



LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

A publication of the Maine Municipal Association • Vol. XLV No. 16 • MAY 5, 2023

All Hands On Deck!

A call to action for Municipal Mutual Aid

While MMA's platform bills were submitted before the December 30, 2022 cloture date, many have only recently been printed. As the paper flows out of the Revisor's Office, it is immediately scheduled for a public hearing, frequently reassigned to committees not referenced on the printed bill, and rapidly scheduled for work sessions. On Thursday, one of MMA's platform bills, LD 1493, *An Act to Increase Affordable Housing by Expanding Tax Increment Financing*, sponsored by Rep. Raegan LaRochelle of Augusta, had a late-night work session, just a short week after the public hearing.

Working with MaineHousing, the amendments submitted to the Taxation Committee during the work session further clarify the housing projects that would qualify for a newly created Pine Tree Housing Zone, allow the retained value from any Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to be used to incentivize the rehabilitation, preservation, expansion or construction of multi-unit family housing projects anywhere in a municipality, and authorize the use of TIF revenues to cover the expenses associated with bonds necessary to support the proposed housing project.

Why Does It Matter?

Currently, the retained value created from either an economic or housing TIF can only be used to bond for infrastructure projects inside the district. While it is the municipal legislative body that denies or approves and repays a municipal bond, the Maine Department of Economic Development has statutory veto authority even without direct skin in the game. This is problematic as most infrastructure investments in the district are paid for by the developer, while the municipality must bond separately to connect those resources to infrastructure outside the district.

As the retained value from economic development districts grows more robustly than those in affordable housing TIF districts, the ability to bond early for the former would remove the barrier that prevents many municipalities from being able to leverage the tool. It's a goose and the golden egg situation.

Anywhere there is existing multifamily housing and a low to moderate income reality for the area's residents, the newly

created Pine Tree Housing Zone overlay could provide a small developer the ability to receive a sales tax exemption on the materials and resources used for the project in exchange for keeping the rent or sales price in an attainable range for low to moderate income households. The municipality could use TIF retained value or a TIF financed infrastructure bond to further help the developer meet bank required project thresholds necessary for financing.

The bill will be scheduled for another work session soon, as it was tabled at 7:30 p.m. with few stakeholders available to weigh in. Municipal leaders in communities with TIF districts and old multi-unit dwelling neighborhoods are urged to call or write the members of the committee ASAP to discuss how this proposed tool would help advance the state's housing creation and development goals and provide much needed housing in your communities.

(continued on page 2)

Do you favor school budget validation referendums?

Check Yes or No.

Public hearings were held on bills that would alter the process of school budget validation referendums and require municipal input into school budgets in the Education and Cultural Affairs committee on Tuesday afternoon.

Bill sponsor, Rep. Ann Marie Mastraccio of Sanford, presented LD 1370, *An Act to Simplify the School Budget Validation Process*, along with an amendment to the bill.

The amended bill intends to remove the state requirement to hold a school budget validation referendum and instead allow communities to opt in to consider using a school budget validation referendum. The results of the opt in vote are considered valid if 25% of the voters who voted in the last gubernatorial election participate in the election. If the number of voters is insufficient, then the proposal to use the budget validation process fails.

(continued on page 6)

All Hands On Deck!...cont'd

Helping Those Who See The Worst.

Somewhat ironically, another of MMA's major policy priorities, LD 1857, *An Act to Create the Public Safety Health and Wellness Reimbursement Fund to Benefit Public Safety Workers and Volunteers*, sponsored by Rep. Lynn Copeland of Saco, trapped in the Revisor's 2,000 plus bill vortex since January, hit the downtown rapids Tuesday, while municipal first responders along the Kennebec River evacuated, monitored, and sandbagged their inundated streets.

Originally assigned to the Taxation Committee, the bill was immediately reassigned to the Health and Human Services Committee and scheduled for a public hearing next **Friday, May 12, at 10:30 a.m.**

Why is it important?

Leveling the cost playing field.

