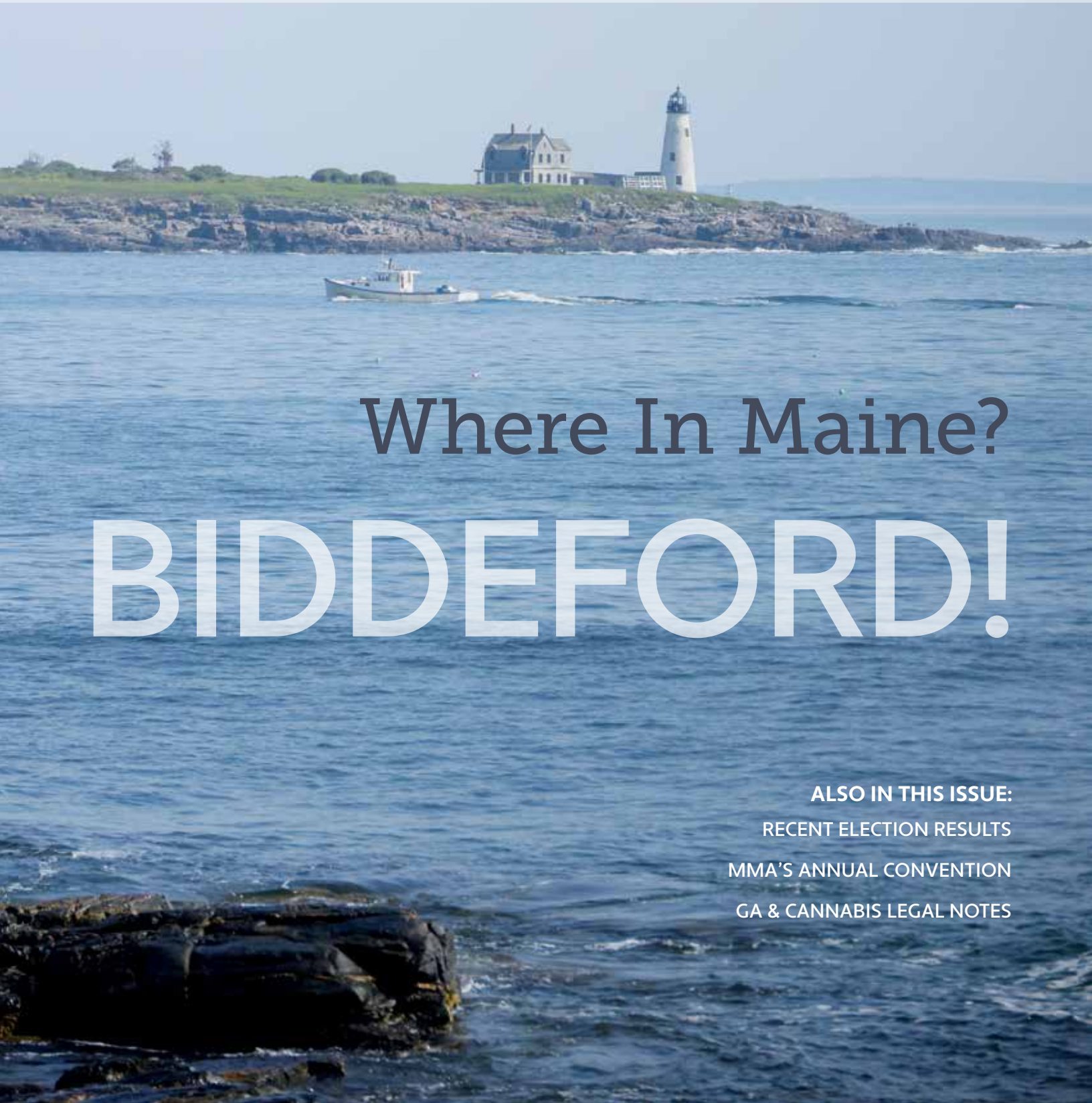


Maine Town & City

The magazine of the Maine Municipal Association

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Where In Maine?

BIDDEFORD!

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In this issue

FOCUSING ON YOUTH. Jobs for Maine Graduates, the Maine Apprenticeship Program, and the Career Exploration Program all have a goal of encouraging Maine's next generation to find careers at home. Some municipalities are turning to these programs to help fill vacancies. **PAGE 7**

ELECTED OFFICIALS SERIES. This month, Cathy Conlow, MMA executive director, closes out the series with an overview of the lessons learned. **PAGE 9**

PROFILES OF SERVICE. This is the first in a series of personal profiles featuring the people who work in municipal government. Wendy Rawski, Eliot town clerk, shares why she has dedicated 36 years to her York County hometown. **PAGE 11**

OPIOID SETTLEMENT. Municipalities and counties across Maine are investing opioid settlement funds in programs and services focused on efforts that save lives and prevent the misuse of opioids, especially among youth. While the \$230 million allocated to Maine is a large amount, the question that remains...is it enough? **PAGE 13**

MMA'S 88TH ANNUAL CONVENTION. Look no further for a sneak peek at the sessions and activities planned for MMA's annual convention on October 2 and 3. **PAGE 17**

WHERE IN MAINE? This month is it Biddeford, a community with a past rich with industrial roots and a growing, diverse, and vibrant culture. **PAGE 29**

DEPARTMENTS

Digital Equity / 23

May & June Election Results / 27

People / 36

News from Around the State / 38

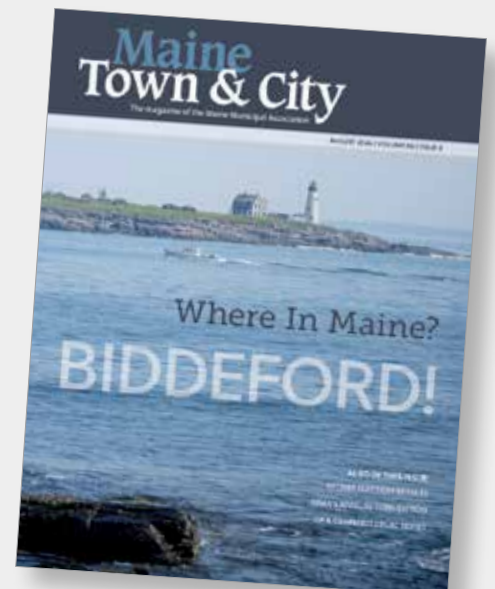
Legal Notes / 40

Training Opportunities / 43

ABOUT THE COVER

A spectacular view of Biddeford's Wood Island lighthouse from the East Point Sanctuary Trail.

(Photo by Rebeca Lambert, Maine Municipal Association)



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MMA Traditions

By Kate Dufour / Director, Advocacy & Communications



Perhaps it is a symptom of age, or better yet the result of acquired wisdom, but over the last several months this feature informally referred to as “Page 5” has focused on the importance of traditions. Not by design or plan, but rather, happenstance.

In May, MMA President, and Ludlow town manager, Diane Hines discussed the value of participating in the National League of City’s March conference, which brings municipal leaders from around the nation to Washington, D.C. for training, networking and discussions with elected federal leaders about issues of mutual importance. In June, the focus was on the Legislature’s adjournment, an annual tradition that recaps the many ways in which state lawmakers have impacted the delivery of local government services. Last month, MMA Executive Director, Cathy Conlow, touched on the importance of networking with peers to share ideas and experiences, and more importantly, generating lifelong relationships.

In August the theme continues with a focus on MMA’s two-day convention, to be held in Augusta on Oct. 2 and 3, an annual tradition that is 88 years in the running. Layering tradition upon tradition, during this year’s convention, the Ethel N. Kelley Memorial Award winner will be unveiled on Wednesday evening, and earlier that day, MMA’s newly elected president, Bradley town manager, Melissa Doane will be sworn into office.

While these events might seem routine, they are of great importance to the Association and its members.

During the changing of the guard, so to speak, our members will learn about Melissa’s priorities for the coming year, the policy changes she intends to pursue, if any, and the way in which she will communicate the progress being made on the association’s goals with our members. During that event, we will also reflect on the association’s 2024 accomplishments, as Diane will address conventioners one last time as MMA’s president.

Acknowledgement of those who have stepped up to the plate to serve on MMA’s governing board will also take place at Wednesday’s luncheon. Currently serving and newly elected executive committee members, and past MMA presidents will be introduced, which is a reminder that the Association is a membership organization that is fueled by the contributions of dedicated volunteers. The programs and services offered, the positions established

on initiatives addressed by the legislature, and the priorities and goals of the association are all generated by town and city leaders. We are truly nothing without our members.

Additionally, during that luncheon, municipal employees, selected by the boards of their affiliate groups, will be celebrated for contributions to their profession. The winners of the Annual Municipal Report contest will also be announced during the

luncheon. This annual event is very competitive and the accompanying bragging rights are of great value, lending evidence to the fact that municipal officials across Maine take great pride in their work and communities.

Let’s not forget the infamous Annual Business Meeting, where Cathy will deliver her State of the Association address, focused on the MMA’s successes, challenges and priorities. It’s a barn burner, so it is advised that members arrive early to secure a seat. While I may be accused of slightly exaggerating the entertainment value of the session, it is nonetheless an important tradition. Much like the annual town meeting or a council budget hearing, it provides the opportunity for all our members to learn about what’s in store for the municipal community and to ask questions about the association’s endeavors.

Last, but certainly not least, the thirty-ninth Ethel N. Kelley Memorial Award winner will be announced during the Member Appreciation Reception held on Wednesday evening. This is a special celebration of dedication to local government service, in honor of a woman who devoted 45 years to the association and its members. The award’s namesake worked for MMA since its founding in 1936 until her death in 1981.

The award was created to recognize municipal leaders, employees and volunteers in our communities who go above and beyond expectations to provide services to our residents. They are the people in our towns and cities who always step up to the plate to serve on boards and commissions, and whose vital contributions often go unrecognized.

Of MMA’s recognition awards, it is the one that humbles many of us the most, as it highlights the difficult work of municipal officials, employees and volunteers and provides an opportunity to truly celebrate the many contributions of our members. 🏔️



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Focusing on Youth

Hiring young people not only assists in filling workplace vacancies, but the experience might just convince these new hires to stay in Maine, indefinitely.

By Stephanie Bouchard

It takes a city, on average, 130 days to fill an open position compared to 36 days in the private sector. When the pandemic hit in 2020, municipal employment levels still hadn't recovered from the Great Recession of 2007-2009, and it's only been in the last year that some municipalities have seen their employment levels return to where they were in 2020.

In Maine, many, if not most, municipalities have open positions they are struggling to fill. Here and across the country, municipal leaders are looking to create a workforce pipeline by tapping their communities' young people.

"Here at NLC, when we ask city leaders what keeps 'em up at night, it is workforce development and it's housing," said Michael Bartlett, a program director focused on workforce issues for the National League of Cities (NLC). "Unsurprisingly, when you think of populations that cities are interested in from a workforce perspective, youth rise to the top of the list."

In Maine, there are several workforce development programs, such as the Maine Apprenticeship Program, the Jobs for Maine Graduates Program and the Maine Government Summer Internship Program through the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at the University of Maine, that seek to build Maine's workforce generally, and specifically, to demonstrate to Maine's youth that a good career is possible in their home state.

The newest effort by the state to support workforce development is its Career Exploration Program (CEP). Supported by \$25 million from the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan, the CEP got underway last year with the aim of offering paid work experience to youth ages 16 to 24.

