

Maine Town & City

The magazine of the Maine Municipal Association

MAY 2024 | VOLUME 86 | ISSUE 5

The Total Eclipse

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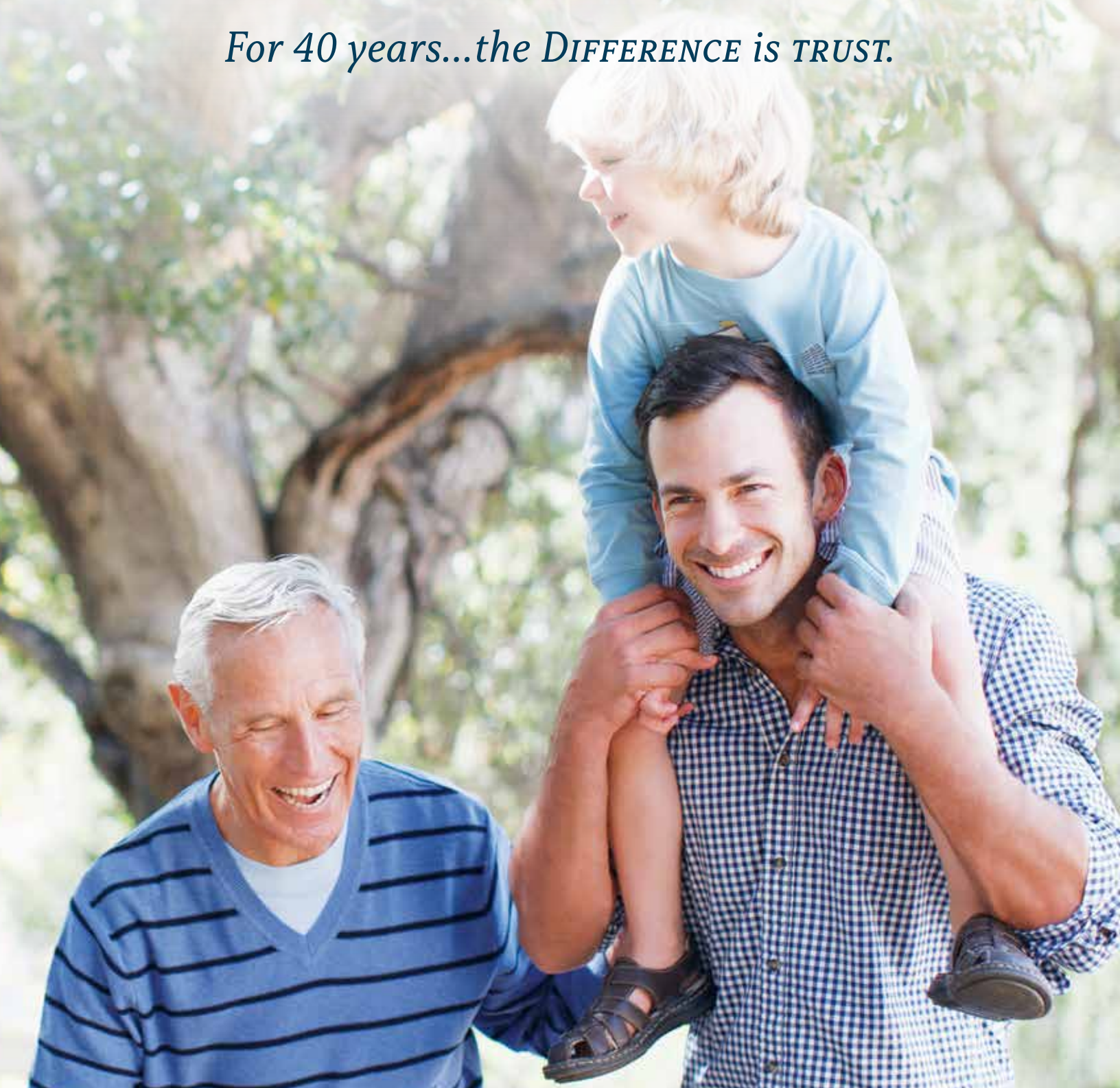
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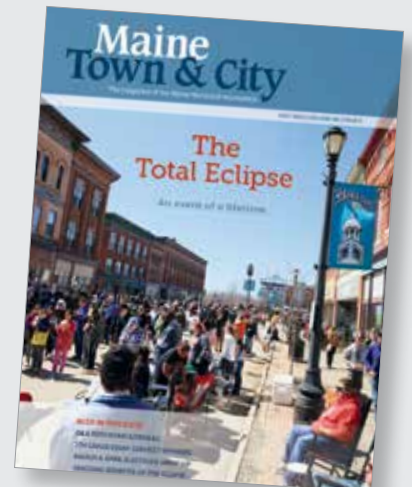
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Eclipse enthusiasts await totality in Houlton.

(Photo by Rebecca Lambert, MMA)



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Maine People, National Stage

By Diane Hines / Town Manager, Town of Ludlow



Each March, municipal leaders from around the nation gather in Washington, D.C. to partake in the National Leagues of Cities' (NLC) Congressional City Conference. Last year, I had the privilege of attending the event and as you can imagine, I was proud and excited to return in 2024 as MMA President.

Maine was well represented at the March conference, as municipal leaders from Bangor, Brewer, Hampden, Portland, and South Portland convened for days of learning, networking, and lobbying. Municipal leaders presented a unified front when asking for Senators Collins and King, Congresswoman Pingree and Congressman Golden's support for important initiatives. While our towns and cities vary in size, as we discussed our issues it was evident that the challenges facing municipalities are the same, whether it is aging infrastructure, lack of access to broadband services, PFAS or the mental health and substance use crises, the only difference being scale.

Monday, March 11, was the opening day of the session and the 3,000 attendees were met with tightened security. Rumor had it that someone from the White House would be speaking during the opening ceremony. Adding to the excitement was the NLC's celebration of its centennial anniversary, which was founded as the American Municipal Association in 1924. Bagpipes were played, the National Guard presented the colors, and ushers used light sabers to guide participants to their seats. Finally, the rumors were confirmed as President Biden took the stage and opened his fifteen-minute speech with a joke about not being at the first meeting of the NLC a 100 years earlier. His humor and speech were well received.

However, the real highlight of the opening day ceremony was the blessing of the ground beneath the Capital City delivered by Portland City Councilor, April Fournier. It was with spine tingling and teary-eyed pride that attendees from Maine watched as one of our own took center stage to kick off the event. Her poise, resolve, and

dedication to her ancestral roots were palpable. This moment was a well-deserved tribute to and acknowledgment of Councilor Fournier's efforts at the state and national levels, which now also includes being a founding member of the NLC's newly created Local Indigenous Leaders constituency group.

Influenced by the opening day ceremonies, I found myself at a special exhibit at the Renwick Gallery about Native American beadwork. It was a destination that graced the top of my leisure time list. With a bit of encouragement from a colleague as we browsed the gift shop replete with items celebrating Native American culture, I was drawn to, purchased and wore a black suit interwoven with colorful ribbons on the second day of the conference. As I was waiting for doors to open for a session, I was suddenly surrounded by three women who were practically shouting "where did you get that suit?" The Renwick Gallery answer came as a bit of a surprise, and then someone recognized me. This was April Fournier. Turns out that I was wearing a B. Yellowtail ensemble, and the women all knew the designer.

As we discussed the designer, it was reinforced that color plays an important role in Native American culture. As the four of us, the mayor of Winslow Arizona, Birdie Cano; fellow council member Melissa Nelson; Councilor Fournier and I, the town manager of Ludlow, stood for a selfie, it became clear that color also has a unifying power, as that chance meeting continues to grace my fondest memories.

Attendees also had opportunities to participate in amazing breakout sessions. My favorite session featured leaders from different federal agencies, including the departments of Housing and Urban Development, Environmental Protection, and Transportation, who shared information regarding the plethora of funding opportunities for towns and cities.

On many different fronts, it was an empowering event, and I can hardly wait to wear my power suit again. 🏔️

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A Damaging Winter

The costs continue to accumulate as Maine residents, businesses, and communities recover.

By Betty Adams

Johnson Cove Road, Roque Bluffs (Photo: Lisa Hanscom, EMA director for Washington County)

The state took a wallop this past winter from storms that brought floodwaters into businesses and homes, wiped out roadways and municipal facilities, and caused all sorts of headaches for residents and visitors alike.

On Dec.17-21, 2023, bad weather struck largely inland communities where rivers and streams overflowed banks and occasionally blocked access in parts of Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset counties.

Then the coast in Cumberland, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, Washington, and York counties took the brunt of the damage from back-to-back ocean storms Jan. 10-13.

Both incidents met the criteria for federal disaster declarations, making federal funding available for recovery. According to a press release from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), that funding is available to individuals as well as “state, tribal and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the severe storms and flooding.”

In fact, between April 30, 2023, and April 10, 2024, Maine sustained six qualifying major disaster incidents as a result of various severe storms and flooding, according to FEMA records, including damage from Hurricane Lee on Sept. 15-17, 2023.

A Preliminary Damage Assessment Report issued by FEMA for December 17-21, 2023, provided some overall statistics, noting that the primary impact in the public assistance category was “damage to roads and bridges,” with the cost estimated at just over \$5.7 million.

The report also noted that 215 residences were impacted, with 119 classified as either destroyed or sustaining major damage and that the “Total Individual Assistance Cost Estimate” was about \$2.3 million. The assessment noted the highest per capita impacts occurred in Franklin

County (\$58.25) and Washington County (\$35.55). The preliminary damage assessment is “used to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and resulting needs of individuals, businesses, public sector, and community as a whole.” The information collected is “used by the State as a basis for the Governor’s request for a major disaster or emergency declaration, and by the President in determining a response to the Governor’s request,” the report notes.

The Town of Rumford in Oxford County served as one of the Disaster Recovery Centers in Maine. On the town’s Facebook page, Rumford posted a FEMA news release about the April 1, 2024 deadline to apply for assistance from the December storm. The last two Disaster Recovery Centers in Maine – located at the Rumford Town Office and the Manchester Fire Department were scheduled to close permanently that day.

Rumford Town Manager Stacy Carter (who has worked for the town for 34 years – 30 with the town’s police department, including 14 years as chief) said that Rumford and the adjacent town of Mexico sustained a great deal of damage and had a number of people displaced. “It was kind of ground zero for this neck of the woods,” Carter said, so Rumford offered to host a recovery center, and it proved to be particularly busy, and opened the longest. “When it originally opened, we had a contract for one month and they were open seven days a week from 9 to 6,” he noted.

The contract was later extended to April 1 although it was open fewer days and shorter hours as the closing date approached.

“It was important for us to stay open so we could make it as easy as possible, not only for our residents, but we had businesses affected as well,” Carter said. “People were able to register in person. We wanted them to have face-to-face contact, to ask questions and get through the process. For some of them it took more than one visit. As they got receipts from work done, (FEMA officials) were able to help them a little better.” Applications for relief also were accepted via a helpline and on the web.

Betty Adams is a freelance writer from Augusta and regular contributor to Maine Town & City, adamsbetty00@gmail.com.



Marshall Point Road.

(Photo: Lisa Hanscom, EMA director for Washington County)

As part of the recovery effort, there was an “Envision Rumford Disaster Relief Night of Information” held Feb. 27 at Mountain Valley High School. Information was provided by FEMA, the Small Business Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, United Way of Androscoggin County and other disaster relief and finance groups.

Much of the damage came from rivers overflowing their banks. The Swift River flows into the Androscoggin River at the Rumford-Mexico line and the latter serves as the border between the towns as it winds through the urban area on its way to join the Kennebec River at Merymeeting Bay en route to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Swift River was at an all-time high. “Because of the rain, we had tremendous snow melt as well,” Carter said. The towns of Byron and Roxbury, which are farther north along the Swift River, sustained damage from flooding as well.

Rumford’s Parks Department sustained significant damage, including the baseball and softball fields and fencing. “We had three buildings in the flood zone that received damage and a lot of equipment,” Carter said. “Not only is the public allowed to apply for assistance from FEMA, the town is able to apply for public assistance.” He said that will help rebuild 10 municipal roads

that were damaged in the flooding.

The town had received federal assistance to rebuild roads damaged in the December 2022 floods, and another storm in May 2023 brought more flooding and about \$90,000 in road damage. “We got those roads repaired, but we haven’t gotten the money yet. And now we have another project from Dec. 18, 2023,” Carter said. “In a year’s period we had three major storms that caused major damage.

He estimated the municipal damage from the December 2023 floods at about \$2 million, with some of that covered by flood insurance. The recreation facility buildings and the seven sewer pump stations that were damaged were insured, and he noted that FEMA will assist with funds for road rebuilding. Shortly after the floods, the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) estimated that emergency response and infrastructure repairs would cost approximately \$10-12 million, according to a news release from the governor’s office.

Carter added that the state repaired Route 120 where it washed out along the Swift River; however, more work, including paving, is anticipated in the warmer weather.

The town also conducted an “after action review” of emergency management procedures and found that the current policies and procedures worked well.

“The one thing that we’re looking to do as we do repairs and build back is look for ways to be more resilient and make some of these road areas that continually flood a little better, and maybe do additional riprap so that they don’t wash out.” He noted that is a process through FEMA and state hazard mitigation grants.