The proposal establishes a statewide reimbursement fund to offset the cost of providing public safety employees, including volunteer first responders, access to a specially designed health and wellness program that mitigates both the physical and mental health effects that the repeated exposure to traumatic events has on these professionals.

Specifically, the proposal would allow public safety agencies to receive reimbursement for the costs of providing career informed mental health, wellness, and specialized cardiac screening for risk factors unique to public safety employees, which would be funded by dedicating 5% of the gross sales and excise tax revenue generated by adult use cannabis establishments to the program.

First responders (e.g., law enforcement, fire, EMS, dispatch, and corrections) across the state work for agencies and associations with unequal local resources. Often, they are volunteers, per diem, occasional or part-time employees, and may have employment roles in other communities. While those individuals are covered under Maine's workers' compensation laws, one key piece is that not all services have the ability to

provide additional and specially oriented mental wellness programs or even provide health insurance for their volunteers. However, via the path proposed in LD 1857, all public safety services providers would be afforded the opportunity to connect their members with career specific culturally competent providers and obtain base level screenings and risk assessments before any health impacts of public safety service are encountered.

Linking both mental wellness and cardiac risks connects the head and heart in the care of first responders, who have significantly elevated risks because of repeated and prolonged exposure to unnatural traumatic events. Unfortunately, to date the only policies emerging from the halls of Augusta have focused on workers' compensation related presumptions for workplace injury. The Legislature's "after the injury occurs" policy focus is effectively forcing communities to pay for expensive career ending or life ending care, and associated attorneys' fees at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars compared to the cost of the preventive screenings.

For non-fulltime employees, most health insurance does not cover baseline cancer screenings, or evaluate cardiac inflammatory levels without a qualifying health need. All first responders — regardless of department size — face the same exposure to repeated traumatic events and all have the same associated health risks as a result. This bill provides universally available screenings, using a revenue stream not yet tapped to support the very individuals the cannabis adult use program impacts, and allows all services, including volunteers, to offer their first responders a real benefit for their service and improves longevity.

THIS BILL NEEDS A STRONG VOICE – YOUR VOICE!

Testifying during the initial public hearing for this bill is vital, but so is the need to call and submit testimony for this bill to be fully funded on the Special Appropriations Table at the end of the legislative session.

Showing up in person sends a loud

message, testifying via Zoom is always possible, and submitting written testimony is also helpful. The Health and Human Services Committee is in Room 209 of the Burton Cross Building behind the dome.

How to get a Zoom link and testify.

From this link: <https://www.mainelegislature.org/testimony/> select the "**Public Hearing**" button. At the bottom of the screen, select "**Health and Human Services**" from the drop-down menu, then select **Friday, May 12, at 10:30 a.m.** from the "**Choose Date**" menu.

This changes the screen again and displays a further list of bills scheduled to have a hearing that day. Select the button next to **LD 1857, An Act to Create the Public Safety Health and Wellness Reimbursement Fund to Benefit Public Safety Workers and Volunteers** and just below that check the small check box next to "**I want to testify electronically over Zoom**". At this point you can upload written testimony if you intend to read it or submit it later through the same portal. You need to include all your contact information and city/town or organization and certify you're human and then hit "**Submit/Register**" at the bottom.

You should receive an email not only confirming whether you have uploaded testimony but also the Zoom link in two separate emails.

How to submit written testimony.

Follow the same procedures as above to upload the written comments, but leave the box next to "I want to testify via Zoom" unchecked. You may also email the committee clerk, analyst, and chairs directly at HHS@legislature.maine.gov, Anna.Broome@legislature.maine.gov, Joseph.Baldacci@Legislature.Maine.gov, and Michele.Meyer@Legislature.Maine.gov.

While doing the right thing for Maine's first responders won't get you a "Get Out of Jail Free" card, it just may guarantee they are still there when you do need them.

