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One Big, Small Town

By Catherine Conlow / Executive Director



It has been said that Maine is one big, small town. Never has that felt more real than on October 25, when we watched in horror as the unfathomable mass shooting occurred in Lewiston. Many of us who live and work in Maine do so to enjoy the safety and security that our small towns and cities offer. Events like this are all the more traumatic because our belief in and feeling of safety is violated. As we continue to process what occurred a few short weeks ago, it will be near impossible to find someone in Maine who hasn't been impacted by the terrible events in Lewiston.

The collective feelings of sorrow that we share as individuals and communities is evident and the healing process is already underway through the outreach, vigils, and services being held across Maine for Lewiston and its victims. However, we must also recognize that recovery will vary greatly for the communities and residents of Lewiston, Lisbon, and Auburn. The road to healing will be extensive, and long-term access to community support for survivors, victims, and first responders will be crucial.

As we learn more about the events of October 25, we know that stories of individual heroism will continue to emerge. Tricia Asselin, a part time employee of the bowling alley, took the necessary actions to call 911, and that cost her life. Joseph Walker, manager of the bar and son of Auburn City Councilor Leroy Walker, Sr., grabbed a knife to stave off the shooter, and that act of selflessness cost him his life. Thomas Giberti, who is recovering from seven gunshot wounds, took the steps necessary to help children escape from harm. As time goes on, we will hear more about these heroic actions, and I am grateful for and inspired by the individuals who were there to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others.

What is also clear to me is that the quick

and collective actions of these members of our communities, as well as the actions of the Lewiston Police Department and area law enforcement officials, dispatchers and hospital workers saved countless lives. The unfortunate reality for first responders is that regardless of how much they train for these mass casualty events, they can never be fully

prepared to respond to the horrors they face when the unthinkable happens in their own community. These men and women are members of the greater community and are confronted with the stark reality that those who are injured or who have died are also their friends, relatives, and neighbors.

The news that the shooter was dead brought a collective sense of relief across the state, allowing many of us to resume our daily routines. As I went about my Saturday morning business in the Lewiston/Auburn area, my observation was that while the community was still grieving, interactions were met with a subdued kindness and grace for one another. As is common after a tragedy, people were more patient with and thoughtful of one another. I was also struck by the number of people around the state who were directly impacted by the tragedy, regardless of where they were residing.

That is indeed the result of being one big, small town.

For our law enforcement community in Lewiston, Auburn, and Lisbon, as well as the Androscoggin Sheriff's Department and State Police, grieving and a regular routine is only a hope right now.

Law enforcement agencies will spend weeks reviewing the events, while continuing to provide safety and security within our communities. It is hard to imagine how the individual members of law enforcement, dispatchers, EMS, and hospital workers can compartmentalize events like those of October 25 and continue to serve the public health

and safety needs of our communities. As we attend to our own daily needs it is important to remember that our first responders and hospital workers are also in the process of healing.

As expected, although admittedly sooner than I'd hoped, the "hind sighted" analysis coming out of media outlets and social media platforms has begun, and the actions of our police agencies are being picked apart and criticized. Real reflection on the incident requires that those involved be given the appropriate amount of time and space to process the trauma and heal. As a result, the Lewiston/Auburn/Lisbon public safety and first responders deserve our patience and understanding more than ever.

As Mainers we must resist the urge to jump on board, and instead demonstrate our steady support for the area law enforcement community and first responders who responded under unimaginable circumstances. Examining the events of that evening should and will be done by affected law enforcement agencies in the days and months to come. Governor Mills has also convened an independent commission to review the agencies' response. The conclusions will be converted into

policy changes and enhanced procedures that will be implemented by public safety agencies across Maine. The result is that first responders across the state will be better prepared.

There is no doubt that the aftermath of this mass shooting will forever alter the fabric of our communities. But, as we have also seen so many times before, tragic events like this are moments when unity, resilience, and empathy can also be woven into the community fabric. Community healing and unwavering support for survivors and those left behind to grieve the tremendous losses will serve as the foundation for recovery. By recognizing the trauma, providing resources for healing, and acknowledging the sacrifices of first responders, the communities will come together to heal with the promise of better times to come.

The Maine Municipal Association stands with the City of Lewiston, Lewiston Police Department, dispatchers, first responders as well as the other agencies that responded to this tragic event. We extend our sincere condolences for the horrific losses suffered by the community as well as the victims and families of this shooting. 🇺🇸

The City of Lewiston has established a fund to help the families and community recover from this tragedy. We are committed to support the City of Lewiston in this effort so that those wanting to help have a safe and secure way to do so.

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Providing for Asylum Seekers

Despite the challenges facing Portland, city leaders are confident that a coordinated intergovernmental response will generate the robust and diverse workforce Maine needs.

By Colleen Hennessy

Local, state, and, even national, media coverage of asylum-seekers' challenges finding temporary shelter in Portland this spring should have been enough to make even the most seasoned town or city staff shudder. Headlines like (CBCNews, May 13) "So Close to Canada, but stranded in Maine. After Roxham change, migrants are piling up in this small U.S. city" and "Asylum seekers at Portland Expo protest living conditions and lack of available housing" (News Center Maine, June 29), and "Temporary shelter for asylum seekers closes in Maine's largest city" (ABC Aug 16) and more recently, "Portland Sued for Ending Expo Lease to Accommodate Asylum Seekers" (PPH, Sept 15) are just a sample of the mainstream media coverage. While the City of Portland staff is used to bearing the weight of the social services crises in Maine, the magnitude of this spring's homeless crisis caused by a confluence of factors, including post COVID-19 pandemic policies, hit new levels, and isn't going away, despite the self-imposed deadlines to rehouse asylum-seekers and those living in homeless encampments passing in August and September.

Aside from the press coverage, the workload and scrutiny from residents associated with the lack of temporary shelter accommodations and long-term affordable housing options in the Greater Portland area is a challenge for staff and management and in a municipality running 200-250 employees short-handed, it's a factor in hiring and retention. Despite all this, Portland City Manager Danielle West is hopeful about the positive impact the increased population will have in Maine. In a state with an aging population and difficulty attracting a young and diverse workforce not only in the public sector, the migration of people seeking asylum should be much more than a housing crisis, in her opinion, and the recently announced state-level initiatives to support policy and resource coordination for new Mainers, makes West hopeful, despite a challenging year and no end to a temporary or affordable housing crisis in sight.

This past June, the City of Portland stopped taking



Photo courtesy of the City of Portland.

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



Photos courtesy of the City of Portland.

residents at the Portland Expo temporary shelter. Between January and June 2023, about 80 new asylum seekers arrived each week in Portland needing shelter. Because the need for emergency shelter was far greater than capacity, the City opened the Portland Expo as an emergency shelter for family units and housed 300 people there beginning in April. The Maine Red Claws have a lease with the City of Portland to use the Expo as their home facility through the 2023-2024 season, and so the City committed to vacating the facility and moving every family into new housing placements by August 16. After announcing the deadline for families to find alternate short-term or, ideally, long-term housing (with the help of case managers), Mayor Kate Snyder and City Manager Danielle West requested that Governor Mills support the Greater Portland Council of Governments' (GPCOG) proposal to use vacant Unity College campus facilities as transitional housing for asylum-seekers.

Reaction to this proposal was mixed. Common concerns over resources, culture, and representation were at the forefront in Unity. Migrants, who have few options themselves once they enter the legal limbo of seeking refugee status, and small communities, are tasked with finding solutions in scenarios where municipalities have little to no representation in the international and national policies regulating immigration. Residents expressed concerns about the management and funding of such a site, especially in light of the proposal not originating locally, but rather coming out of the Portland-area governments. Residents and town representatives also expressed concern about stressing services in the rural town by adding at least 300 more residents, to a population of just over 2,000.