According to the Department of Economic and Community Development, which oversees the program in cooperation with the Department of Education, Department of Labor, and the Governor's Children's Cabinet, almost 3,000 youth had participated in a paid work experience through CEP with a Maine employer as of the summer of 2023. The goal is to connect a minimum of 6,000 young

people with such experiences.

One of the communities that has been participating in the Career Exploration Program is the Washington County town of Danforth, with a population hovering around 600. Like many towns and cities across the state, the businesses and town office in Danforth are facing a workforce shortage and are concerned about the youth of the community leaving.

Danforth, bordered by East Grand Lake, and beyond, to Canada, on its eastern boundary, the community sees a lot of tourists and part-time residents in the summer, but being so remote (Houlton is about 40 minutes away) has put a crunch on the workforce for businesses in the town and region, as well as town government.

There's a huge labor shortage throughout the region and community," said Ardis Brown, Danforth's town manager, "and so the hope and the idea is to let the kids experience some [career paths] and hopefully they'll get their education and stay here, want to work here."

"We are in a rural area, 34 miles from Houlton, from the nearest main service center, so we need students and young people to step into some of these positions and jobs and the trades," said Angela Cowger, the Extended Learning Opportunities coordinator based at Danforth's East Grand School.

Her position at the school has been funded by the Career Exploration Program, she said, but beginning next year, her job has been incorporated into the school budget. "We've done presentations at the [school board meetings] and they see how the students are really getting plugged into the town. So, for them to take on my salary, especially right now with as difficult as it is in school budgets, it really speaks of the value that they see in it."

In addition to paying Cowger's salary, the grant Danforth received also pays an hourly minimum wage to the students working with employers in town, who typically work about 10 hours a week. Most students who are working are juniors or seniors, but the program is open to younger students.

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

Each of the students who have worked at the town office have been seniors, said Brown. After school let out for the summer last year, the first student who worked in the office was hired by the town to fill in during the summer, which tends to be a busy time for the town office due to a high seasonal population.

Besides learning the ropes of working in a town office—how to process motor vehicle registrations and building permits, gaining an understanding of excise tax and property tax and records management—the town has made sure their student workers get training, Brown said, some of those trainings through the Maine Municipal Association. In May of this year, the student currently working in the office went with the town’s deputy clerk for a full day’s training for clerks.

While CEP and other youth workforce programs in Maine aren’t solely to create a hiring pipeline to municipal jobs, communities like Danforth can take advantage of and benefit from them. Having just one student worker in the town office has been a big help in Danforth, Brown noted.

“Every little town has that need [for a clerk], and there’s not enough people to fill those positions,” Brown said. “So, at this point, they could come back to our region and take a job opening that comes open, or they have the skills so they could go to any municipality in the state of Maine.”

Other communities across the country benefitting from their youth workforce programs include:

Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Its Earn and Learn summertime youth employment program connects those age 14 to 24 residing in Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee to meaningful work experiences across a broad spectrum of industries.


Frederick, Maryland: Its Workforce Services’ Summer Jobs Program, another summertime program, pairs local employers with those age 14 to 21 in Frederick County who face barriers to employment, such as having a disability or being from a low-income household.

Los Angeles, California: Hire LA’s Youth is the umbrella for a number of youth hiring programs in the city, many of them specifically geared toward putting young people into municipal jobs.

When municipalities consider hiring youth, there are some things to keep in mind, Michael Bartlett of the National League of Cities pointed out:

- Recognize that you may have to change longstanding policies. For example, municipalities are doing away with (depending on the job) the requirement for undergraduate degrees. Policies limiting hires to those age 18 and older should be revisited.
- Think about and strategize solutions to overcome the barriers youth hires may face, including lack of housing, trouble getting transportation, and childcare responsibilities, either because they are young parents or are taking care of siblings.
- Examine staff perceptions about youth workers. Many young people leave jobs because they don’t feel respected by their older coworkers.
- Take advantage of workforce development funds that are part of funding from state or federal government for specific projects, such as infrastructure improvements.
- Think outside the box. Municipalities traditionally have hired youth for summer jobs like being a lifeguard at public pools or running parks and rec youth programs, but they can be used in so many other ways. In countries like Germany and Switzerland, teenagers are working with highly advanced, multimillion-dollar manufacturing machinery, for example.

“I think we set too low expectations for what young people can do,” Bartlett said. “I would challenge anybody that with the proper support, young people can succeed in any role you can imagine.”

For more information about the Career Exploration Program, go to <https://40006601.hs-sites.com/mcep-landing-page> 



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A Concise Summary of An Elected Official's Survival Guide

Throughout this series MMA staff have provided the advice, tips, and tools elected officials need to fulfill their roles, however, all good things must come to an end.

By Catherine Conlow / Executive Director

Over the course of six editions of the Maine Town & City, MMA staff have shared advice, tips and tools with elected officials. As the series' name indicates, the goal was to ensure that new and seasoned elected officials, alike, have the basic information necessary to lead Maine's towns and cities.

Powers of Municipal Government. MMA's Legal Department got it all started with an overview of the fundamentals of municipal government, including an informative description of home rule authority, forms of municipal government, and the variety of governance models adopted within each form of government, which are tailored to meet each municipality's unique needs.

Of note, the article also focused on the powers of municipal government, which include legislative, executive, and judicial functions. As we learned, municipal legislative functions include those primarily performed by the legislative body (e.g., town meeting or council), including the election of officers and the adoption of budgets and ordinances, while executive functions rest with the elected municipal officers. These functions are generally grouped into four broad categories, including finance; public health, safety and welfare; maintenance of public property; and management of contracts and interlocal and public relations. Finally, since there are no municipal courts in Maine, towns and cities must develop judicial processes to settle disputes associated with the enforcement of ordinances and for managing personnel matters, for example.

Loudermill Hearing, Weingarten Rights & Garrity Rights...Oh My! In the July magazine, MMA's Human Resources (HR) and Personnel Services staff reminded readers that in the process of taking a disciplinary action for a non-probationary employee—where the outcome may result in a suspension, demotion or termination—employees have a right to due process through a Lou-

dermill Hearing. When dealing with union employees where disciplinary action may be taken, employees have Weingarten Rights, allowing a union representative to be present during the process of an investigation. Finally, in the event an employee is being investigated for potentially criminal reasons and is compelled to cooperate with the investigation or be terminated should they not respond to the questions, they are protected by their Garrity Rights. This provides that their statements cannot be used against them in criminal proceedings.

Additionally, MMA's HR department offers fee-based services, such as executive searches, background checks, and collective bargaining assistance, to help member communities in navigating the complexities of personnel matters.

Avoiding Discrimination Claims. In March and at the request of MMA's Risk Management Services (RMS), attorneys from Norman, Hanson & DeTroy discussed the Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA) and its importance to municipal employers. MHRA prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, physical or mental disability, religion, age, ancestry, national origin or familial status. Given the extensive reach of the act, the article underscored the importance of ensuring that employees receive training and highly advised municipal employers to adopt policies that explain what discriminatory conduct includes and the steps employees should take to address such conduct. The major takeaway is that these policies must affirm that the municipality takes claims of discrimination seriously and as a result all claims are investigated thoroughly. Documentation of each stage of the claim process is vital.

The article also included descriptions of the services RMS provides, including three self-insurance pools. These programs include the: (1) Workers' Compensation Fund,

which assists members with claims management and loss prevention activities; (2) Property & Casualty Pool, which provides members with a broad range of property and liability coverage products at favorable rates; and (3) Unemployment Compensation Fund, which is a self-funded program that allows RMS to serve as a liaison between participants and the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation in the handling of unemployment claims.

Education & Training. In addition to protecting our members, MMA also takes an active role in training and educating, and in some cases, certifying elected and appointed municipal officials and employees. Of direct interest to municipal officers, MMA offers five Elected Officials Workshops annually in person and via Zoom, and hosts recordings of webinars in the Video Training Library for viewing at any time. These workshops are designed with the newly elected official in mind, but also for those who might benefit from a “refresher” as time goes on. The bulk of the training is provided by MMA’s Legal Services and includes a very popular segment on conflicts of interests and thoroughly explains municipal officials’ responsibilities under the Freedom of Access Act. As a bonus, a component related to communicating with the media and public has been added to the training.

MMA also offers a variety of different stand-alone courses that elected officials are encouraged to take, including basic municipal budgeting, personnel practices, labor and employment laws, and the principles of assessing for the non-assessor.

Communications. In the April edition, attention turned to providing elected officials with the tips to use when speaking with residents, employees, and fellow councilors and select board members. Suggestions ranged from being mindful of body language to the value of communicating as your authentic self. Specifically emphasized was the need to provide timely and accurate information and in doing so, the importance of adopting policies that spell out the chain of communication, which can change depending on the issue’s urgency or sensitivity.

Advocacy. In June, the focus was on advocacy and the role of MMA’s 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), which was created by the association’s 12-member Executive Committee in the 1970s to ensure that the collective voices and needs of towns, cities, and plantations were heard by members of the Maine State Legislature. The LPC has two primary responsibilities. One is to establish MMA’s positions on all bills before the legislature. The other takes place shortly after the newly-elected LPC

is seated, which is to develop MMA’s two-year legislative platform, which normally consists of a dozen or so bills focused on enacting new or amending existing laws to improve the delivery of municipal services for consideration by the legislature. The newly elected LPC will get to work quickly, as it is scheduled to convene on August 29 to begin the process of developing MMA’s 2024-2026 legislative platform.

To that end, staff, via the use of a legislative issues survey, have invited all municipal officials to share what issues they believe should be addressed by the legislature during the 2025-2026 session. If you have not already done so, please reach out to Kate Dufour at kdufour@memun.org before August 29.

I hope that you found this series useful as it was developed in recognition of the work that elected officials do, which at times is difficult, not very well compensated, and unfortunately, often without the acknowledgement of a job well done. While the published articles provide excellent summaries, greater details about MMA programs and services can be found on our website at www.memun.org.

As always, I encourage you to reach out to MMA staff who can help you locate needed resources and answer your questions. 🏡

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Profiles of Service...

Wendy Rawski, Eliot Town Clerk

“I’m a coat hanger.” After 36 years with the town of Eliot, Rawski is “still hanging out.”

By Stephanie Bouchard

Wendy Rawski likes to joke that she’s a coat hanger. After 36 years working for the town of Eliot, currently as the town clerk and tax collector, she tells people “I’m still hanging out,” and she wouldn’t have it any other way.

When Rawski first started working for the town in 1987 at the age of 19, the customer service role she took on was just, in her mind, a short-term stop as she figured out her next steps. Working her entire adult life for the town she grew up in was not in her plans.

What she was aiming for was a role in the medical field. Even though she loved animals, she ruled out veterinary science after talking to local veterinarians and getting the low-down on what veterinary school involved.

She shifted her interest in medicine to the idea of becoming a nurse and was mulling that prospect when her father, who was then working for the town in the public works department, told her about an entry-level position in the clerk’s office coming available. “I took (the job), honestly, never, ever imagining I would be here this long,” she says.

In the early days of her employment, she assisted residents paying their property taxes and registering their vehicles. Nothing too exciting. But what hooked her, and keeps her hooked to this day, is the variety. “I love that every day comes, and you just never know what’s coming at you,” she says.

Car registrations, birth, marriage and death certificates, tax collection—you’d think the repetition of these would get boring over the decades, but each individual case can have enough nuance where on-the-fly thinking comes into play. And, Rawski likes operating on her toes.