HEARING SCHEDULE

For the week of May 8, 2023

MONDAY, MAY 8

Criminal Justice & Public Safety
Room 436, State House, 9:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1122

LD 551 – An Act to Strengthen Maine Citizens' Second Amendment Rights by Allowing the Discharge of Firearms on Private Property That Is Within 500 Feet of School Property in Certain Circumstances

LD 624 – An Act to Prohibit Government Officials from Maintaining Records Related to Firearms Owners

LD 1451 – An Act to Prohibit State and Local Enforcement of Federal Firearms Laws

Environment & Natural Resources
Room 216, Cross Building, 11:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-4149

LD 718 – An Act to Increase the Beneficial Reuse of Construction and Demolition Debris

LD 1330 – Resolve, to Ensure Compliance by the State with an Agreement Regarding the Operation of the Landfill in Old Town

LD 1660 – An Act to Provide That Advanced Recycling Facilities Are Subject to Solid Waste Regulation and That Advanced Recycling Does Not Constitute Recycling

1:00 p.m.

LD 1814 – An Act to Reduce Mercury in the Environment by Phasing Out Certain Fluorescent Light Bulbs

LD 1839 – An Act to Study a Permitting Process for and Establish a Moratorium on Certain Tall Structures

LD 1845 – An Act to Regulate Outdoor Lighting

Health & Human Services
Room 209, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1317

LD 1781 – An Act to Establish the Homeless Substance Use Disorder Service Program

Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
Room 206, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1338

LD 221 – An Act Regarding Airboat Noise

LD 1868 – Resolve, to Name 2 Brooks in the Town of Orient

TUESDAY, MAY 9

Criminal Justice & Public Safety
Room 436, State House, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1122

LD 179 – An Act to Provide Support for Restorative Justice Practices in Maine

LD 288 – An Act Concerning Housing and Support Services for At-risk Youth and Youth Who Have Committed Juvenile Crimes

LD 630 – An Act to Ensure Rural Law Enforcement Services in Maine

LD 913 – An Act to Support First Responders

LD 919 – An Act to Facilitate Employment in the Field of Emergency Medical Services

LD 931 – An Act to Expand the State's Workforce by Supporting the Transition from Incarceration to Employment

LD 1133 – An Act Regarding Emergency Management Funding for Municipal Shelters

Education & Cultural Affairs
Room 208, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-3125

LD 1702 – Resolve, to Establish the Commission to Improve the Educational Experience of People Who Are Resettling in Maine

Energy, Utilities & Technology
Room 211, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-4143

LD 1828 – An Act Regarding Enhanced 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points

Joint Select Committee on Housing
Room 216, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-4149

LD 1752 – Resolve, to Prepare Preapproved Building Types

LD 1787 – Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Convene a Stakeholder Group Tasked with a Comprehensive Overhaul and Modernization of the State Subdivision Statutes

Labor & Housing
Room 202, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1331

LD 1756 – An Act to Protect Employee Freedom of Speech

Note: As of now, the legislative presiding officers have waived the requirement that bills be advertised for public hearing two weeks in advance; therefore, you should check your newspapers for Legal Notices as there may be changes in the hearing schedule. It is not uncommon at this time of the session to have a bill printed one day and a public hearing within a few days. Weekly schedules for hearings and work sessions can be found on the Legislature's website at: <http://legislature.maine.gov/calendar/#Weekly/>.

Taxation
Room 127, State House, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-1552

LD 1747 – An Act to Return the Sales Tax Rate to 5 Percent

Transportation
Room 126, State House, 1:00 p.m.
Tel: 287-4148

LD 1822 – An Act to Amend the Specialty License Plate Laws and Extend the Moratorium on Approval of Specialty License Plates and Remove the Authority of Municipalities to Issue Driver's Licenses

LD 1843 – Resolve, to Name a Bridge in the Town of Bremen the Kitty Breskin Memorial Bridge

LD 1848 – Resolve, to Designate the Route 15 Bridge Located in the Town of Kenduskeag the William S. Pullen Bridge

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
Room 214, Cross Building, 9:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1312

LD 1823 – An Act to Respect and Protect the Right to Food

LD 1881 – An Act Regarding Compensation Fees and Related Conservation Efforts to Protect Soils and Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat from Solar and Wind Energy Development and High-impact Electric Transmission Lines Under the Site Location of Development Laws

Education & Cultural Affairs
Room 208, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-3125

LD 1799 – An Act to Expand Maine's High-quality Early Learning and Care for Children

(continued on page 4)

HEARING SCHEDULE *(cont'd)*

For the week of May 8, 2023

by Increasing Public Preschool Opportunities in Communities

Energy, Utilities & Technology

Room 211, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.