Members of the Unity select board said in July that the proposal would not go ahead to meet the August 16 need, while Greg Payne, Governor Mills' senior housing adviser, confirmed the administration was reviewing

the proposal, but it provided no relief for the families or City in August, or to-date. Portland officials believe it's a model, a central transitional hub with wraparound services, used in other states, and successfully piloted here in a Saco hotel, that is still worth considering.

Although this proposal did not become a reality for the 300 families sheltered in the Portland Expo this spring and summer, City leadership maintains solutions require a bird's-eye view to coordinate and delegate responsibility and so is hopeful centralized service provision and financing will be a result of a new state "Office of New Americans," announced by Governor Mills in September. West said, "For a municipality to look up and manage the pieces on the ground is hard, particularly for long-term planning and financing." West, alongside Portland's councilors, have consistently maintained the city's current homelessness crisis requires solutions for two distinct populations - families and individuals seeking asylum and the circumstantially unhoused. The addition of thousands of asylum seekers in the past two years, many needing a financial system to find housing because federal law prohibits them from working, into a city with only 354 municipal shelter beds, and a state where most municipalities have no shelter beds, has clarified the need for distinct longer-term solutions. "This is a global phenomenon causing migration that is going to continue, and as a state with an aging population we need to plan ahead in order to position Maine to integrate this young and diverse population and address the significant needs of the unhoused in Portland and throughout Maine," said West.

In the past year, a patchwork of solutions cobbled together through a patchwork of innovative services providers, and immigrant communities in Maine, heavily supported by the Mills' administration, MaineHousing, the Maine Legislature, as well as advocacy from Maine's federal delegation, have helped hundreds of families

settle into permanent housing in the Greater Portland area, and other Maine communities. Despite the stress and uncertainty faced by the families housed in the Expo this summer, most reported trusting that the city would find solutions, probably because of Portland's partnership with the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition to provide services and shelter management at various sites. While not ideal, Jessica Grondin, Portland's communications director, confirmed the sixty families still at the Expo on August 16 would be moved to hotels in Freeport and Lewiston. The hotels were contracted on a temporary basis and funded by General Assistance (GA), with the hope that as space opens up in the family shelter, the under-construction transitional shelter for asylum seekers in Portland opens, and other affordable housing options become available, families will find more permanent housing.

Although Maine municipalities, State government, and most elected officials embrace this challenge even when they can't provide housing solutions, over the past few years, some have claimed that Portland is somehow "drawing asylum seekers here" through false promises and so is to blame for the housing crisis. While this "Portland versus the rest of the state" has been a common feature in Maine politics especially where GA policy and funding are concerned, this year's surge in asylum seekers coupled with a lack of housing options across the state, has made it clear this isn't actually a Portland problem, or even a city versus town problem. Cities and towns, like Sanford, Lewiston, Rockland, Biddeford, and Waterville, are just a sample of communities in Maine struggling to provide shelter beds for both asylum seekers and existing residents experiencing homelessness.

The Department of Health and Human Services stated this spring that the current GA program is unsustainable as structured, while several bills related to General Assistance, such as LD 1664 which sought to increase state reimbursement for the aid provided under the GA program, were proposed and considered, and in this case carried over, in this past legislative session. An overarching strategic plan for providing services to new Mainers was met with enthusiasm across sectors and stakeholder groups, and the hope of city leaders, like Mayor Snyder and Manager West, is that this collaborative planning might take the patchwork financing and planning away from heavily burdened municipalities.

According to Anthony Ronzio, Deputy Director of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs in the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, the Office of New Americans is currently consulting many other state agencies, municipal and school leaders, as well as chambers of commerce, philanthropic organizations, and community-based organizations around the state. The office will develop a plan for supporting the economic and civil integration of immigrants by January 2024. Clearly, the housing need, both for emergency shelter and long-term affordable options, is only growing, regardless of immigration. Unfortunately, there won't be any long-term solutions for the families once housed in the Expo or for any one else seeking housing in Maine by January, but the City of Portland is hopeful that immigration will strengthen the city and state in the long-term and the Office of New Americans is a strategic step to ensure planning as a state, in line with other states, rather than having municipalities reactively lurch from crisis to crisis. 🏡

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A Primer on Cybersecurity Awareness

Maine Cyber Range - A trusted source for cybersecurity insight and awareness contributing monthly to the *Maine Town & City*.

When it comes to online security, one of the most common mistakes people make is using weak passwords. Weak passwords are those that lack complexity, uniqueness, or length, making them easy targets for cybercriminals. In this article, we'll break down what weak passwords are, why they're a problem, and provide tips for avoiding them.

What Are Weak Passwords?

Weak passwords are like low-hanging fruit for hackers. They're easy to guess or crack because they lack the safeguards needed to keep your accounts safe. Common examples of weak passwords are those that:

- Are short in length, similar to usernames, or common, such as "password."
- Rely on default passwords or dictionary words.
- Contain personal information, such as names, birthdates, or addresses.
- Use sequential, repeating or keyboard patterns, such "12345," "aaaaa," or "qwerty."

Effects of Weak Passwords

Using weak passwords can have serious consequences, affecting both individuals and organizations. Example of security risks include:

Unauthorized Access. Weak passwords can be easily guessed or cracked, allowing unauthorized access to accounts.

Data Breaches and Identity Theft. Weak passwords can lead to data breaches and identity theft, putting personal and financial information at risk.

Account Compromise and Hijacking. Attackers can take control of accounts, causing disruptions to online activities.

Credential Stuffing Attack. Reusing weak passwords across multiple accounts makes you vulnerable to credential stuffing attacks. Cybercriminals use leaked username-password pairs from one platform to gain



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unauthorized access to other accounts you have on different websites.

Damage to Reputation and Trust. Individuals and organizations with weak password practices can suffer reputational damage and loss of trust following security incidents.

Avoiding Weak Passwords

Protecting yourself from the dangers of weak passwords is critical for keeping yourself secure. Here's what you can do to strengthen your passwords:

Create Strong, Unique Passwords. Make sure each account has a different, complex password.

Use Password Managers. Consider using a password manager to generate and securely store strong passwords. It can generate strong passwords and store them securely, like a digital keychain.

Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). MFA adds an extra layer of security, even if your password is compromised. It's like adding a fingerprint scan to your digital lock, making it much harder for unauthorized users to gain access.

Regularly Update Passwords. Change your passwords regularly and avoid reusing them across multiple accounts.

What to Do If You Suspect Your Password Is Compromised

Discovering that your password might be in the wrong hands can be quite unsettling, but knowing how to react is crucial. Here's what you should do when you suspect your password may have been compromised:

Change Your Password. As soon as you suspect that someone else might have access to your account, change your password immediately. It's like changing the locks on your doors when you think someone has a copy of your keys.



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Inform IT Staff. If you believe your account has been compromised, get in touch with your IT staff or the relevant support team. They can investigate your account to check for any leaked information or suspicious activities. It's like calling the authorities when you suspect a break-in at your home – they can help you figure out what's been stolen and how to prevent it from happening again.

Using strong, unique passwords is crucial to protecting your online security and sensitive information. By following these simple steps, you can reduce the risk of unauthorized access and safeguard your online presence. 🏠

Safeguarding Municipal Cybersecurity - A Series

About This Series. The University of Maine at Augusta's Maine Cyber Range (MCR) has teamed up with MMA to provide municipalities with the support needed to improve their security posture. The MCR launched this student research project in 2022, partnering with Maine Emergency Management Agency and the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, to help municipalities improve their security posture, at no cost, through assessment, network modeling and testing, and training for technical and non-technical personnel. Over the next several months, MCR will share recommendations and best practices with municipal leaders through contributions to the Maine Town & City. For more information about the program, please contact MCR@maine.edu.