The Town of St. George (which includes Port Clyde and Tenants Harbor) in Knox County saw damage from the ocean storms in January 2024, particularly to the Drift Inn and Marshall roads. “Those are both areas where the roadways are very close to the water,” said Town Manager Richard Erb. Marshall Point Road leads to the town-owned Marshall Point Lighthouse & Museum, a popular tourist site that is open during warm weather. “People might remember it from the Forrest Gump movie,” Erb said. “The walkway to the lighthouse has stone piers that hold it up. Those were significantly damaged.” He said town officials are meeting with the engineer and with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to discuss repairs.

Erb said the town has applied for assistance to restore the roads and that the state Department of Transportation repaired a section of Route 131 which was affected by the astronomical high tides. “Astronomical tides really took a toll,” he said. “The town docks were under water.”

He said the initial cost for cleanup and temporary

road repairs was approximately \$90,000. “There will be quite a bit of additional work to be completed when we get into construction season,” he added.

The town’s emergency management procedures remain unchanged. “We’re used to dealing with coastal storms blocking traffic,” he said.

He also noted that the town and its Community Resilience Committee have taken proactive steps toward dealing with the effects of rising sea levels by using state grant money to fund the St. George Coastal Resiliency Project. The town is partnering with Sebago Technics in this effort.

Washington County was impacted by both the December and January storms although county Emergency Management Agency Director Lisa Hanscom said the Jan. 10 storm that struck the coast caused the greatest damage.

The December storm caused an estimated \$1.1 million in damage to public facilities, including town boat landings, wharfs, dunes, bridges, roads, and public buildings. Hanscom said among the most affected communities were Calais, Princeton, and Charlotte.

The storms which occurred on Jan. 10 and Jan. 13 in Washington County caused almost \$5.3 million in public infrastructure damage, and 246 individuals and businesses applied as well for assistance in the initial phase of disaster relief. She said that damage was reported initially by Milbridge, Steuben, Addison, Jonesport, Roque Bluffs, Machias, Cutler, and Lubec.

On April 12, FEMA and the state announced the opening of a Disaster Recovery Center in the University of Maine’s Torrey Building in Machias to assist those impacted by the January storms. Other centers open at that time were located in Wells in York County, Ellsworth in Hancock County and Orr’s Island in Cumberland County.

A week prior, disaster responders were canvassing door-to-door on roads in Addison, Charlotte, Cherryfield, Jonesport, Machias and Milbridge. “They will hit as many of the reporting towns as they can,” Hanscom said.

Hanscom was a member of the Roque Bluff Select Board for 19 years and town assessor there for four years before becoming the county EMA director in late March 2021.

On June 9 that year, a flash flood hit several towns in the county. She recalled the incident: “It was thunderstorms that rolled over on themselves constantly. We had over 7 inches (of rain) in a couple of hours. I was in the Town of Roque Bluffs that was completely cut off from



Lisa Hanscom

everything else. You couldn’t get out of the town.

“MEMA had called me and wanted to know what I had heard. I told her I got reports from Machias that they had lost some roads and reports from Machiasport. And you have 270 people stranded in Roque Bluffs that can’t get out, including me. And they’re going, ‘You can’t get out?’

“No, I’m stuck here.”

That brought rapid response. “It was my first experience with what we could call

in. We had 32 MDOT trucks; we had forestry up in the air doing photos of the damages. We had Marine Patrol and Coast Guard waiting in case we needed them and Machias ambulances for everyone that was kind of stuck in Roque Bluffs until roads could be repaired or flooding went down to get us out.”

One access road had flooded, and the water took out 20 feet of Great Cove Road, the other access point. It took three days to rebuild the latter road.

“It was quite exciting because it really showed me what MEMA could do and the relationships they had with a lot of their resource partners, like forestry and MDOT, so it was kind of a baptism by fire.”

She said the county is currently working to update its hazardous mitigation plan so towns can qualify for funds for hazard mitigation projects.

“The recent storms have kind of woken some of the towns up to potential problems in their towns with roads where people might be totally cut off,” Hanscom said. “In all these storms there are several places in the county that have been without power for numerous days. How are we going to take care of those people, especially those on oxygen or who are sick? We’re looking at all the problems we might have – erosion, wildfires, fall, winter storms, summer storms – and actually plan for it.”

Another result of the December 2023 and January 2024 storms was an extension for tax filing for those in the affected counties. In an April 9 announcement, the state Department of Administrative and Financial Services extended the state’s filing deadline to match that announced earlier by the Internal Revenue Service. It means that the deadlines for affected individuals and businesses for filing 2023 tax returns are June 17, 2024, for Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Somerset counties; and July 15, 2024, for Cumberland, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, Washington, and York counties. In fact, only Aroostook County had the April 17 deadline. 🏔️



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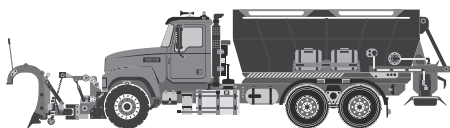
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WHERE *in* MAINE?

Houlton, Maine

The moment of totality in Houlton.

By Rebecca Lambert / Municipal Issues Specialist

Right: A replica of the Samantha Smith statue at the Hines' farm. The original is on display at the Maine State Museum and was designed and sculpted by Glenn Hines.

The "Where in Maine" series will showcase the more whimsical sides of our communities. Municipalities in Maine will be explored with a focus 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





Rebecca Lambert and her special guest, Emmett, arrive in Houlton.



The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and Penobscot drummers.

Tens of thousands of people were expected to flood into Maine towns that fell within the path of the total solar eclipse, on April 8. Eclipse enthusiasts made lodging reservations and planned for the event a year or more in advance, while rural towns lying within the path of totality spent several years planning for the influx of people. For Houlton, a small town of approximately 6,000 people, years of planning resulted in a spectacular and successful community event leading up to a rare celestial occurrence.

Given the rarity of the total eclipse in Maine, the “Where in Maine” series is again in Aroostook County so that our readers may not only experience the eclipse, but also learn how a rural town manages an extreme surge of visitors for what is a relatively short main event.

For three years, Houlton town staff and volunteers have been planning for a three-day festival leading up to the eclipse. Yet while the town was focused on volunteers and staffing, traffic patterns, shuttle bus routes, and parking, local businesses alike were preparing for the massive increase of potential customers, expected to be upwards of 40,000 visitors.

The Maine Eclipse event planners had to keep everything in perspective from ensuring enough food and supplies for visitors to the logistical preparations and staffing needed to accomplish an event of this size. Several business sponsors helped financially, and many hands were involved to produce such a successful event.

However, no amount of preparation can counter the unpredictability of mother nature and while final tweaks to critical pieces of the event were taking place, public works officials wound up having to add snow cleanup to their list of duties from a spring Nor’easter. While the weather was clear on eclipse day, this unexpected snowstorm created a bit of extra stress.

Public safety is a major factor, particularly when a large number of people are expected to descend in a sin-

gle location. Law enforcement personnel from the York County Sheriff’s department as well as officers from the local police departments of Auburn, Gouldsboro, Rumford, Sabattus, and Westbrook came to assist with the public safety aspect of the event.

Houlton schools were closed for the day in anticipation of the traffic congestion and likewise I thought it might be fun to bring my six-year-old son, Emmett, with me to witness this rare event—we will call it an unaffiliated school field trip. A highlight on our drive to Houlton was the rest area with a scenic view of Mount Katahdin, which was open for the monumental occasion, as it typically doesn’t open until May. Emmett and I made our way to the overlook at the rest area and were fortunate to catch a picturesque view of this majestic Maine treasure, punctuated with a cap of snow.

We left home on Sunday, the day before the eclipse and since my lack of planning left us without a room for the night, MMA President Diane Hines graciously offered her guest house to us. Diane and her husband Glenn live in the tiny town of Hammond, located right outside of Houlton, on a 300 plus acre farm. The main home, guest house, and outbuildings have all been built by Diane and her husband. Constantly working and never stagnant, they are artists, sculptors in particular, so it wasn’t surprising to hear they are in the process of building a “studio,” which is appropriately the biggest building of the bunch on their lot.

As you make your way down the long driveway towards the rustic rock bridge, you are met with large and beautiful statues of lions and moose, who appear to be guarding the property from every angle. Sculptures scatter the parcel, and a plethora of busts adorn the shelves in the guest house. Although there was still snow when we visited, the rock walls and paths, flower gardens, and swimming hole/ice skating pond gives the vibe of being in a magical oasis.

Even Boxy, the box turtle—who was brought here from New Jersey—was content sauntering around the greenhouse, albeit he was not overjoyed by Emmett’s overt fondness for him.

After settling into our home away from home, we headed to downtown Houlton to map out our parking spot. A shout out to Nancy Ketch, Houlton’s Director of Community Development, who secured a parking spot for us at Bowers Funeral Home across the street from the town hall, where those from the media were parking.

Downtown roads were blocked for the thousands of pedestrians milling around enjoying the festival in progress and the nice weather that had finally graced the Maine atmosphere. The pleasant weather was especially welcomed after that spring storm dumped a foot or more of snow in some parts of The County.

As we traveled around the town, we happened upon the Houlton Farms Dairy Bar. Now, if you are an avid reader of the “Where in Maine” series, you know I always seem to find the local ice cream shop. What kind of writer would I be for our members if I didn’t sample their selections. I mean, it’s all for the sake of research, right?

For a day that was a bit chilly, the line was long. Nevertheless, Emmett and I took one for our members and stood in line, waiting our turn. While waiting, we were chatting about what flavors we were hoping they had and how the ice cream must be really good given that the line is so long. Another customer in front of us overheard that comment and shared that the line now was the shortest it had been all week.

Emmett’s blue eyes widened, and a smile came across his lips. It was at that priceless moment you could see the wheels in his head turning, confirming that he was about to have the most epic treat of his life. As he looked at the menu trying to sound out the flavors, I found out that this kind stranger was Jane Lynds who works at the Houlton Water Company, which is a member of MMA. She has been working there for nearly 40 years and is approaching retirement, congratulations to her!

The Houlton Creamery holds a special place in my heart and memory bank. My 105-year-old grandmother (still alive) is from Madawaska and would travel there to visit every so often. On her way back home, she and my grandfather would stop at the creamery and stock up on their butter. At any given time there were six or

seven pounds of butter in the freezer. I didn’t realize how good the butter was until I moved out on my own and no longer had 24/7 access to it.

A handful of times over the past few years I’ve had to go to Houlton and each time I have looked, but there is no butter to be found. What does one have to do to get their hands on some Houlton Creamery butter nowadays? But I digress.

Emmett and I awoke to a beautiful day of sunshine on Monday, not a cloud in the sky. After a tour of the farm, we fed Sport the horse some treats, and Emmett was allowed to gather eggs from the chicken coop. We said our goodbyes to our gracious hosts, the Hines, and headed to town for the festivities.

Thousands of people decided to go to the downtown area, which was buzzing with food vendors, and all the shops were open for business. A main stage was set up in historic Market Square where a DJ played music, and rock painting and Tai Chi were offered at the Houlton Amphitheater, where many had already claimed a spot on the grass waiting for the eclipse.

Hot dogs from the Broadway Bus, and pizza from Market Pizza were culinary treasures in the eyes of a six-year-old. As we sat on the curb to eat a slice of pizza, a woman approached me to tell me how cute we looked sitting there together and asked to take our picture so I could see how cute we were. What an unexpected but touching gesture that proves kindness among strangers still exists today.



The Houlton Farms Dairy Bar, line isn’t too long according to a bystander.

For Wabanaki tribes, the eclipse retains a more spiritual meaning and represents rebirth. Along with private celebrations within their own communities, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and Penobscot drummers came together downtown to celebrate and showcase their culture through music and dance.

The notion of rebirth seemed fitting on that gorgeous April day since we have all recently emerged from our own winter cocoons.

The beauty of being in the path of totality is that you didn't have to be downtown or in a certain spot to see the eclipse. If there is a view of the sun, you're good to go! Not only were thousands of people in the downtown and Riverfront Park area, but there were parking lot parties popping up all over Houlton, including in the Hannaford parking lot.

As the minutes ticked closer to the beginning of the eclipse, and with full bellies and many memories made, Emmett and I made our way back to the funeral home parking lot. With eclipse glasses and camera in hand, we settled in and set ourselves up to watch the action unfold. The actual progress towards totality is somewhat lengthy and although exciting, it is a bit like watching paint dry. We decided to spend some time playing a made-up game of parking lot soccer which drew the attention and participation of some other children enjoying the event.

Not being from Houlton, you could feel the spirit of the community and the pride its residents have for their hometown. A lot of care went into the planning of this eclipse event to be a family-oriented celebration, and that is just what they provided.

Leading up to the event, I logically understood what a total eclipse entailed and if you weren't looking through the special glasses, it simply seemed like the sun was setting. However, no logic prepared me for the moment of totality, when like a switch, there was darkness. It was spectacular and felt a little like New Year's Eve when the clock strikes midnight.

Crowds cheered; people hugged. Stars were visible in the sky and the sun was now what appeared to be a black hole with a glowing edge—called the corona. It was breathtaking and once the totality had passed, Mother Nature magically flipped the switch again. I was awestruck.

Knowing there would be traffic on the way home, shortly after the total eclipse, Emmett and I packed up our things to start the long drive home. Traffic flow was a bit congested in Houlton, but once we made it to the interstate it was smooth sailing...well, until Smyrna that is. This is where we had a top speed of 20 mph, but it was mainly stop and go. When we finally made it to the Medway exit, I decided to get off the interstate to get home via the back roads.