Tel: 287-4143

LD 1223 – An Act to Clarify Cost Allocations and Insurance in the Joint Use of Public Utility Equipment

Environment & Natural Resources

Room 216, Cross Building, 10:00 a.m.

Tel: 287-4149

LD 1847 – An Act to Modify the Visual Impact Standards for Offshore Wind Port Development

Taxation

Room 127, State House, 10:00 a.m.

Tel: 287-1552

LD 283 – An Act to Make Technical Changes to the Maine Tax Laws

LD 1538 – An Act to Provide Tax Benefits to Persons Constructing Accessory Dwelling Units

LD 1644 – An Act to Permit the Expenditure of Accumulated Tax Increment Revenues

LD 1739 – An Act to Extend Development District Tax Increment Financing Districts

LD 1808 – An Act to Amend the State Tax Laws

Veterans & Legal Affairs

Room 437, State House, 9:00 a.m.

Tel: 287-1310

LD 1846 – An Act to Amend a Circulator's Oath for Petitions and Nomination Papers by Including the Number of Signatures Collected

LD 1869 – An Act to Prohibit the Private Funding of Elections

THURSDAY, MAY 11

Labor & Housing

Room 202, Cross Building, 1:00 p.m.

Tel: 287-1331

LD 1746 – An Act to Require Responsible Contracting Practices for Public Construction Projects

Taxation

Room 127, State House, 1:00 p.m.

Tel: 287-1552

LD 1268 – An Act to Provide for a Local Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Exemption for Qualifying

Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Persons

LD 1685 – An Act to Increase Acreage Eligibility and Change Requirements for Filing Plans Under the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law
An Act to Expand Bus Service

Transportation

Room 126, State House, 1:00 p.m.

Tel: 287-4148

LD 408 – An Act to Expand Bus Service

FRIDAY, MAY 12

Health & Human Services

Room 209, Cross Building, 10:30 a.m.

Tel: 287-1317

LD 1857 – An Act to Create the Public Safety Health and Wellness Reimbursement Fund to Benefit Public Safety Workers and Volunteers

Joint Select Committee on Housing

Room 216, Cross Building, 9:00 a.m.

Tel: 287-4149

LD 492 – An Act to Repurpose Vacant Shopping Mall and Retail Space to Mixed-use Housing and Retail

(continued on page 5)

IN THE HOPPER

Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry

LD 1881 – An Act Regarding Compensation Fees and Related Conservation Efforts to Protect Soils and Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat from Solar and Wind Energy Development and High-impact Electric Transmission Lines Under the Site Location of Development Laws (Sponsored by Rep. Landry of Farmington)

This bill requires developers of solar energy projects to pay a fee or pay for conservation efforts to mitigate the adverse effects on prime agricultural soils or soils of statewide importance and developers of solar energy developments, wind energy developments or high-impact electric transmission lines to pay a compensation fee to fund off-site habitat improvement or preservation projects to mitigate the adverse effects of a development on wildlife and fisheries habitats. The bill also directs the Department of Environmental Protection to establish one or more compensation funds to carry out the projects or to authorize a public, quasi-public or municipal organization or a private, nonprofit organization to administer the funds.

Criminal Justice & Public Safety

LD 624 – An Act to Prohibit Government Officials from Maintaining Records Related to Firearms Owners (Sponsored by Rep. Ardell of Monticello)

This bill prohibits the state and local governments from maintaining a comprehensive firearms registry, record or database that retains

(The bill summaries are written by MMA staff and are not necessarily the bill's summary statement or an excerpt from that summary statement. During the course of the legislative session, many more bills of municipal interest will be printed than there is space in the Legislative Bulletin to describe. Our attempt is to provide a description of what would appear to be the bills of most significance to local government, but we would advise municipal officials to also review the comprehensive list of LDs of municipal interest that can be found on MMA's website, www.memun.org.)

sufficient information to connect an individual to a firearm, including the name and address of the individual and the make, model, caliber or serial number of a firearm.