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WHERE *in* MAINE?

By Rebecca Lambert / Municipal Issues Specialist

Turner

Nestled in the foothills
of western Maine.

The “Where in Maine” series will showcase the more whimsical sides of our communities. One city or town from each of the counties in Maine will be explored focusing on their vibrant downtowns, historical landmarks, and other places, as well as the things that make each Maine town or city unique.

Photos in this series by Rebecca Lambert, MMA

Nestled in the foothills of western Maine sits the town of Turner in Androscoggin County. With a population of 5,817 (2020 census), this small town has abundant recreational opportunities, a rich history, and numerous farms that supply fresh local meat, dairy and produce to sustain our friends and families.

Turner was incorporated in 1786 and was primarily a farming community, still evident today by the rock walls that seemingly go on for miles before jutting off into the woods to end a section. Passing the large farms with modern conveniences like electric fences and heavy equipment, I couldn't help but imagine what farming was like before that technology was invented and how physically taxing it would be on our bodies.

Containing and caring for several hundred livestock can be a challenge, though easier with current methods. Today, farmers have new tools available to them to aid these tasks, such as a type of wearable device that monitors the health and location of the livestock. This is helpful on many fronts but most importantly to keep the animals in good health and be able to locate them if they get out of their enclosure.

In Turner, and several other locations in Maine, you can find remnants of "cattle pounds," which were used to contain wandering animals. Once the owners were found, the animals were returned. The cattle pound in Turner was added to the National Register of Historic Places in April of 2009.

History is obvious in Turner and is everywhere you look. A prime example is the local grange hall, established in 1876, and still standing today. Below, check out the photo from 1910, courtesy of the Turner Historical Society, alongside the photo I took recently. In that era,

Below: Notice the stark difference in the landscape, particularly the road in front of the building, but the building itself is magnificent.



grange halls were much like modern day community centers where residents would gather to share ideas about agriculture or take in a lecture.

Another tidbit of interesting history relates to the Leavitt building that is now used as the Turner Public Library, located in Turner Center. This building was donated by James Madison Leavitt for the purpose of secondary education, with the last class graduating in 1966. In 1969, the school was consolidated into SAD 52 and renamed Leavitt Area High School.





If you are looking for local beef, look no further than Roebuck's Angus where they raise and sell angus beef. A short drive away is a dairy farm that is home to the Canty Cow Creamery. They are closed for the season but do offer grab and go ice cream containers at the farm in addition to having their products at other local establishments and farm stands across Maine.

My family and I drove here to sample the ice cream earlier in the summer, and I'll vouch that it's good stuff. Full disclosure, I've never had an ice cream flavor that I didn't enjoy, so take that endorsement as you will. I will note that there were calves and cows to visit while noshing on our sweet treats and that scored major points with my animal loving five-year-old. Not only did we get a treat, but also an education—a win-win!

Turner is also home to Ricker Hill Orchards where you can pick your own apples or simply walk into their farm stand to pick up some fresh Maine apples or any of the other local goods in their store. There are several different baked goods to choose from along with pickles, jams, and salsa. I recommend the cider donuts, well really any flavor of their donuts. They are melt-in-your-mouth delicious and satisfies my obvious sweet tooth!

One more farm I want to mention in this great little town is the Nezinscot Farm. Their farm store was not open on this trip, but they did have a self-serve area that featured baked goods, coffee, fresh bread, and yarn, made from the animals on the farm—rabbits, goats, sheep, and alpacas.

This is not an all-inclusive list of farms or farm stands in Turner as there are just way too many to list, but it's safe to say, locally raised and grown food is a hot commodity in this town.

The eastern border of Turner is the Androscoggin River, a haven for recreation but with historical significance. The river is the third largest in Maine and flows into MerryMeeting Bay. Native Americans gave the river its name meaning "plenty of fish" and have used this water source for several millennium, and as such, small riverside settlements popped up. Today, the Androscoggin is still a popular spot for anglers to enjoy the sport whether from the shore or in a boat.

Though fish are plentiful, the river grade is steep at approximately eight feet per mile making travel challenging but prime for hydroelectric power. This power helped to run textile and paper mills in the early 1900s but not without a cost. The waste created from the mills generated incredible amounts of pollution impacting water quality. This led to the Androscoggin River being considered one of the top ten most polluted rivers in the entire country. Fortunately, the regulations imposed through the Clean Water Act of 1972 helped to mitigate the effects of pollution, bringing the river to its glorious state today.

Another water body in Turner known for recreational opportunities is Bear Pond, which is where the municipal beach currently sits, and the pond also shares its shoreline with the Town of Hartford. The spot of the municipal



beach was once home to Bear Pond Amusement Park that opened in the 1920s and was a hot spot to go to. The location had bath houses, a gift shop, a roller-skating rink, and a dance hall along with the beach, all on 55 acres of land. It was the place to go for school field trips, picnics, and family activities.

Unfortunately, a fire, reported to be caused by faulty wiring, destroyed all but the gift shop and roller-skating rink in the mid-1900s. Following the fire, the owner, who had been a seasonal resident for 24 years, sold the property and buildings. Stories can be heard from Mainers across the state, not only the locals, about the decades of fun had at the Bear Pond Amusement Park. Although the location isn't as elaborate as it once was, it is still a beautiful spot to visit.

Summertime activities and fishing aren't the only type of recreation to be found in Turner. The Androscog-

gin Riverlands trail system offers other summer activities including ATV riding, hiking, horseback riding, and biking. It's important to review the rules associated with the park since all forms of recreation, motorized or not, are allowed and sometimes restricted due to conditions.

Once snow flies Turner is a great starting spot for snowmobiling with its connections to the International Trail System (ITS) 89 and ITS 87 and an active snowmobile club, the Turner Ridge Riders, who care for the over 80 miles of local trails located just within Turner's borders. If speed isn't your thing, there are several miles of trails to snowshoe or cross-country ski and perhaps catch a glimpse of the abundant wildlife.

Overall, Turner is a quaint community with history everywhere you look and so much to offer residents and visitors alike. You will likely find anything you need in the town, but with easy access to larger service centers and an abundant trail network, which makes Turner the best of both worlds.

So next time you find yourself in Turner, stop to truly marvel at the beauty and historical significance of the town and sights around you, as I found myself doing.

...and for the love of all things holy, try the donuts at Ricker Hill Orchards! 🍌

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MMA IT Manager explains push for new .gov domain

By Liz Mockler

When other boys were running around the playground, John Lewis was in the computer lab, a forerunner to the career that would eventually bring him to the Maine Municipal Association as manager of information technology.

Lewis said that while he was captivated by computers and IT from a young age, he worked other jobs before taking a chance and applying for a job he knew nothing about and yet found success.

In high school, he found a group of students who shared his interest in IT “and we stuck together, joining all the technology classes ... until we attended Lewiston Regional Technical Center” to take the technology class there.

Lewis earned both high school and college credits in technology. “This was one of the pivotal moments when I knew where my future interests would lie.”

As the state urges municipalities to change their website address to “.gov,” Lewis has completed the process and has also moved the Town of Bowdoin to the new domain.

Here Lewis talks about his evolution to IT and takes questions about how cities and towns can convert to a .gov domain. “I have experience in completing the process and updating an organization to use it.”



John Lewis

some reason I was drawn to the computer lab (this was a time before there were computers in every classroom, and long before every student was issued their own computer.) When everyone else voted to go outside and play on the playground, my vote always landed on “computer lab time” where we could play with the math programs (Math Blaster!, Shuffleboard, The Oregon Trail, to name a few).

When I got to college, I of course went for the CIS program (Computer Information Systems) program and excelled for the most part. At

the time I was working full time, but I was not in the technology field. I was working a second job in my college’s IT department, so I had already dipped my feet in the field, so to speak.