Wendy Rawski

Elections provide the perfect opportunity for her to be in her favorite zone: “Elections are really my jam,” she admits.

As anyone who has worked an election knows, a lot of work goes into them and sometimes they’re total chaos. “I love the whole process,” she says. “You’re planning an event from start to finish and there are so many pieces to it. That’s just a really fun process to go through, even though it does have its trials at times, too.”

Those trials can take the form of 18-hour days, months of planning, and sometimes last-minute disruptions, but lately, politics have become more

of an issue. “Sometimes the political climate can make it difficult (with) people questioning (the process),” she says. “Everybody has a right to understand, but . . . when we try our very best to do everything perfectly—nobody’s perfect—but we try very hard to be perfect at what we do.”

In addition to running Eliot’s elections, Rawski sometimes helps other towns with recounts, and is a member of the Maine Town and City Clerks’ Association (MTCCA) elections working group.

Last spring, Secretary of State Shenna Bellows selected Rawski to be one of two Maine representatives to the U.S. Elections Assistance Standards Board. This board is a 110-member independent, bipartisan commission created by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Fifty-five state/territory elections representatives and 55 local election officials make up the membership of the board.

The Standards Board is charged with the mission of helping election officials improve the administration of elections and helping citizens participate in the voting process. To that end, it has a host of responsibilities, including developing voluntary voting system guidelines, testing and accrediting voting systems, and maintaining the national mail voter registration form.

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

That Rawski was selected to represent Maine as part of this national board is a testament to her professionalism and civic dedication, those who work with her say.

“She’s well-respected in the community (and) in other communities,” says Melissa Albert, who, before moving to her current role as the human resources manager for the town, worked with Rawski as an assistant clerk. “She knows our policies, she knows our charters, she knows state law.” And when she is faced with someone who is upset about something, she keeps calm and respectfully stands her ground when she needs to.

“It’s a tough thing when you grew up in a community and there are policies and practices put in place and you need to enforce them,” says Mike Sullivan, Eliot’s town manager. “I’ve seen situations where people have tried to exploit their relationship with her.”

Sullivan watched as such a situation unfolded recently when a resident came into the town office after bouncing a check. The office policy is that after bouncing a check a different form of payment must be used. The resident was someone Rawski had known for a long time who was insistent on paying with another check. “In my estimation, he tried to bully her, and she stood her ground and said, ‘Nope, that’s the policy,’ and she was very professional about it. She wasn’t argumentative, although he was, and he made terrible comments about

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This is the first in a series of personal profiles Maine Town & City is running on the people who work in municipal government. Do you know someone who would make a great profile? Send an email to kdufour@memun.org with your recommendations.

the town and what kind of people we are.”

Most of the time, though, upset residents are more easily calmed because she knows them or knows their family members, says Albert. “Sometimes when people are really upset, I think being able to have that relation, saying, ‘Hey, I went to school with your daughter,’ or whatever, I think it puts a different spin on it,” she says. “I think people end up starting to be like, ‘Okay, well, she knows me, she knows my family. Maybe I’m not acting the best.’”


The inevitable occasional upset resident comes with the job and in no way diminishes Rawski’s love for her job or her community.

As evidenced by her working long hours, sometimes coming in on a Saturday to help with a marriage license, or just participating in the community through volunteer work and being involved with the PTO and other school-related activities, “she would do anything for that town,” says Brenda Harvey, who worked with Rawski for 15 years as Eliot’s deputy clerk.

“We have to tell her to go home sometimes because she is in the office late sometimes and early the next morning,” says Sullivan.

“I love that I’m working for the town that I grew up in,” explains Rawski. “I just think community outreach and taking care of the people that live in a community is a very important thing.”

Over the course of her three-plus decades working for the town of Eliot, Rawski has had opportunities to leave the town and work for other towns that offered her advancement and more money, but she chose to stay. “Sometimes making more money and changing isn’t always the best thing for you,” she says. “I’ve just always stayed because I think truly my heart and soul is here and I’m just going to... ride off into the sunset from the town of Eliot.” 🏔️




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Local Use of Opioid Settlement Funds

A Drop in the Bucket?

By Colleen Hennessy

The substance misuse epidemic, specifically the opioid epidemic, has cost Maine an unquantifiable level of pain and loss over the past three decades. The financial toll on Maine's communities has also been enormous, and the epidemic has not yet loosened its grip.

Seven hundred and thirty Mainers overdosed, fatal and nonfatal, in April 2024, according to the latest "Maine Monthly Overdose Report." Fentanyl, an opioid, was the leading killer in overdoses from January to April this year. The impact of opioid misuse continues to be felt in hundreds of Maine families. The impact of fatal and nonfatal overdoses, forgetting other drug-use related incidents, is also felt by Maine's municipal staff, especially law enforcement and emergency medical services (EMS) providers, on most shifts. From January to April 2024 law enforcement responded to 3,136 overdose incidents and EMS responded to 10,331 incidents in Maine.

Clearly, Maine's municipalities still need resources to tackle the misuse of opioids and the National Opioid Settlement is an attempt to quantify the damage caused by the manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of opioids and make some monetary restitution to state and municipal governments, and other public institutions and organizations. Maine is due to receive \$230 million dollars of the overall \$50 billion dollar settlement. This chunk will be split three ways in Maine, with thirty percent being paid directly to 39 counties, cities and towns. By 2038 this share will amount to more than \$66 million. While certainly not an attempt to compensate for the human toll on communities, it is a small financial contribution to help address the ongoing needs

in the hardest hit communities.

Because substance misuse is a national public health crisis, with opioids alone killing more than 500,000 Americans in the past two decades, there is research on evidence-based responses to help guide counties, towns and cities decide how to allocate the money they will receive in phased payments over eighteen years.

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health developed a suite of tools to help municipalities plan for and execute impactful public health interventions in line with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by parties receiving money from the settlements. The MOU is broad and does not have specific reporting or monitoring requirements. John Hopkins' goal in developing "The Principles for the Use of Funds from the Opioid Litigation" was to prevent another "significant missed opportunity" such as the failure to use tobacco funds received from lawsuits against related companies to invest in tobacco prevention and cessation programs and address "the greatest cause of preventable death in the United States."

The five principles that should guide the spending are simple: spend the money to save lives; use evidence to guide spending; invest in youth prevention; focus on racial equity; and develop a fair and transparent process for deciding where to spend the funding. In a rural state like Maine, with access to mental healthcare at a crisis point due to ballooning waitlists and workforce shortages, planning and choice might be limited by the dire need to fill gaps.

In responding to urgent workforce needs, a third of the subdivisions that received funding in 2023, including counties, towns and cities, reported spending settlement funds on law enforcement and jail programs. This included medically assisted treatment (MAT) for

Colleen Hennessy is a freelance writer and a former employee of the City of Portland from 2016-2017. She is a regular contributor to *Maine Town & City*, info@colleenhennessy.com

substance use disorder in jails, behavioral health specialists, and more controversially, buying drug-checking devices.

For example, Brunswick Police Department (PD) and Sagadahoc County Sheriff's Office combined forces and funds to pay for a Sweetser liaison officer, housed within Brunswick PD, who answers calls in Brunswick, Bath, and Topsham. Sweetser is a Saco-based mental health service agency that employs behavioral health professionals in other police agencies. While not focused on substance misuse specifically, the role fills a need for the public and for public safety staff since according to the Treatment Advocacy Center, one in four fatal police interactions in the United States involve someone with severe mental illness. This type of allocation represents a prominent theme in overall spending by municipalities, according to a survey conducted by the *Maine Monitor*.

Augusta's desire to balance urgent unmet needs with thorough accountability in allocating the \$450,000 in funds they have for 2024 demonstrates the challenges facing municipalities. In early June, councilors discussed forming a local committee, consisting of experts in substance use disorder, both with lived and formal expertise, which would make recommendations to the city councilors on how best to spend the money to target the issue effectively. Within a week of this propos-

al, councilors also wanted to address an urgent, and publicly demanded, need to respond to a public order issue downtown. In response, the council decided to hire a behavioral health professional to work with Augusta Police Department without waiting for a committee recommendation.

Like in many of Maine's cities, business owners and members of the public have been complaining about groups of transient people, loitering and soliciting in the downtown area. Complaints reported in the *Kennebec Journal* range from fear and intimidation created by solicitation and public drug use to harassment. Demands for an increased police presence have led to the proposed solution - the immediate allocation of \$65,000-\$80,000 from the settlement funds towards hiring a mental health liaison to provide support and connection to treatment options, rather than additional law enforcement. Councilors also approved immediately using \$10,000 to help individuals pay for treatment programs.

In addition to the Augusta and Brunswick initiatives, Falmouth, Gorham, South Portland, York and Sagadahoc County have spent or allocated settlement funds totaling approximately \$370,000 to fund similar positions within law enforcement agencies. Sanford will use the funds to "offset the costs" of a mental health unit within

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the police department while Lewiston spent \$37,000 on a new vehicle used by mental health professionals who ride along with Lewiston and Auburn police officers.

While allocating funds for community health workers salaries is part of York's strategy, the town is also investing in infrastructure to provide treatment to individuals and support first responders through a collaborative project. A York County Substance Use Treatment and Recovery Center and York County First Responder Training Center are situated on county land and will be funded through federal and county funds, along with the opioid settlement funds. The planning board recently granted approval for construction.

All their funds, \$4.6 million, will be used to build a 58-bed regional recovery center in Alfred. This facility, with the capacity to serve 190 people, will be the largest non-hospital center in Maine. While using some shared financial and physical resources, the separate First Responder Training Center aims to tackle fire and EMS training needs by housing 15 staff and supporting the initial and ongoing training needs of 85 first responders each week.

Several counties, specifically Androscoggin, Piscataquis, Penobscot, Hancock and Kennebec, plan to spend most of their funds on treatment programs in jails.

These programs include general counseling or mental health services, substance use specific programs, and

staff and prescriptions to run medically assisted treatment (MAT) substance use programs for inmates. Governor Mills signed an executive order in 2019 directing the Department of Corrections to pilot a MAT program for treatment of incarcerated Mainers. Shortly thereafter, a federal court ruled that Aroostook County had to provide the services, and in 2022 the governor signed into law a requirement that all county jails provide medication for the treatment of substance use disorders. With the bill came the first budget allocation, so while the principles from Johns Hopkins caution against using the funds to fill gaps, there has been a gap in Maine's budgets to help pay for these programs. Counties have allocated anywhere from \$43,000 for a medical technician to \$1.05 million dollars on "prevention" without specific details made public.

Whether towns and cities are funding education prevention in middle and high schools, cleaning up syringes, researching a strategic plan to coordinate services, or investing in much needed short-term recovery and transition housing, the funds while substantial, don't come close to compensating Maine families, municipalities or the State for the human cost of past and current suffering. Hopefully, if put towards evidence-based programs and matched by significant State investment and coordination, the funds will lessen the future human cost in Maine. 🏡

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A Sneak Peek at the 88th Annual MMA Convention

Focusing on the unstoppable resilience of municipal government and its leaders.



Hannah Pingree



Dr. Michele Freeman



Steve Patterson

The theme of resilience—coming back after tragedy and disaster—permeates this year’s 88th annual MMA convention.

The featured speaker will describe how the City of Las Vegas rebounded after a gunman killed 58 people and wounded hundreds of others on Oct. 1, 2017, in the deadliest shooting in modern U.S. history.