LD 630 – An Act to Ensure Rural Law Enforcement Services in Maine (Sponsored by Rep. Graham of North Yarmouth)

This concept draft bill establishes measures to ensure that residents in the rural parts of the state receive adequate law enforcement services, including services provided through the Maine State Police and county sheriffs.

LD 1451 – An Act to Prohibit State and Local Enforcement of Federal Firearms Laws (Sponsored by Sen. Brakey of Androscoggin Cty.)

This bill prohibits all state and local government entities, the employees of these entities and all other state and local government officials from: (1) enforcing or assisting federal agencies in the enforcement of federal laws that restrict a person's right to own, possess and purchase a firearm

HEARING SCHEDULE (cont'd)

For the week of May 8, 2023

LD 1673 – An Act to Encourage Affordable Housing and Mixed-use Development by Establishing a Thriving Corridors Program

LD 1710 – An Act to Establish the Maine Rental Assistance and Guarantee Program and Amend the Laws Regarding Tenants and the Municipal General Assistance Program

LD 1721 – An Act to Create Transitional Housing Communities for Homeless Populations in the State

LD 1844 – An Act to Support Emergency Housing Facility Construction, Renovation and Acquisition Statewide by Creating a Matching Grant Program

Judiciary
Room 438, State House, 9:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1327

LD 776 – RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish the Right to Bodily Autonomy
10:00 a.m.

LD 1764 – An Act Regarding the Charge for Research Time by State Agencies for Freedom of Access Act Requests

State & Local Government
Room 214, Cross Building, 9:30 a.m.
Tel: 287-1330

LD 1772 – An Act to Require Voter Approval of Certain Borrowing by Government-controlled Entities and Utilities and to Provide Voters More Information Regarding That Borrowing

LD 1821 – An Act to Validate Certain Proceedings Authorizing the Issuance of Bonds and Notes by the City of Bath

LD 1825 – An Act to Clarify Licensing Jurisdiction for Manufactured Housing Communities

LD 1862 – An Act to Restore Balanced Powers During a State of Emergency

LD 1872 – An Act to Restore Balanced Emergency Powers

Veterans & Legal Affairs
Room 437, State House, 11:00 a.m.
Tel: 287-1310

LD 1365 – An Act to Require Photograph Identification for Voting

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

A weekly publication of the Maine Municipal Association throughout sessions of the Maine State Legislature.

Subscriptions to the *Bulletin* are available at a rate of \$20 per calendar year. Inquiries regarding subscriptions or opinions expressed in this publication should be addressed to:

Legislative Bulletin, Maine Municipal Association, 60 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330. 207-623-8428. Website: www.memun.org

Editorial Staff: Kate Dufour, Rebecca Graham, Rebecca Lambert and Laura Ellis of Advocacy & Communications.

Layout: Sue Bourdon, Advocacy & Communications



IN THE HOPPER (cont'd)

or firearm ammunition or obtain a related firearms certification without prohibiting these state and local government officials from enforcing state laws that do the same; (2) restricting, revoking, suspending or otherwise infringing on a person's right to own, purchase or possess a firearm or firearm ammunition or to obtain any related firearms certification based on the person's purchase, possession or use of cannabis; and (3) providing information to a federal agency or official of a federal agency relating to a person's ownership, possession or purchase of a firearm or firearm ammunition or the person's obtaining of any related firearms certification based solely on the person's purchase, possession or use of cannabis.

Energy, Utilities & Technology

LD 1223 – An Act to Clarify Cost Allocations and Insurance in the Joint Use of Public Utility Equipment (Sponsored by Sen. Grohoski of Hancock Cty.)