One day I decided I needed a change in my career and put out my resume to a few places, not all of which were technical. But, if I had to highlight one moment in my life that changed my path, it was this one. A company in Brunswick that I applied to reached out and wanted to interview me. It was a Managed Services Provider and honestly, I didn’t know what that really meant. So, I went to it and interviewed. It went really well, and we all seemed to click. The job was to support multiple organizations with their IT needs, mostly desktop support and customer service.

Q What led you to decide on a career in IT?

A. It’s hard to say what the defacto decision was that led to my IT career. I think it was, honestly, a cumulation of events and factors that led me down this path.

My earliest memory was in elementary school, for

Q What is the one important thing every computer user must know and achieve?

A. I think it is important for all users to know the harsh reality, which is that it is not a matter of if your organization (computer system) is going to be breached, it is a matter of when and how prepared you are going to be. Security is important.

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

We have all been taught that. But what we all must strive to achieve is a better understanding of what security means and looks like. It is not just antivirus. It is not just an IT security department. And it is not just changing your password and not sharing it. We must all work together to achieve security. Most of the time it may seem that the policies and procedures in place do more harm to your productivity than we would all want, but it is crucial that we follow the path. It could be all the difference.

Q Are there any major changes coming that computer users should know about?

A. This one is a cop out, but it is the truth. There are never really any major changes coming up that would affect the users as a collective whole. Instead, there are always changes. There is always someone out there, whether state funded, or private, that wants your information. There is always a new social engineering scam, and there is always a new exploit for every update that is made to protect you. It is a never-ending game of problems and solutions.

Everyone should know that they always need to be diligent in their day-to-day operations when it comes to technology. There will never be a time where you can just

take a breath and not have to worry. I know this sounds very pessimistic, but it is the unfortunate reality of the world, especially with the government sector and our members, as a whole.

Q Now I'd like to ask about the .gov domain, which a lot of people are talking about and asking question: What is a .gov domain?

A. To respond to this question, I've copied and pasted data directly from the DOTGOV information page, which is indicated by using brackets [] and italicized to differentiate my own words from theirs.

According to dotgov.gov, the entity that manages the process of issuing and maintaining these domains, [.gov is a 'top-level domain', or TLD, similar to .com, .org, or .us. Enterprises use a TLD to register a domain name (often simply called a domain) for use in their online services, like a website or email.]

Simply put, a .gov domain is a special domain that is reserved for government entities. Anyone can register a .com, .org, .us, etc. domain with little to no verification, but only verified U.S. government entities may use a .gov domain for official purposes.



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Q Why is the state pushing municipalities to adopt a .gov domain?

A. While I cannot speak directly to the push, I can make assumptions based on facts. I believe that the state is making such a push for this change for a few reasons: (1) security; (2) identity management; (3) trust; and (4) the process is now free, which is probably a big factor.

I think the justification for these reasons is evident given the authority a government entity has over its population. I will touch more on these in later questions, but I believe the key takeaway is that the state likely wants to differentiate government agencies from non-government agencies.

Q What are the benefits of a .gov domain?

A. Using a .gov domain gives users the first impression that your domain, website, and email are legitimate. Since only authorized and verified government entities can obtain a .gov domain, it is much more unlikely that the website or email you view/receive is a scam. That is not to say that a website or email with a valid .gov domain cannot be compromised, it just means that the entity is a valid and legitimate entity. This prevents scammers from registering fake .gov domains for the sole purpose of scamming people.

You will also notice that most search providers, like Google or Bing, differentiate government entities by calling out their .gov status on the website. Take, for example, my town of Bowdoin. They recently moved to a .gov domain and this is what you see when you search for them. You will notice that next to the name of the website, it calls out that it is a .gov domain (.gov) and displays the full URL, including the TLD .gov.

Another big reason is that this service is no longer a cost to government entities. In the past, there was a large annual fee attached. In order to better adopt these domains, the decision was made to make the domains free for qualified entities. This means that any town or agency, no matter the size or budget, can own a .gov domain for their use.

Q What is the process of obtaining a .gov domain?

A. This one is a doozy. I think the best answer is the official answer on the get.gov website. They do an amazing job at spelling this out.

<https://beta.get.gov/domains/before/>

Q How is the .gov domain managed?

A. This is the part that people tend to get caught up on. The U.S. government does not control or maintain your domain. You are in full control of it. There are some requirements that you need to maintain to continue to use it, which are: (1) verification; you must maintain your qualification and may need to verify eligibility; and (2) you must enable and use DNS Security. This is simply a method to verify and prove that the requests coming from your domain are legitimate and signed. There is more to it, technically speaking, but in layman terms, it aids in the prevention of domain spoofing and DNS attacks.

Otherwise, you can point your DNS name servers to any provider of your choice, manage and update records like usual, and overall control how your domain is used. You will need to maintain your domain registrar records with dotgov.gov, the official entity responsible for administering these domains, but that goes as far as only maintaining the information about your organization, leadership, decision makers, and technical contacts.

Now, from a day-to-day perspective, it is the responsibility of the owner of the domain to update their organization's records. This means changing the domain used for your website, email provider, and any other location it is used for. For this, we recommend working with an IT professional who is familiar with this process. 🏠

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Interested in having your community featured in the News or People segments of the Maine Town & City? Is your municipality hosting an annual festival celebrating a favorite crustacean, sweet treat, notorious beverage, or historically significant event? Are new businesses relocating to your downtowns?

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Submissions will be published in a time sensitive and as space allows format. Narratives and descriptions should be no more than 150 words, and photos must be 5 x 7 in size.

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2024 Holiday Schedule

The Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services released the following 2024 holiday schedule for state employees. As a reminder, state statutes do not require municipal buildings to close on these days, nor are employees entitled to paid time off. To the extent a municipality follows the State's or an amended schedule, a holiday that falls on a Saturday is observed on the preceding Friday, while a holiday that falls on a Sunday is observed the following Monday. MMA will be closed on the following holidays.

<u>Holidays</u>	<u>Day/Date to Be Observed</u>
New Year's Day	Monday, January 1, 2024
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday, January 15, 2024
Washington's Birthday/Presidents' Day	Monday, February 19, 2024
Patriots Day	Monday, April 15, 2024
Memorial Day	Monday, May 27, 2024
Juneteenth	Wednesday, June 19, 2024
Independence Day	Thursday, July 4, 2024
Labor Day	Monday, September 2, 2024
Indigenous Peoples' Day	Monday, October 14, 2024
Veterans' Day	Monday, November 11, 2024
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 28, 2024
Thanksgiving Friday	Friday, November 29, 2024
Christmas Day	Wednesday, December 25, 2024

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Maine Rodent Academy

Everything you need to know about preventing, managing, and monitoring rodent infestations.

By Janine Pineo

“Are we winning or losing the war? We are losing this war.”

So began the Maine Rodent Academy late last month, a state program to teach the best practices for preventing, managing, and monitoring rodent infestations.

And so observed New York City-area rodentologist Dr. Bobby Corrigan, who called rats “amazing mammals” as he pointed to new research on pest control and the changes that should become part of integrated pest management for rodents. “We want to understand what we’re up against,” he said.

One might think Maine is immune to large outbreaks, but that isn’t the case as one scans news stories dated over multiple years from across the state. Old Town, for example, has had a growing rat infestation over the past several years, and early last month filed a lawsuit against a resident to force the individual to stop leaving food out that the city says is contributing to the rat population. Another example is the Greater Portland area, which long has had rat problems that make the news at regular intervals.

