Vol. XLVII, No. 6

A Publication of the Massachusetts Municipal Association | www.mma.org

June 2020

# House OK's bill on municipal challenges

**By John Robertson** 

The House on May 26 approved and sent back to the Senate the latest municipal bill drafted to help cities and towns manage elections and budgets as the COVID-19 state of emergency continues.

The House bill (H. 4752) made changes to key provisions in the bill approved by the Senate (S. 2680) on May 4 and added new sections related to elections and finance.

With July 1 approaching quickly, the MMA has asked that the differences be resolved by the first week of June, so that a final bill can be sent to the governor for approval and election and town meeting options can be used locally before time runs out.

The House bill includes remote participation language for representative town meetings and quorum reductions available in all towns. The Senate had limited the quorum provision to open town meetings.

The House removed language that would limit town meeting action, under a reduced quorum, to budget and federal grant matters.

The House bill includes a city budget provision and language related to school service contracts from S. 2680.

The House added provisions to allow further delay of municipal elections and eliminate municipal election caucuses.

The House also added language to allow cities and towns to use special revenue fund and stabilization fund amounts to pay for fiscal 2021 expenses through a two-thirds vote of the select board in a town and the council in a city and towns with a town council.

#### City budgets

H. 4752 would extend to July 31 the deadline for mayors to submit a fiscal 2021 budget to their city council, and allow cities to adopt up to three onemonth budgets if the fiscal 2021 budget is not in place by June 30.

#### Open town meetings

Select boards, in consultation with their town moderator, would be allowed to lower quorum requirements for open town meetings to not less than 10% of the existing quorum level.

#### Representative town meeting

Representative town meetings would have the option to meet remotely, if approved by the select board and town moderator, as well as by the town meeting when it

#### Alternate town meeting locations

Towns would be allowed to hold their town meeting in a nearby community if doing so is necessary to achieve safe physical distancing.

#### **Elections**

The House bill would further extend the deadline for 2020 municipal elections to July 31. (The deadline had already been extended to June 30 under Chapter 45,

■ **HOUSE BILL** continued on 25

# Inside

City, town halls proceed with caution on reopening .. 3

Legislature mulls election bills.....5

funding available.....6

Classifieds ......28

# \$500M in CARES Act **Municipal leaders work** to bolster staff morale......7 People ......26 Calendar ......32

# Municipal groups call for urgent federal aid to cities, towns

By Jennifer Kayanaugh

As costs mount and revenues plummet during the COVID-19 emergency response, cities and towns across the country are joining forces in an effort to secure direct federal funding for communities.

Organizations including the National League of Cities, the International City/County Management Association, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors have been asking Congress for direct financial relief for local governments, particularly to offset revenue shortfalls they have experienced as a result of the emergency response and economic shutdown.



Sen. Elizabeth Warren

A research report released by the NLC on May 14 estimates that municipalities across the country will lose \$134 billion in revenue this year alone, representing a 21.6% reduction, and that communities could lose \$360 billion over the next three years. Some communities, the NLC predicts, could lose up to 40% of their revenue.

Lexington Town Manager James Malloy, who also serves

this year as president-elect of the ICMA, said local leaders need to provide data to members of Congress about the revenue cities and towns are losing, particularly hotel and motel taxes, meals taxes and motor vehicle excise taxes, as well as

■ FEDERAL AID continued on 12

#### **2020 MMA Board of Directors**

The MMA Board of Directors holds regular meetings in Boston, followed by a meeting of the Local Government Advisory Commission with the administration. For information on the board's activities, call the office of MMA Executive Director Geoff Beckwith at 617-426-

#### **Executive Committee**

Cecilia Calabrese, MMA President Councillor, Agawam

Adam Chapdelaine, MMA Vice President Town Manager, Arlington

Ellen Allen, MMA Immediate Past President Selectman, Norwell

Michael Bettencourt, MSA First Vice President Select Board Member, Winchester

Lisa Blackmer, MMCA President Councillor, North Adams

Brian Boyle, ATFC President Finance Committee, Bolton

Carolyn Brennan, ATFC First Vice President Finance Committee, Wilbraham

Kathleen Conlon, MSA President Select Board Member, Milton

George "Bud" Dunham, MMMA First Vice President

Town Manager, Sandwich Eamon McCarthy Earls, MMCA First Vice

President Councillor, Franklin

Scott Galvin, MMaA First Vice President Mayor, Woburn

Julie Jacobson, MMMA President Town Manager, Auburn

Jon Mitchell, MMaA President Mayor, New Bedford

Geoff Beckwith (non-voting) MMA Executive Director

Brian Arrigo, Mayor, Revere Steve Bartha, Town Manager, Danvers Peter Christopher, Councillor, Winthrop Andrew Flanagan, Town Manager, Andover Claire Freda, Councillor, Leominster Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor, Newton Jason LaForest, Councillor, North Adams Syed Hashmi, Selectman, Westborough Donna Holaday, Mayor, Newburyport **Thomas Hutcheson,** Town Administrator,

**Dan Matthews,** Select Board Member, Needham David Narkewicz, Mayor, Northampton **John O'Rourke,** Select Board Member, Conway Jeovanny Rodriguez, Councillor, Lawrence Alan Slavin, Selectman, Wareham **Peter Spellios**, Select Board Member, Swampscott Eric Steinhilber, Councillor, Barnstable Kevin Sweet, Town Administrator, Wrentham Arthur Vigeant, Mayor, Marlborough Martin Walsh, Mayor, Boston Kristi Williams, Town Manager, Westborough

# **Executive Director's Report**

# Cities and towns are essential, and the federal government must step up with support

There are no upsides to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Massachusetts alone, thousands of people have perished, tens of thousands of patients have become seriously ill, a million workers have lost their jobs and livelihoods, businesses have shuttered, students have languished, and every person has suffered stress and disruption.

Yet, in the midst of all of this devastation and uncertainty, heretofore hidden realities have become crystal clear to anyone who has paid attention: government is a force for good, government is necessary to create a safe and just society, and government is the only force that can bind us together to fight against common threats and to work for common prosperity.

Over the past five decades, it has become convenient – even popular – in American political discourse to disparage the virtues and necessity of government. Opportunists have employed divisive rhetoric to advance their personal ambitions, constructing a shadowy portrait of government as anti-people, when the reality is the opposite, especially at the local level, where the people are the government. Aided and abetted by a media that out of "fairness" seems compelled to give equal time to conspiracy theories and fact-ignoring statements, a false narrative has taken hold that ordinary citizens are



**By Geoffrey** Beckwith

victims, not beneficiaries, of the one institution that exists to protect and serve society.

Enter a true crisis - a deadly virus that has brought every country and economy to its knees. With this unprecedented threat, average citizens immediately knew where to turn, and where not to turn. They knew not to

turn to corporate America, or political parties, or bombastic opportunists. Average folks turned to their local and state governments, to the accountable leaders and the institutions that were created to provide for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which in the context of COVID-19 means safety, security and hope for the future.

From Day One of the public health emergency, cities and towns have been on the tip of the sword in the battle against the novel coronavirus. Local officials mobilized their boards of health, their first responders, their health professionals and human service providers, their school services, their emergency management staff, and all departments. Communities have been on the front line, doing what they do best: protecting and serving the public.

Our state government has also displayed excellent leadership. The Baker-Polito administration moved swiftly to declare

■ DIRECTOR'S REPORT continued on 24

# heBeacon

June 2020 | Volume XLVII, Number 6 Copyright © 2020, Massachusetts Municipal Association

Manager of Publications & Digital Communications John Quellette

**Associate Editor** Jennifer Kavanaugh

Digital Communications Full Circle Design Coordinator Meredith Gabrilska

Communications & **Membership Director** Candace Pierce

Publisher Geoffrey Beckwith

Design

Printed on Recycled Paper

#### **Massachusetts Municipal Association**

Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association One Winthrop Square, Boston 02110 617-426-7272 · www.mma.org

Twitter and Facebook: @massmunicipal

Periodicals Postage Paid at Boston, MA, and additional mailing offices.

TheBeacon (ISSN 0199-235X) is published monthly, except for a combined July-August issue, by the Massachusetts Municipal Association, One Winthrop Square, Boston, MA 02110. The MMA is composed of the Massachusetts Selectmen's Association. the Massachusetts Mayors' Association, the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, the Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, and the Association of Town Finance Committees. Subscription rate for **TheBeacon** is \$36 per year. An \$18 subscription fee is included in dues payments for members. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **TheBeacon**, One Winthrop Square, Boston, MA 02110.

We encourage readers to send comments, story ideas, news items, and events notices to editor@mma.org.

# City, town halls proceed with caution on reopening

By John Ouellette

City and town halls had been all-but-dormant for more than two months when they received the OK to reopen effective May 25 during the first phase of the state's reopening plan.

The scene at these centers of local government activity, however, is going to look quite different than it did before the COVID-19 state of emergency.

For starters, municipal buildings are subject to the 25% occupancy limitation imposed on office spaces in the state's new Sector-Specific Workplace Safety Standards.

They'll also need to keep people at least 6 feet apart whenever possible and provide masks when it's not, which means closing or reconfiguring common areas such as break rooms and requiring masks for

And they'll need to post signs, erect partitions and stock up on cleaning products such as sanitizers and disinfecting wipes. Staggered work, break and lunch schedules might be necessary to ensure distancing. Sharing office materials and equipment is strongly discouraged. And workers will have to be trained on the new protocols.

All of this has local leaders taking a moment to digest the guidance and prepare careful plans, rather than rushing to reopen. Most appear to be taking a phased-in approach, and are postponing interactions with the public. After honing their abilities to deliver services and hold meetings remotely over the past 10 weeks, many are in no rush to return to a pre-COVID workplace, particularly as they face budget uncertainty in fiscal 2021, which begins on July 1.

"I do have an interest in reviving services such as the library and Senior Center," said Hudson Town Manager Thomas Moses. But he said there's more risk than upside in moving quickly to reopen Town Hall, adding that the public is not clamoring at the doors.

"My local experience tells me that all our essential services are being fulfilled at a distance," he wrote in the MMA's online COVID forum. "I know that we would all like to get back to normal, but I don't see that we have to.

"The processes that we normally conduct

in person ... either have a viable alternative delivery method or the underlying activities are on hold."

Auburn Town Manager Julie Jacobson, president of the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, said this view reflects the general sentiment of town managers, who are committed to meeting all health and safety standards.

"Most of the managers I have spoken with are planning a gradual return to the office for those employees who have been working remotely, although many plan to continue to have employees work remotely as much as possible," she said.

"Most of the managers I have spoken with are planning a gradual return to the office for those employees who have been working remotely, although many plan to continue to have employees work remotely as much as possible." - Auburn Town Manager

Julie Jacobson

"Here in Auburn," she said, "we are proud to have maintained continuity of our municipal operations, even when many of those operations have been - and will likely continue to be – provided remotely. ... Our in-office staffing levels will resume gradually, possibly with split shifts if needed.

To reduce the need for in-person contact, the town is getting ready to open a drivethrough service kiosk in the Town Hall parking lot and a drive-up window for the treasurer/collector's office.

While Halifax looks forward to reopening municipal buildings and re-establishing personal connections with residents, the first priority must be the safety and health of residents and employees," said Town Administrator Charlie Seelig.

"Reopening simply to meet a self-imposed date and without all the necessary measures in place, ranging from glass and



Hudson Town Hall

plexiglass shields to hand sanitizer, is a reopening that leaves everyone more vulnerable to the transmission of the virus." he said. "Halifax is working with employees on the policies and procedures needed to have staff return in larger numbers, then to have a possible 'soft opening' in which places such as Town Hall are open on a limited basis, such as by appointment, and then to open the building for its normal hours but with social distancing and hygiene protocols in place."

Seelig said the timeframe for this progression is not yet clear, and towns need to remain on guard for a potential second wave of COVID and a need to revert to earlier practices.

City offices in Beverly, Lowell, New Bedford, Northampton and Worcester are among those that remain closed until further notice. The same is true of Easthampton and Lawrence, whose mayors - Nicole LaChapelle and Dan Rivera, respectively - served on the state's Reopening Advisory Board.

The New Bedford website states that city offices "continue to serve residents remotely, as they have since mid-March." Northampton's website states: "Our return to our offices will be deliberately planned, carefully communicated, will incorporate input from Department Heads, and will allow adequate time for implementation."

In conference calls with local officials, Lt. Gov. Karvn Polito has said that the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, the Registry of Motor Vehicles and the Human Resources Division are working on guidance for state agencies on reopening and interact-

■ TOWN HALL continued on 23

# State and local leaders discuss reopening progress

#### By John Ouellettte

As the weather warms and the state begins its phased reopening process, state and local leaders discussed a range of outdoor activities during their 10th weekly conference call on May 26.

Construction, manufacturing and places of worship got the green light to open on May 18, the first day of Phase 1, with additional activities allowed to reopen as of May 25, including laboratories, hair salons and barber shops, auto dealers, and libraries, with certain restrictions. (Within the <u>state reopening website</u> is the latest expected <u>timeline for a wide range of activities</u>.)

In the fresh air, the rules recently changed for public beaches as well as golf and outdoor fitness classes. Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides gave an update on activities ranging from athletic fields to youth sports, all of which are <u>catalogued</u> on her executive office's website.

Activities currently allowed in Phase 1, with restrictions, include beaches, golf, parks, nature preserves, hiking trails, recreational boating, outdoor education programs (including yoga classes), ecotourism, whitewater rafting, adventure parks and wildlife reserves. (See the agency's website for guidance and best practices for each type of activity.)

As with any Phase 1 activity, participants must comply with state orders on social distancing (staying at least 6 feet from other individuals or groups), face coverings (in instances where adequate distance cannot be maintained), and gathering sizes (no more than 10 individuals).

Theorides said most beaches stayed open during the emergency, but they were limited to transitory activities and their parking lots were closed. The parking lots are now open again, where approved locally, and restrooms have reopened at state beaches and parks. Beachgoers must comply with state orders on social distancing, face coverings and gathering sizes, and cannot play organized ball games.

State boat ramps are open to vehicles registered in Massachusetts, while municipal boat ramps are open at the discretion of the city or town.



Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides provides an update on the administration's food security plan at a State House press conference on May 26. (Courtesy photo by Joshua Qualls/Governor's Press Office)

A 60-member Outdoor Recreation Task Force, which includes municipal officials, continues its work on guidance for activities allowed in Phase 2, including playgrounds, traditional tent camping, public pools, youth sports (practice and drills), and summer camps.

Noting the importance of access to outdoor activities during the COVID emergency, Theorides noted, "That's keeping us all sane these days." She added that these activities also give a badly needed boost to the economy.

Large-scale gatherings such as outdoor concerts are not in the plans until Phase 3. A fireworks display could be a possibility in Phase 2 if there is not an accompanying event, but guidance is not yet developed.

Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito added that state guidance for child care and summer camp programs would be coming by May 29.

#### **Graduation and return to school**

With guidance released on May 21, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is taking a two-phase approach to a popular springtime outdoor activity: high school graduation.

During June and early July, DESE Com-

missioner Jeff Riley said, school districts may hold a virtual graduation ceremony (e.g., via Zoom) or employ "extreme social distancing" (e.g., a car parade). For non-remote activities, he said, school districts should work with the local board of health to ensure that the plan is OK under current guidance.

Beginning on July 19, districts will have the opportunity to hold in-person events meeting specific criteria, including social distancing. Hugs and handshakes will be missing from these events, except among members of the same family who live together.

Attendance must be limited to graduates and their immediate family members. Only those who have pre-registered for the graduation may attend, and children under age 5, older adults, and those with vulnerable health conditions should be discouraged from attending. Food and beverages will not be permitted.

Requirements for districts include notifying participants of the ground rules in advance, providing hand sanitizers and signage, and managing entrances and exits to ensure distancing.

Riley said he hopes to make draft guidance for fall school reopening, and summer school programs, available around mid-June – "before schools get out, so districts have several months of planning time."

Protocols that have now become commonplace are likely to be included.

"You should expect, more likely than not, that we're going to have children wearing masks and staff members wearing masks," he said. "You should expect social distancing to be a factor in what reopening will look like."

He said a 44-member working group, including students and representatives of the education community, is working on the plan for fall, in part by looking at how countries that are several steps ahead of the United States on COVID reopening are handling the issue.

"I'm very optimistic about a return to school," he said.

Riley said he couldn't provide an update on the status of Chapter 70 education funding for fiscal 2021, with that ball in the Legislature's court.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

"We're in a little bit of a time of uncertainty," he said, referring to the impact that the COVID emergency is having on the economy and state revenue. "We have to be realistic about what this budget could look like going forward."

He added, however, that some federal CARES Act funding could help school districts with technology needs related to their COVID emergency response.