Less than a year ago, the City of Lewiston, Maine, experienced a similar tragedy where a gunman killed 18 people and wounded 13 others at two different locations on Oct. 25, 2023.

In addition, major weather-related disasters, including those resulting from severe storms and flooding, have negatively impacted communities across the state over the past two years.

The convention’s full theme: “UNSTOPPABLE: Harnessing Resilience” will be addressed in several workshops that will offer ideas on ways that municipal officials, employees and others can help their communities recover after tragic and disastrous events as well as ways to try to prevent such events and prepare for the unexpected.

In late April, Maine Gov. Janet Mills signed a supplemental budget that had “significant investments supporting resiliency and recovery in Lewiston and across Maine.” It included “one-time funds for a crisis receiving center in Lewiston, post-traumatic wellness services for first respond-

ers, community-based behavioral health services, and filling in the behavioral health service continuum.”

Pre-registration for the convention, which takes place this year on Oct. 2 and 3 at the Augusta Civic Center, must be completed by Sept. 30. The Maine Municipal Association has 482 municipalities as members and the cost to attend is \$110 for two days.

“We try pretty hard to keep the cost down and make sure training is accessible for members,” said MMA’s director of Educational Services, Peter Osborne. “We try to get everyone under the municipal umbrella participating.”

The vast majority of the municipalities in Maine will be represented at the convention. “This is really our flagship event,” Osborne said. The yearly convention typically attracts 600-700 attendees from municipalities, plus an additional 150-200 vendors and sponsors. Last year’s convention theme was “Lead, Motivate, Communicate.”

MMA also offers two smaller conferences each year, and this year MMA hosted one on human resources and management, and the other on cybersecurity.

In the convention’s opening address at 9 a.m. Oct. 2, Dr. Michele Freeman, retired chief of the Las Vegas Department of Public Safety, is slated to describe her experience leading the city through the tragedy seven years ago and discuss “transcending grief and trauma to adapt to shake-ups in your organizations and communities.”

Other featured speakers at the convention on Oct. 3 include Hannah Pingree, director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and co-chair of the Maine Climate Council, who will present "The Urgency of Building Resilient Communities." She will focus on the impacts of climate change and offer examples of the effects of the storms this past winter.

Steve Patterson, who is mayor of Athens, Ohio, and the second vice president of the National League of Cities (NLC), will speak on "Building Resilient Communities Through NLC Advocacy" at the Oct. 3 luncheon.



Ryan Pelletier

Ryan Pelletier, who is county administrator in Aroostook County and the current president of the Maine Town, City and County Management Association, has been a regular convention attendee in previous years and continues to promote it.

He served on the Executive Committee of the Maine Municipal Association for a number of years and has been town manager in Madawaska, St. Agatha and Wallagrass. He talked about the convention's two prongs:

"First you have elected officials: the boards of selectmen and town councilors. It's geared for them to learn more about what MMA provides for services for all municipalities. A lot of them know their own community's role, but they don't always know that MMA has services available to them or their department. There are a lot of training programs for elected officials."

He also encourages people to spend time on the floor with vendors.

"It gives municipal officials, both elected and appointed, an opportunity to meet with people in municipal banking, road paving, and municipal water and sewer engineering firms. It brings a lot of variety to municipalities, particularly places like Aroostook where we're rural. We oftentimes rely on those outside vendors because we don't have a lot of them in the county. The convention gives an opportunity to meet those vendors."

Pelletier said the second prong is aimed at the employee side: the town managers, the clerks, the road foremen, public works directors, etc. "It's a great opportunity for networking," he said. "All those groups have their own associations and oftentimes those associations have meetings during the convention. It gives a chance to meet

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people across the state that are doing similar work in their own communities, resource sharing and best practices.

“I really always enjoyed the workshop training sessions where you get four or five people in your profession up on a platform or at a table talking about an issue because we all deal with similar issues regardless of whether you’re in Fort Kent or Kittery. It’s great to learn from people doing the same work about experiences.”

Pelletier recalled one workshop where a panel of municipal officials talked about how they converted their offices to four-day-work weeks, what benefits that came from that, how they implemented it, and how they communicated it among their citizens. “I saw a lot of people around the room nodding, saying, ‘I never thought of that. That’s a great idea, I’ll try that in my own community,’” Pelletier said.

He added, **“I really encourage people to take advantage of it if they can; MMA is an absolutely wonderful resource for its members and they do a great job advocating. There’s an opportunity to talk to the advocacy staff there and speak directly to them about legislative priorities that members want to see in the next legislative session.”**

This year’s convention offers a number of concurrent sessions and panels on a variety of topics. “We try to be responsive to topical issues and also the nuts and bolts, including interpersonal and technical skills,” Osborne said.

Here is a short sampling of the almost 30 workshops and panels:

- Effective Local Leadership: Policy Development & Implementation;
- DISCovering Workplace Harmony: Working with Various Personalities;
- Getting the Most Out of Your Mental Health Resource;
- Enhancing Municipal Buildings Through Energy Efficiency Upgrades;
- We’ve Always Done It That Way Is Over: What’s Next?;
- What To Expect When You’re Expecting a Disaster; and
- Situational Awareness for the Municipal Official, Gun Law Changes and Best Practices.

Also, a number of associated organizations are sponsoring specific topic related presentations.

- A session on “Municipalities and Mental Health: Behavioral Health Liaisons and First Responder Resources” is sponsored by the Maine Animal Control Association.
- “Community Risk Reduction Overview” is sponsored by the Maine Fire Chiefs Association.
- In addition, Joyce Taylor, chief engineer with the Maine Department of Transportation, will present a session on “Lessons on Infrastructure Resilience from MaineDOT.”

Several workshops offer credits for certification or continuing education, including “Vital Records Updates” and “Elections Updates,” both sponsored by the Maine Town & City Clerks Association; “Short-Term Rentals: The Assessors’ Side” sponsored by the Maine Association of Assessing Officers; and “Property Tax Sales and the Foreclosure Process,” sponsored by the Maine Municipal Tax Collectors & Treasurers Association.

“Investment in career development and growth is vital to the continued delivery of quality local government services,” noted MMA Executive Director Catherine Conlow. “As the nature of our members’ work continues to evolve, so does MMA’s training programs. The association’s annual convention is but one of the many educational and networking opportunities available to municipal officials. Not only are these training events important for keeping current on the latest programs and procedures, but also



support the well-being of our members. The ability to meet in a central location to network and connect with local officials in other communities provides chances to share ideas and experiences, as well as to foster lifelong friendships. All elected and appointed municipal officials, whether just beginning a career in municipal government or getting ready to retire, will find value in the annual convention.”

The convention is also the site of meetings for a number of related associations, including the Maine Chapter of American Public Works Association, the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust Annual Reporting Meeting, the Maine Community Development Association, and the MMA Annual Business Meeting.

MMA’s Osborne noted that the list of sponsors and vendors runs the gamut from law firms to financial institutions, technology websites, energy management businesses, various departments and agencies in the state, educational institutions and pavement and highway equipment sellers. “It’s pretty much anyone who wants to do business with municipalities,” he said.

Convention sponsors who jumped on board early this year include **Northeast Bank**, **Affinity LED Lighting** and the law firm of **Drummond Woodsum**.

Matthew Colpitts, who is senior vice president, director of Government Banking, at Northeast Bank, and a former deputy state treasurer in Maine, noted

that the bank has strong community ties and a department specifically devoted to government banking.

“The primary role that we provide to our customers is cash management solutions,” Colpitts said. “When you receive a dollar from a taxpayer to the point when you spend the dollar to purchase a piece of equipment, our job is to make sure that flow of cash is as smooth as possible for the town. We want to make sure that you are getting the most out of your dollar that you possibly can.”

He and his colleague, Jason Simcock, senior vice president and senior government banker, will both be at the convention. “We will probably have one of the first booths you see as you walk in,” Colpitts said. **“We’re looking forward to the convention. It’s the only convention throughout the year that brings everybody across the state together from town managers to town clerks to treasurers. For Jason and me, it’s really like seeing old friends. We really look forward to it every single year.”**

Affinity LED Lighting, the Dover, New Hampshire, firm where all lights are assembled by U.S. veterans, will again be a convention sponsor. The company does streetlights as well as exterior and interior lighting and will have a large section of booths at the convention.

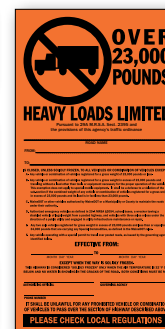
Kelly Smigielski, who does inside sales and marketing for Affinity LED Lighting, said the firm has

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worked for a number of locations in Maine, including York, Berwick and Augusta. “We are looking forward to the convention,” she said. “It’s an opportunity to meet a lot of new municipalities we haven’t worked with in the past. It’s a good way of networking.”

Paul Harris, business development manager, said, “Any building to be converted into LED lighting is really an opportunity for us – any town or government building. We also do an array of private buildings too. Our value to municipalities is we can offer to provide any building with a completely free audit and assessment. We go in and do a free proposal and then we show them how LED lighting cannot only be budget neutral, but also show how upgraded lighting can provide a return on investment.

“With LEDs you get a series of benefits. Obviously financial, which is what most municipalities think of. But also, it’s just better for the world, too. It’s less carbon emissions and less energy usage on the grid. It’s the future of lighting.”

At Drummond Woodsum, which has offices in Portland, Maine, as well as in New Hampshire and Arizona, Terri J. Wilber, director of marketing, said, “Drummond Woodsum takes immense pride in our long-standing commitment to serving municipalities across Maine. For over 40 years, our firm has been a trusted advisor to hundreds of public sector entities, including municipalities, schools, and quasi-municipal corporations. This deep-rooted experience has allowed us to understand the unique challenges and opportunities that these entities face. Our partnership with the Maine Municipal Association is a natural extension of this dedication.”

She added, “By sponsoring MMA’s Annual Conference, we not only contribute to a platform where vital discussions and collaborations take place but also reinforce our commitment to supporting municipal leaders and their communities. This collaboration allows us to stay at the forefront of emerging issues and changes, ensuring that we provide the most relevant and effective counsel to our clients.” 🏔️



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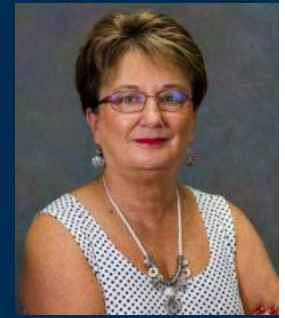
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Connectivity Through Storms

Access, tools, and skills for resilient communities.

Zuzana Duffy, American Connection Corps service member, Island Institute

Christa Thorpe, Community Development Officer, Island Institute

From the southern tip of Maine all the way to Fort Kent, both inland and coastal communities across the state have been experiencing more frequent and severe storms in recent years. These storms not only compromise the structural integrity of infrastructure like road culverts and the electric grid, but they also threaten municipal buildings that often play a critical role in public communication and emergency response, in addition to housing important documents.

There is significant overlap between climate resilience and the need for reliable broadband access, digital tools and skills at the municipal level. Several Maine towns are shifting their focus on the creation of connectivity or resilience hubs and are re-thinking ways to increase capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from extreme weather events. We can look to these communities as models for improved municipal data storage and communication, better data-driven decisions, and readiness for funding opportunities related to Community Resilience Plans and Connectivity Hubs.

Starting with the basics...where you store your data matters.