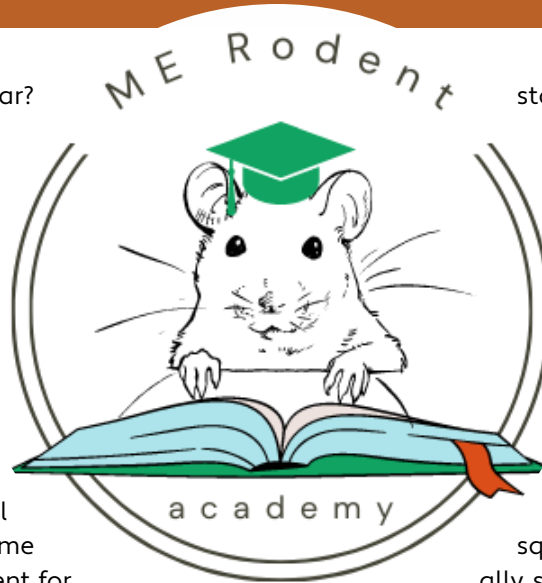
This isn’t a unique problem, according to Corrigan. Rats, he said, are in every sewer system around the world.

Maine’s rats are Norway rats, which are brown rats that are also known as wharf rats. Their territory around the globe is in old ports.

Maine has a lot of old ports.

Corrigan, who has spent decades in pest management, said the principles that apply in cities such as New York and Paris also apply here in Maine. Using the Old Port in Portland as an example, he posed the “what if” question of what if there was an outbreak in five years and those rats were carrying disease? “It is not outside the realm of possibility,” he said.

And while rodents have a “magic secret formula for



staying undetected,” Corrigan said, “rodents give themselves away if we have the eyesight to pick it up.”

All about rodents

Rats and mice are mostly nocturnal animals that inhabit interstitial spaces, those in-between places in spaces. Corrigan said the old adage about seeing one rat means there are more rats isn’t true. It is true, however, that rats can live in sidewalks, squeezing into the cracks. “Rats literally seem to grow out of the sidewalks,” he said.

They can leave a greasy-looking trail if they are squeezing between hard surfaces; the sebum they produce rubs off. The more sebum you see, the more a particular spot is used as a rat highway. A rat needs 12 millimeters, less than a half an inch, to squeeze through a space, while a mouse needs half that amount. And if they have one millimeter of a crack, they will gnaw on it to widen it, depending on the substance.

New research has shown rats aren’t afraid of equipment used to trap them. Corrigan said they will assess the situation and make decisions. While they don’t have great eyesight, it doesn’t mean they will only follow a wall to reach their destination. They will seek out the shadows as they move. They do have great hearing. And one of their most effective tools are their whiskers, which are used to feel what is before them: overhead to determine the size of the hole and forward to warn them what is in front of them.

Rats also put down a pheromone trail on a successful path – one that leads to a food source.

A rat’s sense of smell is impressive. A rat will dart, stand up and smell, Corrigan said, searching for food molecules in the air, down to parts per billion. The rat will then follow those molecules to its density.

But rats can also be choosy. Corrigan said that if bait is left open in a vehicle and it absorbs odors such as from fuel fumes or thirdhand tobacco smoke, the rats will reject the bait.

About the Author: Janine Pineo is a freelance writer from Hudson and regular contributor to Maine Town & City, jepineo@gmail.com.

What drives rats, Corrigan said, is rewarding their senses and their nutritional needs. Garbage cans are a good example, he said, pointing out that a receptacle that is well constructed, covered and clean won't reward them.

The average rat requires one to three ounces of food a day, while a house mouse needs a tenth of an ounce of food.

Corrigan cited an example in an NYC neighborhood where rats proliferated, living in the landscaped green-space with tunnels under the shrubbery. His solution to the city was to empty the litter baskets near the restaurants frequently, which the city rejected because of the cost.

"No food means no rats," Corrigan said.

Behavior directs solutions

It's crucial to observe signs and connect the dots when determining the scope of the pest problem, Corrigan said. "Putting equipment every 25 feet makes zero sense," he said.

What does make sense is using the rodent's behavior to find the best spot to lay down equipment. Getting it wrong means the problem remains longer, Corrigan said, and leads to more biocontamination. Mice and rats are full of pathogens, with mice sometimes far more dangerous than rats, he said. A mouse can leave 3,000 micro drops of urine – its number one means of communication – every 24 hours as well as 125 droppings in the same time period.

A blacklight can find the urine trails. "Urine is always going to be in the main runways," Corrigan said.

While a disease such as hantavirus can live for only a few days in ideal conditions in droppings, other patho-

gens can be active for lengthy periods; salmonella bacteria can survive 180 days in droppings. And while salmonella poisoning is not usually fatal, according to the Centers for Disease Control, Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome has a mortality rate of 38 percent.

Other behaviors to remember include the fact that rodents can hoard weeks of food in their preferred spaces.

And their favorite food is whatever they were brought up on, but generally preferring greasy meats, chocolate, and seeds. To illustrate this, Corrigan told the story of a trap placed in an obvious path that never caught a single rodent because the bait wasn't their food source; it was the candy in the store. The rodents jumped over or avoided the trap to get to their food.

Rodents have preferred nesting spots, seeking warmth and protection, with the harder to get to, the more likely it will meet with rodent approval. Which means the list of their top four favorite spots makes perfect sense:

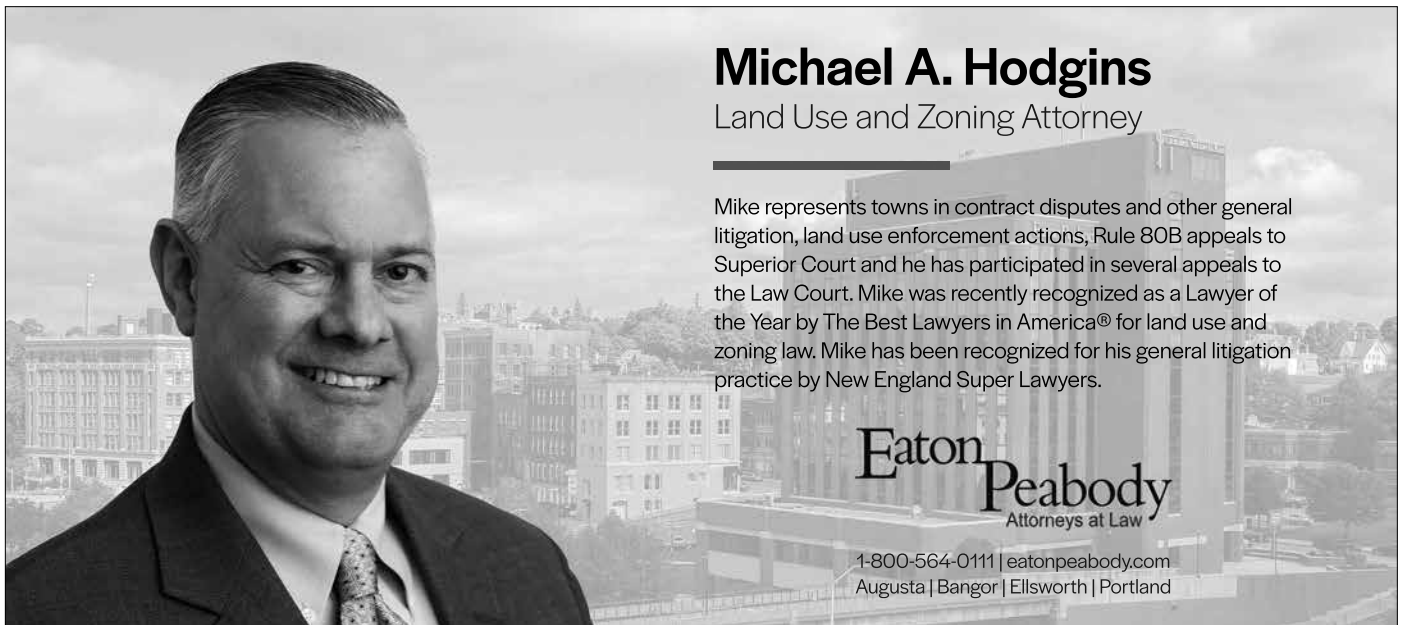
- Stove
- Refrigerator
- Dishwasher
- Under the sinkboard

Corrigan said understanding these behaviors leads to precise placement for equipment, essential for it to be effective. "You do have to thread the needle," he said.