Riley said it was clear early in the COVID emergency that remote learning "was going to be a necessity," but noted there is concern about inequities across the state due to variations in reliable internet access and the availability of internet-ready devices. With some degree of remote learning potentially figuring into plans for the fall or winter, he said, DESE estimates it would take an expenditure of about \$50 million to level the playing field. He said DESE has been working with philanthropic organizations and others to "fill some of those holes," but "there's going to have to be a bigger push" for funding, perhaps through legislative action and the use of CARES Act funds.

#### Other updates

Department of Labor Standards Director Michael Flanagan touched on the new rules for office spaces, including

city and town halls, effective May 25, reminding local officials that the 25% occupancy limitation is per office, not per building.

Asked whether municipalities need to provide face coverings for employees, Polito said it may depend on the nature of the job. She said employers should focus on creating safe distancing, but should provide face coverings when and if sufficient distancing is not possible.

The DLS has created a web area for COVID-19 workplace safety rules. Questions can be directed to the DLS hotline at 508-616-0461, ext. 9488, or safepublicworkplacemailbox@mass.gov.

Asked about when and how to return to customer interactions at municipal buildings, Polito said the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, the Registry of Motor Vehicles and the Human Resources Division are working on guidance for state agencies on that matter, and the guidance may also be helpful to municipalities.

Elizabeth Denniston, the governor's deputy legal counsel, said a visitor may be denied entry to a municipal facility if they refuse to wear a mask and lack a medical or disability reason for doing so. At polling locations, however, face coverings should be encouraged, but entry should not be denied.

Local officials and the Baker-Polito administration are united in support of a bill (S. 2680) that would ease town meeting rules and city budget deadlines, as well as legislation that would streamline the process for restaurants to be able to serve alcohol in outdoor spaces.

Polito opened the call with a reminder to local officials that the state's Community Compact Cabinet program is accepting applications for Best Practices grants. The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement between the administration and a city or town where the community agrees to implement at least one best practice it selects from a range of areas, with state funding support and technical assistance available. Polito suggested that funds from the program could be used to assist communities with best practices related to the reopening process.

Also participating in the conference call were Division of Local Services Senior Deputy Commissioner Sean Cronin, Energy and Environmental Affairs Assistant Secretary Sean Pierce, and Dr. Larry Madoff, medical director at the DPH's Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences.

### Legislature mulls bills that would alter elections process

By Brittney Franklin

On May 14, the Joint Committee on Election Laws held its first-ever virtual public hearing on a number of bills that would change the way elections are held for the September state primary and November general election due to continuing COVID-19 public health concerns.

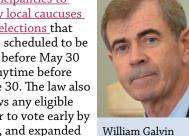
Many participants urged lawmakers to support more vote-by-mail and early voting options, but there wasn't a consensus on details.

The bills before the committee, including one drafted by Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin, vary widely on the specifics of how a registered voter would receive mailed ballots, how long early voting periods should last, and what in-person voting would look like.

#### **Local elections**

Chapter 45 of the Acts of 2020, enacted

in March, allows municipalities to delay local caucuses and elections that were scheduled to be held before May 30 to anytime before June 30. The law also allows any eligible voter to vote early by mail, and expanded absentee voter eligibility to those who



may be taking precautions and staying home due to concerns about COVID-19.

Hadley, Medfield, Sandwich and Sheffield are among municipalities that have seen various degrees of success with voting by mail so far this spring, with some seeing far less in-person voting and more voting by mail, and some seeing roughly one-third of voters voting by mail and two-thirds voting in person.

One takeaway from municipal elections this spring is that voting by mail is a labor-intensive and costly process for town clerks and their staff.

#### MMA testimony

In testimony submitted to the Elections Committee on May 14 regarding pending election bills, the MMA wrote, "We ask you to support provisions to facilitate the conduct of elections during the COVID-19 pandemic with an eye on long-term changes that can be implemented now, without imposing unfunded mandates or requirements, as cities and towns cannot absorb these given the deep revenue losses they are experiencing. ... The MMA supports expanding voting-by-mail options to encourage and allow all citizens to exercise their right

■ ELECTION BILLS continued on 27

# Application, guidance available for CARES Act

#### By John Ouellette

The Baker-Polito administration announced on May 14 that it will distribute up to \$502 million from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund – part of the CARES Act – to local cities and towns for eligible costs related to the COVID-19 response effort.

The administration is also providing guidance to municipalities on the formal distribution process and establishing protocols to maximize the use of federal resources and promote compliance with federal restrictions.

According to the administration, this distribution, plus funds allocated directly to Boston and Plymouth County, represents approximately 25% of the state's allocation from the Coronavirus Relief Fund, and, in most cases, is expected to be sufficient to address incurred or expected eligible COVID-related expenses.

The application deadline is June 5, but submissions will be reviewed and approved on a rolling basis. The administration intends to distribute money to municipalities "quickly and efficiently, and maintain necessary flexibility to allocate additional funds if unanticipated needs arise, or if federal rules change."

These resources will also help ease municipal cashflow pressures, according to the administration.

The distribution process allows municipalities to apply for estimated fiscal 2020 needs. These funds will help address any existing emergency-related deficits in fiscal

2020, thereby avoiding the need to use reserves to fund a deficit or carry one into fiscal 2021. Municipalities will have the opportunity to request funding for fiscal 2021 eligible COVID-19 costs at a later date.

These funds must be used by municipalities consistent with parameters established by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (the CARES Act) and guidance from the U.S. Treasury Department.

The CARES Act authorized \$150 billion through the Coronavirus Relief Fund for state and local governments, including \$2.7 billion for Massachusetts. Aside from large local government units (Boston and Plymouth County), funds have been sent first to the state, with the expectation that the state will use funds for its own expenses and those of municipalities.

Under federal law, eligible uses must meet three conditions:

- 1. They must be "necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to ... COVID-19."
- 2. The expenditures must not have been budgeted as of March 27, when the CARES Act was enacted.
- 3. The expenditures must be incurred between March 1 and Dec. 30, 2020.

Municipalities, through their chief executive officer, can complete a web-based application form that was posted on May 15. The application and complete <u>CARES Actinformation can be found on the Division</u>

of Local Services website.

#### FEMA match

In a call with municipal leaders on May 19, Administration and Finance Undersecretary Catharine Hornby shared the news that funding from the CARES Act can be used to cover the 25% match required for emergency aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Until the new guidance was released from the Treasury Department, it was unclear what the relationship was between the two programs.

Hornby said rules against using CARES Act funds for non-COVID related purposes, such as revenue loss, have not changed as yet. For fiscal 2020, anything that wasn't budgeted and is COVID-related, "is a potentially appropriate use of those funds."

On May 14, representatives from the Executive Office for Administration and Finance and the DLS held an hour-long webinar for local officials, arranged by the MMA, to explain the process. The webinar presenters were Administration and Finance Secretary Michael Heffernan; Hornby; Heath Fahle, special director for federal funds at A&F; and Sean Cronin, senior deputy commissioner at the Division of Local Services.

Eligible uses of the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund may overlap with allowable uses of other federal grants and reimbursements. The Executive Office for Administration and Finance will be working with the state COVID Command Center, state agencies, and municipalities to optimize

■ CARES ACT continued on 27

# In webinar, administration officials explain CARES Act funding process

#### **Bv John Ouellette**

With the administration preparing to distribute federal dollars from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to municipalities for specific COVID-19 response costs, representatives from the Executive Office for Administration and Finance and the Division of Local Services <a href="https://executive.org/hel/">held a webinar for local officials</a> on May 14 to explain the process.

Administration and Finance Secretary Michael Heffernan and his team outlined how the funds appropriated through the federal CARES Act will get to municipalities quickly, both for cash flow purposes and to help address any fiscal 2020 deficits

related to COVID-19 expenditures.

The CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) authorized \$150 billion through the Coronavirus Relief Fund for state and local governments, including \$2.7 billion for Massachusetts. Aside from large local government units (Boston and Plymouth County), funds have been sent first to the state, with the expectation that the state will use funds for its own expenses and those of municipalities.

In addition to Heffernan, the presenters of the hour-long webinar were Administration and Finance Undersecretary Catharine Hornby; Heath Fahle, special director for



Administration officials discuss the federal CARES Act during a May 14 webinar.

federal funds at A&F; and Sean Cronin, senior deputy commissioner at the Division of Local Services.

The webinar was arranged by the MMA.

# Leaders work to boost morale, keep employees connected

By Lisa Capone

A Google search for "employee morale during COVID-19" returns a torrent of online articles, from "4 Ways to Boost Team Morale During a Pandemic" to "March Sadness: How to Boost Worker Morale."

With city and town halls from Provincetown to Pittsfield mostly shuttered for two months, Massachusetts municipal managers could write their own advice columns – and the term "Zoom meeting" would show up frequently.

Across the state, virtual platforms are working overtime as town managers and mayors aim to keep their staffs connected and upbeat, minus the usual face-to-face team building and camaraderie.

"Frequent communication is helpful," said Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll. "You're used to seeing people you work with sometimes more than your own family, and that's been all flipped on its head. But there's still important work to do."

Salem, like most municipalities, has been holding a variety of employee meetings online since March to keep everyone engaged and spirits up. Driscoll hosts daily Zoom meetings with her senior staff, including one that involved a Zoom background contest (with some Salem-spooky entries, of course). She also holds a quarterly staff meeting for about 100 employees via Zoom and had a virtual morning "coffee break" for about 60 City Hall and City Hall Annex employees on May 14.

A Zoom coffee hour is also in play in Needham, where Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick has added brief stress management advice to the bi-weekly agenda.

"When we shut our town buildings in early March, we knew it would be important to keep staff engaged virtually, not only to keep the work of town government going, but to give people a sense of connectedness and community through all of this," Fitzpatrick said.

Familiarity with the technology notwithstanding, municipal managers are finding that online meetings are effective morale-boosters. Unlike conference phone calls, meetings hosted on Zoom and other platforms enable colleagues to see – and not just hear – each other, making them a particularly valuable tool We're working hard to keep employees engaged while also staying healthy and safe during this time, so they can keep serving the public. We have been promoting virtual wellness initiatives and just conducted our health and benefits fair entirely online.

99

### **JOANNE & ROCKY**

HR Manager for Amherst, MA



Amherst Human Resources Manager Joanne Misiaszek posts a Twitter update using the #WorkingForAmherst hashtag, which is part of Amherst's efforts to keep its employees engaged during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

in this time of social distancing.

"We encourage employees who participate in these meetings to do so both through audio and video so we can actually see each other and try to have a human connection even if we can't be physically together," said Auburn Town Manager Julie Jacobson.

"You're used to seeing people you work with sometimes more than your own family, and that's been all flipped on its head. But there's still important work to do." - Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll

She added that her weekly Community Messages to Auburn residents and businesses always include a "thank you" to town employees.

"It is important to publicly acknowledge the work they are doing to maintain continuity of services," she said. "I have never been more proud of the town employees than I am now as I see how they have reacted to and adapted to the COVID-19 crisis."

#### Managers lean on each other

Jacobson, who is president of the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, and other current and former MMA and MMMA presidents and vice presidents recently wrote to all MMMA members to make sure they are getting what they need "to stay strong personally and emotionally." While the letter didn't draw a large response, Jacobson said that's likely because ad hoc regional networks of managers were already reaching out to each other to discuss common challenges and exchange solutions.

"There are several informal groups throughout the state consisting of managers/administrators who meet regularly and, since COVID, have increased their conversations to address common issues and concerns," she said. "Here in central Massachusetts, we have a group of about 22 town managers and administrators who regularly communicate via email to share ideas, resources and plans. It is an incredible source of support for all of us under these unprecedented circumstances."

#### **Continuing connections**

At opposite ends of the state and in communities in between, strategies for lifting staff morale and keeping workers connected feature more similarities than differences – variations on a theme designed to inform and motivate munic-

**■ MORALE** continued on 21

# Towns pursue range of options for meetings, elections

#### By Jennifer Kavanaugh

Relying on everything from voting paddles in parking lots to repurposed technology, towns across the state are adapting amid the COVID-19 emergency to hold previously rescheduled elections and town meetings.

With the June 30 end of the fiscal year looming, communities are balancing public health needs against meeting budget and electoral deadlines set by the state. Many are turning to mail-in voting and virtual and outdoor meetings to keep their residents distanced but still engaged in the work of local government.

The state has taken several steps in recent months to ease the pressure on communities, including allowing towns to push elections into June and to use month-bymonth (one-twelfth) budgets starting in July if they can't hold town meetings by June 30. Additional legislation related to town meetings and elections is continuing to work through the legislative process. These measures could provide further options to delay municipal elections, reduce required quorums, and other options for cities and towns, but final legislation would need to be enacted in the coming days in order to provide meaningful assistance.

The MMA has been tracking the rescheduling of spring elections and town meetings during the public health emergency and will continue gathering data as towns refine their schedules.

Before the pandemic, 11 communities had scheduled their town meetings for March, 43 for April, 206 for May, and roughly two dozen for June. Since March, at least 230 towns have rescheduled their meetings, with at least 158 being rescheduled to a June date. Dozens of town meetings have already been rescheduled a second or third time.

An analysis also shows widespread rescheduling of municipal elections. Before the emergency, 21 towns had planned to hold their elections in March, 71 in April, 182 in May, and 19 in June. Since the shutdown, at least 247 communities have rescheduled their elections one or more times, with more than 200 rescheduling to June.

The numbers reflect the disruption caused to this year's elections and town meetings, but interviews with local officials reveal the extent of work and creativity that commu-



George "Bud" Dunham



Julie Jacobson

nities have invested into redesigning their elections and town meetings.

#### **Elections spread out**

The month of May marked the slow return of municipal elections. In Sheffield, about 850 voters, or 36%, participated in the May 11 election, according to Town Administrator Rhonda LaBombard. About 50% voted by mail or absentee ballot, and the other half voted at the Senior Center.

"Letters were sent to each voter outlining the voting options," LaBombard said.

The town encouraged in-person voters to wear masks and to stand apart as indicated by markings on the floor, LaBombard said. Poll workers wore gloves, provided sanitizer, and cleaned pens and voting booths after each use.

In Sandwich, the town held two elections on May 19: its annual town election, and a special state election for an open Senate seat. Town Manager George "Bud" Dunham said the town held the elections simultaneously to prevent voters from having to come out twice. The town also encouraged people to participate from home.

"We really pushed hard locally to try to get as many people to vote by mail as possible," Dunham said.

About 3,100 people, or 19.4% of the town's 16,000 voters, cast ballots in the state Senate election, with roughly half participating by mail. About 15% voted in the town election, just one-third by mail.

Dunham said the town uses three schools as polling places. The town clerk, fire chief and the health director all participated in the planning. To prepare voters, the town clerk posted walk-throughs of the facilities on Facebook.

On election day, poll workers wore masks and remained behind Plexiglass to check in voters; made sanitizer available; distributed disposable golf pencils instead of reusable pens; and separated the entrances and exits. In addition, the town stationed two firefighters at each location to wipe down voting booths.

"The extra money that we paid to have the firefighters clean things – that made people feel safe," Dunham said.

Sandwich had other employees fill in for regular poll workers who fell into higher-risk health categories. The town also administered rapid-result COVID-19 blood tests to poll workers, which reassured poll workers and employees.

In the future, Dunham said, the town would more aggressively cordon off the entrances and exits, and place larger markings on the floor to encourage distancing. Dunham, a longtime member of the MMA Board of Directors, said he hopes municipalities can work with the MMA and the state to streamline mail-in voting before the presidential election.

"Use any election you have between now and November as a test run, Dunham said. "Try to figure out what went well, and what you could do a little bit better."

#### **Town Meeting outdoors**

Before the public health emergency, Auburn had planned to hold its representative Town Meeting on May 5 in an auditorium. Instead, it will move to the high school football field on June 2, with two possible rain dates also scheduled.

Town Manager Julie Jacobson sent a letter to the 120 Town Meeting members to explain the safety procedures, which include distanced seating on the field, the wearing of masks and gloves, Plexiglass at the check-in table, and 6-foot markings on the ground. Jacobson also sent a map of the location.

Members who can't or don't want to enter the field can stay parked in their cars, listening to the proceedings on loudspeakers or their car radios. To vote, members will hold paddles outside their cars, and counters will walk around to tally votes.

To expedite proceedings, the town has eliminated less time-sensitive warrant articles, as well as presentations by Jacobson and others. Instead, the town will include written versions of the presentations in members' packets. It will also post written presentations on the town's website, along

continued on next page

continued from previous page

with taped versions.

For a quorum, Auburn needs 80 of its 120 Town Meeting members to participate. The town has called members to gauge attendance, Jacobson said, and has at least 87 committed members. She said the option to sit in their cars has proved popular.

"Everyone we spoke to said they were very pleased with the measures we are taking," Jacobson said.