This bill clarifies that an owner of a utility pole is responsible for costs associated with accommodating an attachment to the pole except for costs associated with municipal attachments, costs of a modification of an attachment to comply with safety, or engineering or construction codes or standards or the cost of insurance of the attaching entity. This bill also clarifies that a pole owner may require an attaching entity or a contractor of the attaching entity to carry insurance but the pole owner or attaching entity may not dictate the terms, type, or level of the insurance of another attaching entity or contractor.

LD 1828 – An Act Regarding Enhanced 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points (Emergency) (Sponsored by Sen. LaFountain of Kennebec Cty.)

This emergency bill: (1) requires a public safety answering point (PSAP) to provide the Public Utilities Commission, Emergency Services Communication Bureau notice at least one year prior to discontinuing service to a municipality, unless the bureau authorizes a shorter period for notification; (2) authorizes the bureau to establish an additional PSAP on a determination that it is necessary to ensure public safety and access to E-9-1-1 services; and (3) requires the bureau to conduct a study assessing whether PSAP can be more efficiently managed to ensure stability of the system.

Environment & Natural Resources

LD 1660 – An Act to Provide That Advanced Recycling Facilities Are Subject to Solid Waste Regulation and That Advanced Recycling Does Not Constitute Recycling (Sponsored by Sen. Carney of Cumberland Cty.)

This bill redefines recycling as the series of activities by which material is collected, transported, sorted, and processed for use as an industrial feedstock in place of raw materials to manufacture new products with minimal loss of material quality and quantity. The definition further provides that excluded from the definition recycling is energy recovery or energy generation by any means, including, but not limited to, advanced recycling, combustion, gasification, incineration, pyrolysis, solvolysis, hydrolysis, thermal desorption, waste-to-energy,

Do you favor school budget validation referendums? ...cont'd

The Maine School Management Association (MSMA) and MMA were both in support of the bill since it helps to ensure that the result is representative of community desire and that it could arguably entice more people to attend the budget meetings to be better informed on the school budget. It was mentioned that municipalities often attend a school budget meeting where they have an opportunity to ask questions and provide input on the budget as it's being developed.

Opposition came from the Maine Town and City Clerks Association (MTCCA) who admittedly had not yet seen the amendment and prefaced the testimony with the caution that their position could change. MTCCA's testimony outlined the concern that if a referendum was required, a ballot change could also be required, leading to additional expenses to the municipality. There was also concern among their members regarding the language in the bill that discusses the validity of the results.

As written, the vote may not be considered valid if the number of voters does not meet the threshold. This could increase voter confusion and since voter turnout for special elections is

low, there is concern that the threshold would not be met.

A similar initiative, LD 1748, *An Act to Reform the School Budget Referendum Process by Limiting the Circumstances in Which Referenda Occur*, sponsored by Rep. Mana Abdi of Lewiston, also received a public hearing. This bill would eliminate the state requirement to hold a school budget validation referendum unless a written petition is signed by 25% of the number of voters who voted in the last gubernatorial election.

A former member of the Lewiston school committee testified in favor of the bill adding that the threshold of 25% is high, but necessary to preserve the integrity of the budget validation referendum process.

MMA rose in opposition to the measure since local leaders feel that this decision would be best left locally to fulfill the will of their residents. Communities prefer local control and are more appreciative of the measure proposed in LD 1370 than the avenue taken in LD 1748. Testimony neither for nor against LD 1748 was provided by MTCCA due to the low turnout seen at these kinds of elections. They also suggested the com-

mittee consider changing the language where it states the election will be held 30 days after the petition is submitted to 30 days after the petition is verified, to give staff enough time to verify the signatures on the petition and deem it valid. MTCCA felt the threshold could also be lowered to 15% to be more reasonable.

Stay tuned since the work session has not been scheduled for either of these bills.

Rep. Richard Campbell of Orrington, the sponsor of LD 1300, *An Act to Give the Governing Board of a Municipality Input into the Budget Developed by a School Board*, asked the committee to move this bill ought not to pass. However, members of the public, who had been waiting all afternoon to testify on the bill were allowed to be heard.