It's the food

Locating and eliminating the food source should be a priority in dealing with a rat issue. Corrigan said it's not going to work if you don't get rid of the food.

During the COVID-19 closings in 2020, the shuttered restaurants meant that all the normal food sources, particularly restaurant dumpsters, were gone, Corrigan said.



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“This proves the importance of garbage management,” he said.

Corrigan said every step of the way keep asking “where is the food?”

Rural challenges

Griffin Dill of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension said the scope of rodent control in rural situations can be huge, particularly when there are exacerbating behaviors.

That list of behaviors is lengthy:

- **improper waste disposal and open garbage containers**
- **abandoned structures and lack of building maintenance**
- **increase in backyard chicken flocks**
- **wildlife feeding**
- **failure to report rodent sightings or infestations promptly**
- **reluctance to invest in property maintenance and exclusion methods**
- **hesitation to engage with local authorities and pest control professionals**
- **resistance to adopting integrated pest management principles**
- **inconsistent enforcement of regulations due to community apathy**
- **inadequate involvement in community-wide efforts to address the issue**

But rural municipalities face several challenges, Dill said, including scarce financial resources for comprehensive control programs and even a lack of adequate enforcement capability of regulations and ordinances. There may even be limited access to professional pest management.

Regulations do need to be put in place, Dill said. Those should include:

- **establishing clear guidelines**
- **sanitation requirements**
- **building maintenance standards**
- **baiting and trapping guidelines**
- **inspection and reporting**
- **public health enforcement**
- **exterior cleaning standards**
- **penalties for noncompliance**

Dill said if the problem is community-wide, then the solution needs to engage the community through coordination and leadership, public education and awareness campaigns, involvement of local organizations, and holding rodent control workshops with expert-led sessions. 🏡



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John Bohenko

John Bohenko has been named Saco city administrator, effective Oct. 10. He comes to Maine after managing the City of Portsmouth, NH, for 23 years. Bohenko emerged as the top candidate of nine finalists who were interviewed by three different groups, including a panel of residents. Bohenko, with a total of 36 years of experience, has also managed Plainville, CT, and North Andover, MA. He holds a bachelor's degree in public administration from Bentley University in Waltham, MA, and a master's degree in business administration from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY.

Clinton Town Manager John Bellino has resigned after one year on the job. Bellino is giving up his job because of the round-trip 90-minute commute from his home in the Gardiner area. He offered to work part-time for the town of 3,500 and to help with the transition to a new manager. The select board expects to hire a new manager by year's end. Bellino's experience includes serving as Richmond fire chief, as well as teaching paramedic classes in Brunswick.

Pittsfield town councilors voted unanimously to hire Jacob Gran as the new town manager, making him among the youngest managers in Maine at age 26. Gran, former Bucksport town clerk and registrar of voters, began his new job in late September. He was among 30 applicants for the job and one of 10 finalists. Gran began his municipal government experience as the Wintertown deputy town clerk in 2019. Gran also served on the board of the Maine Town and City Clerks' Association and served on an advisory board for the Maine Municipal Association. He replaces Kathryn Ruth, who worked as manager for 21 years and plans to take the newly created grant administrator's job in January.

Oxford Fire and Rescue Chief Paul Hewey resigned in September, after serving four years in the top job. Hewey, a longtime firefighter, was named chief in June 2019 after the death of Chief Gary Sacco. Hewey had been serving as deputy chief when Sacco died. Deputy Chief Shawn Cordwell, who joined the department in 1993, has been named acting chief.

Biddeford police officer Maegan Lambert-Irish was named 2023 Employee of the Year for her service as the city's first substance use outreach liaison, a job she's held since 2017. She was honored for her "tireless" ad-

vocacy for the people she serves, as well as maintaining a caring relationship with at-risk populations. Lambert-Irish is a licensed clinical professional counselor and a licensed drug and alcohol counselor.



Erica LaCroix

Erica LaCroix will begin her new duties as Farmington town manager in mid-December, leaving her post as town manager of Winslow. LaCroix, who has 25 years of experience in municipal government, was named the 2022 Rising Star by the Maine Town, City and County Management Association for her outstanding service and professionalism. She earned a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and a master's in public administration from Norwich University in Vermont. She was one of three finalists - all working Maine managers - and was unanimously selected by the select board. Meanwhile, Ella Bowman left her position as Oakland town manager to replace LaCroix in Winslow. Bowman managed Oakland for nearly a decade, and previously worked as a police officer for the town.



Travis Leary

Fairfield and Benton have a new fire chief, but not a new face. Lt. Travis Leary was promoted to chief in early October, replacing Duane Bickford, who retired in September. Leary has worked for the Fairfield Fire Department for 26 years. Fairfield provides fire protection to nearby Benton. Leary will also serve as emergency management director and forest fire warden for both towns. Leary earned a degree in fire science from the Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor. Leary assumed his new duties on Nov. 1.



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Former longtime Caribou Police Chief **Verne “Buck” McKenney** died on Oct. 5 at the age of 84. McKenney joined the Caribou police force in 1959 as a foot patrolman and climbed the ranks to be named chief in 1974. He retired in 1987. McKenney was named Police Chief of the Year in 1976, a coveted award from the Maine Chiefs of Police Association.



Richard Schrader

Richard “Chip” Schrader has been named Scarborough Public Library director, replacing **Nancy Crowell**, who served in the position for 46 years. Most recently, Schrader worked as director of the Louis B. Goodall Library in Sanford. Schrader is “a worthy successor to our esteemed Nancy Crowell,” city officials said. He will oversee a staff of 19, and the library expansion as one of his top priorities.



James Smith

Brewer Assistant City Manager **James Smith** has been named Bar Harbor town manager, effective Nov. 13. Smith, assistant manager for 10 years, also served as Rockland city manager and previously town manager of Oakfield. Smith replaces **Kevin Sutherland**, who resigned in January. The town council took nine months to search for a new top administrator and found him 45 miles away. Smith’s proximity to and knowledge of Bar Harbor on Mount Desert Island was one of the reasons they liked the Marine Corps veteran. The town named two interim managers during the search: **Sarah Gilbert**, the current finance director; and **Cornell Knight**, longtime Maine manager who worked for Bar Harbor for seven years before retiring in 2021. 🏔️

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Total free distribution or nominal rate distribution		
	191	191
Total distribution	3,608	3,500
Copies not distributed	0	0
Total	3,608	3,608
Percent Paid	100%	100%

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

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LEWISTON

A U.S. Army reservist from Bowdoin opened fire at two locations in Lewiston on Oct. 25, killing 18 and wounding another 13 in what police say was the worst mass shooting in Maine history. After an intensive region-wide search over two days, police found Robert R. Card, 40, dead inside a box trailer near his former workplace in Lisbon on Friday, Oct. 27. Police said Card, 40, died of a self-inflicted gunshot. Residents of Lewiston, Auburn and Lisbon sheltered in place as hundreds of local, state, and federal police and other first responders searched for Card in multiple areas. Lewiston, Maine's second largest city, is a sister city to Auburn, separated by a river. Lisbon abuts Lewiston. Schools, municipal offices, businesses, and professional offices across Androscoggin County closed down until Card's body was found. The victims' ages ranged from 14 to 76 and included a married couple and a father and son. A recent FBI crime report showed Maine was the safest state in the nation in 2022.