#### Town meetings from afar

While some towns moved their meetings outdoors, others are taking a more remote approach. Starting June 1, Lexington will hold its representative Town Meeting virtually. Other communities, including Winchester and Brookline, also have remote town meetings planned this month.

"We're treading new ground," said Lexington Select Board Member Joe Pato.

He said the town needs to hold Town Meeting before June 30 rather than adopting monthly budgets based on fiscal 2020 spending. With a \$250 million annual budget, Lexington would have quickly run into financial trouble, Pato said, given contractually obligated salary increases in fiscal 2021. He said the town also has time-sensitive warrant articles that need to be addressed.

"We believed it was going to be impractical, at best, to try to have an in-person meeting, even if the emergency order was lifted, because in our representative Town Meeting, our members skew older, and a larger proportion fell into the vulnerable classes," Pato said.

As June 1 approaches, Lexington still doesn't technically have the state's authorization to meet virtually, given that legislation allowing for virtual representative town meetings (S. 2680/H. 4752) is not yet resolved in the Legislature.

As it awaited Beacon Hill action, Lexington prepared a special Town Meeting warrant article authorizing the town to petition the Legislature to have its Town Meeting results accepted by the state. It was also prepared to seek a court order if needed. Lexington had consulted with town counsel on the moves, Pato said, and took the steps to satisfy its bond counsel.

Technology presents another challenge.

"There's nothing off the shelf to buy," Pato said. "There's neither a service nor a product that we could just use a turnkey solution for. So the time pressure was hard, to get something built and stable for Town Meeting."

Town Meeting members will need to log in to three different places: the overall Town Meeting portal, the voting application, and Zoom. Option Technologies, which typically provides handheld voting devices for Lexington's town meetings, will supply the voting app. Pato, a retired research computer scientist, created the Town Meeting portal. It took about six weeks to build this virtual process, he said.

Lexington has also conducted extensive training for its nearly 200 Town Meeting members, including sessions for each of its nine precincts, and a full-scale mock meeting for 200-plus attendees. It also offered one-on-one training for those who needed it.

Addressing the needs of members with varying technological skills has been challenging, Pato said. The training sessions helped pinpoint both common user error and technological issues, such as password problems and user interfaces that behaved differently depending on devices being used.

Residents can watch the proceedings via live streaming or on local cable, and submit comments for the meeting, but they can't access the Zoom meeting itself. To prevent hacking or outside interference, the town created authenticated accounts for each Town Meeting member and mailed letters containing passwords, Pato said. Members will see their votes displayed in real time and see if there's a problem.

IT staff will be available to help members during the meeting. Lexington has crosstrained staff so that each employee knows how to do multiple jobs. It has installed backup systems, created a separate setup in a town building and trained a deputy town moderator, in case the moderator falls ill.

"We've tried to build in redundancy for everything," Pato said.

## MMA testifies on bond bill with Ch. 90 funding

#### By Ariela Lovett

The Senate Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets accepted written testimony through May 19 on an \$18 billion transportation bond bill (H. 4547) that was passed by the House on March 5.

The bill includes a 50% increase for the Chapter 90 local road and bridge program, from \$200 million to \$300 million.

In February, the House took up a standalone Chapter 90 bond authorization bill of \$200 million. Later, House leadership incorporated the stand-alone Chapter 90 bill into the omnibus transportation bond bill, and increased the authorization to \$300 million.

With the construction season well underway, the MMA has been expressing concern about the need for prompt resolution of Chapter 90 authorizations for fiscal 2021. Since the stand-alone Chapter 90 bill was folded into the transportation bond bill, the Legislature cannot act on the Chapter 90 component without also moving the bond bill forward in the legislative process, unless separate action is taken.

The MMA submitted written testimony to the Senate Bonding Committee on the transportation bond bill on May 19.

"The Chapter 90 program is an essential component of municipal capital plans, and communities rely on these funds to keep local roads passable and safe for motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and other roadway users," the MMA wrote. "Chapter 90 provides necessary resources to maintain and build the 30,000-mile local transportation infrastructure system that serves as

the platform for economic development, commerce and growth in every corner of the state. ... Chronic underfunding and the lack of a multi-year approach to Chapter 90 are holding back progress in our shared transportation and environmental policy goals.

"We respectfully request that this transportation bond bill move forward as soon as possible, maintaining funding for the targeted municipal grant programs and the long-awaited increase to \$300 million for the Chapter 90 program. As Massachusetts seeks to rebuild its economy from the depths of the COVID-19 recession, injecting funds into our transportation and construction industry will create jobs, improve commerce, and enhance safety."

# State reopening plan details 4 phases

#### By John Ouellette

Reopening Massachusetts, the 28-page report released by the administration and its Reopening Advisory Board on May 18, details a four-phased strategy to reopen businesses and activities while continuing to fight COVID-19.

Workplaces that are permitted to open during each phase of a "cautious" reopening are required to follow new safety protocols and guidance.

Industries, sectors and activities that present less risk will open in earlier phases. Those that present more risk will open in later phases.

The administration has launched a comprehensive website with reopening information, <a href="www.mass.gov/reopening">www.mass.gov/reopening</a>, and is providing <a href="guidance for specific industries">guidance for specific industries</a>.

The administration continues to remind residents that each phase of the reopening will be guided by public health data and key indicators that will be continually monitored for progress and will be used to determine advancement to future phases.

#### Phase 1

Based on the state's identified public health metrics, manufacturing facilities, construction sites and places of worship were allowed to open on May 18, followed by lab space; office space; limited personal services, including hair salons, pet grooming and car washes; and retail (remote fulfillment and curbside pick-up) on May 25.

Also permitted to open on May 25, with applicable guidelines, are the following: beaches; parks; drive-in movie theaters; select athletic fields and courts; many outdoor adventure activities; most fishing, hunting, and boating; and outdoor gardens, zoos, reserves and public installations.

Hospitals and community health centers that attest to specific public health and safety standards can begin providing high-priority preventative care, pediatric care, and treatment for high-risk patients.

Office spaces in the city of Boston may not reopen until June 1.

Businesses are not required to reopen, and may not do so if they are unable to

Dashboard of public health indicators

Starting on May 18, the COVID-19 Command Center will give updates on six key public health indicators

Before and during reopening, these metrics must continue to show progress

Below is the status as of May 18, 2020:

Indicator

Status

COVID-19 positive test rate

Number of individuals who died from COVID-19

Number of patients with COVID-19 in hospitals

Healthcare system readiness

Testing capacity

Contact tracing capabilities

Negative trend

As part of its report Reopening Massachusetts, the state lists the six key indicators it is tracking as part of its decision-making process for reopening the state.

.....

follow safety protocols. Businesses are expected to implement sector-specific protocols in addition to the <u>Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards</u>.

Guidance for sectors opening in later phases will be posted online in advance of those phases.

The state's reopening plan is designed to be self-compliant. In order to reopen, employers must:

- Use a <u>template to develop a COVID</u> control plan.
- Acquire the <u>required supplies</u> (such as face coverings and sanitizers).
- · Conduct employee training.
- Display <u>compliance attestation</u> <u>posters</u> and <u>checklists</u> to assure both employees and visitors that the workplace is in compliance.

Educational materials on mass.gov/reopening define how employers should prepare their work spaces to reopen and what products are appropriate for employees to protect themselves at work.

Businesses operating to provide "essential services," as defined in executive orders, may remain open and have time to comply with the general workplace safety standards, as well as their industry's sector-specific protocols.

Administration officials have stated that enforcement of the new safety standards is a joint responsibility between the Department of Labor Standards, the Department of Public Health, and local boards of health.

Enforcement will scale from verbal consultation and redirection, to written redirection, to fines, and finally to cease-and-desist letters. Local boards of health that need assistance or guidance can call the DLS hotline at 508-616-0461, ext. 9488, or send an email to safepublicworkplacemailbox@mass.gov.

The state has developed a guide to educate business owners on what supplies are needed to return to workplaces and a portal to connect businesses with manufacturers and distributors. These are available via mass.gov/reopening.

The Department of Public Health's new Safer at Home Advisory urges everyone to stay home unless they are headed to a newly opened facility or activity. Those over the age of 65 and those with underlying health conditions are advised to stay home with the exception of trips required for health care, groceries or other necessities.

All residents must continue to wear a face covering in public when social distancing is not possible, and individuals are advised to wash their hands frequently and be vigilant in monitoring for symptoms.

Restrictions on gatherings of more than 10 people remain in effect.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

#### **Reopening phases**

The reopening will take place over four phases: Start, Cautious, Vigilant, and New Normal. The administration states that the goal "is to methodically allow businesses, services, and activities to resume, while avoiding a resurgence of COVID-19 that could overwhelm the state's health care system and erase the progress made so far."

Each phase will last a minimum of three weeks and could last longer before moving to the next phase. If public health data trends are negative, specific industries, regions, and/or the entire Commonwealth may need to return to an earlier phase.

The key public health metrics are:

- COVID-19 positive test rate
- Number of individuals who died from COVID-19
- Number of patients with COVID-19 in hospitals
- Health care system readiness
- Testing capacity
- Contact tracing capabilities

The Commonwealth will partner with industries to draft sector-specific protocols in advance of future phases (for example, restaurant-specific protocols were drafted in advance of Phase 2).

Success in earlier phases will refine criteria for future phases including travel, sizes of gatherings, as well as additional retail openings, lodging and accommodations, arts, entertainment, fitness centers, museums, restaurants, youth sports, and other activities.

The 17-member Reopening Advisory

Board, co-chaired by Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito and Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy, consists of public health experts, municipal leaders and members of the business community representing many facets of the Massachusetts economy. Since its formation on April 28, the board met with 75 stakeholder groups representing more than 112,000 different businesses and more than 2 million workers across the Commonwealth. The board also considered written comments from more than 4,500 employers, organizations and individuals.

The MMA developed a set of recommendations to address the needs of cities and towns during the reopening process, and presented those priorities to the Reopening Advisory Board on May 13, urging their adoption in the reopening plan.

The MMA leadership is continuing to hold detailed discussions on its priorities with the administration. Many details and questions will emerge in the coming days and weeks, and the MMA will continue to work on all of these issues.

The Reopening Advisory Board established a municipal government working group that has met three times a week to discuss issues pertaining to cities and towns.

#### Child care and transit

Child care and summer recreation camps will reopen in a phased approach. The departments of Early Education and Care and Public Health are developing guidelines that balance families' need for child care with health and safety.

The initial reopening plan will focus on families who have no safe alternative

to group care by increasing emergency child care capacity. The Department of Early Education and Care will also partner with industries returning to work to develop options specific to their workplaces.

In March, the administration stood up an emergency child care system to support children of essential workers and vulnerable families with extra virus mitigation protocols. During Phase 1, this child care system will be used to meet the needs of people with no alternatives for care. Only 35% of the emergency child care capacity is occupied, according to the administration, and the system has the ability to serve more families as more sectors come back online.

The administration states that public transportation "unavoidably creates some risk" of coronavirus transmission, but the MBTA, riders and employers can significantly reduce that risk.

Riders are required to wear face coverings and must make efforts to distance. Riders are asked to avoid riding transit if they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

Employers are encouraged to stagger schedules and implement work from home policies to reduce demand, especially during rush hours.

The MBTA will continue to take protective and preventative measures such as frequently disinfecting and cleaning vehicles and stations and providing protective supplies to workers.

The MBTA will support the transit needs of essential workers and those returning to the workplace in Phase 1, while continuing with limited service.

# STAM webinar covers range of municipal finance topics

The Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts hosted a Zoom meeting with Division of Local Services Senior Deputy Commissioner Sean Cronin on May 5.

During the hour-long session, Cronin answered questions posed by participants, which included more than 130

town administrators, select board members and town finance committee members. Questions ranged from postponing town meeting and the implications for town budgets, to the COVID emergency's impact on state revenue and what the fiscal 2021 state budget might look like.

Cronin referenced the resources available through the <u>COVID-19 area</u> on the state website. Local officials with urgent finance questions related to COVID-19 can send an email to COVID19DLS@dor. state.ma.us.

#### **FEDERAL AID**

Continued from page 1

state aid. Lexington anticipates losing \$6.3 million in fiscal 2021 revenue, he said.

"Most cities and towns have control over most of their spending, and can make adjustments to manage their finances on the expenditure side," Malloy said. "The problem is that we don't have control over certain revenues, and these are the revenues [where] we have seen major losses."

The ICMA sent a letter to congressional leaders on April 18, asking for help to offset pandemic-related revenue losses that local communities have experienced.

The association asked that all local governments be made eligible to receive direct grants for emergency COVID-19 expenditures; that the CARES Act be amended to account for COVID-19 revenue shortfalls; that all cost-share requirements be waived for Federal Emergency Management Agency grants; that state and local governments receive the same emergency paid leave tax credits already provided to private employers; and that advance refunding of tax-exempt bonds be restored to free up funds for other projects.

The ICMA has sent three independent letters to congressional leadership about funding, most recently on April 28, and has cosigned several others with national organizations.

"We cannot overstate the importance of advocacy," said Elizabeth Kellar, the ICMA's director of public policy.

She said it's essential for lawmakers to understand the need at the local level, the increased costs and financial losses communities are facing, and the importance of direct, flexible aid to local governments.

"Here in the United States and across the globe, local governments served at the front lines of fighting this disease, and they're being called again by their communities to lead our economic recovery," Kellar said. "Giving local governments the proper resources to do this work is giving our entire nation the tools to recover."

#### **#CitiesAreEssential**

The NLC is also urging local leaders to

gather data on community impacts and let federal lawmakers know how lost revenue will affect public safety, first responders and working families, said Melissa Williams, the NLC's marketing and communications manager.

On April 16, the NLC joined the National Association of Counties and the U.S. Conference of Mayors in sending a letter to congressional leaders and the Trump administration asking for \$250 billion for local governments to help with COVID-19 response and recovery efforts

Earlier this month, the NLC launched the Cities Are Essential initiative to make the case for direct federal support to local governments, and to request \$500 billion in funding over the next two years.

"We know we are facing a longer road for economic recovery than can be accomplished in one year," Williams said, explaining why the NLC expanded its funding request. "This is to prevent the worst immediate outcomes, stabilize local government operations, increase services as necessary, and provide fiscal certainty and stability long term."

As part of Cities Are Essential, the NLC is asking local leaders to tell their stories about the vital services they're providing, and about what's at stake without direct federal help. Among other actions, the NLC asks local leaders to contact senators and members of Congress, to write opinion pieces and letters to the editor for local media, to promote the campaign on social media with the #CitiesAreEssential hashtag, and to engage the business community and other organizations in the effort.

"Let's tell Washington why we can't wait any longer for federal support – the future of city services, the municipal workforce, and our local economies depend on it," NLC President Joe Buscaino said in a May 6 email to members.

Efforts such as these have received support from the MMA and other state municipal leagues across the country. Working with the NLC, the MMA has secured the support of the Massachusetts congressional delegation for increased funding to local governments.

#### Fiscal pain

The U.S. Conference of Mayors recently launched the Mayors COVID-19 Fiscal

.....

Pain Tracker to capture the difficult choices faced by cities around the country. One entry describes the cutbacks faced by the city of New Bedford, which on April 22 announced proposed reductions in capital improvements, a hiring freeze, and a proposal to reduce pending loan authorizations.

A survey by the National League of Cities and U.S. Conference of Mayors found that nearly 100% of communities with populations above 50,000 face declining revenue this year, and more than half report that the losses will affect core functions such as public safety. In addition, the NLC found, as many as 1 million municipal workers could face layoffs or furloughs as a result of declining revenues.

Efforts have been made on Capitol Hill to provide more emergency assistance to local governments, but those proposals also face political opposition.

Early last month, lawmakers filed the Coronavirus Community Relief Act (H.R. 6467), calling for \$250 billion in direct aid to help cities and towns maintain essential services and make up for revenue losses. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform on April 7, and no further action has been reported on the bill.

On May 12, House lawmakers filed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, a \$3 trillion bill that would provide \$375 billion in funding to local and county governments. The bill would also grant state and local employers access to tax credits for paid sick and family leave that were given to private-sector employers under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

The House narrowly passed the bill on May 15, with support from the entire Massachusetts delegation, but it faces significant opposition in the Senate. Supporters say the legislation is the start of a negotiation over the next round of coronavirus relief.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren stated her strong support during a May 13 conference call arranged by the MMA, when municipal managers and administrators expressed concerns about budget shortfalls and possible layoffs in their communities.

"Count me in, and I do understand that continued on next page continued from previous page

urgency," she said.

She added, however, that she expects a "big fight" on Capitol Hill over the proposed funding, and she urged local officials to reach out to lawmakers and be vocal in their support for the legislation. With Sen. Markey's support certain as well, Warren encouraged officials to contact municipal colleagues in other states and urge them to lobby their federal representatives.