This past year, the storms that hit Maine in December and January alone caused an estimated \$90 million dollars in damage to public infrastructure and exposed vulnerabilities that already existed even in less extreme weather. Culverts in many towns are inadequate and can't handle the water flow after a summer thunderstorm or during rapid snow melts in the spring. Whether you are a river community, a coastal town, or a mountain haven, the importance of where and how you store your municipal data is very relevant. If carbon



Members of the Deer Isle-Stonington Connectivity Hub programming collaborative, from left: Kimberly Gertz, the Northeast Center for Occupational Health & Safety; Linda Nelson, Town of Stonington Economic & Community Development Director; Morgan Witham, Director, Deer Isle Adult and Community Education; and James Rutter, Director, Haystack Fabrication (Fab) Lab.

copies or data servers are located on the ground, or in a flood prone zone, consider digitizing the records, having them as far away from the ground as possible or developing a specific response plan for weather related incidents outside of normal emergency alert systems.

Broadband as a communications lifeline when the power goes out.

When the town of Cranberry Isles became one of the first Maine communities to invest in a municipally owned fiber-optic internet network, residents couldn't

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This article is the fifth in a series by the Island Institute exploring the topic of digital equity in relation to Maine's municipalities.

have foreseen how much they would appreciate the reliability of the infrastructure. For a variety of reasons, fiber-optic technology is more likely than traditional copper networks to keep working when the power grid is down. Islesford resident, Joanne Thormann, reflects on the new municipal broadband system as a critical asset in times of emergency: “We all used to keep our landlines for emergencies. So, in the old days, when the power went out and we lost the internet we at least had some ties to the outside world... [Now] our broadband is our emergency system. That’s our lifeline. So, the fact that it doesn’t go down when power goes down is really important.”

“[Broadband] is our 911... our emergency team letting us know where the trees are down, where we shouldn’t go, where we should go.”

- Joanne Thormann, Islesford, Cranberry Isles

Digital tools for data-driven decisions.

Beyond the basics of data storage and communications, many municipalities are putting a substantial effort into documenting, monitoring and mapping the effects of the extreme weather events on their infrastructure, businesses or land use to better prepare for the future. This systematically documented information serves as valuable evidence for potential funding applications and allows the town to make research driven decisions. For example, the town of Long Island uses their shoreline data to create maps in ArcGIS, an open-source software, which helps them make the case for grants to shore up public infrastructure and working waterfronts.

Usually, the more data a municipality can submit the better. Cross collaboration on open-source software such as QGIS or ArcGIS happens not only between municipalities but also industries and researchers who might be collecting the data for various other purposes. This allows municipalities to download already existing datasets in support of municipal planning processes. Broadband not only allows you to search for answers more quickly, a person with GIS training in-house can help mitigate future risk. For example, in response to last winter’s storms, the Arrowsic Broadband Authority, a municipal network like the Cranberries, sought out wind trends data because they wanted to be able to budget accurately for annual maintenance and repair

of their aerial fiber internet lines going into the future.

Going deeper...community resilience plans and connectivity hubs.

Since facing a higher volume of extreme weather events, many municipalities are going beyond comprehensive planning to create local economic and climate resilience plans. Within these plans, some communities have started exploring the idea of creating community resilience hubs: multi-purpose buildings that serve as a nexus of community resilience, emergency management, extreme weather event mitigation and social equity. This could look different in each community. Hubs could solely be used as post-storm emergency shelters, or could be designed with a more holistic approach that makes use of the space throughout the year for various purposes. Whatever the primary purpose of these hubs, the goal is for these places to be equitable, open and accessible to all.

For example, community members from Tremont on Mount Desert Island began envisioning a resilience shelter through their participation in the Community Resilience Partnership, a program created and funded through the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) to help Maine communities reduce emissions and prepare for the effects of climate change. According to residents, power outages in Tremont usually last multiple days, and the community needs a hub where people can stay warm, safe, and connected. Grounded in community feedback, the Tremont Resilience Plan was approved by voters at their May 2024 town meeting and will help prepare the town for potential funding opportunities such as the Energy Efficiency Priority Grants awarded by GOPIF in May.

Recipients of GOPIF’s May awards included the bridged islands of Deer Isle and Stonington, which each received \$200,000 for solar arrays and battery storage. The location of this microgrid set up in Stonington is the historic 1905 former Stonington Elementary School, the same municipally owned building just awarded \$1.7 million from the Maine Connectivity Authority for major renovations to establish a Connectivity Hub. The hub will serve as a service and navigational resource for Deer Isle, Stonington, and the surrounding Blue Hill region with a focus on workforce transitions, education, health monitoring, and improving the populations’ access to digital skills and resources.

Stonington’s readiness for these transformational funding opportunities flowed out of their diligent local planning work, from their 2018 Comprehensive Plan

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Bridgton Public Library
Caribou Public Library
Town of Stonington
Mano en Mano
SeniorsPlus



List of Connectivity Hub projects with funding awards announced in June 2024.
<https://www.maineconnectivity.org/connectivity-hubs>

downstream to their 2023 Economic Resilience Strategy. Economic and Community Development Director of the town of Stonington, Linda Nelson, said that the hub grant “is essential to our shared community vision for moving Stonington and the regional fishing communities, for which it is already a service center, into a bright and shining future.”

As we close out this series on what Maine’s Digital Equity plan means for municipalities, even when storm response and energy crises feel more pressing, we hope more communities will be inspired to incorporate the state’s vision statement into their local plans. This will help to promote a shining future and ensure that every person, regardless of their background, resources, circumstances, identity, or community, will have equitable access to the digital world, including:

1. Affordable, reliable internet connectivity;
2. An affordable device that meets their needs;
3. The opportunity to develop digital skills and access technical support;
4. Tools and information to protect themselves and their families online; and,
5. Online government resources that are inclusive and accessible for all. 🏡

ADD CRITICAL CAPACITY TO YOUR ORGANIZATION OR MUNICIPALITY BY BRINGING TOP TALENT BACK HOME TO SERVE.

If you are looking for capacity support for any of the topics touched on in the Digital Equity Series—from digitizing records and automating municipal services to creating a communications plan or designing a municipally-owned broadband network—consider hosting an American Connection Corps (ACC) service member. ACC is an AmeriCorps program aimed at activating local leaders to bridge the digital divide and advance prosperity in rural communities across the United States. Each ACC member commits one year of their lives to helping a host site and its community realize the opportunities that broadband access facilitates. Be part of a “Start Where You Live” movement to retain a new generation of locally rooted leaders in your area.

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Across all three areas, ACC members work toward the program’s core campaign, which is closing the digital divide.

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Deadline to Apply is April 2025 but organizations should reach out ASAP to indicate general interest. The application should take no more than 15 minutes to complete and does not commit you to moving forward.

If your organization is ready to add a skilled, locally rooted, and service minded leader to advance your local impact, or if you know of someone in your community interested in applying to serve, you can access an ACC host site or service member digital application at:
<https://www.americanconnectioncorps.org/apply-now>.

Questions? Reach out to Scott McFarland at scott.mcfarland@leadforamerica.org



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May & June Election Results

Following are municipal election results from May and June annual meetings, as well as local voting on June 11. Challengers are not identified unless they served previously, and unopposed candidates are not included. The results were collected from news accounts, municipal web sites and interviews with town clerks.

Bar Harbor: Incumbents **Joe Minutolo** and **Gary Friedmann** received 743 votes and 648 votes, respectively, to defeat four challengers and win reelection.

Chelsea: Incumbent Selectperson **Sheri Truman** held off a challenger by a vote of 186 to 87.

Cumberland: **Denise Thorsson**, **Helene DiBartolomeo** and **Andrew Magoun**, all newcomers, won the three open seats on the town council. Thorsson won the at-large seat with 1,092 votes, defeating two challengers. DiBartolomeo took the west district seat with 1,378 votes, also holding off a challenger, who received 1,261 votes. Magoun defeated former Councilor George Turner, 1,411 to 1,222 for the Foreside seat. They replaced councilors **Shirley Storey-King**, **Ronald Copp, Jr.**, and **Mark Segrist**, who did not seek reelection.

Dresden: Newcomer **Tracy Tuttle** garnered 360 votes to defeat incumbent **Brian York**, who received 242 votes, and two other challengers.

Edgecomb: Newcomer **George Chase** defeated a challenger by a vote of 92 to 7 to replace Selectperson **Mike Smith**, who did not seek reelection. Chase served on the regional school board for two years and worked as code enforcement officer for the town. He resigned both positions.

Falmouth: Former Town Councilor **Sean Mahoney** and newcomer **Alisa Conroy Morton** won elections in a five-way race. They received 1,461 and 1,056 votes, respectively. They will replace Councilors **Hope Cahan** and **Amy Kuhn**, who did not seek reelection.

Hartland: Incumbent **Jerry Martin** defeated a challenger by a vote of 194 to 120 to serve another three-year term on the select board.

Hermon: Newcomers **Joshua Berry** and **Terry Hamm-Morris** were elected to replace **Danielle Haggerty** and **Steven Thomas**, who did not seek reelection to the select board. Berry, the town's former manager, collected 1,043 votes.

Kingfield: Newcomer **Chris Rushton** won a one-year seat on the select board with 158 votes, defeating a challenger, who received 63 votes. Incumbent **Morgan Dunham** captured the second open seat, holding off a challenger with 184 votes.

Litchfield: Incumbent Selectperson **Clarence Gowell III** received 285 votes to defeat a challenger, who garnered 241 votes.

Livermore Falls: Write-in candidate **John Barbioni** has accepted a seat on the select board. A second write-in candidate declined the two-year position. Both received nine votes. Barbioni was a planning board member when elected.

Madawaska: Newcomers **Jenney Dionne** and **Michael Williams** received 505 votes and 230 votes, respectively, to replace select board chairperson **Richard Dionne**, who did not seek reelection, and **Christopher Braley**, who resigned earlier this year.

Rangeley: Newcomer **Jacob Beaulieu** defeated incumbent **Ethna Thompson** by a vote of 146 to 125 to serve a three-year term on the select board.

Readfield: Incumbent Selectperson **Sean Keegan** and newcomer **Jaaron Shaw** collected 385 and 361 votes, respectively, to defeat incumbent Selectperson **Carol Doorenbos**, who received 246 votes.

Rockport: Chairperson **Denise Munger** and former select board member **Michelle Hannan** held off a third candidate to win seats on the board. Munger received 576 votes; Hannan collected 537.

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

Skowhegan: Newcomer **Amber Lambke** collected 526 votes to defeat incumbent **Harold Bigelow**, who received 355 votes, and three more challengers for a seat on the select board.

St. George: Incumbent Selectperson **Tammy Willey** held off a challenger by a vote of 376 to 176 to win reelection.

Thomaston: Newcomer **Kimberly Matthews** won election on her fourth attempt, receiving 178 votes and defeating a challenger, who collected 126 votes. Matthews replaces **Diane Giese**, who resigned last fall.

Union: Incumbent **Martha Johnston-Nash** held off a challenger to win another three-year term on the select board, while newcomer **Steven Migliorini** held off two challengers to win his first term.

Waldoboro: Incumbent **Abden Simmons** received 599 votes to win reelection, and newcomer **Rebecca Stephens** collected 457 to replace **William Pratt** on the select board. Pratt did not seek reelection. The two winners held off three other candidates; the third highest vote getter received 448 votes.

Wiscasset: Incumbents **Sarah Whitfield, James Andretta and William Maloney** held off a challenger to win new terms on the select board. Whitfield collected the most votes with 471, followed by Andretta with 455 and Maloney with 409.