STATEWIDE

The state needs 84,000 new homes over the next seven years to keep pace with the existing population and anticipated growth in in-migration. A report from MaineHousing, in conjunction with the governor's office, has sent housing and building officials scouring for new projects to double the annual number of building permits and rehabilitate the state's housing stock. Some of the oldest houses in the nation are located in Maine. There are many factors impacting the housing market, including an historic lack of new building projects, a labor force that needs affordable housing, and an increase in migration to Maine. Current interest rates and the lack of housing stock has discouraged homebuyers, which in turn has created a rental housing crisis. Many municipalities have approved major new housing projects, and are considering other ways to relieve the problem, but getting to 84,000 will take many years, officials say.

ALFRED

York County hopes to confront three major needs as it plans to build a 58-bed regional drug addiction recovery center, as well as a 30-unit housing complex and a public safety training facility. Supporters and advocates say the three-pronged approach represents the largest investment to tackle three major needs at once. The county, funded primarily by property taxes, sought a regional solution that's believed to be the first in Maine to address opioid addiction, housing shortages

and the need for firefighters, police officers and paramedics. Last year, the five-person County Commission agreed to spend roughly \$15 million on each of the three projects. Three-quarters of the county's American Rescue Plan funds of \$40 million will be tapped, as well as \$4.6 million in opioid settlement funds. The county plans to build the training facility and the drug addiction recovery center on the same county-owned parcel in Alfred that abuts the county jail. Those recovering from addiction will live in the apartment building, helping them make the transition back to everyday life. The housing project will be located in Sanford because the county cannot meet zoning requirements to place all three projects on one site. Work is underway to secure the needed permits in each community. Officials hope to begin construction this year.

FORT KENT

Acknowledging that an extension of I-95 through Aroostook County is improbable, local and state transportation officials are now developing plans and priorities to upgrade The County's existing highway system. Pending federal funding, the state transportation department is proposing a full rehabilitation of parts of Route 161, which runs 86 miles from Fort Fairfield to Allagash. An effort to extend Interstate 95 through Aroostook County was blocked after the state learned it would not meet the federal standards for funding. If the new fiscal year federal budget passes, it would include \$10.4 million to reconstruct parts of Route 161 and \$8 million to reconstruct Route 161 in the Fort Kent region. Both projects are in the engineering stage. State officials say the improved roadway will be completed by late 2026 or early 2027.

HALLOWELL

The city council voted unanimously last month to pass a pesticide ban, with a water testing component. The new ordinance will prohibit residents from using pesticides on private property, but allow fertilizers. The city joins a smattering of other municipalities that have approved pesticide bans.

OLD TOWN

Officials said in October that the state-owned landfill, which takes trash from nearly 160 towns in central and northern Maine, is filling up so fast they have called an emergency. Two major landfills, in Hampden and Orrington, have closed since 2020, leaving municipalities few options. Burying trash rather than incinerating it is a last resort, officials said. Old Town state Rep. James

Dill has proposed a bill to direct the state to investigate solutions to the crisis, which has been years in the making. The bill calls for a report to the Legislature by June 1, 2024. Old Town's Juniper Landfill, Maine's largest landfill, opened in 1993 and city officials worry that at the current pace, it will be filled five years early. In addition to the proposed legislation, Old Town leaders want the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to work with the city to confront and resolve the Juniper crisis.

WINDHAM

A new conservation area, the largest in southern Maine, will open in December and offer residents and visitors five miles of trails, access to a town pond and a view of the mountains of western Maine. The East Windham Conservation Area now totals 2,000 acres, thanks to a recent addition of 700 acres. The property will remain undeveloped and open to the public. The new area includes 14 different parcels of land, which took years of negotiating with landowners to secure for conservation. 🌲

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PHOTO CONTEST!

Now collecting photos featuring your community's special attributes.

Although the 87th MMA Convention is behind us, staff are already at work planning for the 2024 event. One of the items on the "to do list" is the convention attendee giveaway, which will be a deck of playing cards featuring photos of Maine towns and cities.

In the vein of "many hands make light work," this is where you come in.

MMA is looking for pictures of idyllic Maine spring, summer, fall and winter scenes, photos taken at community events, and snapshots of the unique and quirky features or locales in your municipalities.

All communities contributing photos will be entered into a drawing for a two-day pass to the 2024 MMA convention. Of course, winners will be bestowed with bragging rights.

Since a panel of judges will be convened in May to select the winning photos, we urge you to grab your phones or Kodachrome cameras.

However, before you hit send, a bit of fine print for your consideration:

- Photos must be submitted to Sue Bourdon at sbourdon@memun.org no later than noon, on Tuesday, April 1, 2024.
- Photos must be submitted in an electronic format, jpg preferred.
- The submission must include a description of the photo and an explanation of its significance to your community or the State of Maine.

If you have any questions about the contest, please do not hesitate to contact Kate Dufour at kdufour@memun.org or 1-800-452-8786.

Thank you and good luck!

NEW MEDICAL CANNABIS REGISTRATION FORM

Municipal officers may soon be asked to complete a new form developed by the Maine Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP).

Generally, medical cannabis caregivers must register with the OCP annually. See 22 M.R.S. § 2425-A(2). (Caregivers assisting only household or family members are exempt from registration). Registered caregivers may operate a single retail store pursuant to their state registration, but that retail store can only be located in a municipality that has “opted in” to allow the operation of such stores. To help OCP ensure that registered caregivers have the required municipal permission to operate a retail store, the OCP has developed a “Caregiver Retail Store Local Authorization Form” which caregivers must now submit with their annual registration application.

The OCP form asks the municipal officers to confirm that the municipality’s legislative body has voted to allow medical cannabis retail stores (or that the store was operating with municipal approval prior to December 13, 2018) and that the caregiver has obtained all necessary local approvals, permits, or licenses for the operation of a registered caregiver retail store. The form may be accessed on OCP’s website at: <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/ocp/medical-use/applications-forms>.

More information on both medical and adult use cannabis is available in MMA Legal Services information packets on these topics under the “Legal” tab on our website (www.memun.org) (By S.F.P.)

REQUIRED NOTICE OF SHORELAND ZONING DECISIONS

We want to remind local boards of appeals and their staff that municipalities must notify the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) both before and after the board makes decisions on certain shoreland zoning matters.

State statute requires municipalities to forward a copy of every shoreland zoning *variance request* to the DEP at least 20 days before action by the local appeals board (see 38 M.R.S. § 438-A(6-A)). This material must include the application and all supporting information provided by the applicant. The DEP may comment if it determines that comments are warranted, and if it does, these comments must be made part of the record and considered by the appeals board prior to acting on the variance request.

In addition, written notice of all shoreland zoning-related appeals board decisions on *both* administrative appeals and variances must be given to the DEP after

a decision is made. This notice must state the reasons and the basis for the board’s decision, including the facts found and conclusions reached, and must be mailed or hand-delivered to the applicant and to the DEP within seven days of the board’s decision. This requirement is located in the *Maine Guidelines for Municipal Shoreland Zoning Ordinances* (06-096 C.M.R. ch. 1000) section 16(H)(4)(b)(iv) and must be incorporated into municipal shoreland zoning ordinances. The *Guidelines* also require copies of all such board of appeals decisions to be given to the planning board, CEO, and municipal officers. (Also see 30-A M.R.S. § 2691(3)).

Access the model guidelines and contact information for DEP’s Shoreland Zoning Unit at: <https://www.maine.gov/dep/land/slz/>. (By S.F.P.)

APPOINTED TO HIRED?

Question: Our select board wants to change some appointed municipal positions, such as clerk, treasurer, and collector to “hired” positions. Can they?