"We have to get this bill through," Warren said, "and we need to get it through with significant help from our cities and towns."

#### Resources

- NLC Cities Are Essential
- · ICMA efforts to win federal aid
- <u>U.S. Conference of Mayors Fiscal Pain</u>
  <u>Tracker</u>

### Food insecurity is target of \$56 million fund and recommendations

#### **Bv Ariela Lovett**

On May 17, the Baker-Polito administration announced the investment of \$56 million to combat urgent food insecurity needs of Massachusetts families and individuals, a need exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The largest portion of the funding is a \$36 million COVID-19 Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program.

Eligible uses of the grant funds are:

- Increasing capacity for food direct delivery
- Increasing capacity of food banks and food pantries
- Increasing capacity of local food distribution partners
- Innovative solutions to enable those receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Women, Infants and Children benefits to receive food more easily
- Innovative solutions for urban farming
- Help for farms, retailers, fisheries and other food system businesses to adapt to disruptions and allow them to

provide greater access to local food

Another \$12 million will provide 25,000 family food boxes per week through a regional food supply system, with each box containing 30-35 meals.

A \$5 million increase for the Healthy Incentives Program will enable the program to meet increased demand for local produce and add more access points that can process SNAP and HIP benefits, according to the administration.

The final \$3 million will be used for immediate relief for food banks.

Also announced were recommendations from the Food Security Task Force, convened by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center to prioritize action steps to combat food insecurity.

The task force organized more than 80 recommendations into four key categories:

- Develop and implement an emergency food program
- · Fortify the food bank system
- Maximize federal resources for food and nutrition

 Reinforce and redeploy the food system infrastructure

"Increasing food security is essential to protecting the health of Massachusetts residents," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides, co-chair of the task force, "and the funding and recommendations made available through the Task Force will help meet greater demand for nutritional assistance among vulnerable populations and those struggling with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic."

Theoharides, Department of Transitional Assistance Commissioner Amy Kershaw, and Jill Shah, president of the Shah Family Foundation, will continue the work of the task force as a public-private partnership, and will report directly to the COVID-19 Command Center.

The Baker-Polito administration is also releasing up to \$502 million from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund for the state and its municipalities, and highlighted food insecurity initiatives as an eligible use for the funds.

### House's \$1.7B bond bill has funding for IT, other programs

#### By John Robertson

The House on May 20 approved and sent to the Senate a \$1.7 billion capital bond bill that includes funding for state information technology purchases and a variety of other state and local capital programs.

During debate, House members added \$100 million to the House budget committee recommendation mostly for local projects.

Any bond authorizations eventually

enacted would be included in future state capital spending plans prepared by the governor.

The Board of Library Commissioners' public library building grant program would be replenished with \$115 million in new spending authorizations in the final House bill (H. 4733). This amount reflects \$15 million added by amendment.

The bill includes a general \$101 million program for municipalities and certain regional government entities to fund

capital projects, including IT equipment and infrastructure. House members added \$5 million for the Community Compact technology grant program.

In items for the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, there is \$25 million to fund a competitive grant program for fire departments to purchase firefighter safety equipment, including washer and dryer cleaning equipment for firefighter gear and safety equipment. Firefighting vehicles are not included.

# Planning is key should reductions become necessary

By Melissa Murray, Tim Norris and Brett Sabbag

As cities and towns grapple with the loss of revenue and impending fiscal crisis due to COVID-19, many may find the need to look at workforce reduction as a means of balancing shrinking budgets.

Should the need arise, it's important to understand the distinctions between layoffs, furloughs, and reductions in force – terms that are frequently used interchangeably, though their meanings are quite different. Understanding this can lead to more thoughtful planning.

Generally, a layoff is an unpaid separation or termination of an employee without any identified or foreseeable expectation of rehire or return (although Massachusetts has certain reinstatement rights for laid-off civil service employees). While a layoff can be temporary or carry with it the possibility of recall, it is not believed to be as certain as when employees are furloughed. When an employee is laid off, he or she must be paid all earned wages, including vacation time, at the time of the layoff.

Furloughs (also referred to as "standby status") are a temporary period of unpaid (either voluntary or involuntary) leave, offering an alternative to layoffs that allow you to retain staff you cannot afford to pay. During a furlough, an employee remains on the payroll but is not permitted to perform any work, and there is usually a mutual expectation that the employee will return to work at the end of the furlough period.

The Office of the Attorney General has confirmed that an employer may "furlough" an employee without terminating the employment relationship. A furloughed employee may maintain his or her health insurance, vacation time, creditable service for retirement, and other benefits. A furlough does not trigger a payout of earned wages because the employment relationship continues.

A reduction in force (RIF) occurs when a position or positions are eliminated without the intention of replacement. It is a permanent reduction and can be done for financial reasons, when an organization is going through a reorganization, or when a decision is made to stop providing a service or product. A RIF can be done by termination or attrition, or a layoff can

turn into a RIF.

Often reductions in force and layoffs are used interchangeably (or layoffs are viewed as the means of accomplishing a reduction in force) because the result is the same: someone loses their job.

#### **Unemployment benefits**

Furloughed employees are eligible for unemployment benefits if the furlough is due to the COVID crisis. Although an employment relationship continues, such individuals are considered unemployed due to lack of work and are placed in what is called "standby status."

Standby status is meant to help both employers and their employees in situations where the unemployment is expected to be temporary. Additionally, an employee may be eligible for partial employment benefits if they continue to work but their hours are reduced.

#### Standby status

On March 16, the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance enacted emergency regulations (set forth at 430 CMR 22.00) to assist employees in obtaining unemployment benefits. As part of these regulations, the DUA created a "standby status," which includes individuals who are temporarily unemployed because of a lack of work due to COVID-19, but have an expected return-to-work date.

The standby status designation relieves the employee of the normal requirement to search for work provided that the individual maintains contact with their employer and remains available for any suitable work offered by the employer.

#### **EPSL and EFMLEA**

Furloughed employees are not eligible for EPSL and EFMLEA leave. While furloughed employees are not technically separated from employment, an employee's eligibility for Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA or FMLA+) leave, under the DOL regulations, is predicated on the employer having work available for the employee to perform.

# Bargaining and contractual obligations

Is there an obligation to bargain with unions over layoffs, furloughs and reductions? In most cases, at least impact bargaining will be required if these decisions



Attorney Melissa Murray discusses furloughs, layoffs and workforce reductions during a May 14 webinar hosted by Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources.

will affect unionized employees. While an employer may not always need to bargain over the decision to lay off employees, an employer must bargain over the impacts of implementing that decision.

If contemplated reductions will involve or impact unionized employees, it's important to provide sufficient notice of the contemplated reductions to give the union a reasonable opportunity to exercise its rights to bargain. Impacts of layoffs might include criteria for selection for layoffs (if not already established by law or contract), possible alternatives to layoffs, and the economic impacts of layoffs on employees.

Employers are advised to review all applicable policies and agreements to make sure they are clear on the parties' rights and responsibilities. Collective bargaining agreements may contain specific bargaining requirements and restrictions that must be observed. State and federal laws and regulations should also be reviewed, in light of COVID-related legislation being passed and financial incentives available to certain employers for maintaining pre-COVID-19 staffing levels.

In the face of layoff notices, unions are within their rights to request information; it is important that employers respond quickly and fully to requests for relevant information.

#### Plan and document

The first and most important step in contemplating staff reductions is proper planning. Gather information that

continued on next page

continued from previous page

demonstrates and supports the need to make staff reductions, and make sure this information is clear and can be easily understood and shared when discussing the need to reduce payroll costs.

Consult collective bargaining agreements and personnel bylaws or ordinances regarding the authority for layoffs or reductions in force, and be clear on what your rights and obligations are generally and with specific groups. Consult labor counsel with questions on collective bar-

gaining issues, civil service rights (including hearing and notice requirements), and notice requirements.

Doing this homework is the first step in minimizing risks of liability. In addition, take time to consider alternatives, so you can demonstrate that you have acted fairly and considered options for minimizing layoffs or furloughs.

Use objective criteria in your selection process, and document all steps taken, information presented and all communication – formal and informal – with

union leadership. Anticipate questions or concerns, and prepare or discuss responses with supervisors in advance. Work with supervisors to give them the tools they need, and advise against making stray comments. Where appropriate, consider offering a severance to certain staff members in exchange for a release.

Melissa Murray, Tim Norris and Brett Sabbag are attorneys at <u>Norris, Murray &</u> <u>Peloquin, LLC.</u>

### MMHR webinar covers unemployment, staffing changes

A Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources webinar on May 14 covered legal concerns related to furloughs and unemployment during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

MMA Senior Legislative Analyst Lisa Adams gave an update about the legislative response to the COVID-19 emergency in the human resources arena.

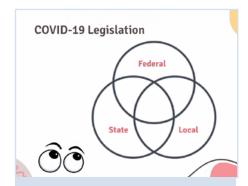
Attorney Melissa Murray of Norris, Murray & Peloquin explained the legal implications of furloughs, layoffs and reductions in force. Murray covered civil service layoffs, WorkShare programs, unemployment benefits, and the importance of planning and documentation. She also provided a variety of resources to guide participants through the vari-

ous processes

Joe LaLiberte, a social worker in Acton, discussed coping strategies that people can use to manage stress during this crisis. LaLiberte emphasized the importance of maintaining a routine during this time and finding time to incorporate "stress-busting" activities like exercise and spending time outdoors.

Nearly 300 human resources professionals participated in the 90-minute webinar.

Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols



The MMA provided a legislative update during a May 14 webinar hosted by Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources.

# DLS preliminary estimate: 11.2% for fall CPA Trust Fund distribution

While the COVID emergency's impact on the Community Preservation Act Trust Fund is difficult to predict, the Division of Local Services on May 1 issued preliminary guidance, projecting an 11.2% first-round distribution to CPA communities in November.

"While current events have made estimating the state match a challenge, we have calculated a conservative estimate for use in municipal budget discussions," the DLS stated.

Revenue for the trust fund comes from filing fees collected at the state's registries of deeds (for home sales and mortgage filings, for example), but it's unclear how COVID will impact the real estate market in the coming months.

A change to fees collected by the registries of deeds went into effect on January 1, 2020. This change was implemented to boost the CPA trust fund balance to provide for a greater state match.

"The COVID-19 outbreak will undoubtedly have an impact on the transactions at the Registry of Deeds, however, and the magnitude of that impact is impossible to project," the DLS stated. "We will provide updated guidance on the state match percentage as additional data becomes available."

The Community Preservation Coalition is reporting that the DLS's projection is based solely on revenue that was collected before April and is currently in the trust fund. Almost all of this revenue

came in prior to the governor's state of emergency order in March.

"The pandemic hit just as the revenue for the Trust Fund began to climb dramatically – a result of the legislation passed last year to raise registry fees for CPA," the coalition states. "The pre-pandemic reports were showing very positive results. With seven months to go until November's distribution, the final percentage will undoubtedly be much higher than the DOR's current projection." ●

# State agencies explain state, federal aid programs

Representatives from a range of state and quasi-government agencies participated in a webinar on May 28 hosted by the MMA to give an overview of state and federally funded programs available to help communities mitigate some of the economic impacts created by the COVID-19 emergency.

Presenters from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, Department of Housing and Community Development, MassDevelopment and Mass Growth Capital Corporation discussed Community Development Block Grants, Housing Choice, the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, MassWorks, and Urban Agenda, as well as funding

opportunities to encourage business and community economic recovery.

Municipalities and their partners may access these state funding opportunities as they work to encourage business and community economic recovery.

#### Panelists were:

- Housing and Economic Development Deputy Secretary Tim McGourthy
- Louis Martin, associate director, Department of Housing and Community Development
- Mark Southard, community development manager, Department of Housing and Community Development

- Amy Stitely, chief of programs, Department of Housing and Community Development
- Juan Vega, assistant secretary for Communities and Programs, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
- Larry Andrews, president and CEO of Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation
- Lauren Liss, president and CEO of MassDevelopment

The webinar and PowerPoint presentations are available on www.mma.org.

### **MMA** continues remote operations through Labor Day

The MMA office at One Winthrop Square in Boston remains closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, but staff continue to provide important services to support the work of our members remotely.

While the building management firm issued a reopening plan for One Winthrop Square effective May 18, the MMA will continue to work remotely until at least Labor Day and will reevaluate the reopening on an ongoing basis.

"The city of Boston has encouraged all employers to continue remote work as long as possible to reduce crowding in the inner core region," said MMA Executive Director and CEO Geoff Beckwith,



"and with so much uncertainty in the early stages of the reopening process we agree that this is a prudent step to take."

All MMA and MIIA staff have been pro-

vided with the tools and resources they need to work remotely, and are fully accessible to all members.

The MMA has converted in-person meetings into virtual gatherings, and the MMA website is constantly updated with relevant and timely information.

As always, members may reach any member of the MMA staff at their email address (first initial, last name @mma. org) or by calling 617- 426-7272 and the person's extension number, which is listed on the MMA website.

– MMA Administration and Finance Director Katie McCue

# MMCA webinar looks at municipal budgeting in COVID era

The Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association held a webinar on municipal budgeting on May 13.

Framingham Chief Operating Officer Thatcher Kezer, a former mayor of Amesbury, gave an overview of how city budgets are developed and debated. He discussed a typical process, from working with department heads on workable budget requests, through making cuts to the budget, to final approval.

Watertown Councillor and municipal attorney John Gannon described the

budget process in a town manager/council form of government, which more than a dozen communities have.

MMCA President and North Adams Councillor Lisa Blackmer moderated the webinar, which had more than 60 participants.

– MMA Senior Member Services Coordinator Denise Baker



Framingham Chief Operating Officer Thatcher Kezer discusses the city budget process during a Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association webinar.

# Select board group discusses meetings, records

In response to the COVID-19 emergency, the Massachusetts Select Board Association's Annual Leadership Conference has been restructured as a series of free webinars to be conducted over the coming months.

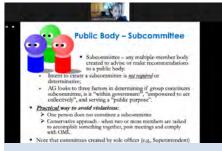
The first of these webinars featured a discussion aimed at experienced select board members with KP Law managing attorney Lauren Goldberg. The discussion centered on common challenges faced by municipal government, including the open meeting and public records laws, social media use by public officials, record keeping, and conducting public

hearings.

Goldberg gave a top-line overview of these issues and responded to questions on a range of topics, including how to comply with the open meeting law while conducting virtual meetings.

More than 90 select board members from around the state participated in the webinar.

The next webinar of the Leadership Conference series is scheduled for June 24. ●



During the Massachusetts Select Board Association's May 20 webinar, members focused on open meeting and public records laws with attorney Lauren Goldberg, managing partner at KP Law.

### MMHR to discuss municipal re-entry planning on June 11

The virtual Annual Meeting of Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources on June 11 will cover the topic of re-entry planning for municipalities.

The free Zoom webinar will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Cities and towns are now developing plans for bringing municipal employees back into the workplace and opening municipal buildings to the public. This topic will be discussed from multiple perspectives, including policy development and legal implications, emergency management, and public health.

Attorney Jaime Kenny of Clifford & Kenny, LLP, will discuss legal and policy concerns with re-entry planning. Newton Acting Emergency Management Director Bruce Proia will cover the emergency management perspective. And former Southborough Board of Health Chair Dr. Louis Fazen will provide a public health perspective.

Voting on the fiscal 2021 MMHR Board of Directors slate and budget will be conducted online. All voting members of the association will receive an electronic ballot via email no later than Monday, June 8.

Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols at inichols@mma.org

### Officials asked to update information for Municipal Directory

Work continues on the 2020-2021 edition of the Massachusetts Municipal Directory, and the MMA will begin contacting municipalities in upcoming weeks to enlist their help in updating the information for their communities.

The process will be a little different this year, to minimize the time and effort required by member communities.

The MMA greatly appreciates the attention local officials give each year to updating their communities' profiles. We particularly thank you in advance for your help this year, given the added challenges you face during the

COVID-19 emergency response.

Because town elections have been delayed this year, the MMA will conduct its outreach in two stages, first by emailing towns to update information for non-elected municipal positions, and then following up to confirm elected positions after town elections are held. The MMA will also email cities this spring to confirm their information.

Communities will be given access to an online update form, which is pre-populated with the personnel information currently in the MMA database.

The MMA's annual directory includes

listings of local officials and contact information – as well as demographic and financial data – for all of the state's cities and towns. There are also sections devoted to regional school districts, state and federal government agencies, and relevant professional organizations, as well as a guide to products and services for municipalities.

The new edition of the directory will be published in early fall.

For more information, contact the MMA at directory@mma.org. ●

# With a different look, farmers markets march on

By Lisa Capone

Typically, this is the time of year when Massachusetts consumers get an infusion of local alternatives to supermarket fare, as seasonal farmers markets open. But, while Gov. Charlie Baker included farmers markets among "essential services" during the COVID-19 pandemic, this spring is anything but typical for the state's 221 markets.