As we made our way, we found that traffic to get on the interstate in Medway was backed up all the way to downtown Millinocket! For those that don't know, that is approximately 10 miles.

I'm somewhat familiar with the back roads but they obviously aren't the ones that I drive on every day so there is a level of unfamiliarity. The sun had set (for real this time) making seeing what was coming up ahead a bit challenging, but I did learn a fun fact. When you fail to stop at a yield sign, even if you didn't see it, and you wind up cutting off a police officer, they don't like it.

A heartfelt apology to the officer in Skowhegan who I did cut off, and a most sincere thank you for not giving me a ticket for my action.

A journey that took Emmett and I three hours on Sunday, wound up taking five to get home but am thankful I wasn't subjected to the horror stories that other travelers encountered. It was reported that people with electric cars were stranded with either no place to charge them or facing long lines for charging stations.

All in all, Houlton successfully produced an eclipse event and should be very proud of the outcome of their efforts. Now, if someone could just point me to the Houlton Farms Creamery butter. 🧈

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Retaining First Responders

Pay, benefits, and most importantly, community support, are needed in the ongoing battle to retain Maine's dwindling ranks of volunteer first responders

By Colleen Hennessy

Successfully hiring and training any new municipal employee now is a win, albeit an expensive one. But since the summer of 2021, dubbed the “Great Resignation,” recruiting first responders to work in local government has been especially hard. While resignations have evened out nationally, Maine continues to face a retirement surge that will make existing first responder staff and volunteers, even more valuable. Because of the challenges in attracting and certifying or licensing new, even experienced first responders, retention of the existing workforce must be a priority for Maine's municipalities, both from an employment and public safety standpoint.

To keep motivated law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services (EMS) people on the job, municipal governments work hard to support them, but also need to compete with other cities and towns for pay and benefits. Supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and company policies are variables which influence employee satisfaction and motivation according to a 2020 article published in the *Journal of Police Science & Management*. However, control over some of these variables are in the hands of local government employers, while others need support from the State of Maine.

Municipal governments can be bureaucratic and inflexible employers since appointments, pay and benefits, and training guidelines are often set by public policy that is often slow and difficult to change. The fire and emergency medical services in Maine, traditionally a voluntary workforce, can no longer operate safely by relying on their members intrinsic motivation or spare time to function. Considering the hourly living wage for an adult is now \$22.04, most Mainers can't afford to volunteer significant hours in their communities and still earn enough to survive. While local and state governments realized that EMS

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This is the final article in a three-part series looking at the challenges facing first responder agencies.

was at the point of collapse post-COVID and accepted services needed to be funded, the fire service is still floundering without any intervention to retain the service at all, forget individual firefighters. Even with hourly wages paid to many staff now, training time is often voluntary, and the majority of departments don't pay anyone to be on-call or staff the station for a shift, like they do with EMS professionals.

Volunteer departments tried to provide retirement savings programs to incentivize employees to invest more years in their community by advocating for the creation of the Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP). This is an annuity-based savings program for volunteer emergency personnel used in at least forty states. Maine passed a bill creating a LOSAP in 2015, yet according to Liberty Fire Chief, Bill Gillespie, founding member, chair of the board, and Maine Fire Chiefs' Association representative, it's been a real struggle to get through the red tape and fund it.

He said, “The State passed the legislation in 2016 and we only just received \$500,000 in seed money in 2021 due to administration issues. First, MainePERS couldn't do it and then we needed to authorize third party administration and go through that RFP process.”

Maine's LOSAP is a defined contribution plan where contributions are added to the individual's account so when the participant attains the vesting requirements the funds are available for retirement benefits. These funds can come from federal, state, and local governments and volunteer organizations associated with fire departments. However, without State funding, it hasn't been a significant help to municipalities and fire departments despite years of work.

“We need 2.5 million dollars from the state. Instead, we

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get periodic allotments from the governor year by year,” added Gillespie.

While communities want a locally operated and controlled fire department, according to chiefs like Gillespie and Roy Potter of Edgecomb, they don’t understand the dire need to start budgeting for paid staff, training, and annual equipment upgrades. Chief Potter, currently a part-time paid town employee, has lobbied for the position to be full-time, to preserve the department now, but also to plan to recruit a replacement when he eventually retires.

“Now I’m the only one available to respond, depending on where I am for work, during a daytime call for fire, a car crash, or any other accident. That’s not sustainable. So if the town won’t pay for a full-time position, they need to decide what services I should cut,” Potter told Maine Town & City. “We’ve tried everything and we’re at the stage where there is no one to replace us. And with the new OSHA regulations, I won’t meet the training standard to keep being chief anyways.”

Training for first responders is critical to their and the public’s safety and is an expensive item for municipalities for both new and already employed staff. In Maine, police and fire training relies on a voluntary model and so those training facilities are also short-staffed and overrun by demand. Potter referred to the proposed “Emergency Response Standard” from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) published February 5, 2024. The proposed update includes prohibitively restrictive standards on physical exams, purchasing of new equipment and staffing of emergency plans. The National Volunteer Fire Council has voiced significant concerns and is organizing public comments while Maine’s volunteer departments are lobbying the federal delegation to push for exemptions for rural departments.

“I’m not against the OSHA changes because safety is our priority, but realistically the standards shouldn’t be the same here as in Portland because we don’t respond to the same events,” he said. The stress of keeping the department open, the community safe, and its volunteers safe, is a major stress and when not shared by enough volunteers or even community members, it isn’t some-

thing new recruits want to take on their shoulders. “What we’re doing is we’re suffocating ourselves,” Potter said of many towns’ refusal to look at regionalization of departments and collaborative solutions to pay crews to ensure coverage. He pointed out, “It takes 7 or 8 departments responding now to major fires just to have enough crew—that is in reality regionalization—just not planned and not efficient.”

Full-time paid firefighters are also dealing with mental and physical stress and larger municipalities need to provide services to keep staff healthy, and in the job until retirement. Between 2014-2020 more firefighters died from suicide than in the line of duty in the United States. This statistic proved to Portland Fire Chief Keith Gautreau that departments weren’t always providing the right training on the job. To support the Portland Fire Department, the city hired a full-time mental health coordinator. The cost, \$300,000 over two years, is 1% of the budget. It is an investment which saves the community money in turnover and expensive out-of-state specialized services like the Center of Excellence in Maryland. Firefighters typically stay for a month to treat PTSD and other mental health conditions. The in-house service aims to create a culture of peer support and preventative mental healthcare so that firefighters feel safe and motivated and can stay on the job until retirement.

The Maine Resiliency Center, a resource hub created in Lewiston after the shooting in October, is hiring a First Responder Wellness Coordinator to support law enforcement, fire, and EMS impacted by the mass violence and its aftermath. A large-scale incident, like in Lewiston, highlights the physical and emotional risks to first responders in an acute and public way, and offers the opportunity to hire a wellness coordinator, but first responders are exposed to risk and trauma regularly as part of their work or volunteer efforts. Until there are central funds and technical support for training, benefits, and pay available to support Maine’s first responders, it will be up to municipal governments to get creative with collaborative solutions to keep Maine communities, of all sizes, safe. 🏡

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From MacGyver Mode to Proper Construction

It's a rags to riches story for Maine's transportation infrastructure.

By Janine Pineo

Work in March on the temporary bridge span in Old Town. (Photo: MaineDOT)

It's not your imagination if you think you are seeing more transportation projects.

For years, the Maine Department of Transportation functioned in what it called "MacGyver mode," described as "holding things together in an improvised or inventive way and making use of whatever resources were at hand," according to MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce A. Van Note in the cover letter earlier this year for the state's three-year work plan.

Which is to say that for a number of years, Maine was not keeping up with work on the vast multimodal transportation system in a state with a lot of infrastructure per capita.

The commissioner noted that just four years ago in another cover letter "we are now competently managing a slow decline of our transportation system until bipartisan funding solutions materialize." A year later—and a year into the pandemic—the shortfall of funds was "daunting" and amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars per year, not to mention soaring construction costs over 50 percent higher.

The turnaround began in late 2021 with passage of the five-year federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that gave MaineDOT a chance to compete for competitive discretionary grant programs and Congressionally Directed Spending that should more than double the amount of federal transportation money for Maine compared to before the 2021 law.

On the heels of that came state support in 2023 with changes in the Highway Fund budget that secured an increased allocation of liquor proceeds and automotive sales and use taxes.

It means the state now has a three-year plan totaling \$4.74 billion with 2,672 work items that "includes more bridge projects, more durable highway projects, more

village and downtown projects, more transit and active transportation investments, more port improvements, and more adaptation to climate impacts," Van Note wrote.

It means small, medium, and large road construction projects are under way in a big way, with more to come. It means redirected traffic, some disgruntled residents and worried business owners as some projects are expected to take two years to complete, which means two years of disruption.

Long time coming

James Gillway remembers that when he started as Searsport's town manager in 2005, MaineDOT was looking at Route 1 through town and its historic downtown.

Then nothing happened, at least nothing that resulted in actual construction work. The U.S. financial crisis of 2008 happened, and the Great Recession followed. Government changed, staff changed, the economy changed.

Gillway said at one point, MaineDOT found some project money for some planning work and then things went silent again.

"When you go that long...some things change," Gillway said. For example, a turning lane was added and the traffic pattern changed because a Dollar General went in.

Then in 2020, U.S. Sen. Susan Collins requested discretionary funding for the Searsport project, with \$9.2 million granted for the state to tackle one of the remaining two unbuilt midcoast sections of Route 1 (the other being Lincolnville). MaineDOT defines a "built" road as one that is constructed to modern standards with an "unbuilt" road having significant deficiencies and having evolved without being engineered to accommodate today's vehicle weights and traffic volumes.

For Searsport, deficiencies in the targeted 1.94 miles include safety, mobility, pavement structure, drainage, pedestrian access, ADA compliance, bicycle access and parking. Those 1.94 miles of Main Street include the town's numerous historic sea captains' houses (in 1885, a tenth of

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

all full-rigged ships sailing under an American flag were led by Searsport captains of which there were nearly 300 during the 19th century heyday), its historic commercial district, which is still home to businesses dependent on the summer tourism season, and the Penobscot Marine Museum Historic District.

With the pandemic beginning in 2020 and the continuing difficulties in 2021 with soaring costs and employee shortages, it would not be until 2022 that MaineDOT put the Searsport project out to bid.

No one bid.

Managing expectations

The answer to “why in the world would that happen” was because of something the town requested. The original proposal was for night work, Gillway said, and contractors told the state that killed any interest. When the requirement was deleted from the proposal and put out to bid again, only one offer was made and then was accepted, but the price tag was \$5 million higher.

In the end, the two-year Searsport reconstruction project would begin in June 2023 at a cost of nearly \$18 million.

Almost immediately, news reports about struggling businesses surfaced during the summer and continued into the fall. Gillway said residents on the bypass and detour have complained about speeders, engine brakes and

broken pavement.

The public front has “been the challenge from the beginning,” Gillway said. Despite nearly two decades in the making, the disruption was going to be substantial. In response, the town holds monthly meetings with the business community, he said.

Searsport has put up signs saying the town is open and how to find parking. There are four parking lots, one not 400 feet from the heart of the downtown. The town even placed an ad in Down East magazine this month letting people know they can access Searsport.

Gillway said what the town will have in the end is a downtown with brick sidewalks on both sides of the street and even 16 historically appropriate streetlights in the downtown, something that wasn’t there before. No road frontage will be lost, and sidewalks will be ADA compliant.

Previously, he said, the town had crosswalks that went to curbs. “You disenfranchise a lot of people” when it isn’t accessible, he said.

Meanwhile, the weather has mostly cooperated. Gordon Contracting of Sangerville did work through the winter. “Most years you can’t get a shovel in the ground,” Gillway said. “They think they will finish this year.”

MaineDOT’s projected finish date is June 2025.

Gillway said the project has been mostly unscathed by the severe storms over the past year. The exception was



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The Grist Mill Bridge in Hampden, under construction in 2020, was the first bridge to be built with GBeams.

early October when Tropical Storm Philippe reached Maine and dumped nearly six inches of rain in the Midcoast.

“We were inundated,” he said.

Part of the reconstruction is drainage, some of which had just been put into place on Prospect Street, which Gillway said had been a problem area for years. As a precaution, Gordon had placed a pump to help with runoff. Periodic checks through the evening showed everything holding.

Just before midnight, the road washed out under a vehicle, stranding the passengers who had to be rescued. It made Route 1 impassable with a foot of rock and debris, closing the road.

Gillway found he didn’t have a direct number to contact someone at Gordon and had to email, saying “All hell’s broken loose.”

Within 30 to 45 minutes, the company was on scene and by 10:30 the next morning, everything was rebuilt, and the road open again.

Gillway said there have been about four line breaks in the sewage system, and up to three feet of sewage in spots. “You don’t always see the damage,” he said. Sometimes the breaks show up in a few days or take weeks to erupt.

One thing that didn’t go as expected was that the town had negotiated with the state for the reclaimed granite curbing to be used for town projects, Gillway said. The town found out that detail never made it into the contract when Gordon Contracting announced it was selling the granite.