MSMA, MMA, and the Maine Education Association all rose to speak on the bill, but quickly breezed through their testimony since the bill was slated for an immediate work session. As suspected, the committee closed the public hearing and opened the work session on LD 1300. A motion of ought not to pass prevailed with a unanimous vote.

IN THE HOPPER (cont'd)

waste-to-fuel or any other chemical or molecular conversion process.

LD 1845 – An Act to Regulate Outdoor Lighting (Sponsored by Rep. Osher of Orono)

This bill regulates outdoor lighting fixtures by imposing with some exceptions, certain requirements related to the installation and use of outdoor lighting fixtures, including: (1) prohibiting a person from placing or installing an outdoor lighting fixture unless the fixture is shielded to direct the light downward; (2) providing that if an outdoor lighting fixture is not shielded it may not be operated between 11 p.m. and sunrise; and (3) prohibiting the installation of outdoor lighting fixtures that use a mercury vapor lamp. The bill also authorizes municipalities to adopt ordinances that include the same or more restrictive requirements and provides that where there is no such ordinance the Department of Environmental Protection has authority to enforce the requirements.

Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

LD 221 – An Act Regarding Airboat Noise (Sponsored by Rep. Hepler of Woolwich)

This bill extends the repeal date of the law governing airboat noise limits to September 7, 2025.

Joint Select Committee on Housing

LD 1673 – An Act to Encourage Affordable Housing and Mixed-use Development by Establishing a Thriving Corridors Program (Sponsored by Rep. Gere of Kennebunkport)

This bill establishes the Thriving Corridors Program within the Department of Administrative and Financial Services in order to assist municipalities with technical support and funding to redevelop high-impact corridors near downtowns, village centers or crossroads into mixed-use, mixed-income, walkable neighborhoods by infilling and redeveloping underutilized land.

Hearings of the Week: Right to Food & Tree Growth

Right to Food. The Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee will hold a public hearing on LD 1823, *An Act to Respect and Protect the Right to Food* on **Wednesday, May 10 at 9:00 a.m.** in room 214 of the Cross Office Building. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Craig Hickman of Kennebec County, in part, amends the statutes regulating food and food sovereignty by: (1) applying the provisions of the Maine Food Sovereignty Act to all local food ordinances, including those in place before the Act was enacted; (2) establishes the Maine Vegetable Garden Protection Act to allow a person to cultivate vegetable gardens on the person's own property or with permission on the private property of another and prohibits interference by the State or a political subdivision; (3) provides that local ordinances may be adopted to regulate matters related to the cultivation of vegetable gardens, including height, setback, water use, fertilizer use or the control of invasive or unlawful species, as long as the ordinance does not have the effect of prohibiting the cultivation of vegetable gardens; and (4) authorizes municipalities to develop and implement programs to establish

edible landscaping, food forests and community gardens in public spaces, including municipally owned properties, rights-of-way, school grounds, parks and parking lots.

Tree Growth. The Taxation Committee will conduct a public hearing on LD 1685, *An Act to Increase Acreage Eligibility and Change Requirements for Filing Plans Under the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law* on **Thursday, May 11 at 1:00 p.m.** in room 127 of the State House. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Ann Matlack of St. George at the request of municipal assessors, amends the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law by increasing the acreage eligibility requirement from 10 to 25 acres of forested land beginning April 1, 2025. The bill authorizes municipal assessors and the State Tax Assessor to retain copies of required forest management and harvest plans and with assistance from the Director of the Bureau of Forestry to determine the sufficiency of a plan to meet the requirements of the law. The bill also specifies that the retained forest management and harvest plans are confidential and not public records.

IN THE HOPPER (cont'd)

LD 1752 – Resolve, to Prepare Preapproved Building Types (Sponsored by Sen. Pouliot of Kennebec Cty.)

This bill directs the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Resource Information and Land Use Planning to contract with an appropriate consultant to establish a set of building types that municipalities may adopt as preapproved building types to reduce the cost and time associated with processing building permit applications. The bill also requires the department to submit a report no later than November 6, 2024 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over housing matters, which is authorized to report out legislation in 2025.