Market managers and the local officials they work with have been navigating a thicket of public health challenges, both as they prepare to launch their outdoor "summer" markets and as some scrambled to replace in-person "winter markets" in March and April with pickup or delivery services ("mobile markets") to provide local residents with access to fresh produce, meat, eggs and fish.

"For nearly 50 years, the opening of the Amherst Farmers Market has been a true harbinger of spring," said Amherst Town Manager Paul Bockelman. "Farmers and vendors bring their goods, people emerge from their homes, music is in the air – a true embrace of the new season.

"This year will be different, but we look forward to opening the market, even if under different circumstances."

Like a number of others in Massachusetts, the Amherst Farmers Market is still working out details of how and when it will be able to open in a way that complies with new guidelines and requirements established by numerous authorities, including municipal public health and licensing officials, the state departments of Agricultural Resources and Public Health, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Some are now poised to open – albeit with an air of austerity.

#### A different look

Besides providing residents with fresh, healthy food, farmers markets also support farms that contribute to local, regional and state economies and conserve open space. The typically bustling and walkable markets also provide a sense of community, with music, homemade crafts and art in addition to food.

Greenfield's market draws farmers from all over Franklin County, a region with about 900 farms.



Local officials and market managers are navigating a number of challenges as they prepare for the season.

"We set out to come up with a plan that is as safe as possible, keeping all rules for physical distancing in place, and still allow our citizens who want access to fresh-grown food and dairy and to support our farmers to be able to do that."

Greenfield Mayor
 Roxann Wedegartner

"It would be unthinkable not to have a summer farmers market in 2020," said Greenfield Mayor Roxann Wedegartner, "even during this challenging time.

"We set out to come up with a plan that is as safe as possible, keeping all rules for physical distancing in place, and still allow our citizens who want access to fresh-grown food and dairy and to support our farmers to be able to do that."

When the Greenfield Farmers Market opened for the season downtown on May 4, offerings were limited to food and plants.

"No crafters, no music," said Greenfield Farmers' Market Steering Committee President David Paysnick. "We really don't want people gathering there. We need to put safety and food access first, and put fun and commerce behind that."

Paysnick said his organization began discussing logistics with Wedegartner's office and the Greenfield Board of Health in March, and has been learning from other farmers markets through a listserv operated by the Farmers Markets Coalition – picking up best practices on everything from ordering hand sanitizer to setting up pre-order/drive-through operations and handling pedestrian traffic flow.

The story is the same in other communities preparing to open in-person markets that will look and feel more constrained.

Needham Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick said the Needham Health Division discussed with the Needham Farmers Market the necessary steps to safely hold the market this year.

"The goal is to run a safe market that adheres to the most up-to-date guidance on COVID-19," she said.

Needham's market, like many others, will feature spacing of at least 6 feet between vendors; one-way customer flow; face masks for vendors and

continued on next page

continued from previous page

customers; handwashing stations; a ban on cloth tablecloths, reusable shopping bags and food samples; and a focus on contactless/cash-free forms of payment, with workers sanitizing credit cards and readers between transactions.

It's not a recipe for a carefree afternoon; it's a formula designed to connect people with fresh, locally grown food safely and efficiently.

"The market is a community event. ... That socializing piece isn't going to happen," said Melrose Farmers Market Manager Julie Unger. "It's going to be different."

The Melrose market is planning to open in early June in a city park. It will have designated hours for online pre-order pickups and for senior citizens only, said Unger, who has been sharing ideas in weekly Zoom meetings with about 20 other farmers market managers representing many of the state's regions – a "grassroots" effort that grew out of a Facebook group.

# Sharing ideas and helping those in need

Other organizations providing guidance include Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, which has created a Farmers' Markets Checklist: logistical best practices document, and the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative, which has been facilitating conversations related to the unique food access challenges COVID-19 poses for recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.

Several farmers markets have been operating throughout the COVID crisis, offering mobile markets that rely on remote ordering and delivery or pickup. It's a model North Adams Mayor Thomas Bernard said shows "thoughtfulness and creativity" to bring "the market directly into people's homes – including mine – at a time when we can't safely gather in public."

While mobile markets are a breeze for credit card customers, they are problematic for SNAP recipients whose payments, by law, can't be online.

"SNAP payment processing is a huge

equity issue right now," said Rebecca Miller, manager of the collaborative's Healthy Incentives Program campaign. She expressed optimism those rules may be eased, and said farmers markets are finding creative solutions in the meantime

North Adams, for example, hopes to launch a pre-order/drive-through market for SNAP recipients in mid-May. Both the North Adams and Pittsfield farmers markets offer up to \$30 of free food for SNAP recipients, and the Pittsfield market extends that benefit to anyone "facing economic hardship due to the pandemic." Operated by the nonprofit Roots Rising, Pittsfield held its first "virtual" market on April 4.

Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyer said the Downtown Farmers Market "has found a way to ensure that our community members have access to fresh fruits and vegetables from local farms" through the creation of a new website and delivery system.

"I am inspired by the continuous demonstration of innovation and ingenuity among Pittsfielders, who are finding bold solutions to meet the needs in our community," she said.

On the North Shore, Lynn's farmers market is a collaboration between the city and The Food Project. Two markets, serving more than 200 residents each (with 70% using SNAP), took place April 4 and 25, and a "seniors only" market was held at elderly living establishments on April 30.

"COVID-19 has wrought havoc around the world, and Lynn is no different," said Lynn Food and Fitness Alliance Director Norris Guscott. "But thanks to a partnership between the Lynn Department of Public Health and TFP, the city was able to mount a robust response to safeguard food access for the city's most vulnerable."

# HIP helps stretch food dollars at Lawrence farmers market

The impacts of COVID-19 have been especially brutal in some of the state's older urban centers, such as Lawrence, a densely populated city with the sixth-highest rate of COVID cases in the state, according to Department of Public Health data.

Adding to the challenge is the fact that nearly 44% of households receive public assistance to pay for food through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the highest percentage in the state, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Like other farmers markets around Massachusetts, Lawrence's provides a convenient way for SNAP recipients to get more bang for their food buck through the Healthy Incentives Program, a state initiative that provides a dollar-for-dollar match for each SNAP dollar spent on targeted fruits and vegetables purchased at Massachusetts farmers markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and community-supported agriculture programs.

With its traditional farmers market on hold during the pandemic, Groundwork Lawrence, which runs the city's market, found a creative solution to keep SNAP and HIP benefits flowing. Each Wednesday, shoppers can order produce from two local farmers and then pay for and pick up their orders at the Lawrence Senior Center parking lot the next day. The program, which allows pre-orders of four different produce assortments at two price points, was scheduled to run through the end of May.

"The Groundwork Lawrence Farmers Market has always been a strong partner in ensuring access to healthy, fresh food for our community," said Mayor Dan Rivera. "This sentiment has never been more valid than in these challenging times. The extra precautions for Groundwork Lawrence's Virtual Farmers Market amid COVID-19 offers residents a safe way to access fresh produce without having to go to a congested grocery store at a time when social distancing is so crucial to stopping the spread of COVID-19."

– Lisa Capone

# **New grant program addresses PFAS contamination**

On May 20, the Baker-Polito administration announced a new funding opportunity to support public water systems in addressing elevated levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water.

The grant program, managed by the Department of Environmental Protection, will provide up to \$2 million for expenses related to the design and planning of treatment systems that protect drinking water against PFAS.

PFAS are a family of chemicals widely used since the 1950s to manufacture common consumer products and some fire-fighting foams. Drinking water may become contaminated if PFAS deposited onto the soil seeps into groundwater or surface water.

PFAS have been linked to a variety of health risks, particularly in women who

are pregnant or nursing, and in infants. Last December, the MassDEP proposed a protective standard for PFAS in drinking water and finalized cleanup standards for soil and groundwater.

"Working closely with communities facing PFAS is essential to our efforts to eliminate these contaminants," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides, "and these grants will help cities and towns develop the necessary treatment systems to protect drinking water."

The administration secured \$28.4 million in two recent supplemental budgets for water infrastructure and PFAS testing, with \$20 million appropriated to the Commonwealth's Clean Water Trust, providing financing that can be used by communities to address contamination issues,

and \$6.4 million supporting a statewide sampling program for public water supplies and private wells. Statewide testing of drinking water for PFAS will provide the data to support the MassDEP's strategy for treatment and mitigation.

The new grant program, funded by \$2 million from the supplemental budget, will provide assistance to water suppliers for the necessary planning, studies, pump tests, engineering, and design necessary to remove PFAS contamination from water systems. Reimbursement for previously completed eligible work will also be included in the grant opportunity.

A maximum grant of \$200,000 per applicant will be available. Details about this grant opportunity, including how to apply, can be found at <a href="https://www.commbuys.com/bso">https://www.commbuys.com/bso</a>.

### EPA offers grants to help reduce food loss and waste

In an effort to reduce food loss and waste, municipalities can seek grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for projects that divert food waste from landfills and help expand the country's anaerobic digester capacity.

Anaerobic digester technology generates renewable energy in the form of biogas and produces digestate, a material that can improve soil health.

The EPA expects to award up to \$3 million for food-waste projects, with individual applicants receiving awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$300,000. The application is open to local, tribal, interstate and intrastate government agencies, as well as nonprofits.

The EPA expects to award anywhere from 10 to 40 grants during this funding process. To be considered, applications must satisfy one or more of the following objectives:

- Support state, tribal and/or local government programs that seek to use anaerobic digester technology to increase their organic waste diversion rates or support other sustainability goals
- Demonstrate and/or implement solutions and/or approaches for increasing anaerobic digester use that can be replicated by other communities or governments

 Establish new partnerships or expand existing partnerships that result in the development of anaerobic digester capacity

The application deadline is July 14.

For more information, visit <u>Grants.gov</u> (under Funding Opportunity Announcement EPA-OLEM-ORCR-20-02), or by visiting the <u>EPA Anaerobic Digestion</u> <u>Funding Opportunity web page</u>.

The EPA will hold an informational webinar about the grants and application process on June 2 at 1 p.m. Register for the webinar.

### New program can help with public space modifications

The Solomon and Barr foundations have launched a program to help communities adapt public spaces in ways that benefit those most at risk or otherwise most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Streets for Recovery focuses on reconfiguring streets and other public areas to support safe social distancing practices. The program looks to partner with communities to identify and implement simple and sustainable changes that allow communities to reopen safely, and

can provide grant funding for equipment needed to ensure that streets and sidewalks remain safe.

For example, the program suggests moving parking spaces further from the curb in order to expand sidewalks and provide safe space for walking. Other modifications include expanding space to walk or bike by eliminating curbside parking temporarily, and designating unused street space and parking lots for outdoor restaurant and store use.

Streets for Recovery can provide technical assistance to municipalities and can offer up to \$10,000 toward the hiring of a project manager or other staff needed to implement changes to streets and public spaces.

For more on how to participate, contact Program Director Allison Burton at allisonburson@solomonfoundation.org.

#### **MORALE**

Continued from page 7

ipal staff and the public alike.

On Cape Cod, Chatham Town Manager Jill Goldsmith provides weekly updates to her staff and town residents via the municipal website. In the Berkshires, Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyer delivers weekly community-wide updates via Pittsfield Community Television and Facebook Live. In the Pioneer Valley, Amherst Town Manager Paul Bockelman hosts twice-weekly virtual Community Chats that bring town staff and residents together for updates and live O & A.

Amherst also provides staff lunches from local businesses for those still working in town facilities, and has launched a social media campaign called #WorkingforAmherst that highlights staff members in their "new normal" (usually home offices) to remind residents that town employees are still hard at work.

"This has been a great way to keep connected with staff, especially those working from home," Bockelman said. "This has had a great response from the public as well, so it checks multiple boxes for us."

In addition to online meetings and updates, some municipal workforces are finding creative ways to simply get together to socialize. Examples include Amherst's "virtual open lunchroom series," during which staff pop in and out to say "hello" and catch up; Chatham's "Keeping Team Chatham Connected," which enables staff to share stories and selfies using the MS Teams platform;

and Needham's virtual coffees and after-hours game nights and chats.

A "Zoom Happy Hour" hosted several weeks ago by Lexington Town Manager Jim Malloy has now become an every other Thursday tradition.

"We had a great discussion that included an update on the town's COVID responses, issues with staff working remotely, as well as the anxiety many staff were going through," Malloy said. "It was a great experience during a stressful time to reunite staff. I'll continue doing this regularly until we return to a normal work environment, and I believe there will be long lasting positive effects of this effort."

### Leadership classes graduate, finance applications accepted

#### By Katie McCue

The 13th and 14th classes of the MMA-Suffolk University Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program graduated on May 22.

The 57 graduates attended the programs in Barnstable and Littleton over the course of the 2019-2020 academic year. Classes for the final two months of the program, and the graduation ceremonies, were held remotely.

"Municipal government affects our citizens more than any other level," said John Petrin, a retired town manager and coordinator for the MMA-Suffolk programs. "It is where the government literally hits the pavement. One of our most important tasks is to ensure that we provide education and training to develop our next generation of local leaders. The MMA and Suffolk have been collaborating now for 10 years to do just that."

The MMA and Suffolk are preparing to hold programs in Danvers and Shrewsbury in the fall.

For more information about the program, visit <a href="https://www.mma.org/certificate">www.mma.org/certificate</a>.

#### Finance seminar

The MMA and Suffolk are also preparing to hold the fourth Municipal Finance Management Seminar this fall in South-

borough. The <u>application is</u> <u>available on the MMA website</u>, and the deadline is 5 p.m. on July 31.

The seminar is designed to provide an overview of municipal finance in Massachusetts, including operational aspects of finance structure, and systems and processes in Massachusetts cities and towns. Topics include budgeting, financial reporting, treasury functions, property assessment, and costing out contracts.

The seminar is for municipal officials interested in furthering their careers in municipal finance as well as for employees who are new to municipal finance. Applicants must be employed by a city or town, and must have the approval of their municipal manager, administrator or mayor to apply.

The program will be held in Southborough on five Fridays beginning in November. Classes are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with the last class including a panel discussion and celebratory lunch. The cost of the seminar is \$825.

The program application can be found





Students who attended the 2019-2020 classes of the MMA-Suffolk University Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program gathered May 22 for their Zoom graduations. In total, 57 people graduated from two classes: 29 from the Littleton class (above) and 28 from the Barnstable class (below).

on the MMA website under <u>Featured</u> <u>Services</u>, and completed applications can be sent to seminars@mma.org.



# Mild winter brings bumper crop of disease-carrying ticks

**Bv Javne Schmitz** 

As the weather warms and we venture outside to seek relief from being housebound, it's important to be on the lookout for ticks, particularly this year because the mild winter allowed ticks to thrive instead of being killed off.

The Department of Public Health's Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences states that blacklegged (deer) ticks and dog ticks, found throughout Massachusetts, can spread a range of diseases, including Lyme disease, babesiosis and anaplasmosis, when they bite people.

Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranked Massachusetts as the fourth-worst state for tick-borne diseases, according to an article last December in US News and World Report.

Ticks may be encountered year-round, but they are typically most active between April and September, with most

# MIIA welcomes new members

MIIA welcomes the following communities, school districts and municipal organizations to the MIIA Health Benefits Trust:

**Medical:** Blandford, Danvers, Northern Middlesex Regional Emergency Communications Center, Lancaster, Mattapoisett, Tyngsborough, and Wenham

**Dental:** Amherst, Blandford, Cohasset, Huntington, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Mahar Regional School District, Mattapoisett, Northern Middlesex Regional Emergency Communications Center, and Wenham

MIIA looks forward to working with these members on their health, dental, and wellness needs. tick-borne disease cases reported in June and July.

The fact that we've been cooped up for months due to COVID-19 hasn't diminished the chance of getting Lyme disease. Many people are taking daily walks in the woods and spending more time in their yards, potentially exposing themselves and their pets to ticks. Those who live in the suburbs, where people, ticks, deer, and tick hosts such as mice and chipmunks are in close contact, can be at high risk of contracting Lyme disease.

Health issues such as Lyme disease can make people more vulnerable to COVID-19, according to Goudarz Molaei, director of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's passive tick surveillance and testing program. There's no evidence ticks can carry or transmit the virus that causes COVID-19, Molaei said, but a person who contracts a tick-borne illness and is then exposed to the coronavirus could have an especially difficult time recovering.

#### **Symptoms**

Typical Lyme disease symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue and a characteristic skin rash that looks like a bullseye. In most cases, symptoms of early Lyme disease begin to appear from three to 30 days after being bitten by an infected tick.

According to the CDC, most cases of Lyme disease can be cured with a two- to four-week course of oral antibiotics.