But the money raised—over \$10,000—was to go to the businesses along the path of the construction.

Building with innovation

The third busiest road in Penobscot County is getting an upgrade, including the bridges over the Stillwater River using technology developed at the University of Maine.

If you drive through Old Town from Interstate 95, you will see work finished a few years ago right up until you hit the Bennoch Road light, which gives a view toward the river and all the construction to the road along the way to the bridges and beyond.

“It’s obviously going to be a huge improvement,” said Bill Mayo, Old Town town manager.

Right now, nearly a half mile of the major entrance to Old Town and one of the main routes to access the University of Maine campus in Orono is awash in construction equipment and signs, cones, and torn-up sidewalks, from Bennoch Road to College Avenue. Water and sewer mains are being rebuilt,

Mayo said, with other improvements at the intersections. That includes new lights and control boxes to coordinate traffic flow all along the route that, combined with other work in the downtown area, will in theory be all new from downtown Old Town to I-95.

The first phase of construction for the bridges will cost just over \$10 million. Other phases will go out to bid later. The associated highway work for the roadways and intersections at Bennoch Road and College Avenue is \$10.9 million.

The most striking work right now is being done over the Stillwater River. The temporary bridge being built to carry traffic is but feet away from the two old bridges, which many may think is a single span but about midway sits atop a small island.

The new bridges, according to MaineDOT, will have 11-foot-wide travel lanes and six-foot-wide shoulders that can accommodate bicycle use and a 6.5-foot-wide raised sidewalk. The design team is looking at using some available space on the island to provide an observation area on the upstream, sidewalk side of the span.

What will be remarkable about the bridges won’t be seen: GBeams made of the widely touted composite developed by the University of Maine will be used in place of traditional steel girders. The patented beams will be manufactured in Brewer by AIT Composites, the university’s commercial partner.

Bill Davids, Bodwell University Distinguished Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UMaine, said most people know of the glass fiber-reinforced polymer better known as fiberglass. The GBeam is a combination of both glass and carbon fiber-reinforced polymers (FRP).

“The versatility of the GBeam is a consequence of its exceptionally light weight, about 40 percent of that of an equivalent steel beam, and its cross-sectional geometry,” he said. Because it is easily adapted and customized, it can work for different construction scenarios and loca-



Work in March along Route 1 in Searsport. (Photo: MaineDOT)

tions. Plus, it is cheaper to ship than steel or concrete products.

Another bonus is that fiber-reinforced polymers are non-corroding, won't rust, are ultraviolet-resistant and require no painting or treatment.

"Rust is the death of many bridges in Maine and other states with harsh climates that use road salt or are adjacent to saltwater," Davids said. "Rust on steel bridges is obvious, but the steel reinforcing in concrete bridges is also corrosion-prone and rust of reinforcement leads to increased maintenance costs and the loss of structural capacity with time. To combat this in reinforced concrete bridges, some states, including Maine, are increasingly using FRP and/or stainless steel reinforcing bars in concrete bridge decks. However, replacing the entire steel or concrete girder—the main structural member—with FRP girders as we are doing is highly unusual."

The lifespan is expected to be substantial. "We expect that these beams will last 100-plus years with minimal maintenance," Davids said, "and prior durability testing performed by us and others on similar FRP materials backs this up."

Two smaller bridges in Maine have been built using the GBeams, both in Hampden, with the very first constructed in 2020. Other bridges now using GBeams are in Rhode Island and Florida.

It is striking to note that in 2016, when the first public meetings were held on the planned project in Old Town, the composite technology had not yet had a prototype tested. That wouldn't happen until 2018.

If all goes to plan, Old Town's Mayo said, "two years from now we'll be happily driving over the new bridge." 🏗️

The Next Generation of Municipal Leaders

The winners of MMA's 2024 "If I lead my community" essay contest are...

Annually, MMA conducts the "If I lead my community" essay contest, which invites seventh grade students from Maine schools to discuss how, if given the chance, they would guide the course of their communities. Over the years, Maine Town & City magazine readers have had the opportunity to catch a glimpse of what is in store when these students enter careers in municipal government service or seek elected office. The ideas presented by students are thoughtful, creative, and run the gamut from historic preservation, natural resources protection to implementing the changes necessary to make their communities a place residents want to call home.

This year, MMA received 130 essays from students enrolled in schools from Houlton to Kittery.

What follows are the essays submitted by this year's winners. Congratulations to **Stella Caruso**, Shapleigh School in Kittery; **George Horrigan**, Scarborough Middle School; and **Allyson Clement**, Reeds Brook Middle School in Hampden. Each student received a \$250 Visa gift card for their winning contributions.

A heartfelt thank you to the teachers who encouraged their students to participate in the contest, as well as to the staff at MMA who had the unenviable task of winnowing the submissions down to three. This year's judges included Sandy Berry, Amanda Campbell, Abigail DiPasquale, Nick Kimball, Rebecca Lambert, Kelly Maines, and Jen Thompson. Special thanks are also owed to Carol Weigelt for organizing the essay contest. It is due to her dedication to this project that the number of entries has grown exponentially.



Stella Caruso

Mr. Waters, Shapleigh School, Kittery

If I led my community, I would focus on creating a Volunteer Match Program that would highlight the talents, interests, hobbies and passions of Kittery residents. This program would be posted on the Kittery Facebook page so that current residents could get involved. It would also build momentum in the Kittery School System to help children establish a connection with their community. Since the match is based on interest, students and community members would be investing their time in something that gives them personal excitement and achievement. The Volunteer Match Program's page would generate community voice, allow you to donate money, along with opportunities to volunteer time on specific projects. The program would establish various areas that community members could volunteer including, but not limited to, creating a historic mural, childcare, giving gardens, recycling programs, and beach cleanup.

Creating a Historic Mural would give community members an opportunity to use art to transform a specific area and ignite awareness. For example, we could highlight historical events and places specific to Kittery to build awareness for generations to come. Community voice and artistic talent would be recognized, and new murals would be created yearly.

The Community Center offers a perfect opportunity for students to build a connection with children by playing games or providing a homework club. When students have a specific responsibility, it builds confidence and creates a ripple of change, awareness and kindness for the entire community.

Nooney Farm's current Giving Garden grows food for non-profit organizations. Students and community members can volunteer to work at the farm, grow vegetables to be used in the school cafeterias, provide for families in need and sponsor events like cooking healthy meals and canning, just to name a few, at the Kittery Community Market. Having students involved in the entire process builds awareness and empathy.

Setting up Community Recycling Projects can help reduce, reuse and recycle waste materials that would otherwise be thrown away. This can save Kittery money and create beautiful, innovative and useful places for community members to use. Also, the students of Kittery can create reusable bags, and profits can go to funding specific community causes.

Beach clean-up helps protect the natural environment and prevents harm to our oceans and wildlife. These clean-ups would be held annually to maintain Kittery's natural beauty. Also, with pristine beaches and parks, people are more likely to visit the area and spend money, which helps the local economy.

The current annual Block Party would be a perfect platform to celebrate accomplishments and educate community members on future ideas and projects. Overall, the Kittery Volunteer Match Program would be community members working together to make our town a better place to live. We all work and help one another and basically everyone benefits. It will provide multi-generational experiences, along with opportunities for students to enhance and fine tune specific talents and passions. It would ignite positive experiences and the community would be stronger and stay connected.



George Horrigan

Mrs. Bracy, Scarborough Middle School

If I led my community, in order to make it a better place, the issue I would address about Scarborough is the invasive species, the Green Crab. This issue is serious for me as I live in Scarborough, home to the largest saltwater marsh in the state. The marsh is a big part of my life; I swim, boat, and fish in it. My family keeps a Boston Whaler in a marina where the Libby River combines with the marsh. Since I spend so much time around the marsh, I want it to be well taken care of so it will be around for the next generations to enjoy. If we don't act, the invasive Green Crabs will take over, eating native species and destroying parts of the habitat.

Scarborough is very keen on conserving the marsh from people, but we also need to protect it from within. Green Crabs eat native crabs, fish, and clams. I can help, and so can everyone else. We can spread the word, making signs telling people of the damage and destruction taking place in our marsh. Once people know about Green Crabs, we can all work together to get rid of them. The invasive species is especially an issue for fishermen and clambers, when the crabs eat the things being fished, there are less to be caught and sold. According to the Portland Press Herald, fishermen are already working on exterminating the crabs, as reported in 2017, "About 20 fishermen participated in the June 28 conservation project along the banks of the Jones Creek and Nonesuch River, hoping to kill as many invasive green crabs as possible before the crustaceans prey upon the clams - and the fishermen's livelihood."(pressherald.com) The article shows how big of an issue this is for fishermen; if they cannot catch enough fish, they won't make enough money.

You can help in this way, too. Although it is illegal to sell Green Crabs without a license, you are completely allowed to kill one. That is exactly what we should do; if you see one of these crabs at the beach, you should kill it, knowing you are helping the environment. They don't belong here, and are causing unbelievable amounts of destruction.

If taking matters into my own hands doesn't work, I have another solution. I can work with town officials to get more traps and fences put up, protecting our marshes in a stronger way. The fences will block the Green Crabs from access to baby clams, the traps will get rid of the crabs in efficient ways. Adding traps and fences will reduce the amount of damage done by Green Crabs.

If I led my community, I would work to make it a better place by focusing on the issue of Green Crabs in the Scarborough Marsh. I want to help this problem because I am worried for our marsh, and I want it to last. Not only for me, but for the future of our community.



Allyson Clement

Mr. Kash, Reeds Brook Middle School

If I led my community, I would make sure it is a place people want to live. Without an innovative and adaptive population to help it grow, a community is just a place. With its population, however, a community has a spirit in which it attracts people, makes more want to live there, raise their children there, and even make the community better themselves. A community government must do for its population what they do for it, so I would do my best to think for them.

The first thing I would do for my community is repair its damages. The town in which I live is often affected by storms and other devastation that rip apart buildings, tear trees from their ground, and send loose branches diving into power lines, knocking out the many supports of electricity. It often takes many weeks for things to become normal again after such events, leaving many homes without power, businesses without assets, and organizations like schools without the proper means to teach students. With thoughts of this, I would help to hire more people in public works to help with repairs ranging from roads to trees, to bridges, to powerlines, as well as aid in funding damaged businesses and buildings.

The next thing I would do for my community is help to clean it. I would dedicate at least three days a year to a community cleanup where volunteers could go out and safely clean up trash and items left behind. To make this fun for my community, I would give out little prizes such as gift cards, gift certificates, small toys, and keepsakes for different categories of items found. This would help to get the younger generations involved and excited about helping their community environment, something that would help to better the town's future. Furthermore, I would add more specific or stricter ordinances towards littering on roadsides and public outdoor spaces such as parks or memorials.

In addition to getting children involved in the community, I would also find ways to get them inspired to help out creatively, such as personally helping schools plan field trips in which students can participate in and learn about how the different parts of the town work together, letting them work together in the process.

The final thing I would like to do for my community is to help with things that the people find important. I would do this by hosting meetings open to the public in which citizens, even children, could propose ideas for community projects and events they find interesting and would like to attend. I would also implement things people in the community think are significant, maybe adding something like an animal shelter to the community to interest people. Collaboration and creativity are necessary components in any community and ones I personally find important.

If I lead my community, I would make it a place where people want to live, raise their children, and watch the world around them grow.

Election results from March/April 2024 Town Meetings

The following are among the municipal election results from annual town meeting voting in March and April. Uncontested candidates are not listed. The names of challengers are not listed unless someone has served previously. The information is gathered from published reports, municipal websites, and town clerks.

Alna: Write-in candidate Nicholas Johnston squeaked out a six-point win over incumbent Select Board Chairperson Ed Pentaleri.

Belgrade: Barbara Allen and Carol Johnson held off a challenger to win reelection.

Carrabassett Valley: Raleigh “Roddy” Ehrlenbach defeated a challenger to replace John Beaupre, who did not seek reelection.

Caste Hill: Write-in candidate Scott Cheney was unopposed to replace Allen Michaud, who did not seek reelection.

Chesterville: Newcomer Earl Martin Jr. received 54 votes to succeed Linda Bauer, who did not seek reelection. Jason Ward picked up 61 votes to replace Anne Lambert, who also did not seek reelection. Justin Richards garnered 49 votes to replace Tim LeSiege, who resigned in March.

Cranberry Isles: Katelyn Damon, the town’s former public safety coordinator, defeated a challenger by a vote of 27-20 to replace Cory Alley, who died before his term expired.

Farmington: Incumbent Selectperson Matthew Smith was reelected with 159 votes and newcomer Richard Morton collected 112 votes to win seats on the select board. A third candidate received 89 votes. Morton will finish the final two years of Stephan Bunker’s term. Bunker, who was honored for 52 years of service to the town, will remain active in the fire department.

Industry: Newcomer Mark Prentiss ran unopposed to replace Robert Geisser, who did not seek reelection.

Mapleton: Former Selectperson Joseph Powers ran unopposed to replace Travis Mastro, who did not seek reelection.

Norridgewock: Newcomer Cheyenne M. Goodrich won a seat on the select board, replacing Dylan Wentworth, who did not seek reelection.

New Sharon: Newcomer Kathleen Reis defeated a challenger, 101-92, to replace Selectperson Travis Pond, who did not seek reelection.

