointment.

The prohibition lasts for the municipal officer's full term of office plus one year thereafter. It also applies regardless of how that person voted on any compensation increase or whether they are willing to be paid less than the position's current occupant.

The prohibition does not apply, however, if the position was created or the compensation was increased by action of some other body (e.g., by town meeting

## MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

**NOVEMBER 24 – Thanksgiving Day**, the last Thursday in November, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051).

**ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 15** – Monthly/quarterly/semi-annual expenditure statement and claim for General Assistance reimbursement to be filed via online portal or sent to Department of Health and Human Services, General Assistance Unit, #11 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333-0011 (22 M.R.S. § 4311; DHHS regulations).

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

**NOVEMBER-DECEMBER** – Towns that elect officials by secret ballot under 30-A M.R.S. § 2528 must make nomination papers available 40 days before the filing deadline, which is 60 days before the election date. For most towns with March elections, papers must be made available beginning sometime in November-December, depending on the date of the election.

**BY JANUARY 1** – Each owner or keeper of a dog or wolf hybrid at the age of 6 months or more shall obtain a license for that animal from the municipal clerk (7 M.R.S. § 3922).

vote), even if the municipal officers recommended the action. Nor does it apply if the employment or appointment is allowed or required by state or federal law or municipal ordinance or charter.

We should note that it is not otherwise prohibited for a municipal officer to be a municipal employee unless the employment position is a sworn office with duties that conflict with those of a municipal officer, or unless the municipality has prohibited it by charter or ethics policy (see "Can a Selectman be Hired as a Town Employee Too?" Maine Townsman, "Legal Notes," July 2013).

For more on prohibited employment, incompatible offices, and related issues, see MMA Legal Services' Information Packet on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest, available free to members on MMA's website ([www.memun.org](http://www.memun.org)). (R.P.F./S.F.P.)

## WHY A MUNICIPAL CHARTER?

*(Reprinted as revised from the April 2009 Maine Townsman, "Legal Notes.")*

### Question:

Why would a municipality need a home rule charter?

### Answer:

It wouldn't, unless the municipality wished to alter the rules provided by gen-

eral law. Most municipalities in Maine are small towns (more than half have a population of less than 1,500), and most of them are perfectly content to operate under the select board/town meeting form of government provided for in Title 30-A of the Maine Revised Statutes. But certain things can be accomplished only by charter. Below are some prime examples:

**Legislative/budgetary authority.** Under general law, municipal legislative and budgetary authority is vested in the voters assembled in town meeting. To transfer either or both these powers to another body (typically a council), a charter would be required. This is undoubtedly a major reason that 80 or so of Maine's municipalities have adopted charters (out of 486 municipalities). Incidentally, there are numerous charters that divide powers between a select board or council and town meeting, often with legislative power delegated to the former but budgetary power reserved for the latter.

**Conduct of elections.** Title 30-A (municipal laws) and Title 21-A (state election laws) govern the conduct of municipal elections, including voter initiatives (petitions), nominations, the method for calling elections, the method of voting, recounts and so on. To alter any of these statutory requirements and procedures (for instance, to restrict voter initiatives,

# Legal Notes

or to mandate all-referendum voting), a charter is required.

**Qualifications for office.** According to 30-A M.R.S. § 2526(3), a municipal official must be a resident of Maine, at least 18 years of age, and a U.S. citizen (municipal officers, must also be registered voters; school committee members must be residents). Additional qualifications or prohibitions, such as term limits, or residency requirements for officials other than municipal officers and school committee members, may be imposed only via a charter.

**Recall of school committee members.** State law (30-A M.R.S. § 2602) governs how vacancies in most municipal offices occur and how they are filled; in most situations these rules may be altered or supplemented by either charter or ordinance. However, recall of municipal school committee members may only be accomplished through a charter provision. (Recall of other elected officials may be accomplished by either charter or ordinance).