Some patients, however, can have symptoms of pain, fatigue or difficulty thinking that lasts for more than six months after they finish treatment. This condition is called Post-Treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome. Unfortunately, there is no proven treatment for PTLDS. Patients usually get better over time, but it can take many months to feel completely well.

If untreated, symptoms of late Lyme

disease may occur from weeks to years after the initial infection.

Symptoms of untreated Lyme disease include:

- · Severe headaches and neck stiffness
- Additional bullseye rashes on other areas of the body
- Facial palsy
- Arthritis with severe joint pain and swelling, particularly the knees and other large joints
- Intermittent pain in tendons, muscles, joints, and bones
- Heart palpitations or an irregular heartbeat
- Episodes of dizziness or shortness of breath
- Inflammation of the brain and spinal cord
- Nerve pain
- Shooting pains, numbness or tingling in the hands or feet

Research from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health suggests that a prolonged illness associated with the disease in some patients is more widespread and serious than previously understood. The researchers found that Lyme disease costs the U.S. health care system between \$712 million and \$1.3 billion a year — or nearly \$3,000 per patient on average.

#### Prevention

Steps to prevent Lyme disease include using insect repellent, wearing long sleeves and tucking long pants into socks when possible, wearing permethrin-treated clothing, checking for and removing ticks promptly by using tweezers and pulling them straight up and out starting as close to the skin as possible, noting the date of a tick bite, and alerting one's primary care physician.

■ MIIA continued on 25

#### **TOWN HALL**

Continued from page 3

ing with the public. She suggested this guidance may also be helpful to municipalities, once it is ready.

# Plans, posters, supplies and training

The state's reopening plan is designed to be self-compliant. Like all employers, cities and towns are expected to:

- Use a <u>template to develop a COVID</u> control plan.
- Acquire the <u>required supplies</u> (such as face coverings and sanitizers).
- · Conduct employee training.
- Display <u>compliance attestation posters</u> and <u>checklists</u> to assure both employees and visitors that the workplace is in compliance.

The two-page control plan template must be filled out to indicate that the workplace is complying with the mandatory safety standards for operation in the COVID-19 reopening period. The template asks for business contact information, a human resources contact, and the number of employees on site. It then includes a list of check boxes in the areas of Social Distancing, Hygiene Protocols, Staffing and Operations (covering items such as training and what to do when an employee is ill), and Cleaning and Disinfecting. Control plans do not need to be submitted for approval, but must be kept on premise and made available in the case of an inspection or outbreak.

The single-page attestation poster is a four-item list, with assurances about face coverings and social distancing, hand washing capabilities and sanitization, staff training, and cleaning and disinfecting protocols. The attestation poster should be displayed in an area on the premises that is visible to employees and visitors.

The two-page COVID checklist for office spaces goes into additional detail on the four main areas covered in the attestation poster.

The employee training would explain the social distancing and hygiene protocols that have been put in place to comply with the state's mandatory health and safety requirements, according to the DLS.

Department of Labor Standards Director

Michael Flanagan assures local leaders that the compliance standards "may sound more daunting than they really are."

"It's a half dozen checkboxes, you make sure that you're meeting all those requirements, you check the boxes, you sign it, you post it, and that's what self-certification is," he said. "It's not a particularly arduous process."

Regarding training, he said, "this doesn't need to be a full-blown day of training. This can be 15 maybe 30 minutes of training that is no more elaborate than what your specific protocols are in order to meet the reopening requirements and the self-certification requirements."

"This can be 15 maybe 30 minutes of training that is no more elaborate than what your specific protocols are in order to meet the reopening requirements and the self-certification requirements."

 Department of Labor Standards Director Michael Flanagan

#### **Occupancy limit**

The DLS has clarified that the current 25% occupancy limit is per office space and not by building.

According to the DLS, municipalities "should limit occupancy of municipal office spaces to 25 percent of (a) the maximum occupancy level specified in any certificate of occupancy or similar permit or as provided for under the state building code; or (b) the business organization's typical occupancy as of March 1, 2020."

If a municipality designates a municipal office as a "COVID-19 Essential Service," which it has discretion to do, then that office has until July 1 to comply with the 25% occupancy limitations.

"Further, a municipality may determine that a municipal office can exceed the

maximum occupancy level if the municipality determines that it is in the interest of public health or safety considerations, or where strict compliance may interfere with the continued delivery of a critical service, as determined by the municipality."

While essential service offices have until July 1 to comply, they're advised to do so as soon as they're able.

#### **Further guidance**

Massachusetts employers are expected to continue and encourage social and hygiene practices that have become new habits over the past two months, such as hand washing and distancing, and to continue remote-work practices where feasible.

The following are some of the requirements for employers:

- Provide regular sanitization of hightouch areas, such as workstations, equipment, doorknobs and restrooms
- Ensure that employees who are displaying COVID-19-like symptoms do not report to work
- Ensure that cleaning and disinfecting is performed when an active employee is diagnosed with COVID-19
- Establish a plan for employees getting ill from COVID-19 at work, and a returnto-work plan

Physical partitions must separate workstations that cannot be spaced out, and workers are required to wear face coverings in cases where they cannot maintain a distance of 6 feet, such as in elevators, control rooms and vehicles.

Directional hallways for foot traffic, and visible signage, are recommended to minimize contact. Signs should also be posted throughout the work site to remind workers of the hygiene and safety protocols.

Meeting sizes should be limited to ensure distancing, and remote participation should be encouraged.

Cafeterias may operate only with prepackaged food.

The DLS has created a web area for COVID-19 workplace safety rules.

Questions can be directed to the DLS hotline at 508-616-0461, ext. 9488, or safepublicworkplacemailbox@mass.gov.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Continued from page 2

a public health emergency, convene stakeholders, and implement an urgent and sweeping agenda to flatten the surge of contagion and illness, ramp up resources and capacity to treat the afflicted, and communicate directly with the people of Massachusetts. The Legislature has responded as well, enacting key measures to provide communities with tools, resources, flexibility and authority to battle the pandemic, and it has re-tooled its own procedures to conduct vital business in our new virtual reality.

#### A call for federal action

And now our local and state governments face an unprecedented economic collapse, losing billions in vital tax revenues. Cities and towns are waiting to get guidance from the state. The state is waiting to get guidance from the federal government. And the federal government is ... waiting.

To be clear, the MMA believes that communities must receive funding and relief to replace the local revenues lost due to the COVID-19 shutdown, and believes that any cut in local aid by the state would be truly devastating to public health and our economic recovery. Further, we believe that state government must also be protected from the COVID-19 recession, which is why we have been calling on the federal government to marshal all available resources to provide fiscal relief to cities, towns and our state. We are in this together.

With the state facing a projected revenue loss of \$6 billion or more, and cities and towns facing the loss of hundreds of millions in local meals and lodging taxes right now, and even more painful losses in property tax and other revenues going forward, it is impossible to see how either level of government could maintain existing services – even essential ones – without immediate and substantial federal relief to replace these funds.

How can communities fight COVID-19 with smaller budgets? With fewer police officers, firefighters and emergency responders? With fewer inspectors and health agents? With fewer nurses, health professionals, and staff to serve vulnerable populations?

How can communities deliver vital services with smaller budgets? How can we have fewer teachers when class sizes have to get smaller to protect against the virus? How can we maintain our core transportation, water and sewer functions with fewer public works employees? How can we maintain our public spaces, which are more vital than ever to our residents?

The pandemic has cast a spotlight on the indispensable role that local government has in our lives and livelihoods. At a time when cities and towns are more important than ever to our survival and to our future prosperity, that spotlight must also serve as a beacon for our federal partners. Their response will determine nothing less than the future of our nation.

How can we regrow our economy without adequate public safety, public health, public education, public works, and safetynet services, all delivered locally?

The answer to all of these questions is clear: we can't.

The MMA applauds the state's entire Washington delegation. U.S. Senators Warren and Markey, and Representatives Neal, McGovern, Trahan, Kennedy, Clark, Moulton, Pressley, Lynch, and Keating have all been powerful advocates and supporters of major and immediate relief for cities and towns, and our state. Local officials deeply appreciate their efforts.

Despite their hard work and advocacy, however, efforts to pass a relief package to support local and state governments has been stalled, with conflicting signals coming from some administration officials and the Senate majority leader. Initially, they indicated support for direct financial aid, but later issued statements asserting that localities are wasteful and fiscally irresponsible, and suggested that they do not want to provide funds for "blue" regions.

Of course, we know that the opposite is true. Our cities and towns operate with balanced budgets, are directly accountable to the voters and residents of their communities, and are strictly nonpartisan. There's no red and blue at the municipal level.

On the one hand, it is understandable that some federal politicians are concerned about alienating ideologues within their states or constituencies, given the modern narrative that government is bad. But on the other hand, we are facing a national crisis. It is time for everyone to put political considerations aside and act. That's what leadership means in the time of COVID-19.

The MMA, working together with our colleague municipal associations across the country, is supporting a public education effort under the umbrella of the National League of Cities. The NLC's Cities and Towns Are Essential program is generating widespread media coverage on the essential role that local government plays in our lives and highlighting the damage that would be done if cities and towns are left to fend for themselves during what could grow to be an economic depression.

With all of the Massachusetts delegation on record in support of direct federal aid to communities, the NLC effort is targeted to states where municipal leaders are uncertain of their federal lawmakers' commitment. Local officials, businesses and citizens are using the information to let their lawmakers know that cities and towns are essential, and immediate federal relief is essential, too. You can learn more about the program at <a href="mailto:covid19.nlc.org/cities-are-essential">covid19.nlc.org/cities-are-essential</a>.

The pandemic has cast a spotlight on the indispensable role that local government has in our lives and livelihoods. At a time when cities and towns are more important than ever to our survival and to our future prosperity, that spotlight must also serve as a beacon for our federal partners. Their response will determine nothing less than the future of our nation.

# Bergman, Reed to serve as advisors to town managers

By Denise Baker

In partnership with the International City/County Management Association, the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association has launched a Senior Advisor Program to help town managers in the state.

The program has kicked off in Massachusetts with two long-time managers: Keith Bergman, who served as town manager in Provincetown for 17 years and retired last year from the town of Littleton after 11 years as town administrator, and Rick Reed, who retired from the town of Bedford in 2018 after 30 years as the town manager. Both are ICMA lifetime members and retired members of the MMMA.



Keith Bergman



Rick Reed

Senior advisors are volunteers available to talk with members about a number of issues, including operations questions, career development, response to local charter changes, working with the select board or council, and resources available on all of these issues.

"The Senior Advisor Program provides a tremendous resource to MMMA members seeking guidance and support on a wide range of municipal issues," said MMMA President and Auburn Town Manager Julie Jacobson. "Keith and Rick each have a wealth of experience as municipal managers, which will be beneficial to both seasoned and newly appointed town managers/administrators and assistants."

The ICMA created the Senior Advisor Program in 1974 to make available to its members the counsel, experience and support of respected, retired managers.

Bergman and Reed will be reaching out to members in the coming months, and are available by email at keith@kbergman.com and rreedtm1@gmail.com.

### DER offers aid for priority ecological restoration projects

The Division of Ecological Restoration seeks responses for cranberry bog restoration, streamflow restoration, and urban river revitalization projects.

Selected Priority Projects will be eligible to receive technical assistance from DER staff, technical services from consultants, and/or grant funding throughout the life of the project.

The DER was scheduled to release the full RFR on May 28, with applications due June 18 at 5 p.m.

Applicants are encouraged to review the pre-RFR and discuss potential applica-

tions with DER staff during the pre-RFR period. The <u>pre-RFR</u>, <u>applications</u>, <u>and additional materials are available on the DER website</u>.

The DER works to promote river and wetland restoration projects that bring significant ecological, community and climate adaptation benefits to Massachusetts. Since its founding in 2009, the DER and its partners have completed more than 65 Priority Ecological Restoration Projects. Each project restores healthy habitat while also helping communities prevent storm damage, ad-

dress aging infrastructure, and improve outdoor recreation. The agency reports that restoration projects also support the economy, <u>creating or maintaining</u> 12.5 jobs for every \$1 million spent.

For more information, contact Alex Hackman at alex.hackman@mass.gov regarding cranberry bog wetland restoration projects, Michelle Craddock at michelle.craddock@mass.gov regarding streamflow restoration projects, and Cindy Delpapa at cindy.delpapa@mass.gov regarding urban stream and river revitalization projects.

#### **HOUSE BILL**

Continued from page 1

enacted on March 23.) The bill would also allow towns that hold municipal election caucuses to eliminate them this year and use nomination papers instead.

# Contracts for school and education services

The bill would allow communities to make payments under existing contracts for school and education services that are not currently being delivered, if that is desired, in order to ensure that adequate capacity is available to deliver services when schools reopen. In the current version of the bill, these reworked agreements would require the approval of the municipal chief executive.

#### MIIA

Continued from page 22

Saving the tick in a plastic bag or jar can also be helpful for identification, should illness appear.

The CDC suggests disposing of a live tick by putting it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. The CDC warns against using folklore remedies that wait for the tick to detach, or crushing them.

Communities can take steps to prevent ticks and tick-borne diseases by applying eco-friendly pesticides such as permethrin, reducing tick habitat, and combating climate change.

Educating employees about Lyme

disease and prevention can reduce the chance of long-term health-related costs, loss of productivity, and ongoing debilitating illness.

For more information, including downloadable educational materials, visit mass.gov/tick-borne-diseases.

Jayne Schmitz is a MIIA Wellness Project Manager.

# **People**



Ann Vandal

Longtime Dracut employee **Ann Vandal** became the town manager on May 4 after having twice served as interim manager. She replaces **James Duggan**, who left the position last fall.

Vandal, who had

started her most recent period as interim manager last October, has been working for the town since 2003. She was hired as the town accountant, promoted to finance director/treasurer, and later became the assistant town manager/finance director. She had also served as the interim manager before Duggan was hired in 2014.

Before coming to Dracut, Vandal worked for three years as the treasurer/collector in Carlisle. She has a bachelor's degree in finance from Franklin Pierce University.



Katie King

Katie King becomes the assistant town manager in Needham on June 1, replacing Christopher Coleman, who left last fall to become the town administrator in Westwood.

King worked for the city of Boston from

2013 to 2019, initially as deputy director, and then director, for state relations, before becoming director of the mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Relations in 2016

Previously, King spent more than three years as the Massachusetts director of health promotion and public policy for the American Lung Association, and almost two years before that as the grassroots advocacy coordinator for the American Cancer Society.

King has a master's degree in public administration from the Harvard Kennedy School, a master's degree in public health from Boston University, and a bachelor's degree in sociology from BU.

**William Chenard** became the new town manager in Pembroke on May 11.

Chenard most recently served more than six years as deputy town administrator in Natick. He has also served as Natick's business manager, and as a commercial assessor for the city of Newton. Chenard has a bachelor's degree from the University of Maine and earned a certificate from the MMA-Suffolk University Local Government Leadership and Management program, having graduated from the program's first class in 2012.

Chenard replaces **Ed Thorne**, who had been serving as the town's interim manager.



Lisa Adams

to 2001.

On May 18, **Lisa Adams**, who served more than two years as an MMA senior legislative analyst, became the director of investigations for the state's Human Resources Division, where she previously worked as labor counsel from 1998

While at the MMA, Adams worked on policy areas related to human resources and labor relations.



Robert Brady Jr.

Avon Selectman **Robert Brady Jr.** died on May 4 at age 65 after contracting COVID-19.

Brady, the brother of Sen. **Michael Brady**, had served as a selectman since 2011, and served on the Avon Zoning Board

of Appeals from 2003 to 2011. He had also served for many years as a Norfolk County deputy sheriff.

For health reasons, Brady had planned to step down as a selectman when his term ended this spring, but remained on the board as the coronavirus pandemic had delayed the town election and the selection of his successor. A native of Brockton, Brady owned National Electrical Testing and Service Inc., in Brockton, and Brady Distributing Company, a bread delivery service on the South Shore.



George Cataldo

Former Brockton City Councillor, World War II veteran and singer **George Cataldo** died April 23 at age 92.

Cataldo had served the city from 1976 to 1989, first as a ward councillor and then later as a councillor at large, according

to the mayor's office. He remained heavily involved in public service and volunteerism even after he left office.

In addition to his public service, Cataldo was known for his personality, as a singer and radio and local access television host. Called the "The Silver Foxx," Cataldo sang at local nursing homes, wearing his signature brightly colored suits.

Cataldo had recently moved to Florida to be near family members.



Daniel Dermody

Taunton City
Councillor **Daniel Dermody** died on
May 16 at age 57.
A lifelong Taunton
resident, Dermody
served as a councillor
from 2016 to 2018.
After losing reelection
in 2017, he won
a second term on

the council this past November. Before becoming a city councillor, he had served 16 years on the Taunton Planning Board, a dozen of which as the board's chair. For the past 25 years, Dermody worked as a special projects manager for Secretary of the Commonwealth **William Galvin**.