Yarmouth: Incumbent councilors **Heather Abbott** and board chairperson **David Craig** won reelection with 1,171 votes and 1,256 votes, respectively, defeating a challenger, who received 690 votes. 🏔️



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WHERE *in* MAINE?

By Rebecca Lambert / Municipal Issues Specialist



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

Photos in this series by Rebecca Lambert, MMA

Biddeford.

Inclusive. Creative. Vibrant. Beautiful.

Looking at the counties in Maine that have not yet had a town or city featured in the “Where in Maine” series led me to the beautiful city of Biddeford. Located along the southern coast in York County, with a population of 22,450 (2022 census), Biddeford has a storied past rich with industrial roots and a growing, diverse and vibrant culture. Being from Maine, I’m aware of the abundance of recreational offerings and natural scenic beauty in the area. However, I didn’t expect to see this once mill town transformed into a vibrant and cultural gem. Biddeford is a unique city that intertwines its historical significance with the modern day making it a fulfilling destination to live, work, or visit.

Historical Roots. In the early 19th century with the rise of the industrial era, the city’s location along the Saco River made it an ideal spot for the burgeoning textile industry. The construction of the Saco Water Power Company’s mills in the 1830s transformed Biddeford into a bustling mill town that harnessed the river’s power to produce cotton textiles. The employment opportunities attracted a diverse workforce and fostered a thriving community. At its peak, the textile industry in Biddeford employed thousands and the mill complexes became the heart of the city’s economic and social vitality. These iconic brick mill buildings, some of which still stand today, are a living testament to the city’s industrial prowess and architectural heritage.

As the textile industry declined, it posed significant challenges to Biddeford which led to an economic downturn and a need to redefine its identity. This transformation did not happen overnight, and it wasn’t until the turn of the 21st century when local government, developers, and stakeholders recognized the historical significance of the giant brick mill buildings and the potential to be used for new purposes.

New beginnings, with a nod to history. One of the most significant transformations has been the Pepperell Mill Campus. This sprawling complex has been converted into a mixed-use development, that houses apartments, offices, retail spaces, and art studios. The adaptive reuse preserved the historic character



The “One Blue Sky” mural, by Michigan artist, Pat Perry.

of the mills while integrating modern amenities that attract both residents and businesses.

The Lincoln Mill is another notable project, which was recently renovated into a luxury hotel, appropriately named The Lincoln Hotel, which boasts a rooftop pool with expansive views, which also includes residential space. This development retained much of the building’s historic charm, including exposed brick walls and original wooden beams, blending them with contemporary design elements. The success of these projects has spurred further investment in the area, catalyzing Biddeford’s economic and cultural revival.

Not only have these mill buildings been repurposed with a nod to history, but they have also had far-reaching cultural and community impacts. These spaces have become vibrant centers for the arts, hosting galleries, studios, and performance venues. The annual Fringe Festival, now part of River Jam Festival and held in August at the Pepperell Mill Campus, is a testament to the growing cultural scene, drawing artists and visitors from across the region.

Not all projects are conspicuous, in both visual and physical interpretation, like the public art installation on a wall of a building on the Pepperell campus, the One Blue Sky mural, by Michigan artist Pat Perry. This unique mural depicts a boy slouched over and sitting

cross-legged, making a phone call. What is not initially apparent in the mural is that the phone call is with Slemani, Iraq, a town approximately 5,000 miles away from Biddeford.

For this project, students from the Biddeford Intermediate School and the International School of Chouelfat in Slemani participated in the creation of the designs. The students’ contributions are the painted messages (in the sky of the mural) depicting how their similarities far outnumber their differences and that humans are more globally connected now than they have been at any other point in history.

With the help of The Good Works Foundation in Boston, nonprofit organizations Engine and aptART (Awareness & Prevention Through Art) the ideas of these students came together to help Perry produce this magnificent piece of art. The two classrooms exchanged videos and artwork, before the students began painting messages along with the artist in each of their hometowns.

In the mural, the boy on the phone is looking through an opening of a broken fence with barbed wire. The fence symbolizes the barriers between the countries, and the opening of the fence symbolizes open communication. The drawings and messages of peace surrounding the boy in the mural are the additions stemming from the students’ collaboration across the globe. A similar mural of a girl on the phone exists in Iraq.

Mixed-use developments such as the renovated mill campuses, and community projects like the One Blue Sky mural, help to create dynamic, walkable neighborhoods where residents can live, work, and socialize. For Biddeford, this has attracted a younger demographic, contributing to the city’s population growth and diversification. The influx of new businesses, including tech startups, artisanal shops, and restaurants, has revitalized the local economy and enhanced Biddeford’s appeal as a destination.

Culture, Community, and the Arts. The historic mills are not the only recent transformations the city of Biddeford has undertaken. The vibrant and cultural development of the downtown has been propelled forward in part by partnering with the Heart of Biddeford, a volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) that works with various city departments, the council, and private and nonprofit businesses to foster economic development and improve the quality of life within the downtown area. This has attracted many unique small businesses, a few international restaurants, a lively arts

and music scene, and fostered a sense of community pride. According to the Heart of Biddeford's website, this time of reinvention has contributed to Biddeford now being known as the youngest city in Maine.

Annual events like the River Jam Festival and Chalk on the Walk, bring residents and visitors together to celebrate the city's unique spirit. A long running event established in 1982 to celebrate French-Canadian culture in Maine, La Kermesse has been a favorite of all attendees for years with live music, games, and entertainment. The iconic green frog has been the mascot since the festival began. In 1997, La Kermesse shifted to include celebrating all groups in Biddeford and not just French-Canadian culture, a testament to the city's commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

In 2010, Engine enters the scene, another 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to "connect and empower artists through equitable access to community, resources, and creative opportunities." Since its inception, Engine has provided and evolved their offerings to meet the current social needs and believes that artistic expression and creativeness is crucial to revitalizing a community.

In 2023, Engine became a fiscal sponsor for the Common Roots Studio Mobile Art Bus, a new program through Common Roots Studio, which is a renovated school bus that relies on sponsors, donations and hired jobs, to conduct pop up art events for a variety of gatherings. The bus was painted by the community at the Fringe Festival (now River Jam), with the help of local artist Dana Nastee.

The bus can be rented in blocks of two or four hours

and has the option of two or four crafts per time block. It's great for birthdays, festivals, or any event you want to enhance with art! These hired jobs, along with generous donations and sponsors, allow the bus to operate for free at community and nonprofit events. In addition to sponsorship opportunities, the bus accepts monetary donations through Venmo (commonrootsstudio), or supplies through their Amazon wish list "Community Art Bus."

But wait, just when you thought Biddeford couldn't get any cooler...

For those appreciating performing arts, the Biddeford City Theater is a must-see. Built in 1860, it has been meticulously restored and hosts a variety of performances, from local theater productions to concerts and comedy shows. The theater's stunning architecture and intimate setting make for an unforgettable cultural experience. You can find a comprehensive and fascinating history of the theater on their website, which also lists future performances and some of those from the past, while also offering other tidbits and photos from throughout their 125-year history.

I would be remiss not to mention that through the incredible work of a nearly 100% volunteer workforce, the theater has received several awards that include the gold medal for "Best Live Theater in the State of Maine" through the "Best of the 207" contest in 2022 and 2023.

The Natural World and Recreation. The natural landscape provides a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities that cater to a variety of interests. In terms of parks and trails, Biddeford's mere 30 square miles has multiple parks offering a plethora of recreational opportunities. Some parks include recreation for all ages like playgrounds, ballfields, and skate parks, and hiking trails can be found at nearly every park in the city.

Rotary Park features walking trails, a boat launch, playgrounds, skatepark, volleyball court, disc golf course, and a picnic area on 72 acres along the Saco River. Clifford Park has an extensive "in town" trail network on 140+ acres offering a mix of forested paths and open spaces. It features tennis and pickle ball courts, a mini skate park, a story walk, and a picnic area.

Biddeford is situated along the Eastern Trail, part of the East Coast Greenway, which connects the city to a larger trail network that spans from Maine to Florida.



East Point Sanctuary Trail

East Point Audubon Sanctuary encompasses a unique 27-acre coastal environment in Biddeford, renowned for its rich avifauna and diverse habitats. Managed by the National Audubon Society and one of eight Maine sanctuaries, East Point serves as a critical refuge for numerous bird species while also offering educational and recreational opportunities for the public. The sanctuary is open year-round, and rumor has it that snowy owls winter on Wood Island and nearby small rocky islands, so bring your binoculars if you venture to East Point in the winter months.

During the summer months it is a busy place with hikers, bird watchers, and photographers. There are spots to climb down onto the rocks. I found a small hidden beach that was loaded with smooth large rocks. The waves would come in, crash onto the rocky beach and as the water receded back to the sea, this beautiful song was created by the water rippling over the rocks. It was an incredible experience.

The short trail network allows access to diverse habitats and spectacular views along the perimeter of East Point. The trails are designed to provide unobstructed views of key areas like Wood Island Lighthouse and the beautiful rocky coastline, while mini-

mizing disturbance to nature and wildlife. The main trail lends access to these observation points overlooking the salt marshes and tidal flats. Interpretive signs along the trails offer educational information about the local flora and fauna, enhancing the experience.

Another significant conservation area is Timber Point Trail, part of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This trail provides access to a variety of habitats, including salt marshes, tidal flats, and forested areas, each contributing to the region's ecological richness. There are a few parking spots here, and access to the ocean via a small beach where I spied someone relaxing in the fresh salt air.

For reference, salt marshes are vital for resident and migratory bird species and serve as breeding grounds and feeding areas, all while playing a critical role in flood control and water filtration. Tidal flats are dynamic environments shaped by the ebb and flow of the tides. These areas are rich in invertebrate life and provide essential foraging grounds for shorebirds.

Biddeford's proximity to the Saco River and the Atlantic Ocean enables a range of water activities

Timber Point Trail, a 1.4-mile loop located on the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.





Goldthwaite's Pool Lobster in Biddeford Pool

like sea kayaking, canoeing, or paddleboarding, and nearby access to whale watches or a float down the Saco River. If having a beach day is more your idea of a good time, Biddeford Pool, Middle Beach and Fortunes Rocks Beach are excellent spots for swimming, surfing, or beach combing, and attract locals and visitors alike.

My six-year-old son, Emmett, has become my sidekick when researching places for some of the “Where in Maine?” articles. He accompanied me to these beach areas, and they are truly a seaside oasis. Fortunes Rocks Beach, Middle Beach, and Biddeford Pool beach are peppered with smooth black stones, of which we collected several to paint for our garden in Readfield, and is clean and quiet. We were there at low tide, and it was perfect for playing a game of frisbee or catch, taking a walk along the beach to find treasures, or simply to relax and catch some rays in the fresh salt air.

In my opinion, it was one of the best beaches that I have been to in Maine.

Parking is available for the day (no hourly option) and additionally, the city offers three and seven day passes that can be conveniently paid for at the kiosk in the parking lot. Season passes are available, and additional information can be obtained at City Hall.

Satiate Your Hunger. Biddeford’s culinary scene is flourishing, and you will not have any trouble finding a place with delicious food. Across the city there are an array of restaurants, cafes, and pubs that cater to diverse tastes, and it was impossible to eat at and

review all the options in Biddeford, though I made a valiant effort.