Answer: Not really. Usually when a municipality asks us about converting an appointed office to a “hired” position the underlying goal is to appoint someone to the position for an indefinite (unending) term. That cannot be accomplished without legislative body (town meeting/council) approval. Let us explain:

Some positions within municipal government are “offices.” Generally, offices are established in state statute, a person is elected or appointed to fill the office for a definite term, and an oath of office is required. Municipal “offices” include the municipal clerk, tax collector, treasurer, road commissioner, code enforcement officer and animal control officer, among others. For a list of required municipal offices, see “Municipal Officials Required by Statute,” in our *Town Meeting & Elections Manual*, Appendix 1.

An “office” may either be an *elected* or an *appointed* position – those are the only two choices. (Note: we are only discussing appointed positions in this Legal Note.)

Unless a municipal charter provides otherwise, a multi-year or even an indefinite term of office may legally be established for most *appointed* offices, but only by action of the municipal legislative body clearly establishing a new term for the position. (There are some exceptions where a term is limited by statute, for example, registrar of voters or appointed tax assessor.) Otherwise, the default term for most municipal offices is one year. See 30-A M.R.S. § 2601(2).

However, establishing an indefinite term for an appointed office should be carefully considered as thereafter it may be significantly more difficult to terminate an unsatisfactory official or simply make a change from

time to time. Generally, appointed officials may only be removed during their term for “just cause” after notice and hearing. Establishing an indefinite term for an appointed position eliminates the opportunity to simply decline to re-appoint an official periodically when a new term begins if the official’s performance has been less than ideal, or it is simply time for a change.

In most cases, a 3-year or 5-year term may be sufficient to provide reasonable job security (to attract good candidates) while also enabling the board or manager the option to choose someone new if the incumbent is just not working out after those years. Alternatively, if no change is desired, the official may easily be re-appointed to a new term of office with new appointment papers and a new oath of office.

Finally, many municipalities incorporate advertising, application forms and interview procedures into the appointment process. This is perfectly legal and, in fact, recommended. Some mistakenly assume that adding those procedures converts an office into a “hired” position. That is simply not true; as explained above, only the municipal legislative body may alter the term of an appointed office. (By S.F.P.)

PUBLIC WORKS ENGINEER REQUIREMENTS

A new law expands the situations in which a municipality must hire a licensed professional engineer to assist with public works projects. Effective 10/25/23, unless an exemption applies, Maine law requires municipalities to use a licensed professional engineer for any public works construction project that involves “professional engineering.” (PL 2023, c. 174).

Previously, the law expressly allowed public construction projects to proceed without an engineer if the project did not exceed \$100,000 in cost and did not create an undue risk to public safety or welfare.

The statute (32 M.R.S. § 1254) was rewritten to now require a licensed engineer for all public works construction projects of any cost that involve “professional engineering” unless the limited exemption described below applies. “Professional engineering” is broadly defined in 32 M.R.S. § 1251(4) as “any professional service, such as consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning, design or responsible supervision of construction in connection with any public or private utilities, structures, buildings, machines, equipment, processes, works or projects, wherein the public welfare or the safeguarding of life, health or property is concerned or involved, when such professional service requires the application of engineering principles and data.”

The law allows an exemption only for projects meeting both of the following criteria: (1) the project is \$250,000

MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 23 – Thanksgiving Day, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051).

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

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

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

BY JANUARY 1 – Owners or keepers of dogs or wolf hybrids aged 6 months or more must obtain a license from the municipal clerk, an authorized veterinarian agent, or via the state’s online portal. A late fee applies after January 31. (7 M.R.S. §§ 3922, 3923-A).

or less in cost, and (2) an “authorized representative” of the municipality has issued a written determination that “the life, health and property of the public will be adequately protected without the services of a licensed professional engineer.”

It is not clear which municipal official(s) are “authorized representatives” who may determine that a municipal project can safely proceed without an engineer. Absent an ordinance or charter provision providing otherwise, the municipal officers (select board/council) generally have final oversight responsibility for construction projects that have been approved by the municipal legislative body. As a result, in most situations the board would likely be considered the “authorized representative” in this context. Given the technical nature of this determination, we recommend the board make (and document) any such determination in consultation with a licensed professional engineer.

For more information on laws pertaining to public works projects, see our Contracts & Competitive Bidding Information Packet available on MMA’s website (www.memun.org) (By S.F.P.) 🏡

NOVEMBER

11/16	Thurs.	The ABCs of Assessing – for Non Assessors	Zoom Webinar	MMA
11/28	Tues.	Elected Officials Workshop	Zoom Webinar	MMA

DECEMBER

12/1	Fri.	MTCMA/MMANH Joint Workshop - Leadership Exchange	Freeport - The Harraseeket Inn	MTCMA
12/6	Wed.	Planning Board/Boards of Appeal	Zoom Webinar	MMA
12/6 & 7	Wed.-Thurs.	MTCCA Vital Records	Day 1: Zoom Webinar (full day) Day 2: Zoom Webinar (half day)	MTCCA
12/7	Thurs.	MBOIA Annual Membership Meeting & Training	Lewiston - The Green Ladle	MBOIA
12/8	Fri.	MWDA Winter Issues Training	Augusta - MMA	MWDA
12/13 & 14	Wed-Thurs.	Athenian Dialogue: My Fight/Your Fight	Zoom Meeting	MTCCA
12/13	Wed.	MMA Issues in Cannabis Compliance and Enforcement Webinar	Zoom	MMA
12/18	Mon.	Understanding the Freedom of Access Act	Zoom Webinar	MMA
12/19	Tue.	MMTCTA Small Claims workshop	Augusta -MMA	MMTCTA

Survey Says...

MMA'S NEW WEBSITE IS A WELCOME CHANGE.

On **June 22**, MMA launched its modernized website, which was redesigned with the end user in mind. As is the case with any new product or service, initial adjustments and amendments are often necessary to ensure customer satisfaction. To that end, we asked municipal officials attending the MMA Annual Convention to provide needed feedback by completing a survey.

Nearly 230 municipal officials responded to the request by providing feedback on the usability of the website and offering suggestions for improvements.

Based on the feedback received, MMA learned that **95% of the survey participants** had visited the new website, and **93% reported** that they could easily locate the needed information and resources. A few respondents admitted that getting accustomed to the new format would take some time, while others expressed concerns with the new website. A few notable stumbling blocks included the ability to find legal manuals, as well as the link to the job bank.

A tutorial providing users with a tour of the new website and its features was one of the suggested improvements, as were more general pleas to make the site more intuitive and user friendly. Other respondents recommended adding additional features, such as access to online quizzes to assess employee training needs.

Thanks are owed to the municipal officials who took time out of the convention to provide constructive feedback and to express appreciation and support for this effort. However, there is still time to share your thoughts. MMA takes these comments seriously and encourages municipalities to keep the feedback coming. If you have suggestions to share, please don't hesitate to email us at resourcecenter@memun.org.

Additionally, congratulations to **Megan Brackett**, Rockport finance director, who won an iPad in a drawing for having completed the survey.

MAINE MUNICIPAL BOND BANK

2024 SPRING BOND ISSUE SCHEDULE

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

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

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

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

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

Wednesday, February 7th - Application Deadline

Wednesday, March 13th - Application Approval (MMBB Board Meeting)

Monday, April 8th - Preliminary opinions and loan agreements due from bond counsel of each borrower

Wednesday, April 10th - Last date for signing school contracts and rates in place for water district. PUC approvals due

Week of April 22nd - Maine Municipal Bond Bank Pricing

Monday, May 13th - Final documents due from bond counsel

Wednesday, May 22nd - Pre-closing

Thursday, May 23rd - Closing - Bond proceeds available

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



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