This monthly column highlights transitions, accomplishments and awards, and life events of municipal officials. To submit information for People, contact MMA Associate Editor Jennifer Kavanaugh at 800-882-1498 or jkavanaugh@mma.org.

# **People**

#### New selectmen elected

The following are new selectmen elected in spring elections through May 20. This listing is meant to highlight first-time selectmen, but it is possible that some selectmen are returning to their board after an absence.

If we are missing a new selectman, please let us know by emailing

newselectmen@mma.org.

**Chestfield:** Donald Willard III **Sheffield:** Robert Kilmer

### MMHR accepting nominations for 2020 Skop Award

Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources is accepting nominations through Sept. 1 for its annual Emil S. Skop Award, given in recognition of outstanding contributions made to the field of municipal human resources management.

Nominations will be accepted from MMHR members, human resources colleagues, municipal chief administra-

tive officers, municipal personnel/human resources boards, officials of state human resources-related agencies, and other related entities.

Skop was one of the founding members of the Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association (renamed MMHR in 2019) and served as its first executive secretary.

Before "networking" became a recogniz-

able term, Skop acknowledged the value of sharing information and experiences with other human resources and labor relations professionals. He is recognized for his tireless efforts in this area.

The award criteria and nomination form can be found here.

Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols at inichols@mma.org

### **Get MMA.org updates in your mailbox**

The MMA in early May launched a weekly email newsletter that provides a digest of all the updates posted each week on MMA.org.

Particularly during the COVID emergency, laws, guidance and best practices are changing by the minute. The MMA website is a great source for the latest

information as it relates to local government.

The email newsletter ensures that subscribers won't miss any website updates. A listing of all the news stories, letters of testimony, and guidance documents will come directly to their mailbox every Friday morning.

The email subject line is "MMA Weekly Review."

To sign up, use the short and simple form at <a href="https://www.mma.org/about-mma/newsletter-sign-up">www.mma.org/about-mma/newsletter-sign-up</a>. ■

#### **ELECTION BILLS**

Continued from page 5

to vote safely.

"The Secretary of the Commonwealth should be required to issue guidance on how to run safe elections, considering important aspects such as PPE [personal protective equipment], social/physical distancing, proper sanitization protocols for voting booths and equipment, use of plexiglass and other barriers, and other

public health safeguards to protect voters, poll workers, and observers.

"In addition, municipalities should have the option of consolidating and changing the locations of polling places and reducing the number of required poll workers at any given polling location."

The MMA supports increased flexibility and authority to allow municipalities to decide how best to hold safe and successful elections.

It is unclear how or when the several bills before the Elections Committee may move.

In a memo accompanying Secretary Galvin's bill, Michelle Tassinari, the director and legal counsel of the Elections Division, wrote, "It is necessary to resolve this issue as soon as possible so that we are able to adequately prepare to administer increased voting by mail."

#### **CARES ACT**

 $Continued\ from\ page\ 6$ 

the use of federal funds.

As a condition of accepting federal Coronavirus Relief Fund money, municipalities must maximize FEMA reimbursements. In other words, for costs that appear eligible under the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund as well as for FEMA reimbursement, municipalities must apply for FEMA reimbursement. Federal dollars cannot under any circumstances be claimed twice for the same spending.

The DLS has additional general municipal finance guidance related to the current state of emergency. ●

# **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

#### Assessor Town of Agawam

The town of Agawam is accepting resumes for a qualified full-time Assessor. For more information please visit the town of Agawam website at <a href="www.agawam.ma.us">www.agawam.ma.us</a>, go to the personnel section and select job openings, from there you will be able to view the job description and requirements. Please send a cover letter and resume to cgruska@agawam.ma.us. The deadline for resumes to be submitted is June 12. The town of Agawam is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

# Human Resources Director Town of Saugus

Applications are being accepted for the position of full-time Human Resources Director. Bachelor's degree in human resources, business administration or related field desired. Certificate and/or master's degree is a plus. Five years of progressively responsible experience in Human Resources Management required. Experience in municipal personnel administration a plus or any equivalent combination of education and experience. This position reports directly to the Town Manager. Please submit application and resume to the Human Resource office by email to: glagattolla@saugus-ma.gov.

#### Children's Librarian Town of Saugus

The Saugus Public Library seeks a Children's Librarian to provide programming, outreach, and room supervision in a busy Children's Room. The successful candidate will be a self motivated quick learner who is able to handle a variety of tasks. The Children's Librarian, under the supervision of the Head of Children's Services, assists in the development, planning and implementation of the children's services including programming, readers' advisory, reference, instruction in use of materials and databases, collection development, use of social media, day-to-day operation of the department, participation in system-wide committees/other professional activities, as well as related and/or comparable duties as assigned. This 18 hours per week position pays \$22.96-\$26.09 per hour (in five steps). Please submit application and resume to the Human Resource office by email to: glagattolla@saugus-ma.gov.

# Assistant DPW Director Town of Saugus

The town of Saugus is seeking an immediate fulltime Assistant DPW Director who will assist in the oversight of daily operations of the Department, as well as short- and long-term planning, budgeting and development of those divisions and their associated municipal infrastructure. Minimum qualifications include a bachelor's degree in civil engineering or related field, prior experience in public works operations is a plus, and five years of supervisory and management experience or any equivalent combination of education, training and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the essential functions of the job. Municipal experience preferred. A large part of this position is handling a multitude of tasks simultaneously, effectively dealing with the public and problem solving. This position reports directly to the

Director of Public Works. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Please submit an application and resume to the Human Resource office by email to: glagattolla@saugus-ma.gov.

# Senior Clerk/Water & Sewer Coordinator Town of Saugus

Applications are being accepted for a full-time (36.5 hours) Senior Clerk/Water & Sewer Coordinator in the Treasurer/Collector Office. This position requires a thorough knowledge of office-related computer software including Microsoft applications. The applicant must possess strong technical skills in computer applications. This person will maintain our water/sewer billing system, coordinate and prepare semi-annual water/sewer billing including downloading readings from automated hand-held units, review pre-commitment reports for billing accuracy, create invoices, coordinate printing and mailing of invoices, and prepare final water bills as well as other responsibilities in the office as needed. Must have excellent customer service skills and a general knowledge of accounting principles. An associate's or bachelor's in accounting, finance or related field preferred or at least two to five years of financial municipal experience in an office setting. Please submit application and resume to the Human Resource office by email to: glagattolla@saugus-ma.

# Assistant Town Administrator Town of Yarmouth

The town of Yarmouth seeks a highly qualified candidate for full-time Assistant Town Administrator. Works under the administrative direction of the Town Administrator and in conjunction with the policies and procedures of the town. Professional, administrative and supervisory work in directing a diverse municipal department and in assisting the Town Administrator to provide daily control over a variety of ongoing town activities, research, analyze and recommend changes in town policies, and serve as liaison and coordinator between town officials, employees and citizens; all

other related work as required. Exercises considerable independent judgment in providing professional advice to the variety of official boards and committees concerning the development, implementation and administration of policies, goals, regulations and statutory requirements related to the administration and operation of the town. Acts in the absence of the Town Administrator. Master's degree in public administration, business management or related field; Five years' experience in municipal management or a related field; or any equivalent combination of education and experience. For more information or to apply, please visit <a href="https://www.yarmouth.ma.us">www.yarmouth.ma.us</a>.

# Town Accountant Town of Yarmouth

The town of Yarmouth seeks qualified applicants for the position of Town Accountant. Position reports to Finance, serves as Town Accountant and supervises employees in the Accounting Division. Carries out all responsibilities of the Town Accountant as required by applicable law. Develops and oversees implementation of best practices pertaining to the municipal accounting function. Please visit <a href="www.yarmouth.ma.us">www.yarmouth.ma.us</a> for more information and application.

#### Community Health Nurse Substitute Town of Wayland

Description of Position: Provides comprehensive community health care to all students/staff throughout the Wayland public school system. This encompasses a wide range of health/wellness services that includes routine and emergency care, medication administration, health screenings, adherence to Massachusetts Department of Health (MDPH) requirements, documentation within the electronic health record (EHR) and communication with students/families and staff. Has the ability to perform related community health services as assigned; performs all other related work as required. Recommended Minimum Qualifications: Education: Bachelor's degree in nursing from an accredited institution. Experience: Over two years

### **Classified advertising rates and information**

The Beacon publishes classified ads from units of government, public agencies, and companies.

Classified advertising categories are: Employment Opportunities, Requests for Proposals, and Services. Only one job opening or RFP can be listed per ad. The MMA cannot assume responsibility for information or claims made in any advertisement.

#### **Classified advertising rates**

Classified ad rates include publication in The

Beacon and on <a href="www.mma.org">www.mma.org</a>, though a discount is available for those who request placement of an ad only in The Beacon or on the website.

#### **Member rates**

- \$100 for first 100 words; \$100 for each additional block of up to 100 words
- Rate for one format only (print or website): \$75 for first 100 words, \$75 for each additional block of up to 100 words

#### Nonmember rates

- \$150 for first 100 words; \$150 for each additional block of up to 100 words
- Rate for one format only (print or website): \$125 for first 100 words, \$125 for each additional block of up to 100 words

#### Beacon deadlines and publication dates

The Beacon is published on the first business day of each month, except in the summer, when a combined July-August issue is printed in mid-July.

#### Summer Beacon (July/August)

Deadline: July 10 Publication: July 22

#### September Beacon

Deadline: August 20 Publication: Sept. 1

#### Placing an ad

You may use our convenient online form at

www.mma.org

For more information, call Meredith Gabrilska at the MMA at 617-426-7272.

Missed the Beacon deadline for an employment ad? You can still get the word out – right away.

See www.mma.org for details.

experience in school, pediatric, community health or comparable nursing experience. License/Certificate: Registered professional nurse in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Must possess a valid driver's license. Date posted: May 8. Date closed: Open until filled. Apply to: Please submit a resume and cover letter to the Human Resources Manager, Town of Wayland, 41 Cochituate Road, Wayland, MA 01778 or hr@wayland. ma.us. The town of Wayland is an equal opportunity employer.

# Chief Information Officer Town of Concord

The future of Concord's IT services holds exciting possibilities. We are seeking an experienced IT leader ready to meet today's technology, security and business challenges, and guide us in building a system responsive to the rapidly changing IT landscape. The next CIO will be instrumental in developing security protocols while expanding line-of business applications and network capabilities for on-site and telework. We offer a solid IT infrastructure, including a town-owned fiber system also used to provide Municipal Broadband Internet. We are ready to engage with our new CIO to build an ongoing Strategic Technology Plan to set the IT direction of our 650-person organization serving about 18K residents. A committed staff with room for team expansion and reliable vendors are prepared to support our CIO in meeting the town's goals. EOE. Salary range: \$101,000-\$153,000. Application deadline: June 8. For additional information regarding the position and how to apply, visit: www.concordma. gov/jobs.

#### Facilities Manager Town of Saugus

We are seeking a full-time Facilities Manager. This position will require hands-on responsibility for the town's Capital Improvement Projects, electrical and mechanical engineering, maintenance, environmental, health, safety, energy, controls/instrumentation, civil engineering, and HVAC needs. The successful candidate will have considerable project management skills, and demonstrated experience with capital, facilities build-out and equipment procurement and maintenance, including familiarity with building codes and standards. Responsibilities include definition and implementation of processes for building and equipment maintenance, tool calibration, and laboratory hygiene. In consultation with management, the Facilities Manager will initiate and manage contracts and relationships with critical suppliers and service providers to ensure cost effectiveness and operational continuity. We are seeking a self-starting individual with strong project management capability, technical aptitude, people skills and experience in construction and HVAC. The candidate will bring significant project management experience to the role. Managing projects to schedule with tight deadlines, demanding requirements, and limited budgets is expected. Candidates should have five years' experience and/or educational equivalence in facilities engineering or facilities management (or related field), municipal experience is a plus, college degree in civil engineering is a plus. Please submit an application and resume to the Human Resource office by email to: glagattolla@saugus-ma.gov.

#### Public Health Director Town of Saugus

\$100K-\$120K annually, based off of education, certifications and experience. Applications are being accepted for a full-time Public Health Director in the

Health Department. This position plans, coordinates, and directs the public health programs and activities of the town. Enforces public health laws and regulations. Reviews existing laws and regulations and works with governing bodies and policy-makers to update them as needed. Conducts enforcement activities. Coordinates notification of violations among other governmental agencies that enforce laws and regulations that protect the public's health. Conducts inspections of residential and commercial properties in accordance with state and local public health laws and regulations. Jurisdiction includes, but is not limited to: housing, lead paint, food establishments, tobacco sales establishments, massage therapy establishments, septic haulers, rubbish haulers, swimming pools, summer camps, nuisances, and facilities that use or store hazardous materials. Issues various licenses and permits based on application review, site inspections, and evaluation of the issues involved. Prepares related reports and records. Applicants must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a related field, with at least three to five years of supervisory municipal health inspection experience. Please submit an application and resume to the Human Resource office by email to: glagattolla@saugus-ma.gov.

# Planning & Development Director Town of Saugus

The town of Saugus is seeking a full-time Planning & Development Director. This position serves as the town's point of contact and manager for all: shorter term, intermediate and longer range master planning. Responsibilities include: land use planning; energy, housing and open space projects and initiatives; infrastructure needs assessments; and coordination of efforts to attract desired economic development. Duties also include developing sound approaches to development; assessing proposals for growth; making recommendations for land-use development zoning bylaw changes. The Director will be expected to develop and/or obtain strategic land-use planning tools as well as housing studies. The Director will assist in the review and evaluation of development proposals and will provide input for specific planning and development issues. The Director will seek and prepare grant applications, and will perform other related planning, community development assignments. This position reports directly to the Town Manager. Qualifications: Minimum five years of planning and community development or related economic experience. Bachelor's degree required, master's degree preferred, in planning community development or related field. Please submit an application and resume to the Human Resource office by email to: glagattolla@ saugus-ma.gov.

#### Principal Assessor Town of Edgartown

The town of Edgartown (population 4,830 year round, with seasonal influx) and an annual budget of \$38 million, is seeking an experienced professional for the position of Principal Assessor. Working under the direction of the Board of Assessors; the Principal Assessor is responsible for the assessment of all residential, commercial, industrial, and personal property. Other responsibilities include administering the general business activities of the office including maintaining records in compliance with state laws and guidelines, budget preparation and supervising department employees. Candidates must possess excellent interpersonal, organizational and time management skills, excellent verbal and written

communication abilities, knowledge of modern property assessment/appraisal principles and practices and a general knowledge of Massachusetts laws relating to municipal finance and property assessment. Bachelor's degree in business, finance or related fields and four years of related experience, Massachusetts Accredited Assessor designation (MAA), and prior municipal experience preferred. Must possess a valid Massachusetts driver's license. The position is 35 hours weekly with benefits, salary commensurate with experience. Job description and application available at www.edgartown-ma.us or at klucas@ edgartown-ma.us. Send letter of interest, resume, and application to Kim Lucas, Human Resource Director, klucas@edgartown-ma.us, P.O. Box 5130, Edgartown, MA 02539. Application deadline June 1. Edgartown

# Town Counsel Town of Yarmouth

The town of Yarmouth is soliciting interest from attorneys and/or firms experienced in municipal law to serve as town counsel. Letters of interest, including a complete list of current municipal clients and a minimum of five client references, should be emailed to employment@yarmouth.ma.us. Please include "Town Counsel" in the subject line.

#### **SERVICES**

#### **Personal Protective Equipment**

PPEUSA Supply Company is providing Personal Protective Equipment supplies to Fire, Police, Ambulance, Skilled Nursing Facilities, Assisted Living Facilities, and Hospitals. The company is based out of Walpole, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. PPEUSA Supply Company's medical supplier has been working with their FDA-approved international factories in China, Europe and Mexico for over a decade, so we are not newcomers to meeting the critical needs today. I, Jeffrey A. Goldshine, have been a health care administrator and entrepreneur since 1975, at one point owning and operating over a dozen facilities, so my experience is grounded in customer orientation and understanding of the products you may require. PPEUSA Supply Company's products are exactly as advertised, and our expected delivery times can be a few days if the product is in the warehouse or up to 2 weeks if it is shipping from our international suppliers. PPEUSA Supply Company's website, www. ppeusasupply.com, provides easy ordering and full view of the products and their specifications. PPEUSA Supply Company, 1600 Providence Highway, Suite 232, Walpole, MA 02081. 781-806-0264; jeff@ ppeusasupply.com.