I would encourage you to do your own research on the endless options, literally catering to every culture and taste. In the mood for some Mediterranean food? Check. Italian? Check. Indian, burgers, seafood or Thai? Check, check, and check.

Like many Maine towns and cities, Biddeford has a diner that’s been around forever. The Palace Diner is one of the oldest diners in Maine, founded in 1927, and has been revitalized in recent years. It offers a retro ambiance and classic diner fare. But maybe you’d rather find a bakery? Look no further than Reilly’s Bakery, a favorite for custom cakes and other baked treats. This family-owned business has been around for more than 109 years and has perfected the art of baked goods through their family recipes. Try the cream horns!

Another pastry option is Edelweiss Pastry Shop, a Swiss bakery in the heart of Biddeford’s downtown, to satisfy your sweet tooth.

For a not-so-sweet option, Rover Bagels, named Food & Wine’s Best Bagel in America award in 2021, is a takeout only option for wood-fired bagels, bagel sandwiches, and spreads. Their bagels have a New York style chewiness to them with a crunchy outer char, from being wood fired. They are so popular it’s recommended that you order early, and order ahead, since they inevitably sell out daily.

Maine cuisine will always include an option for fresh seafood. The proximity to the ocean guarantees

the freshest ingredients and helps to support the area's economy by sourcing the catch from local fisherman. In Biddeford, the Fish & Whistle is the place to go for fried seafood, which includes lightly battered and perfectly crispy options. Just make sure to save room for their sea salt vanilla soft serve!

Another seafood option that you might consider is Pool Lobster F. O. Goldthwaite's, in Biddeford Pool. Founded in 1902, known then as Goldthwaite's Pool Lobster, a fish market and grocery store, it now operates at a general store, restaurant, and lobster pound and has proudly served fresh seafood in the region for over 100 years.

Dizzy Birds Rotisserie is a standout, serving mouth-watering rotisserie chicken meals and sandwiches. The chicken is marinated with a secret blend of herbs and spices before being slow cooked to perfection. But Dizzy Birds doesn't stop at just chicken. The menu also features a variety of delectable sides, including roasted vegetables, fluffy mashed potatoes, and fresh salads.

Beyond its delicious offerings, Dizzy Birds Rotisserie has become a community staple. The owners are actively involved in local events and support various charitable causes, strengthening their ties to the Biddeford community.

In terms of craft brews, Biddeford is down with that scene as well, and is home to many craft beer hot spots like Banded Brewing Co., Run of the Mill Public House & Brewery, a dedicated gluten-free brewery Lucky Pigeon Brewing Co., and the newest addition to the craft brew scene, Sacred Profane Brewery and Tankpub. The Batson River Brewing & Distilling is located in the same building as The Lincoln Hotel, and it should be noted that guests of the Lincoln receive priority seating at their brewery.

On The Lincoln Hotel's website in their dining options, they feature "food trails," that is a guide of Biddeford restaurants, typically following a theme, for anyone wanting to embark on a culinary adventure. How fun!

It wouldn't be a true "Where in Maine" article without giving my readers the low down on where to find delicious ice cream...would it? While I won't discriminate against any ice cream shop, Sweetcream Dairy, located in the downtown area, is where it's at. This cute little parlor serves homemade ice cream, of which I tried a scoop of their strawberry rhubarb crisp, and brown butter crumble flavors. Both were refreshing and delicious on the hot and humid day I was there.



Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp and Brown Butter Crumble, just a sample of the flavors of ice cream served at Sweetcream Dairy

Having a little one of my own, one feature I noticed about this ice cream shop while savoring this cool sweet treat, is that it had child's size tables and benches with several books displayed on a bookcase for kids to read. I also noticed that the higher tables and chairs were conveniently located next to outlets fitted with USB ports, for the bigger kids or adults who need to do some work or have a place to charge their device while out and about, further solidifying the inclusivity Biddeford strives to maintain.

Finally, for a romantic date night, consider trying Magnus on Water, an intimate spot that serves primarily small plates, focused on connecting with one another and the community as a whole.

Although Biddeford is larger than any other place I've covered in this series, it is a city that beautifully balances its rich historical heritage with modern vibrancy and diversity by leveraging its natural assets, community spirit, and cultural heritage to create a diverse and dynamic recreational landscape. As Biddeford continues to grow and evolve, sustaining and expanding these amenities will be key to continuing to foster a vibrant, healthy, and inclusive community. Whether you're a history buff, an outdoor enthusiast, or a lover of the arts and good food, Biddeford promises an engaging, inclusive, and enjoyable experience. 🏡

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2024 FALL 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 three to four months. Below is the schedule for the Bond Bank's Fall Issue. Applications can be founded on our website at www.mmbb.com.

August						
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

September						
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					

October						
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		

November						
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

Thursday, August 1st – Application Deadline

Wednesday, August 28th – Application Approval (Board Meeting)

Wednesday, September 11th – Preliminary opinions and loan agreements due from bond counsel of each borrower

Thursday, September 18th – Last date for signing school contracts and rates in place for water district. PUC approvals due

Week of September 30th – Maine Municipal Bond Bank Pricing

Thursday, October 24th – Final documents due from bond counsel

Wednesday, November 6th – Pre-closing

Thursday, November 7th – Closing – Bond proceeds available (1:00pm)

If you would like to participate in or have any questions regarding the 2024 Fall Bond Issue, please contact Toni Reed at (207)622-9386 ext. 213 or treed@mmbb.com.



Gardiner City Councilor **Terry Berry** died June 24 after a brief illness while serving his fifth term on the council. Berry, 69, was first elected in 2014 and won four consecutive terms. Mayor **Patricia Hart** called Berry “an extraordinary man” who kept taxpayers in mind in his decision-making and “looked to compromise whenever possible.”



David Daigle

Eldon Daigle

Jason Cyr

The Town of Madawaska has announced three new appointees. Former St. Agatha Town Manager **David Daigle** has been named town manager. He served as St. Agatha manager from 1989 to 1998. Meanwhile, **Eldon Daigle** has been named public works director, while **Jason Cyr** has been appointed deputy director. Both have extensive experience in public works.

John “Linky” Erskine, South Portland parks operations manager, has retired after 40 years. Erskine started his career with the city as an animal control officer and a mechanic for the police and fire departments. A year later, he joined the public works crew as a mechanic, working his way up to foreman and eventually parks operations manager. Erskine also retired as the city arborist.

Mavis Gensel was honored by the Farmington Select Board in June for her many decades of work for the town. Gensel has worked for the sewer department since joining the town staff in 1989. Presently, Gensel manages the General Assistance program as well as her sewer clerk’s duties.

Otisfield annual town meeting voters elected former Administrative Assistant **Anne Pastore** to a three-year term on the select board. She defeated two challengers and garnered 51 votes. The two challengers then competed for a second open seat. **Frank “Buddy” Blauvelt, Jr.** won the seat with 47 votes.



Gary Getchell

Gary Getchell made his foray into municipal government in June after being elected to the Dresden selectboard at the age of 88. He won the race for first selectperson on June 11 and began his duties on July 2. Getchell and his wife invited his challenger for dinner, which lasted for hours. Getchell said he’s not ready for a rocking chair or jigsaw puzzles and thinks concerns over age are unfounded. Getchell also was elected to the RSU 2 School board from 2008 to 2014.

Cyr Martin has resigned as Ashland town manager after seven years, effective Aug. 8. He accepted the job of executive director of the Aroostook Regional Transportation System. Martin also resigned as the town police chief after 20 years but will stay on as



POTHoles & POLITICS

Local Maine Issues from A to Z”

A podcast about municipalities in Maine and the people and policies that bring local government to your doorstep.

administrative police chief until Dec. 31, or when a replacement is hired.



William Post

The assistant city manager in Waterville has accepted the same position in Augusta, effective July 1. **William Post** served in the assistant's position since 2022 and as acting manager from January through July 2023. Post has 28 years of experience in municipal government, managing Bowdoinham, Rockport and Waldoboro, as well as serving as county administrator for Sagadahoc and Knox counties. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Southern Maine.

Kennebunkport has hired **Chris Simeoni** as its new police chief. He started his law enforcement career in 1997 as a reserve officer and was hired as a full-time officer the following year. He spent two decades as a senior patrol sergeant until 2021, when he was named director of public works for the town. Simeoni holds a bachelor's degree in criminology and an associate degree in business administration. He replaces **Craig Sanford**, who retired after serving as chief for 13 years.

David White has been named Old Town police chief, effective Aug. 1. He has worked the past 27 years for the Hanover Township Police Department in Whippany, N.J. He replaces **Scott Wilcox**, who resigned in December 2023 to take the job of chief executive officer for the Old Town-Orono YMCA. Wilcox had served as director of public safety, working the jobs of police and fire chief. The town has since reverted to separate positions. 🏡

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STATEWIDE

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) has awarded \$7.4 million in grants to 12 Maine municipalities and nonprofit groups for infrastructure and other major projects. Among the awards were \$1 million to the town of Rockport for sewer expansion; \$1 million to Bethel for wastewater treatment system updates; \$1 million to Ellsworth for construction of a new wastewater plant; and \$500,000 to the Aroostook Micmac Council to expand its fish hatchery. The commission also awarded \$1 million for the construction of a nonprofit licensed childcare center in Rangeley. In all, 25 applications were filed for a total of \$19.4 million in funding requests. The NBRC is a federal-state partnership for economic and community development in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York.

CARIBOU

The city has won a \$1.85 million grant to renovate the Caribou Public Library and expand technology-based services for patrons. The grant was awarded by the Maine Connectivity Authority and will finance the library's first major renovation since 1960. Computers are the most utilized item in the library, which currently houses just six computers. The library will use the grant money to extend a second-floor loft to a full floor, complete with a 15-foot by 24-foot conference room with microphones for online conferencing. Also to be added are two telehealth rooms with new computers. The larger upstairs area will expand the library's access point for older residents, as well as space to offer National Digital Equity Center classes, which will provide information on the basics of smartphone and computer use. The renovations are expected to begin no later than next spring. The library was built in 1910, one of 20 funded in Maine by Andrew Carnegie.

EASTPORT

Residents were alarmed to learn the city council voted to allow all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on some city streets and roads. The council vote was the beginning of a process to develop a policy that will go to voters as a referendum, officials said. For now, ATVs will

be allowed on local roads in the city's bow-hunting district only, and not downtown or on neighborhood streets. They also will not be allowed on busy Route 190 unless the town comes up with a plan that can gain state approval.

EDGECOMB

Residents at a special town meeting on July 1 voted to establish a municipal fire department. The vote was 21-6. In May, voters approved a town council proposal to move the fire chief to full-time status. During the July meeting, they approved an article raising money for salaries and training.

SACO

Upgrades to the city's wastewater treatment facility are underway in response to flooding and a rise in sea level. The existing facility sits only a few feet from the tidal Saco River. Voters in 2021 approved a \$50 million bond for the project, which will elevate the plant and expand the wastewater treatment capacity. The city has secured \$11 million in state and federal financing toward the total cost. Construction is expected to wrap up in 2027.

WESTBROOK

The Westbrook Regional Vocational Center will receive \$1.5 million in federal funding to build a "live fire" facility to train both students in its firefighter program and for municipal fire and rescue services personnel in Cumberland County. Officials believe the new facility will help departments recruit firefighters, addressing the most pressing need for Maine fire agencies. The town, school, and fire departments are working together on the design of the building. It's unclear when construction will begin.