LD 1787 – Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to Convene a Stakeholder Group Tasked with a Comprehensive Overhaul and Modernization of the State Subdivision Statutes (Sponsored by Rep. Ducharme of Madison)

This resolve requires the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, in coordination with the Department of Environmental Protection, to convene a stakeholder group, including municipal officials, to review and recommend a comprehensive overhaul and modernization of the subdivision laws. The departments must submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and on Environment and Natural Resources, which are authorized to report out legislation in 2024.

Judiciary

LD 1764 – An Act Regarding the Charge for Research Time by State Agencies for Freedom of Access Act Requests (Sponsored by Sen. Lawrence of York Cty.)

This bill allows a state agency or official to charge \$25 for the first two hours of staff time responding to a public records request under the Freedom of Access Act and sets the fee at \$25 per hour for staff time after the first two hours.

State & Local Government

LD 1825 – An Act to Clarify Licensing Jurisdiction for Manufactured Housing Communities (Sponsored by Speaker Jackson of Aroostook Cty.)

This bill requires a municipality to accept a license issued by the Manufactured Housing Board as evidence a manufactured housing community meets all requirements to operate. The bill also provides that a municipality may not charge any additional fees for a manufactured housing community to operate or a fee for any type of permit for manufactured housing if the installation is governed by rules of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development or the Manufactured Housing Board.

Taxation

LD 1268 – An Act to Provide for a Local Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Exemption for Qualifying Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Persons (Sponsored by Rep. Doudera of Camden)

This bill allows a municipality to provide an excise tax exemption for one vehicle owned, separately or jointly, by a resident of that municipality who is a volunteer firefighter or volunteer emergency medical services person, as long as the vehicle is used to perform those volunteer duties. The bill also authorizes municipalities to impose additional eligibility criteria, including, but not limited to, duration



IN THE HOPPER (*cont'd*)

of service, minimum call response, and training requirements.

LD 1538 – An Act to Provide Tax Benefits to Persons Constructing Accessory Dwelling Units (Sponsored by Sen. Brenner of Cumberland Cty.)

This bill allows for reimbursement by the State for up to years of a percentage of property taxes paid due to an increase in the taxes because of the construction of an accessory dwelling unit, which is defined as an attached or detached unit on the same lot or parcel as an existing or proposed single-family or multifamily residence that allows for independent living for one or more persons and contains kitchen and bathroom facilities and sleeping accommodations.

LD 1644 – An Act to Permit the Expenditure of Accumulated Tax Increment Revenues (Sponsored by Rep. Salisbury of Westbrook)

This bill governs the process for the use of tax increment funds that remain after the term of a development district expires, including: (1) payment of debt on service bonds and notes used to fund district-related projects; (2) payment of approved costs described in the development program for up to three years after the expiration date; or (3) a revenue transfer to the general fund with a corresponding adjustment to the municipality's assessed value.

LD 1739 – An Act to Extend Development District Tax Increment Financing Districts (Sponsored by Rep. Kuhn of Falmouth)

This bill allows a development district that is a tax increment financing

district to be extended an additional 30 years if the district uses at least 51% of state tax increment revenue for affordable housing or transit-oriented development. The bill also defines: (1) "affordable housing" as a decent, safe and sanitary dwelling, apartment or other living accommodation for a household whose income does not exceed 120% of the median income for the area; and (2) "transit oriented development" as a type of development that links land use with transit facilities by combining housing with complementary public uses, including jobs, retail or services establishments that are located in transit-served nodes or corridors.

Veterans & Legal Affairs

LD 1365 – An Act to Require Photograph Identification for Voting (Sponsored by Rep. Paul of Winterport)

This bill requires the presentation of proof of identity in the form of a photograph identification when voting in person or by absentee ballot. Acceptable photograph identification is a valid driver's license or nondriver identification card issued in this State, a U.S. passport, a military identification or a permit to carry a concealed handgun issued in this State if that permit includes a photograph. An identification issued by a college or university in this State may not be accepted for voter identification when voting or when registering to vote. The bill also allows a person who does not possess a photograph identification document to request a free special voter photograph identification card from the Secretary of State.