Orono: Newcomer Jacob Baker collected the most votes with 816 to win a seat on the select board. Incumbents Matthew Powers and Robert Laraway were reelected with 706 votes and 598 votes, respectively. They held off another candidate, who received 410 votes.

Pittston: Newcomer Cathy Jewett Thomas defeated two challengers to replace Selectperson Mary Jean Ambrose, who did not seek reelection. Thomas garnered 281 votes, while two other candidates garnered 264 and 63 votes.

Roxbury: Selectperson Matt Patneau defeated a challenger by a vote of 20 to two, for another term on the select board. Patneau had served for two years after the death of Rodney “Bing” Cross in December 2021.

Searsport: Select Board Chairperson Douglas Norman won re-election and Wesley Norton defeated incumbent Linda Payson by a vote of 266 to 261 to win seats on the select board.

Starks: Incumbent Selectperson Ernest Hilton defeated a challenger by a vote of 79-39 to win reelection.

Weld: Incumbent Selectperson Dina Walker held off a write-in challenge by a vote of 119-48 to win reelection.

West Gardiner: Veteran Select Board Chairman Greg Coulture collected 271 votes to hold off three challengers for another term. He defeated a school board member, a former candidate, and a former city clerk. 🏡



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More Than a Waning Opportunity

Some municipal leaders hope the eclipse experience leaves first time visitors wanting more.

By Stephanie Bouchard

At shortly after 2 p.m. on Monday, April 8, those traveling north on Route 2 under a blue-bird sky began seeing residents sitting in their front yards or pulled into parking areas along the Penobscot River, faces tilted upward, solar eclipse glasses covering their eyes as the shadow of the moon began to creep over the sun.

The Knights of Columbus parking lot on the outskirts of Lincoln was packed, as was the boat launch. In the center of town, businesses along Route 2 shared their parking lots and grassy spaces with crowds of people. In the Hannaford parking lot, people pulled in and set up folding chairs, and employees from the grocery store and other nearby businesses spilled outside to look west.

As the sky began to darken after 3 p.m., an American flag on a pole next to the Golden Arches of a McDonald's whipped in a stiff breeze that made the incredible 68-degree-day feel much cooler, and it got winter jacket-cold as less and less of the sun was visible.

With ten minutes to totality, the lights in Hannaford's parking lot turned on. Cheers and clapping greeted the moment the moon's shadow totally blocked the sun, followed by hushed amazement at the surreal vision of a black sun surrounded by its yellow halo looking like it had been Photoshopped into the husky blue sky.

Shortly after the diamond ring blazed out along the sun's side, people began leaving, and in minutes, Route 2 through Lincoln was deadlocked in traffic, and the event the state and eclipse-viewing communities had been planning for, in some cases for years, was over.

But not really. In the weeks after the eclipse, communities across the state are assessing how things went and strategizing how they can build on the energy of what many see as an incredible success.

"We will never see anything like this again in our lifetime. I cannot imagine anything that would generate so much excitement and goodwill and happy people," said Jane Torres, executive director of Greater Houlton Chamber of Commerce. "Hopefully, we can keep up that momentum and invite people up to see us."

Houlton was one of the communities in Maine that saw the potential of the eclipse early on. A committee was formed, and planning began three years ago. "We realized that we had to really put Houlton out there as a fun place to come and visit and be," she said.

To put their best foot forward would take partnering with local and regional businesses, a variety of agencies, the state and the county, and sponsors to help with funding. "It was expensive, but we did have very generous sponsors," Torres said. Those sponsors donated funds from \$10,000 to \$25,000. "I think we raised about almost a quarter of a million to do this," she said.

That money went into things such as heated tent rentals, portable toilets, hired entertainers, such as Big Nazo!, a performance group from Rhode Island who walked through town dressed as aliens, and marketing, lots and lots of marketing.

"We knew we needed to really push Houlton, because a lot of people don't know anything exists past Bangor," she said. They started their marketing pitch by targeting southern Maine, and before they knew it, they were talking to major news networks across the country. "We all did a lot of interviews, and it was because we'd had such a great marketing campaign, and people started to be curious about this little town, Houlton, and what was going to happen here. It was great."

Visitors started arriving on the Saturday before the eclipse, but in small numbers due to the wintry weather. The crowd got bigger on Sunday. "It started to clear up a little bit and we thought, 'Aha! This is going to happen!'" Torres said. "Monday dawned, and it was just the most beautiful, gorgeous day."

A gorgeous spring day was certainly not something anyone could predict, and with the historical average of a cloudy day on April 8th of 70% to 80%, chances for a sunny day were tough. "April's really quite difficult," said Jacob Pelkey, tourism developer for Aroostook County Tourism. A storm that left more than 350,000 households without electricity just days before the eclipse was a very real example of just how difficult it could be.

But when the Weather Channel announced that Maine would be the place to see the eclipse a week out, the

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

phones in Maine started ringing. “When that outlook came a week out, it gave very short notice for the municipalities and the organizers to accommodate the influx and interest in the selling,” said Pelkey. “I don’t think there’s ever been an event in Maine that has seen so much vendor registration in the last week leading up to an event.” Luckily, vendor spaces were still available in many cases, he said, so the surge of interest could largely be accommodated.

While visitor numbers from the state were not yet available at the time of reporting, Torres estimates there were between 20,000 and 25,000 people in Houlton on eclipse day.

Route 4, the main major road going into Rangeley was pretty quiet in the days leading up to the eclipse, says Joe Roach, Rangeley’s town manager. A car count released by Franklin County Emergency Management Agency showed that between 1,750 and 1,800 cars traveled the road on the Saturday and Sunday before, and 9,700 on the day of.

“Everybody just showed up on Monday,” Roach said.

Rangeley, like the rest of the state, had no idea how many people would show up in their community. And while the area is used to seeing people visiting the area’s rivers and lakes and ski resorts, the eclipse was another thing entirely.

“We looked at this unofficially as an incident and planned for it that way,” Roach said. The town worked with the Franklin County Emergency Management Agen-

cy as well as local and area public safety officials, used Jackman’s eclipse plan as a framework, and relied on the National Incident Management System guidelines to inform the town’s planning and protocols.

There wasn’t a lot of added expense for the town, either, he said, mostly for portable toilets. The tasks that needed to be done, like putting out no parking signs, were easily rolled into normal operations so demands on town staff were minimal.

Overall, he said, “It was a great experience.” Even with two- to three-foot high snowbanks, there were no serious incidents, like traffic accidents, reported, he said. “I think it went really well. One thing I noticed immediately after was there wasn’t bottles and cans and trash and debris all over the place. People were pretty tidy.”

Rangeley wasn’t the only community amazed at the lack of trash from the visitors. “I got to tell you, these people were the cleanest people ever,” said Janes Torres. “We didn’t have to pick up hardly any trash. There were some water bottles in the parks, but no trash. Everything was neat and clean, and then we were back to Houlton again, back to normal.”

In Island Falls, with a population just over 750, Elizabeth Moulton, the town’s recreation director, estimated there were about 2,000 people in town on the day of the eclipse. “Literally, every person that we interacted with was just so excited and nice,” she said. “My favorite part of the whole thing was that the day after I walked our

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grounds here and next door at the VFW where a bunch of people parked, I picked up one juice box and two pieces of chalk. And that was it. They were very, very respectful and glad to be here.”

The big question for towns like Island Falls, Rangeley and Houlton is will these visitors return, and in what capacity? As new full- or part-time residents or as tourists?

It’s hard to tell if any of the people who were in Island Falls for the eclipse will return, said Moulton. “An awful lot of people said that they would be back to visit at different times, but you never know.”

“I think almost a 100% of people that visit Rangeley want to come back,” said Roach. “And I’ve heard reports of people saying—voluntarily—that, ‘Geez, this is a great little town. We came for the eclipse, but we’ll be back.’ But from a planning perspective . . . like from a land use/ community development perspective, we’re not ready for that many people to be there every day. I don’t think it would be good for us to strive for that either—obviously it may affect our brand.”

Houlton, on the other hand, hopes their efforts to attract people to the town for the eclipse, will not only bring them back to vacation, but result in getting people to move there. That desire to attract people to Houlton was part of the event planning from the very beginning, said Torres. “The after marketing was always part of the larger plan to sort of capitalize on that momentum,” she said. “We did save a certain amount of money so we could do

some after marketing, so we can get some of those people to come back and visit again. So that’s our next plan.”

And she thinks the chances of people returning are good, because they had such a positive experience. Jacob Pelkey from the county’s tourism office thinks she may be right. “The hardest thing in tourism is getting somebody to come for the first time,” he said. “It’s a lot easier to retain and entice that person . . . after they’ve been to an area.”

While the state’s tourism office did not have estimated numbers of visitors for the eclipse at the time of reporting for this article, the Maine Department of Transportation had released preliminary traffic data the day after the event.

In a press release, MaineDOT said that some of the state highways that were monitored had traffic volumes 10 to 20 times greater than normal, and estimated that over the weekend, 15,000 additional vehicles, carrying unknown numbers of people, entered the state. These estimates do not include in-state travelers.

“You have a great amount of people right now who just had an amazingly positive moment in Aroostook County,” said Pelkey. “We need to continue to cultivate those positive moments that we had on April 8th, and now’s the time to reach out and market ourselves because people are more familiar now with Aroostook County than they were a month ago. And (while) I’m talking about Aroostook County, it was really all of Maine.” 🏡



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Education & Training

MMA offers a wide variety of training sessions, workshops, and conferences to support municipal leaders and employees in the delivery of important government services.

By Peter Osborne / Director, Educational Services

“The times they are a-changin’,” said 2016 Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan – Dylan’s sentiment restates and re-frames the important adage that “the only constant is change.”

Across the state, municipalities are seeing a transition in both their workforce and their elected officials. In both cases, many long-time officials are either retiring or moving on to other things and towns and cities are welcoming new faces. Some of these new faces have previous municipal experience, but many do not. Changes of this nature and magnitude are challenging, but they also offer some excellent opportunities to incorporate new ideas, perspectives, and skillsets into municipal government.

Training and educational opportunities for new officials are key to supporting their work and getting the most out of their potential impact on the community. However, not only new municipal officials greatly benefit from ongoing training as there are constantly new laws, rules, legal guidance, best practices, programs, and “ways of doing business” that make municipal operations more efficient and responsive to the changing needs of every community.

But for now, I’d like to focus on the training programs offered directly by MMA and make suggestions for topics that are of interest for municipal elected officials. Details for all the trainings, and instructions for registration, can be found at <https://www.memun.org/Training> or by emailing our office at training@memun.org.

Elected Officials Workshops and Webinars: MMA offers five Elected Officials Workshops annually in both in-person and webinar formats, and also hosts recordings of recent webinars in our Video Training Library for viewing at any time. These workshops are excellent for both new officials as well as those who might benefit from a “refresher” as time goes on. MMA’s Legal Services team designs and facilitates the bulk of the training, which offers participants an overview of the forms of municipal government in Maine; points out and explains some of the most relevant statutes, including the origins and importance of “home rule authority,” discusses conflicts of interest, and thoroughly explains the responsibilities spelled out in the Freedom of Access Act, which incidentally fulfills officials’ training requirement in this area. In recent years, a component related to communicating with the media and public has also been added to this training, which is very helpful to elected officials.

However, our Elected Officials Workshop is just an introduction and should not be considered the “end-all, be-all” of training for elected officials! Some other training opportunities that would be beneficial for elected officials include:

Understanding the Freedom of Access Act: MMA offers a standalone training session that fulfills state FOAA training requirements five times annually, via in-person, virtual, or hybrid formats. It is also available as a recorded webinar in the MMA Video Training Library. If you’re an elected official who is only looking to get your updated FOAA training, this is the best option for you.

Basic Municipal Budgeting: Typically offered in late spring each year, this hybrid workshop offers an overview of how to prepare a municipal budget, make forecasts and projections, present a budget, and utilize budget controls.

Personnel Practices: Offered on May 1 of this year and every year in late spring, the workshop provides a comprehensive overview of personnel laws affecting all

EO101

“An Elected Official’s Survival Guide.” In this series MMA staff will provide the advice, tips and tools elected officials need to fulfill their roles and to be prepared for the challenges that await.

municipal leaders, including discipline and discharge, family medical leave, disability, discrimination, and handling difficult employee situations. Presenters also highlight and discuss special rules pertaining to public employers.

Labor & Employment Law: Offered in October this year and every year in the fall, this workshop is a must for the most up-to-date legal and practical approaches to common personnel issues. The training itself focuses on current developments in labor and employment law and covers topics related to benefits and union updates, compliance, avoiding employment-related claims, handling the labor shortage, and more.

ABCs of Assessing for Non-Assessors: This training, typically offered as a webinar each fall, provides an overview of municipal property tax assessment roles and responsibilities, specially geared toward municipal officials in municipalities without a full-time appointed assessor. The webinar covers the statutory framework for assessing property taxes, options for delegating assessing responsibilities, and fundamental rules governing property valuation.

In addition to standalone trainings and webinars throughout the year, MMA also hosts two conferences and a two-day Convention each year.

Municipal Technology Conference: Held on May 22 this year, the 2024 Municipal Technology Conference focused specifically on cybersecurity and tools and techniques

that can support municipal officials in protecting the security of their digital assets. Held in late spring each year, the conference focuses on topics related to technologies used in municipal government, and typically consists of multiple sessions throughout the day and the opportunity to visit with sponsors and exhibitors who offer products and services in the technology space.