Note that municipalities are able to legislate on numerous local issues without the need to adopt a charter. For instance, a town manager plan, an administrative system, ethics policies, and a budget committee review process may all be implemented by ordinance in lieu of a charter (although such matters are also commonly dealt with in charters).

Adoption, revision and amendment of municipal charters must follow strict procedures outlined in state statute. For more details, see our “Municipal Charters Information Packet,” available free to members on MMA’s website ([www.memun.org](http://www.memun.org)).

If you don’t know whether your municipality has a charter, see “Got a Charter?” Maine Townsman, “Legal Notes,” May 2010 or contact MMA Legal Services (we have copies of most). (R.P.F./S.F.P.)

## FILLING VACANCIES ON SCHOOL BOARDS

We are often asked what role, if any, the municipal officers (select board, councilors, plantation assessors) play in filling unanticipated vacancies on municipal school committees or school district boards of directors.

State law governs how school board and committee vacancies are created and filled through statutory provisions specific to each type of school administrative unit. Four of the most common are discussed below.

In a municipal school unit, a vacancy on the school committee is governed by 20-A M.R.S. § 2305 unless a municipal charter provides otherwise. Section 2305 allows the school committee to fill the vacancy by appointment within 30 days; the appointment expires at the next annual municipal meeting at which time someone must be elected to fill the remainder of the vacant term. If the school committee fails to appoint a person to fill the vacancy within 30 days, the vacancy may be filled by election at a town meeting called for that purpose.

Vacancies on Regional School Unit (RSU) and School Administrative District (SAD) boards are governed by 20-A M.R.S. §§ 1474 and 1254 respectively. Both authorize the municipal officers of the municipality in which the school board director resided to appoint an interim director for the municipality or subdistrict to serve until the next annual municipal election. The municipal officers then must provide for the election of a director to fill the remainder of the vacant term at the next municipal or subdistrict election.

Community School District (CSD) board of trustee vacancies are governed by 20-A M.R.S. § 1651 which authorizes the municipal officers of the municipality which the former trustee represented to appoint an interim trustee to serve until a successor is elected to fill the unexpired term at the next annual municipal meeting. CSD school committee vacancies are governed by 20-A M.R.S. § 1653; procedures vary depending on the grade levels included in the school’s program.

In other, less common types of school administrative units, such as alternative organizational structures (AOS), the applicable law or agreement establishing the school unit should be consulted.

For information on filling other types of vacancies, see “How Vacancies Are Filled,” Maine Townsman, Legal Notes, August 2007. (S.F.P.)

## CONFIDENTIALITY OF AQUACULTURE REPORTS CLARIFIED

State law requires aquaculture lessees to annually submit a seeding and harvest report to the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR). 12 M.R.S. § 6072. The report often contains sensitive business information regarding the lessee’s operations. A municipality adjacent to the leased area is entitled to a copy of the report from the DMR upon request. Although the reports were (and are) clearly confidential in the possession of the DMR, it was unclear whether copies furnished by the state to municipalities retained confidential status. A new law (PL 2021, c. 581) clarifies that seeding and harvest reports submitted to DMR by an aquaculture lessee remain confidential in municipal hands. (S.F.P.)

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# MAINE MUNICIPAL BOND BANK

## 2023 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.

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 8<sup>th</sup> - Application Deadline**

**Wednesday, March 15<sup>th</sup> - Application Approval (MMBB Board Meeting)**

**Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> - Preliminary opinions and loan agreements due from bond counsel of each borrower**

**Wednesday, April 5<sup>th</sup> - Last date for signing school contracts and rates in place for water district. PUC approvals due**

**Week of April 17<sup>th</sup> - Maine Municipal Bond Bank Pricing**

**Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup> - Final documents due from bond counsel**

**Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> - Pre-closing**

**Thursday, May 18<sup>th</sup> - Closing - Bond proceeds available**

If you would like to participate in or have any questions regarding the 2023 Spring Bond Issue, please contact Toni Reed at [treed@mmbb.com](mailto:treed@mmbb.com) or (207)622-9386 ext. 213.



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