WINSLOW

The town council has approved creating a seven-member committee that will review and make recommendations for changes to the town charter. The process is expected to take up to a year. The council hopes any changes can go to voters in the November 2025 election. 🏔️



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CONFIDENTIALITY OF MEDICAL CANNABIS RECORDS

A new law revises confidentiality protections applicable to medical cannabis records. In some cases, broader access for municipal officials is the result. See PL 2023, c. 637, which took effect August 9, 2024.

The legislation provides the following:

- Information identifying a qualifying medical cannabis patient, a visiting qualifying patient, a registered patient, or a caregiver exempt from registration is confidential and may not be disclosed by the Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP) except: (1) with written consent of the patient or exempt caregiver, or (2) pursuant to a court order or a subpoena.
- The personal contact information of a registered caregiver or applicant for caregiver registration is confidential and generally may not be disclosed by OCP except: (1) with written consent of the caregiver/applicant, or (2) pursuant to a court order or a subpoena. “Personal contact information” includes a personal address, telephone number, facsimile number, e-mail address, cellular telephone number, pager number and user-name, password and uniform resource locator for a personal social media account.
- If a registered caregiver resides at the same address where the caregiver cultivates, manufactures, tests, packages, stores or sells cannabis plants or harvested cannabis the OCP may disclose that address to a state, county or municipal employee responsible for the administration of medical cannabis laws, rules, ordinances or warrant articles (includes law enforcement officers and code enforcement officers). However, any information received by the state, county or municipal employee is also confidential personal contact information and therefore, may not be further disclosed or disseminated.
- Except for confidential personal contact information, or information regarding a patient or exempt caregiver, any applications, supporting information and other information regarding a registered caregiver, including any address where the registered caregiver cultivates, manufactures, tests, packages, stores or sells cannabis plants or harvested cannabis pursuant to the medical cannabis law, is not confidential.
- Applications, supporting information and other information regarding a medical cannabis dispensary, manufacturing facility, testing facility, or regarding an assistant, officer or director of a registered caregiver, dispensary, manufacturing facility or testing facility is generally not confidential. However, the personal contact information of a cardholder who is an assistant, officer or director of a registered caregiver, dispensary, manufacturing facility or cannabis testing facility or an applicant for a registry identification card or registration certificate for one of those positions is confidential and may not be disclosed by OCP except: (1) with written consent of the cardholder or applicant; or (2) pursuant to a court order or a subpoena.
- If OCP issues a final written decision pursuant to 22 M.R.S § section 2430-I that imposes an administrative penalty; orders forfeiture and destruction of cannabis plants, cannabis or cannabis products; or suspends or revokes a registry identification card or registration certificate, that written decision is not confidential.
- Absent a warrant requiring disclosure, neither a caregiver, dispensary, manufacturing facility, testing facility, or an officer, director or assistant of one of those entities, nor a person accompanying a patient, may be required to disclose information identifying an individual to a law enforcement officer.

The bottom line for municipal enforcement officials is that, except for “personal contact information,” most information concerning medical cannabis establishments is not confidential and may be requested from OCP. This would include some information about a registered caregiver operating at a location other than the caregiver’s personal residence. However, if a registered caregiver is operating out of a personal residence, municipal officials may obtain information about the caregiver from OCP, but the information remains confidential and may not be shared further.

For more information on medical and adult use cannabis, see our information packets on these topics in the “Legal” section of MMA’s website. (By S.F.P.)

2024 GENERAL ASSISTANCE CHANGES

Several changes to the municipal General Assistance (GA) laws took effect August 9, 2024; most resulted from one new law, PL 2023, c. 575. We briefly summarize these below:

Required training. Municipal “overseers” and any municipal official designated or appointed to administer GA must now complete training on GA program requirements. Existing officials are subject to the training requirement; new officials must complete the training within 120 days of appointment or election. The Maine Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) must ensure that the training may be completed in under four hours, is accessible at no cost, and can be taken in person, online or via a pre-recorded video presentation.

Office hours. Previously, a GA office or designated location was required to be open at “reasonable times” for persons to apply for GA benefits. The law will now require that the GA office or designated location accept applications during the municipality’s regular business hours.

Trauma-informed and culturally appropriate services. Municipal GA programs must now provide trauma-informed services and culturally and linguistically appropriate services to all applicants and recipients. Among other things, this requires GA programs to recognize the effects of trauma, potential paths for recovery, the unique signs and symptoms of trauma in applicants, clients, families and staff, and integrate such knowledge into policies and procedures. In addition, services must be designed to serve culturally diverse populations in an applicant or recipient’s preferred language and in the context of the person’s cultural beliefs, behaviors and needs, and must support diversity, community engagement and build trust and relationships. DHHS must provide mandatory training to help municipalities comply with these requirements.

Relocated recipients. The obligation of a “sending” municipality to support a relocating GA recipient for 30 days after relocation has now been extended to six months, unless otherwise agreed between affected municipalities. “Support” includes processing applications and determining eligibility for benefits.

Group homes, shelters, institutions. If a GA recipient resides in a group home, shelter, rehabilitation center, nursing home, hospital or other institution at the time of application and has either been in that institution for 12 or fewer months (previous law said six months)

MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 2 – Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051).

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

BY OCTOBER 1 – Assessors should receive the municipality’s proposed current state valuation from the State Tax Assessor. (36 M.R.S. § 208).

OCTOBER 1 – Annual junkyard and automobile graveyard licenses expire. (Automobile recycling business licenses are valid for five years from date issued). (30-A M.R.S. § 3753).

OCTOBER 14 – Indigenous People’s Day, the second Monday in October, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051).

or has an established residence, the municipality of responsibility is the municipality where the applicant was a resident immediately prior to entering the facility and that municipality continues to be responsible for the support of the recipient, processing applications and determining eligibility, unless otherwise agreed upon by the affected municipalities.

State database. Beginning on July 1, 2025, DHHS must provide municipal overseers with access to an Internet-based, real-time database containing information necessary to properly determine an applicant’s eligibility for GA benefits.

Limits on emergency benefits. The 2024 supplemental budget (PL 2023, c. 643 § 11) included a provision prohibiting municipalities from exceeding maximum levels of GA assistance for more than 30 days in a 12-month period when assistance is granted for housing in a hotel, motel, inn, or other lodging place. The law also limits emergency GA assistance to a maximum of 30 days until eligibility has been confirmed and prohibits assistance exceeding the levels established in 22 M.R.S. § 4308. (By S.F.P.)

INTEREST ON ABATED TAXES

(Updating the July 2010 Legal Notes)

Question: Are municipalities required to pay interest on taxes that were paid but later abated?

Answer: Yes. However, the municipality has some

discretion as to the rate of interest.


Pursuant to 36 M.R.S. § 506-A, a taxpayer who pays more than the amount finally assessed must be repaid the amount of the overpayment plus interest from the date of overpayment at a rate established by the municipal legislative body (town meeting or council). The vast majority of “overpayments” result from tax abatements granted after taxes that were originally assessed have been paid.

The municipal legislative body must establish the interest rate on overpayments annually. The rate of interest may not exceed the interest rate established by the municipality for delinquent taxes, nor may it be less than that rate reduced by 4%. (In other words, the overpayment rate cannot be more than 4 percentage points lower than the delinquency rate established by the municipality). If a municipality fails to set any interest rate for overpayment of taxes, the “default” rate is the interest rate it has established for delinquent taxes.

When taxes are assessed in one year but are abated in another year, there is a question under the statute about which year’s interest rate for overpayments ap-

plies. MMA Legal Services and numerous other attorneys believe the rate established for the year the tax was assessed should be applied, not the rate for the year the tax was abated.

Incidentally, there is another type of “overpayment” that is governed by different rules and a different statute. If the municipality has authorized its tax collector and treasurer to accept “prepayments” of the current year’s taxes before those taxes have been committed (see 36 M.R.S. § 506), sometimes a taxpayer making a prepayment pays more than the amount ultimately due. In those cases, state law does not require that interest be paid on the overpaid amount. However, a municipality may (but is not required to) vote to pay interest on tax prepayments when the amount finally assessed exceeds the prepaid estimate.

For more information on interest rates applicable to abatements, delinquent taxes and prepayments, see MMA Legal Services’ *Tax Collectors & Treasurers Manual* (2023 ed.), available to members in the “Legal” section of MMA’s website. (By S.F.P.) 



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The advertisement has a light gray background with a white box containing the bullet points.

TRAINING CALENDAR

Maine Municipal Association & Affiliates

AUGUST

8/14 & 15	Wed. - Thurs.	MTCCA Athenian Dialogue	Zoom Meeting	MTCCA
8/14-16	Wed. - Fri.	MTCMA New England Management Institute	Newry - Sunday River - The Jordan Hotel	MTCMA
8/22	Thurs.	Understanding the Freedom of Access Act	Zoom Webinar	MMA
8/22 & 23	Thurs. - Fri.	MMTCTA Governmental Accounting	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
8/29 & 30	Thurs. - Fri.	MTCCA New Clerks Workshop	Portland - Keeley's Banquet Center & Zoom Webinar	MTCCA

SEPTEMBER

9/4	Wed.	MTCCA Voter Registration Workshop	Bangor - Cross Insurance Center	MTCCA
9/5	Thurs.	MTCCA Title 21A Workshop	Bangor - Cross Insurance Center	MTCCA
9/5	Thurs.	MMTCTA Payroll Law	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
9/11	Wed.	MTCCA Voter Registration Workshop	Portland - DoubleTree By Hilton	MTCCA
9/12	Thurs.	MTCCA Title 21A Workshop	Portland - DoubleTree By Hilton	MTCCA
9/12	Thurs.	MBOIA September Membership Meeting & Training	Portland - Keeley's Banquet Center	MBOIA
9/17	Tues.	Elected Officials Workshop	Augusta - MMA & Zoom Webinar	MMA
9/18	Wed.	MTCCA Networking day & Annual Business Meeting	Augusta Civic Center	MTCCA
9/18	Wed.	MFCA Membership Meeting	Brunswick - Greenwood Emergency Vehicles	MFCA
9/18	Wed.	MBOIA Northern Chapter Training	Brewer - Brewer Auditorium	MBOIA
9/18-20	Wed. - Fri.	MAAO Fall Conference & Annual Meeting	Newry - Sunday River - The Jordan Hotel	MAAO
9/20	Fri.	MWDA GA Basics Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MWDA

OCTOBER

10/2 & 3	Wed.-Thurs.	88th Annual MMA Convention	Augusta Civic Center	MMA
10/10	Thurs.	Planning Board/Boards of Appeal	Augusta - MA & Zoom Webinar	MMA
10/17	Thurs.	MMTCTA Municipal Law for Tax Collectors & Treasurers	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
10/18	Fri.	MWDA Advanced GA Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MWDA
10/29	Tues.	MUBEC Training: Co-Sponsored with the State Fire Marshal's Office & Maine Fire Chiefs' Association	Portland - Keeley's Banquet Center	MBOIA
10/30	Wed.	MUBEC Training: Co-Sponsored with the State Fire Marshal's Office & Maine Fire Chiefs' Association	Brewer - Jeff's Catering	MBOIA
10/31	Thurs.	MUBEC Training: Co-Sponsored with the State Fire Marshal's Office & Maine Fire Chiefs' Association	Waterville - Elks Lodge	MBOIA
10/31	Thurs.	MEGFOA Fall Training Workshop & Annual Meeting	Augusta - MMA & Zoom Webinar	MEGFOA



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