Municipal HR & Management Conference: Being held on June 12 at the University of Maine, this year's conference features keynote speaker Kevin Hancock, Managing Owner & Chairman of Hancock Lumber, who will speak on the business of shared leadership. The conference will also feature eight concurrent sessions on topics related to recruitment and retention, proper documentation, employee mental health resources, paid family medical leave, coaching new supervisors, due process, accommodations for disabilities, and office ergonomics. Vendors and sponsors will also be available to speak with attendees about a wide array of products and services related to municipal human resources and management.

88th Annual MMA Convention: This year's Convention will take place on October 2 & 3 at the Augusta Civic Center with three featured speakers, almost 30 concurrent sessions, and the opportunity to visit with over 100 diverse vendors and sponsors over the course of two full days. At the time I am writing this article, program planning is in its final stages and the convention agenda

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Best Practices

for Newly Elected Officials

and details will be ready to share publicly in June. The annual convention typically draws 700-800 municipal officials from all over the state and offers several opportunities to network, learn about products and services related to municipal government, and engage in training and workshops related to municipal functions and responsibilities.

It's important to note that MMA works directly with 13 affiliated professional associations that also have their own training offerings throughout the year. Depending on the roles that your elected body plays in the municipality (e.g., general assistance, road commissioner, human resources, etc.), you may find some of the training sessions offered by an affiliate association to be of interest. Details about all these training opportunities can also be found at <https://www.memun.org/Training>.

In the coming months, MMA will be developing and launching a municipal training portal that will make it easy for both elected officials and municipal employees to identify training and educational opportunities not only within Maine, but also regionally, nationally, and online. We are also working to develop more "bite-size" topical and multimedia training resources for elected officials in collaboration with MMA Legal Services to bring forward even more training opportunities for local leaders.

The bright future of municipal government in Maine depends heavily on having well-trained municipal officials at the helms of our communities and MMA is a committed partner in making that happen. If you have questions or suggestions on training topics that would be helpful for elected officials, I hope that you will contact me directly at posborne@memun.org or 207-623-8428. 🌲

1. LEARN. Get to know all you can about your community, municipal structure and charter (if any). This includes municipal departments, staff, the local school system and quasi-municipal organizations, such as regional water and sewer districts and solid-waste authorities.

2. COOPERATE. You may have run for office as an individual. You may have advocated for municipal change. But you are part of a larger board now, part of a well-established organization. To get the best results, cooperation is essential.

3. PREPARE. It is common for new officials to underestimate how long it takes to prepare for meetings and workshops, and even to get ready for conversations with groups of citizens or business owners. Advance preparation will make you more confident and effective.

4. BE ETHICAL AND OPEN. You may be thinking, "Of course, I will do that!" But, circumstances may arise presenting potential conflicts of interest that you did not foresee. Challenges may surface that you or your board may be tempted to gloss over. Being 100% ethical, and as open as possible, prevents larger problems from developing.

5. FOLLOW THE MONEY. You will quickly come to realize that money and finances will become your most important area of focus. You will need to weigh the importance of providing, or expanding, municipal services versus the desire to keep fees and taxes as low as possible.

6. PROMISE LITTLE. Sometimes, elected officials campaign on a promise or series of promises. Or, upon being elected, they make promises about what they will achieve while in office. This may include promises to campaign supporters, friends and relatives. Be careful with promises.

7. MEETINGS MATTER. You will be judged by your actions at public and community meetings. Practice vigilant self-awareness. How did you look? What did you say? Did you listen as well as speak? Even your dearest friends will view you differently now that you are on the "other side" of the municipal dais.

8. BE 'JUDICIOUS.' Some of your duties include acting in a judicial capacity – as a hearing examiner or as a judge on matters such as business license applications and building requests. Maintaining impartiality is crucial in this role.

9. HONOR THE ORGANIZATION. Work through the system. If your town or city employs a manager, respect that role. Do the same with department heads. This is especially true with personnel matters. Your major areas of focus should be setting municipal policy and budget priorities, not managing people or details.

10. BE RESOURCEFUL. Use the considerable resources at your disposal. Encourage your staff to do the same. Of course, the Maine Municipal Association tops this list! Other valuable sources of information include: state and federal government agencies and officials; municipal colleagues throughout the state; and, colleges and community colleges in your region, among others.

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2024 SPRING BOND ISSUE SCHEDULE

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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
31						

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

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

Wednesday, February 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.



Discussing Digital Communications in a Hancock County Barn

Addison Gruber, American Connection Corps Fellow, Hancock County Planning Commission
Christa Thorpe, Community Development Officer, Island Institute

Two months ago, we celebrated the milestone of Maine's first Digital Equity Plan being approved by the federal agency deploying nearly \$300 million in broadband funding to our state. Last month, we explored how municipal planning and partners like libraries and adult education can help achieve digital equity at the local level.

Now we get to boil this big topic of digital inclusion down to some practical tips and takeaways for municipalities from a recent conversation at the Woodlawn Barn in Ellsworth. On March 20, the Hancock County Planning Commission and Island Institute co-hosted a panel discussion on why digital engagement is important for municipalities, and the opportunities it can provide. The four panelists were Ray Weintraub (Sullivan, Town Manager), Matt Williams (Ellsworth, City Planner), Kate Dufour (Maine Municipal Association, Director of Advocacy & Communications), and Kathleen Bell (UMaine, Professor of Economics). Topics included the benefits and challenges of implementing digital communications, tips for getting started, and the implications for community and economic resilience.

To kick off the conversation, panelists responded to the question of why digital communications are important for municipalities. The responses included:

- Transparency.
- Cheaper and easier to communicate with more people.
- Strengthening community and economic development.
- Protecting records and archives.
- Providing additional pathways for citizen and stakeholder involvement.
- Opportunities for greater community input leading to better decision making.
- Keeping with the times.

“Digital communications are the future of local government.”

Kate Dufour, MMA

Throughout the discussion, panelists touched on several examples of how digital communication takes place in municipal contexts, including:

- Digital signs.
- Websites.
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube).
- Hybrid meetings (allowing for both in-person and online participation).
- Email blasts.
- Digital alert systems.
- E-newsletters.
- Online polls.

“It lets you touch base with a portion of the population that may not be comfortable walking into a city council meeting and standing at a microphone and talking.”

Matt Williams, Ellsworth City Planner

Ray Weintraub and Matt Williams talked about successes and challenges from their direct experience as municipal employees, each from a different perspective of scale: Sullivan's population is 1,219 and Ellsworth's is 8,399. While Ellsworth has IT staff allowing for more capacity for hybrid meetings, Sullivan has leveraged its own resources and ability to get the word out on their digital sign, website, and social media. As Kathleen Bell noted during the discussion, “We should celebrate that in Maine, big and small communities are wading into this space.”

Some needs identified by both the town manager and city planner included:

- Funding for equipment and staffing.
- Education and technical assistance for municipalities and citizens.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

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

- Evaluation and modification of municipal offices for hybrid meetings.
- Affordable high-speed internet and devices for citizens.
- Linking expanding internet access and digital equity into workforce development.
- “Right sizing” the approach to communications for each community.
- Multiple people with digital skills for sustainability of technical efforts over time.
- Time and resources to form and participate in collaborative efforts.

“One of the obstacles we hear is ‘Well I only have a flip phone, how do I participate?’ How do you bring the world wide web to the world that doesn’t have the technology to connect from their home?”

Ray Weintraub, Sullivan Town Manager

Kate Dufour, who also serves on the Hallowell City Council, provided examples of relevant conversations happening in the Maine State Legislature around moving municipal websites to the .gov domain and expanding broadband infrastructure across the state. She also provided examples of the services and resources that the Maine Municipal Association offers to its members that are navigating the digital realm, including:

- Legal services, advocacy, communications, and education.
- Resources on dealing with public comments, and

training for newly elected officials.

- Partnership with UMaine Augusta’s Cyber Range to provide assessments of cyber threats.

The voices of the municipal staff and MMA’s advocacy & communications director were rounded out with some valuable research-based perspective. Kathleen Bell has been studying the role of digital services in advancing municipal resilience alongside her research partners Eileen Johnson, Bowdoin College; Vanessa Levesque, University of Southern Maine; and Jessica Leahy, University of Maine, supported by their students. Bell explained her team’s findings on the use of digital resources in small, rural communities in Maine and its effect on community and economic development.

The researchers have observed small communities working effectively in the digital space to provide services to citizens and build community and social capital. Some towns have found creative solutions by working together, as in a case Bell mentioned of two towns collaborating on a website. Her group has found a relationship between the number of digital services that a municipality offers and population size, and between the number of digital activities and more representative forms of government.

The methods of digital communication that a municipality may choose to utilize will depend on its resources, capacity, and citizens. This approach can be “right-sized” to work with the capabilities and desires of each community. Partnership opportunities include:

- Libraries, school systems.
- Other municipalities.
- Nonprofits.

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- Economic development groups and chambers of commerce.
- Community hubs.
- Regional entities such as Hancock County Planning Commission can help connect member municipalities with other towns and organizations.

Finally, the panelists discussed how digital tools have been used in response to crises such as the extreme weather events that we've been seeing in Maine. Kate Dufour shared that "it's important particularly with these weather events that you get the message out as quickly as possible, and that the message is consistent so that everybody has the same information and they're put on an equal playing field when it comes to making decisions for themselves." Sullivan makes full use of both its website and Facebook page to communicate in crises, and the city of Ellsworth is looking into the text alert possibilities.

If your municipality is interested in using digital communications, panelists recommended your first steps be to talk to other municipalities and connect with tech savvy individuals in your community.

These key takeaways wrapped up the rich discussion:

- Don't be afraid to try new things.
- Communicate the value of technologies to get buy-in.
- Learn from other communities.
- Work with partners.
- Look to young people as a resource.

- Communicate to the public when you are trying new things.
- Admit when you don't know something.

“Trying new things, particularly digital communications, will enable you to reach people that are generally not being engaged and that’s an incredibly important part of community decision making.”

Kate Dufour, MMA

For those interested in viewing the full panel discussion, a recording of the event is available on the Hancock County Planning Commission Youtube channel. 📺



From left to right: Kathleen Bell, Ray Weintraub, Matt Williams, Addison Gruber



Michael A. Hodgins

Land Use and Zoning Attorney

Mike represents towns in contract disputes and other general litigation, land use enforcement actions, Rule 80B appeals to Superior Court and he has participated in several appeals to the Law Court. Mike was recently recognized as a Lawyer of the Year by The Best Lawyers in America® for land use and zoning law. Mike has been recognized for his general litigation practice by New England Super Lawyers.



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Gorneau: Understanding, meeting GA needs

By Liz Mockler

A favorite thing about Ryan Gorneau's job as manager of the City of Portland's General Assistance (GA) Office is when people leave and never come back.

That's the mark of success, said Gorneau, the newest GA director of the year for Maine. People who don't return prove the effectiveness of the city's assistance programs and staff efforts to help people leave shelters for jobs and more permanent homes.

"I love it when I don't see people again," Gorneau said. "I think that is helping someone in a moment of time, then they become independent, and we never see them again because they can meet their needs and no longer need us."

As a teenager growing up in Greater Portland, Gorneau spent time in a group home, which inspired him to look for social services work after he became independent and left the home, he said.

"Once I became independent and working, it solidified for me how to receive care...and the importance of treating everyone with dignity along the way," he said.

Before joining the City of Portland staff six years ago, Gorneau worked for 14 years with people with developmental disabilities for a nonprofit in southern Maine. After the Great Recession of 2008, Gorneau lost his job when the nonprofit restructured.

Even though he thought he was done with social services, Gorneau decided he still had something to offer. He scaled the career ladder quickly in six years in Portland, beginning as an eligibility specialist, then as a human services counselor and as manager of the GA department in 2019.

He took over the GA office just as the COVID-19 pandemic was taking hold and worked through the crisis and all the challenges it created for his staff and the people they serve. In addition to typical General Assistance aid, Gorneau's office is responsible for the city shelters. The shelter staff works closely with the GA office.

Last year, in addition to serving 4,000 people in 2,100 individual cases, city GA staff oversaw Social Security pay-



Ryan Gorneau

ments for 300 people who the court has deemed unable to take care of their own money. It's not a requirement, but rather one of the many services the city provides. "We are definitely able to help a lot of people stay housed" by watching over the funds, Gorneau said.

Gorneau said he was "utterly shocked" when he received the 2023 General Assistance Director of the Year award from the Maine Welfare Directors' Association last

fall. "It's really a nice recognition for all the work that we do on the (association) board and in the social services field," he said. "It should be given to everyone in this field."

Below are some of Gorneau's thoughts on the common needs of GA recipients, how the GA office is no longer the last resort, and challenges facing people working in social services.

Q What drew you to a career in social services?

A. I have always had an interest in helping others. I don't think this is unique to me or those that are in or have been in similar careers or positions but would add that for me it's also personal. I, like many people, have relied on the aid of others and programs to become a well-balanced person, and to gain stability. In accessing those resources and support, I discovered what it's like to have someone genuinely care about my outcome.