# Construction Site Inspection Services for COVID-19

TRC is a third-party COVID-19 inspections company that uses established protocols, efficient electronic reporting, and experience with practices and preventive measures. Our team brings the proven process and knowledge to help reduce the risk of worker exposure to, or the spread of, COVID-19 on construction sites while protecting your community. We are located in or near your community with offices in Boston, Woburn, Lowell, Waltham, Weymouth, and Franklin. Our team leads the development of best practices and working with state agencies to

■ CLASSIFIEDS continued on 30

#### **CLASSIFIEDS**

Continued from page 29

update guidelines to manage this pandemic. In fact, we have been involved with establishing Covid-19 guidelines with the state and municipalities since the onset of this pandemic. Our competitive advantage: Fast and On-point: Using protocols aligned with your guidelines and those of the Commonwealth, TRC's 3rd-party inspections provide same day digitally delivered inspection reports for straight-forward compliance assessments; Proven and Protective: We are aligned with key members of the construction industry and our proven approach will help protect the men and women working on your projects; Knowledgeable and Experienced: Our staff are some of the most experienced construction managers and compliance specialists in the industry including highly knowledgeable, OSHA-30 certified inspectors; Thorough, Integrated and Mobile: Our electronic, real-time inspection protocols address all components of applicable inspection guidelines. It is mobile, digital, integrated with geographic information system (GIS) technology, facilitates quick reporting and is completely paperless and fully customizable, with an effective on-boarding process for the sites to ensure expectations are aligned for successful, protective outcomes. To learn more about our comprehensive services from on-boarding, site assessment, custom site-specific safety plans, site inspections and more, please reach out to Michael McCaffrey, TRC's Inspections Program Lead, at 781-660-3080 to discuss your needs for your community.

#### **Municipal Accounting Services**

Melanson Heath is one of the largest non-national Certified Public Accounting firms in New England and has been a leader in the accounting and auditing profession for over 42 years. Our Governmental Services Department includes eight principals and 65 professionals who work exclusively on governmental services. Among them are our outsourcing professionals, who are here for you and have the experience and knowledge to help solve your internal accounting challenges. We provide both long- and short-term services as well as flexible access, either remotely or on-site without adding to your long-term employee benefit costs. Contact us today! ContactUs@melansonheath.com.

# Executive Recruiting, Management and Governance Consulting Services

Community Paradigm Associates provides comprehensive professional services to public sector, private sector, and not-for-profit clients, including organizational and management studies, executive recruiting, operational analyses, personnel studies, compensation and classification plans, charter development, strategic planning, leadership training, and facilitation services. Community Paradigm Associates has a team of seasoned associates with expertise in all aspects of municipal government. For more information, contact Principal Bernard Lynch at 978-621-6733 or BLynch@CommunityParadigm.com; www.communityparadigm.com.

#### Executive Recruiting, Interim Staffing, Human Resources and Management Consulting

GovHR USA/GovTempsUSA provides executive recruiting and interim staffing solutions, management and human resource consulting to local government

and nonprofit clients across the country. Seasoned local government professionals provide 5-star quality services including: Classification and Compensation Studies; Temporary and Outsourced staffing; Performance Evaluation System and Training. Visit our website at <a href="https://www.GovHRusa.com">www.GovHRusa.com</a> or contact us at 847-380-3240 or info@govhrusa.com to discuss how we may serve your organization. Post to our job board at <a href="https://www.govhriobs.com">www.govhriobs.com</a>.

# Management, Human Resources and Executive Search

Rutherford Advisors Inc., DBA The Executive Suite, with more than 40 years' experience, is an expert in providing comprehensive, detailed and effective classification and compensation plans; human resource, performance evaluation, and management efficiency studies; interim management; and executive and senior staff recruitment for public, nonprofit and private organizations. We emphasize innovative solutions to commonly encountered management challenges. For discussion on your needs, please contact Warren J. Rutherford at 508-778-7700 or wjr@theexecutivesuite.com, or visit <a href="https://www.theexecutivesuite.com">www.theexecutivesuite.com</a>.

#### **GIS Consulting Services**

As a local government, does your community expect more from you? Geospatial technology is a great tool to use to meet these expectations and build trust. Spatial Relationships is a GIS consulting firm in Boston that specializes in on-demand personalized GIS services for local government. Need extra GIS support for an important project, but don't want to deal with the overhead of a large firm? Don't have GIS staff, but have a one-time need? Indispensable GIS staff going out on leave? We're here to help. To learn more about us, please visit <a href="https://www.spatial-relationships.com">www.spatial-relationships.com</a>.

#### **Town Counsel Services**

KP | Law is a municipal law firm. With offices in Boston, Hyannis, Lenox, Northampton and Worcester, we serve as town counsel to more than 125 towns throughout Massachusetts, from Provincetown to Williamstown, and as special counsel to another 90. For more than 30 years, we have devoted ourselves to municipal law and have become experts in the defense of all areas of municipal trial matters. We have specialists in all areas of municipal law and maintain an environmental and land use law department that is on the cutting edge of planning, zoning and conservation. KP | Law is highly sensitive to the limited legal services budgets of Massachusetts communities and thus has highly competitive billing rates to give your town the best quality legal counsel in the most cost-efficient manner. There is never a need for special counsel. Our breadth and depth of experience helps keep our cost per opinion to a minimum and enables us to service our clients quickly and efficiently, and is consistent with our commitment to excellence. For additional information on the legal services that KP | Law provides, please visit www.k-plaw.com or contact Lauren Goldberg, Esq., at 617-556-0007, or toll-free at 800-548-3522, or at lgoldberg@k-plaw.com.

# Governance and Management Consulting and Recruitment Services

The Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston provides a comprehensive range of professional services to public sector clients, including executive recruitment, organizational and management studies, charter development, compensation and classification plans, and the design and implementation of performance management programs. The Center's goal is to support enhancements to the productivity and effectiveness of government. The Center carries out its work using a combination of University professional staff and seasoned associates. Services may be obtained through intergovernmental agreement. For more information, please visit <a href="https://www.collinscenter.umb.edu">www.collinscenter.umb.edu</a> or contact Stephen McGoldrick at 617-287-4824 or stephen. mcgoldrick@umb.edu.

# General Consultant, Recruiting and Special Studies

Municipal Resources Inc. has been providing management solutions to New England municipalities since 1989. MRI is able to provide expertise when and where it's needed. Our services include executive recruitments, assessment centers and promotional testing; public safety organizational studies; finance operations; interim staffing; internal investigations; efficiency and regionalization studies. MRI has an extensive group of experienced subject experts that are able to provide the technical and management expertise that can help communities deliver quality services and resolve complex problems with real-world solutions. Contact us at 866-501-0352 or info@mrigov.com.

#### **Legal Services**

Brooks & DeRensis, P.C., is available to provide services to government entities at the state, county, city, town or regional district level. Legal services available include procurement law, contracts, eminent domain, labor relations and civil rights. Contact Peter Berry for labor matters, employment matters, civil rights matters and retirement matters, or Paul DeRensis for all other public law issues, at 857-259-5200.

# Organizational Development and Conflict Resolution

The Mediation Group is New England's one-stop shopping for conflict resolution and organizational development. With 30-plus years of experience, our multi-disciplinary team provides individuals and organizations with support to move forward constructively and improve functionality. Our services include: facilitation, mediation, training and coaching, leadership development, cultural competency, independent workplace investigations, stakeholder assessments, public engagement and process design. For more information, visit <a href="https://www.themediationgroup.org">www.themediationgroup.org</a>, email info@ themediationgroup.org or call 617-277-9232.

#### **Town Counsel Services**

Miyares and Harrington LLP provides Town and Special Counsel services to help build and implement local programs that serve community needs. We have the expertise you require, based on decades of real-world experience. We take the time to understand your situation. We inquire, listen, and respond. We provide options that will work for you. We are committed to the values of democracy, to preservation and enhancement of natural resources and the built environment, and to excellence and care in support of municipal objectives. We offer competitive rates, personal service, diligent attention to our clients' needs, and good humor. Please contact us at contact@

miyares-harrington.com or 617-489-1600.

#### **Tax Title Legal Services**

 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{KP}}\xspace\mid \ensuremath{\mathsf{Law}}\xspace$  has been providing a full range of legal services to municipal treasurers and collectors for more than 30 years. Our experienced tax title attorneys draft collection letters and payment agreements; prepare all instruments relative to tax takings and tax sales; draft pleadings for Land Court foreclosures; and provide full representation of municipalities in Land Court actions. We also provide assistance with disposition or reuse of tax parcels. The breadth of our experience, volume, use of experienced paralegals, state-of-the-art computer and informational services, and close proximity to the Land Court enables us to provide prompt, costeffective services. For additional information, please visit www.k-plaw.com or contact Lauren Goldberg, Esq. at 617-556-0007, or toll-free at 800-548-3522, or at lgoldberg@k-plaw.com.

#### **OPEB Funding via Tax Title Sale**

Tallage, a real estate investment company in Boston, assists cities and towns at no charge to execute tax title sales under M.G.L. Ch. 60, Sect. 52, for strategic purposes, such as using a percentage of the revenue to set up an OPEB Funding Trust. Using a small initial funding amount from tax title sales with a long-term strategy can dramatically reduce the OPEB number on the balance sheet. Other benefits of a tax title sale include payment of 100 percent of the principal, interest and fees owed per tax title; significant reduction in the expense of managing tax titles; and valuable due diligence provided by private investors on the validity and economics of the tax titles. To schedule a free meeting to discuss the tax title sale process that 45-plus municipalities across the state have recently experienced, and how the tool can be used in conjunction with an OPEB or other funding strategy, please contact Bill Cowin at Tallage at 617-543-7214 or Bill.Cowin@TallageLLC.com.

#### **Municipal Financial Management** Software: Accounting, Cloud, Utility and Collections

VADAR Systems provides financial management software to more than 100 Massachusetts municipalities. Our accounting, cloud, utility and collections applications are designed exclusively for Massachusetts municipalities by Massachusetts end users. The VADAR Cloud maximizes efficiency with 24/7 secure, remote access to all your applications from any device. Our user support offers unparalleled expertise. Proudly serving Massachusetts for 20-plus years. For a free on-site demonstration, please contact us at 877-823-2700 or sales@vadarsystems.com. Learn more at  $\underline{www.VADARsystems.com}$  . Locally owned and operated at 20 Main St., Suite G1, Acton, MA

#### **Management Consulting Services**

The Matrix Consulting Group is a management consulting firm that provides detailed analysis of public-sector agencies in New England. The firm's services include management, staffing, organizational and operations studies of every local government function, as well as feasibility studies, fleet management and facilities needs. Our staff expertise encompasses police, fire, public works, utilities, planning and building, recreation, finance and administrative functions. For more information, please contact Robin Haley, 17A Steele St., Worcester, MA 01607: 508-887-6564.

#### **Labor Counsel Services/Municipal Human Resources Specialists**

Clifford and Kenny, LLP provides quality representation to cities, towns and school districts in the area of labor and employment. Attorneys John Clifford and Jaime Kenny have many years of experience in representing clients for collective bargaining and personnel-related matters including discipline and discharge of unionized employees. We have extensive experience in the area of police and fire injured-on-duty cases, and have worked extensively with municipalities and insurers to resolve costly longterm claims. We offer training in sexual harassment, social media and the "just cause analysis" to municipal managers. We also serve as appointed hearing officers on a case-by-case basis. Many of our clients take advantage of a flat monthly rate for unlimited phone calls and emails, which encourages key managers to work with counsel prior to making critical personnel decisions. Check our website at CliffordKennyLaw. com to see a complete list of our satisfied clients or call John Clifford or Jaime Kenny at 781-924-5796 for more information.

#### **Municipal Financial Management** Services

Eric A. Kinsherf, CPA, has been involved in municipal finance since 1994 in various capacities, ranging from Finance Director to an auditor of municipalities as a Certified Public Accountant. Cities and towns in need of a CPA specializing in municipal auditing and consulting are offered services such as municipal audits, assistance in year-end closing, interim treasurer, collector and town accountant services, revenue forecasting, and capital financing plan assistance. If you are in need of a municipal audit or a financial consultant, please contact Eric Kinsherf at eric@erickinsherfcpa.com or at 508-833-8508. Learn more at www.erickinsherfcpa.com.

#### **Public Management Consultants**

MMA Consulting Group Inc. provides consulting services to cities, towns, and other public agencies. We specialize in public safety/emergency response (police, fire, EMS) issues, the design and administration of assessment centers, structured oral panels, and recruitment of police and fire executives. For information, contact Mark Morse, President, MMA Consulting Group Inc., 101 Court St. #7, Plymouth, MA 02360; 508-746-3653; mmacginc@gmail.com.

#### **Human Resources Consulting**

Human Resources Services Inc. provides a full range of human resource management consulting services to Massachusetts' local governments and other public agencies. Specialization includes compensation/ classification, performance appraisal, job analysis and evaluation, job descriptions, salary/benefits and total compensation surveys and analytics, personnel policies/handbooks, staffing and organizational management studies, HR audits and assessments. HR training services, recruitment and selection services, web-based HR services, and special projects. Please contact Sandy Stapczynski, President, Human Resources Services Inc., 9 Bartlet St., Suite 186, Andover, MA 01810; 978-474-0200; hrsconsulting@ comcast.net; or visit www.hrsconsultinginc.com. WBE certified.

#### **Executive Recruitment and Municipal** Management

Groux-White Consulting, LLC, is a full-service municipal management consulting firm specializing in executive recruitment, interim management, form of government studies, organizational effectiveness evaluations, strategic and financial planning and conflict resolution. Tom Groux and Rick White, One Pelham Road, Lexington, MA 02421; rickwhite58@verizon.net; 781-572-6332; www. grouxwhiteconsulting.com.

# Calendar The Bea

#### JUNE

Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, remote meeting, "lunch with the

remote meeting, "lunch with the managers," 12:30-1:30 p.m., Contact: MMA Senior Member Services Coordinator Denise Baker

9 Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association,

Board of Directors, 8:30-9:30 a.m., remote meeting. Contact: MMA Senior Member Services Coordinator Denise Baker

9 MMA Board of Directors, 10-11 a.m., remote meeting. Contact: MMA Executive Director's office

9 Massachusetts Select Board Association, Board

of Directors, 2-3:30 p.m., remote meeting. Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols

Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, annual meeting, webinar, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols

Massachusetts Select
Board Association and
Massachusetts Municipal
Councillors' Association, webinar
briefing, 12-1:15 p.m., Contact: MMA
Member Services Coordinator Isabelle
Nichols or MMA Senior Member
Services Coordinator Denise Baker

Massachusetts Municipal Mayors' Association, remote meeting, 10-11 a.m., Contact:MMA Communications and Membership Director Candace Pierce

Massachusetts Select Board Association, leadership conference webinar series, No. 2, 2-3 p.m. Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols

# \* The Beacon

**Massachusetts Municipal Association**One Winthrop Square, Boston, MA 02110

If any part of the address on this issue is incorrect, please email the correct information to database@mma.org.

Due to the ongoing COVID emergency, MMA has suspended all in-person meetings through the end of June. The meeting details here are subject to change.

#### **JULY**

Massachusetts Mayors' Association, monthly meeting, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Contact: MMA Communications and Membership Director Candace Pierce

Massachusetts Select Board Association, leadership conference webinar series, No. 3, 2-3 p.m. Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols

#### **AUGUST**

Massachusetts Select Board Association, leadership conference webinar series, No. 4, 2-3 p.m. Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols

#### **SEPTEMBER**

Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association,

4-7 p.m., Delaney House, Holyoke. Contact: MMA Senior Member Services Coordinator Denise Baker

Massachusetts Select Board Association, regional meeting, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., Sharon Community Center, Sharon. Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, boot

**PERIODICALS** 

camp, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Lake Pearl, Wrentham. Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator Isabelle Nichols

Massachusetts Mayors'
Association, monthly
meeting, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Contact: MMA
Communications and Membership
Director Candace Pierce

#### **OCTOBER**

Isabelle Nichols

Massachusetts Municipal Management Association,

boot camp, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Pine Ridge Country Club, Oxford. Contact: MMA Senior Member Services Coordinator Denise Baker

Massachusetts Select Board Association, Western Massachusetts Conference, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Log Cabin, Holyoke. Contact: MMA Member Services Coordinator

Massachusetts Municipal Management Association,

meeting, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Lake Pearl, Wrentham. Contact: MMA Senior Member Services Coordinator Denise Baker

To list an event of interest to municipal officials in The Beacon, send information about the event, including date, location, sponsorship, cost, and whom to call for more information, to editor@mma.org.

**MMA** contacts

**Denise Baker** can be reached at dbaker@mma.org

**Isabelle Nichols** can be reached at inichols@mma.org

**Timmery Kuck** can be reached at tkuck@mma.org

For more information, visit www.mma.org.

Online registration is available for most of these events.