Over time, I felt I needed to pass that same message on to others, even if they had no faith at the time in the systems or resources available. Frankly, sometimes the processes in accessing systems and programs can be overwhelming, or even disjointed. I am passionately committed to do the best I can to make those improvements whenever I am able, while also broadening others' education and understanding of the various resources available to our community members. At times, this can look like advocacy for legislative policy changes, and other times

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

it's as simple as having honest conversations about whatever the issue is in hopes of bringing awareness and providing any recommendations or feedback.

Q What is your moral philosophy in helping people?

A. For me, it's simple – help others when you are in a position of being able to (help). I think it may be just in part my nature, but not always does helping others look like the conventional tangible aid administered. I think you can help someone in many ways; helping can be the act of listening, broadening others' understanding of the issues when they are removed from the issue at hand, or helping someone who may be "off track" to correct the course and get connected to various resources to gain or regain self-sustainability. Many times, I can't change someone's outcomes, but I may be able to give them information, and outline various ways they can better their situation.


Q What is the most common need of people seeking help?

A. In administering the General Assistance program for the City of Portland, we most commonly see people seeking assistance with meeting their basic needs. This could be rental assistance, access to emergency shelter, assistance with obtaining medications, access to food

assistance or non-food assistance (a voucher for soaps, lotions, creams, etc.), or assistance with utilities. There are a large number of applicants requesting burial or cremation assistance, property tax abatements, and those that are just seeking information on how to connect with the various programs and resources available.

Q What has changed the most for someone in your position?

A. In Portland, we have seen the number of people seeking assistance dramatically increase over the past few years. Like so many other General Assistance administrators, I have had to adapt and change workflows, schedules, processes, etc., to better serve the community in which I work for, while trying to be a good steward of the resources. I can think of many times over the past few years where our office, and others as well, have had to abruptly change course and alter how we are meeting needs, and this could be based on guidance given to the GA administrators, executive orders, etc. The external pressures and forces have increased with the scrutiny of what a municipality does or doesn't do in meeting needs, and this could come from departmental oversight, legal representatives, our constituents, or city council. So, in short, the biggest change would be the increase in those applying and having the GA program under constant scrutiny.



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Q What are the biggest misconceptions about individuals in need of financial assistance?

A. I think the lack of understanding around processes regarding the individuals who are in process of changing their statuses, such as those applying for immigration relief. Not only are the processes, timelines, and requirements complicated at times for administrators to navigate, but also for the clients. Many people who aren't in the field of administering the GA program think that anyone that is applying who is not a U.S. citizen, is a refugee, and that is far from the case. Just like people, each case is unique.

Q Do you recall a particularly poignant story about someone seeking help?

A. Many clients have left an impression, but I'll highlight one applicant who was very unique, and was supported through this office with a number of different needs. Despite all the challenges in trying to meet their needs over the course of months and years given their mental health issues, they were housed and connected with a good team to help navigate the new life they found themselves in.

Over the course of the next few years, we witnessed incredible things. We watched them get their health in order, physical and mental. We saw them connect with others in ways that we could never have expected, volunteering their time, mentoring others, advocating for change, marrying their independence with employment. Eventually, we stopped seeing them come to our office at all because they were able to meet their own needs.

Ultimately, the GA program is intended to be a short-term program, but there are times and clients that warrant

unique approaches and patience on behalf of administrators. When I think about this person and the challenges they overcame, I'm happy to know that they were able to become self-sufficient, which wouldn't have happened without this General Assistance program and others that helped them along. I still see them periodically, and we never say hello. It doesn't bother me, and I'm not sure they 100% remember me given their mental health issues. However, for me it's a sign that they've moved on, and that chapter of their story of relying on others to meet their needs has become just a part of their past.

Q In your experience, do general assistance recipients need more than the city can provide?

A. I think that this program of last resort has now morphed into the program of first referral by many in the community looking to provide guidance to others. Unfortunately, because I don't think external providers always know what the limitations of this program are, sometimes we end up only being able to provide information to clients. A lot of times, the well-intentioned community providers and advocates making the referrals don't understand the GA administrators are typically only following a set of guidelines and policies as outlined by statute, ordinance, and Department of Health Human Services guidance, so we can appear to be of no assistance.

An example of this is that GA doesn't provide case management, as we are not typically social workers. Many people need a lot of wrap-around services that our GA offices don't provide, and despite the recognition of the need, many times we are merely another resource with

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a focus on meeting basic needs. I think there are some fundamental changes that need to be addressed when we look at really helping others in the State of Maine, and this may need to start by funding more behavioral services on a statewide scale, and the development of innovative new programs to meet the needs of a community. I think it's important that the changes are developed by the community to meet the unique needs.

Portland may have different needs perhaps than Presque Isle, for example. So, when looking at needs and resources, I would answer this question by saying that as much as a community can do by means of General Assistance programs, there are so many needs that we are unable to address. Collaboration with the various state departments, the applicants who access services, and community leaders are key to addressing the community's unique needs.

Q Portland is one of the Maine municipalities facing the challenge of helping immigrants and refugees resettle in the state. What is the most difficult problem you face in helping these new residents?

A. I think that there are two issues out of the many that stand out to me as being the biggest issue in ser-

ving these specific community members. First, the lack of housing makes it difficult for anyone to integrate into the community. The second problem that comes to mind is the length of time that someone who is changing their status may wait until they have the ability to work, and thus they must be reliant on various programs until they are able to legally be self-sufficient by means of gaining employment.

Q What is the biggest misconception around immigrants and refugees?

A. I think there is a problem with not understanding the difference between the two groups, and their legal paths to citizenship. Refugees are able to work upon entry to the U.S., and asylum seekers have a different vetting process that doesn't allow for the immediate opportunity to work and meet their own needs.

Q What part of your job brings you the most satisfaction?

A. I enjoy being a part of the ever-changing landscape of the General Assistance program. Some people prefer knowing what each day brings, but for me, I like the challenge of never knowing what to expect. I also like being able to help others, and I like serving my community. 🏡

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PEOPLE

Mexico Selectperson **John “Jack” Arsenault**, who was elected on Nov. 7 to fill the position vacated by Kevin Jamison, has resigned, effective in mid-February. An election will be held in June to fill the remaining two years of the three-year term.

Jay Police Chief **Richard Caton, IV** will also work as interim police chief for the Town of Rangeley. Caton, who lives in Wilton, will work up to 20 hours a week through June reviewing the town department’s policies and practices and keeping tabs on pending cases. The arrangement can be extended if necessary. Caton has worked as Jay police chief since October 2014.

Kevin Gagné has been named Lewiston public works director. Most recently, he worked as the department’s deputy director of utilities. Gagné has been with the department for 30 years and has served in various roles, including deputy director of public services, assistant superintendent of the water and sewer department, project engineer and technician.



Scott LaFlamme

Yarmouth Assistant Town Manager **Scott LaFlamme** has been named manager, effective April 25. He succeeds **Nat Tupper**, who retired in January. He has served as interim manager since Tupper’s departure. LaFlamme was hired as the town’s economic development director in 2017. He also assumed the assistant

manager’s duties last November. LaFlamme has worked as Bath economic development director and managed the Town of Turner. A national search was held to find Tupper’s replacement.



Kevin Lully

Deputy Chief **Kevin Lully** has been named Augusta police chief after serving as interim chief since last November. The city council vote was unanimous; there were 17 applicants. He replaces **Jared Mills**, who retired but then returned recently as city manager. Lully joined the Augusta department in 1995 as a patrol officer, after working as a reserve officer in Washburn. He worked as a detective, sergeant, lieutenant, and division commander before being named deputy chief.

Lewiston Deputy City Administrator **Brian O’Malley** was unanimously selected by the city council as interim ad-

ministrator in late March, replacing outgoing administrator **Heather Hunter**. Hunter was named city administrator in October 2021 after working for the city since 1989, and was ultimately promoted to finance director before taking the administrative post.

Former Sanford Fire Chief **Raymond “Ray” Parent** died April 10 at the age of 80. He served the town for nearly 50 years, retiring in 2011.

A New Mexico man has accepted the position of town manager for the Town of Houlton. **Jeremy Smith** of Los Alamos, N.M., has most recently worked as director of community services for the City of Espanola. He was scheduled to begin his new job on April 29.



Matthew Sturgis

Veteran manager **Matthew Sturgis** is leaving his post in Cape Elizabeth to take the manager’s job for the Town of Cumberland. Sturgis has worked for Cape Elizabeth for 25 years. He will work with Town Manager **Bill Shane** until Shane retires in July.



Alexandra Sykes

Alexandra Sykes is the new planner for the City of Belfast. A resident of Bucksport, Sykes holds a bachelor’s degree in architectural studies from Hobart and William Smith College and a master’s in historic preservation from the University of Pennsylvania. She also earned a second master’s, in architecture, from Montana State University. She left her job at GO Logic in Belfast to take the planner’s position. She was one of nine candidates.

New Norway Town Manager **Jeffrey Wilson** has been appointed as a district court judge by Gov. Janet Mills. Wilson said his appointment was bittersweet because he loved the town and the job, which he has held for three months, but couldn’t give up a chance to be a judge. Wilson applied to be a judge several years ago, he said, so his appointment came as a surprise. Wilson practiced law in neighboring Paris before being named manager. Police Chief **Jeffrey Campbell** has been named interim manager. 🌲

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STATEWIDE

Thousands of visitors trekked to Maine for the rare April 8 total solar eclipse, boosting local businesses in many smaller towns that had plodded through a tough winter without snow. In many areas, lodging was booked solid, including high demand for short-term rentals. There were viewing sites in all the large and small communities along the path of totality, where streets and rural roads were crammed as thousands poured in and out of popular scenic areas to witness the spectacle. The path cut through the center of the state, about 100 miles wide. Totality is when darkness descends for several minutes while the moon blocks out the sun before returning to daylight. Totality lasted two to four minutes in Maine, depending on location. The last time Maine experienced totality was in 1963. There will not be another one in Maine until May 1, 2079. Officials and groups in the Town of Houlton, the last stop on the eclipse's travel across the U.S., planned for the event for three years. A three-day eclipse festival drew an estimated 20,000 to the Aroostook County town. Maine had some of the best weather, with mostly clear skies, of many locations along the path of totality from Texas to Canada.

BANGOR

Last month the city council appropriated \$6.5 million from the undesignated fund to pay for a new 826-space parking lot at Bangor International Airport. Passenger traffic has increased 30% since 2019 because of pent up demand from the pandemic, officials said. In January, nearly 35,500 people passed through the airport, the best January figure since 2020. The January number also ends a six-month period when the airport saw the most passenger traffic in five years. Flights dropped 70% during the pandemic, but they are now at pre-pandemic levels.

BRUNSWICK

Despite public concerns, the town council in April approved the purchase of an armored vehicle for \$380,000. It will replace the police department's old, unsound vehicle. Police leaders said the purchase will be paid for from the department's reserves, and that grants would be sought to help offset the cost. Opponents of buying the armored truck worried it would militarize the coastal town of 21,000. Supporters said it would be helpful for major events and incidents and would be available to help surrounding communities. The vehicle should last 20 years.

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FREEPORT

The Town Council in early April endorsed a new property tax assistance program for people aged 62 and older who have lived in town at least five years. It will take effect in the next tax year and will help as many as 500 taxpayers. Homeowners with incomes of \$37,650 for one person qualify for the program, which provides a maximum benefit of \$750 a year. People who rent and pay toward property taxes also can apply. Applications will open in November.

HAMPDEN

The United States Postal Service will invest \$12.1 million in modernizing its Hampden mail processing operation, but at the same time move some of the daily mail volume to Scarborough 130 miles to the south. The decision was criticized by Maine's congressional delegation and other officials, including the postal workers' union, who say the consolidation will delay mail delivery and cause job losses. The decision is part of the service's 10-year plan to confront a looming \$160 billion deficit.

OGUNQUIT

The York County town of 880 beat out places such as

Tokyo and London as the No. 1 vacation destination this year, according to Real Simple magazine. The town's craggy coastline, sandy beaches and the famous Ogunquit Playhouse were all cited as reasons to enjoy the "peaceful charm" of the town. Other destinations that made the top 10 include the Greek Islands and Old Quebec City.

PORTLAND

The city council has budgeted nearly \$200,000 to pay for an on-the-ground audit of business furnishings and equipment at every city business to ensure the value of the property is accurate. The city could raise a significant amount of new revenue, but the likely results of the audit are unclear since a similar audit has not been performed for a half-century. The audit will begin in July and is expected to take a year to complete.

WELLS

Wells, Scarborough, and Brunswick will share \$10.6 million in federal funding to conserve areas affected by climate change. Projects to be financed include \$4.5 million to improve tidal flow and fish passage in Brunswick and Perry; nearly \$3 million to restore and conserve a compromised coastal marsh in Wells; and \$1.4 million to plan for the restoration of the Scarborough Marsh. 🌲



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LAW COURT UPHOLDS REFERENDUM VOTE

In *Brooks, et. al., v. Town of Bar Harbor*, 2024 ME 21, Maine’s Law Court confirmed the validity of amendments to Bar Harbor’s Land Use Ordinance (LUO) enacted by simple majority vote at referendum.

A group of citizens challenged the validity of the LUO amendments, citing a provision in the LUO stating that certain ordinance amendments could only be approved by a two-thirds majority vote at town meeting. Because the ordinance amendments did not receive the required supermajority at referendum, the citizens argued that they were invalid. MMA Legal Services participated in the appeal in support of the Town through an *amicus curiae* (“friend of the court”) brief prepared by Staff Attorney Sarah Jancarik.

Relying primarily on MMA’s argument that, per Maine statute (30-A M.R.S. § 2501 and 21-A M.R.S. § 723(4)), a municipality may only impose a supermajority referendum voting requirement via a municipal charter (not by ordinance), the Court sided with the Town and confirmed the validity of the Town’s referendum vote.

Note that *Brooks* is a narrow holding focusing solely on municipal authority to impose supermajority voting requirements on a town meeting referendum vote. The Court did not address the issue in the context of open town meeting voting. (MMA’s brief also argued, and it has been our view, that under established common-law rules, any restrictions on the power of open town meeting voters generally may only be accomplished by municipal charter or statute.)

Filing “friend of the court” briefs is one of the services MMA’s Legal Services Program provides free of charge to our members. If your municipality is involved in appellate litigation of statewide significance to municipalities, we invite you to contact us to discuss this form of assistance. (By S.F.P.)

THE ROLE OF A BOARD CHAIR

Question: I’m the new chair of a municipal board. What are my official duties?

Answer: Actually, state law does not address the powers and duties of a municipal board chairperson. Based on the few statutes that do mention board chairs, it appears that the chair’s role is simply to preside over the board’s meetings. This usually includes leading the meeting, calling agenda items and votes, receiving motions, recognizing others to speak, and making sure that the board proceeds in an orderly manner through its business.

Beyond presiding over meetings, no other powers or duties should be assumed to belong to the chair unless assigned by charter, ordinance, board bylaws, or perhaps by consent of the board (which can be implied by custom or past practice). A chair, for example, has no inherent authority to speak for the board or to dictate its agenda, although some chairs are given those responsibilities.

Also, unless otherwise provided by statute, charter, or ordinance, the chair is entitled to the same privileges as other board members (e.g., to make motions, to express opinions, to participate in deliberations, to vote); the chair is not limited, for example, to voting only to break a tie or required to vote last.

A chair with strong leadership skills, commitment, and an even-tempered disposition can greatly enhance board productivity and public confidence. The ability to lead meetings is an important skill; a knowledgeable chair can help discussion move forward in an orderly manner, ensure that other members have an adequate and equal chance to be heard, help the board avoid becoming bogged down in irrelevant subjects or personal clashes, and help build consensus within the board.

On a related topic, written board bylaws are recommended to facilitate the orderly conduct of business and to support the chair’s procedural decisions. Unless prohibited by law, boards have inherent authority to adopt their own bylaws or rules of procedure provided that the bylaws do not conflict with statute or applicable charter or ordinance provisions (e.g., quorum, majority vote, term, powers). Bylaws need not be complicated and need not adopt Robert’s Rules of Order.

For more information and samples, see our Board Bylaws Information Packet, available free to members at www.memun.org/legal. (By S.F.P.)

BAN ON SUNDAY HUNTING UPHELD

The first Maine Supreme Judicial Court decision interpreting Maine’s 2021 constitutional “right to food” amendment (Me. Const. art. I, § 25) was recently issued, and it upholds Maine’s longstanding ban on Sunday hunting.

Parker, et al. v. Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, 2024 ME 22, involved a challenge brought by Virginia and Joel Parker, who obtain food via hunting. The Parkers contended that Maine’s constitution creates “a right to harvest food through hunting,” and therefore renders the state law banning hunting on Sunday (12 M.R.S. § 11205) unconstitutional.

According to the Court, the issue boils down to two questions: (1) does the constitution create a right to hunt wild animals; and (2) if so, does the hunting ban infringe on that right?

The Court held that Art. 1 § 25 of the constitution unambiguously creates a limited right to hunt by protecting the right of individuals to “harvest” food of their own choosing. Although the term “harvest” is undefined, the Court found that “harvest” includes hunting activity. However, the right to hunt or harvest is protected only when conducted for the specific purposes of “nourishment, sustenance, bodily health, and well-being.”

Second, the Court noted that the constitution contains several limits on the right to food, including an express exclusion on “poaching ...in the harvesting ... of food.” Finding that “poaching” means taking game or fish illegally, the Court held that the constitutional right to hunt exists only in situations in which hunting is otherwise legal and does not extend to situations in which hunting is illegal. Accordingly, the Court found that the state’s Sunday hunting ban does not conflict with the state constitution and does not violate the Parkers’ constitutional rights.

The constitutional “right to food” should not be conflated with Maine’s “food sovereignty” law. The two are separate, although they share similar tenets. The Maine Food Sovereignty Act (7 M.R.S. §§ 281- 286) authorizes municipalities, by ordinance, to exempt direct producer-to-consumer local food and food product sales (except for meat and poultry product sales) from some state laws regulating food. The “right to food” constitutional amendment, however, does not address the sale or licensing of food products or food producers.

For more information see *Maine Town & City*, Legal Notes, “Maine’s New ‘Right to Food,’” December 2021, and “Food Sovereignty Broadened,” August 2023. To view Maine’s constitution, see <https://legislature.maine.gov/ros/LawsOfMaine/#Const> (By S.F.P.)

CLERKS AND MERCANTILE FILINGS

Municipal clerks often ask about their responsibilities surrounding commercial filings.

Maine law (31 M.R.S. §§ 1-7) has long required mercantile partnerships (two or more persons partnered for business purposes) and sole proprietors doing business under an assumed name (a name other than the owner’s full real name) to file a certificate with the clerk in the municipality in which the business is conducted.

MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

MAY 27 – Memorial Day, the last Monday in May is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. §1051). Municipal officers shall direct the decoration of veterans’ graves. (30-A M.R.S. § 2901).

BY JUNE 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).

JUNE 19 – Juneteenth, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051).


JULY 4 – Independence Day, is a legal holiday (4 M.R.S. § 1051).

The certificate must be signed and sworn, set forth the name(s) and place of residence of the owner(s), and the nature and name of the business. (The law does not apply to corporations, limited partnerships, or limited liability companies, which must file with the Secretary of State’s office.) The filing fee is \$10. See 30-A M.R.S. § 2652.

The filing requirement is aimed at consumer protection, to allow the public to know the identity and residence of the person(s) behind businesses operating in the municipality. Violation of the filing requirement is subject to a civil penalty of \$5 per day, likely enforceable by the Attorney General or District Attorney.

Municipal clerks are required to accept and record these certificates and to maintain a book exclusively for that purpose, which must be open to public inspection. However, receiving and filing certificates is the extent of the clerk’s involvement. The clerk has no duty or authority to advise business owners whether their operation is covered by the statute or to review submissions for legality. Nor does the clerk have any authority to demand or compel a business “scofflaw” to submit paperwork.

Note that the discussion above addresses only the filing requirements in Title 31 of Maine’s statutes; local ordinances may also require various businesses to file notices or to receive a municipal business license.

For more information and sample certificates, see MMA Legal Services’ *Municipal Clerks Manual*, available on our website (www.memun.org/legal). (By S.F.P.) 



On June 12, 2024, the Maine Municipal Association, in cooperation with the Maine Local Government Human Resources Association, will host the 2024 MMA Municipal HR & Management Conference at the University of Maine at Orono's Wells Conference Center. The cost for the full day conference is \$95 for MMA members and \$190 for non-members, which includes a networking lunch. What follows is a condensed summary of the day's sessions and speakers. For more information about the conference or to register, please visit <https://www.memun.org/Training/Conferences-Conventions/HR-Management-Conference>. Questions about the conference should be directed to training@memun.org

AGENDA

8:00 – 8:45 a.m.

Registration, Continental Breakfast and Visit with Sponsors & Vendors

8:45 – 9:00 a.m.

Welcome from Catherine Conlow, Executive Director, MMA

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Keynote with Kevin Hancock, Managing Owner & Chairman, Hancock Lumber

The Business of Shared Leadership

Kevin Hancock is an award-winning author, speaker, and the senior executive of one of America's oldest family businesses, Hancock Lumber. During his keynote address, Kevin will discuss the potential for encouraging innovation to advance humanity by creating an employee centric work culture designed to disperse power, share leadership, and strengthen the voices of others. In this way, organizations can learn to soar to unprecedented heights on the wings of thriving humans at work. Learn more at <https://www.thebusinessofsharedleadership.com/>.

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Break and Visit with Sponsors & Vendors

10:15 – 11:15 a.m.

Concurrent Session #1

Help Wanted: Turning Your Workplace into a Talent Magnet

Presenter: Patrick Ibarra, Co-Founder and Partner, The Mejorando Group. Maintaining a well-prepared, contemporary workforce is fundamental for ensuring your agency's continuity of operations. At the same time, the public sector's traditional ways of retaining and attracting top-flight talent are not always effective and are often viewed as antiquated. Attendees will learn how to strengthen their municipality's brand; that is, reputation, increase retention of A+ performers, and modernize approaches to recruitment.

The What, Where, When, and How of Documentation in Municipal Government

Presenter: Betsy Oulton, President, HR Maine Consulting. Participants will explore all aspects of documentation related to supervision and management in municipal government, including the specific tools and strategies that HR professionals and managers can utilize for success.

11:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Break and Visit with Sponsors & Vendors

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Concurrent Session #2

Mental Health – Getting the Most out of Resources for your Employees

Presenter: Anne Charles, Health Promotion Manager, Maine Municipal Employees' Health Trust (MMEHT). Employees often turn to their manager or Human Resources for guidance with navigating the mental health benefits that are offered through their employer. This session will provide an overview of what the MMEHT has to offer, including Anthem EAP, Talkspace, Aspire365, Mental Health First Aid and wellness classes.

Paid Family and Medical Leave Updates

Presenter: Ann Freeman, Shareholder, Bernstein Shur. This session will provide an overview of the law, discuss any updates related to the rules and regulations to date and discuss what employers can be doing in anticipation of the law taking effect.

12:30 – 1:45 p.m.

Lunch, Networking, Dessert, Coffee, and Visit with Sponsors & Vendors

1:45 – 2:45 p.m.
Concurrent Session #3

Coaching for Success: Bringing Out the Best in Your Supervisors

Presenters: Adam Gormely, Abbe Chabot, and Cynthia Brann, Dirigo Risk Management Solutions. Today’s supervisors must learn to lead by example, actively listen, and foster an environment where feedback is valued and acted upon. This training focuses on developing these soft skills that will teach organizations to transform mere managers into influential leaders who empower their teams to achieve their full potential.

The Do’s and Don’ts of Due Process

Presenter: Matthew Tarasevitch, Shareholder, Bernstein Shur. This session will deal with the complexities of the disciplinary process, including due process requirements, union issues, and the legal landscape to follow, as well as the land mines to avoid.

2:45 – 3:00 p.m.
Break and Visit with Sponsors & Vendors

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Concurrent Session #4

Reasonable Accommodations for People with Disabilities

Presenter: Sharisse Roberts, Rehabilitation Consultant, Maine Department of Labor. This session is a module from Windmills: An Employment Disability Inclusion Program that will acquaint participants with the creative process for identifying reasonable accommodations for a variety of disabilities.

Office Ergonomics

Presenter: Jason Johnson, Loss Control Consultant, MMA Risk Management Services. In this session participants will become familiar with some of the common injuries associated with improper ergonomics and learn how employers can conduct in-house evaluations and improve employee health and well-being.

TRAINING CALENDAR

Maine Municipal Association & Affiliates

MAY

5/20 & 21	Mon. - Tues.	MBOIA Annual Spring Code Conference	Carrabassett Valley - Sugarloaf Mountain Resort	MBOIA
5/21-23	Tues. - Thurs.	MCAPWA Supervisory Leadership in Public Works Program - Part II (full)	Augusta - MaineDOT	MCAPWA
5/22	Wed.	Municipal Technology Conference	Augusta - University of Maine (UMA)	MMA
5/29	Wed.	Communication & Social Media	Zoom Webinar	MMA
5/30	Thurs.	Planning Board/Boards of Appeal	Bangor - Hilton Garden Inn	MMA

JUNE

6/4	Tues.	MMTCTA Tax Liens Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
6/5 & 6	Wed. - Thurs.	MTCCA Athenian Dialogue	Zoom Meeting	MTCCA
6/6	Thurs.	New Managers Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MMA
6/6	Thurs.	MCAPWA Highway Congress	Skowhegan - Skowhegan Fair Grounds	MCAPWA
6/12	Wed.	Municipal Human Resources & Management Conference	Orono - University of Maine	MMA
6/20	Tues.	MEGFOA Spring Training Workshop	Augusta - MMA & Zoom Webinar	MEGFOA
6/25	Tues.	Elected Officials Workshop	Presque Isle - The Northeastland Hotel	MMA
6/25	Tues.	MFCA Membership Meeting & Luncheon	The Bar Harbor Club, Bar Harbor	MFCA

JULY

7/10	Wed.	MTCCA Licensing Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MTCCA
7/11	Thurs.	MBOIA July Membership Meeting & Training	Augusta - MMA	MBOIA
7/23	Tues.	MTCCA Municipal Law	Augusta - MMA & Zoom Webinar	MTCCA
7/25	Thurs.	MMTCTA I've Got The Job - What Now? Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
7/30	Tues.	Planning Board/Boards of Appeal	Freeport - Hilton Garden Inn	MMA
7/31	Wed.	You're the boss - Now what?	Augusta - MMA	MMA



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