

The Beacon

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February 2026

Gov. files \$62.8B state budget for FY27

By Adrienne Núñez

Gov. Maura Healey filed her \$62.8 billion spending plan for fiscal 2027 on Jan. 28, proposing an overall spending increase of 3.5% over the current fiscal year.

Her budget bill, known as House 2, includes incremental increases to key municipal accounts, while boosting rural school aid and continuing to fund public school accounts according to the sixth and final year of the schedule outlined in the Student Opportunity Act.

A climate of continued economic uncertainty, brought on in large part by federal government actions, hangs over the fiscal 2027 budget process. Economists and budget experts predict slow growth in the coming months, with numerous impacts on state revenues and investments resulting from the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act (known as OB3), as well as changes in immigration and employment, tariffs, and shifts in national and international markets.



Gov. Maura Healey, shown speaking in broad terms about her budget during Connect 351 on Jan. 23, filed a \$62.8 billion fiscal 2027 spending plan on Jan. 28.

“We’re very thankful for the governor’s proposed targeted investments in education, rural schools, special education, and roads and bridges through a separate transportation bill,” said MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine. “We appreciate her proposal for Unrestricted General Government Aid, which we see as a starting point for a continuing conversation, given the overwhelming need for essential municipal services.”

The governor’s budget recommendation is an initial step in the state budget process. Legislative hearings will follow on key budget areas, and the House and Senate will release and debate their own plans this spring, with the goal of sending a final budget to the governor before the start of the fiscal year on July 1.

The Division of Local Services has posted [preliminary Cherry Sheet estimates for each city, town and school district](#) based on the governor’s budget. The Cherry Sheets will be updated as each subsequent budget proposal is released.

■ **FY27 BUDGET** *continued on 31*

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Kassandra Gove is new MMA president; Kiana Baskin is VP

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

The two women leading the MMA’s Board of Directors this year say they’re prepared to help the state’s 351 cities and towns navigate a treacherous fiscal landscape and seek greater control over their financial destinies.

On Jan. 24, the last day of the [Connect 351](#) conference in Boston, Amesbury Mayor Kassandra Gove was elected president of the MMA for 2026, and Sharon Select Board Chair Kiana Baskin was elected vice president. Between them, the two leaders bring extensive backgrounds in public service and the nonprofit, legal and private sectors, as well as a commitment to



Amesbury Mayor Kassandra Gove, left, and Sharon Select Board Chair Kiana Baskin gather after being elected MMA president and vice president, respectively, on Jan. 24 during Connect 351 in Boston.

social justice work.

Gove, who served as the MMA’s vice president last year, succeeded Franklin Town Administrator Jamie Hellen. She said

■ **MMA PRESIDENT, VP** *continued on 30*

2026 MMA Board of Directors

The MMA Board of Directors holds regular meetings, often in Boston, followed by a meeting of the Local Government Advisory Commission with the administration. Board members are chosen by the Massachusetts Mayors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, Massachusetts Select Board Association, and Association of Town Finance Committees.

Executive Committee

Kassandra Gove, MMA President,
Mayor, Amesbury

Kiana Baskin, MMA Vice President
Select Board Member, Sharon

Jamie Hellen, MMA Immediate Past President
and MMMA District 2 Representative
Town Administrator, Franklin

Ted Bettencourt, MMA First Vice President
Mayor, Peabody

Denise Casey, MMMA President
Town Administrator, Wakefield

Lisa Feltner, MMCA President
Councillor, Watertown

Joshua Garcia, MMMA President
Mayor, Holyoke

Jennifer Glass, MSA First Vice President
Select Board, Lincoln

Kevin Mizikar, MMMA First Vice President
Town Manager, Shrewsbury

Michael Ossing, MMCA First Vice President
Councillor, Marlborough

Debra Roberts, MSA President
Select Board, Stoughton

Kevin Sullivan, ATFC President
Finance Committee, Hanson

James Walters, ATFC First Vice President
Finance Committee, Halifax

Adam Chapdelaine (non-voting)
MMA Executive Director

Colleen Bradley-McArthur, Councillor,
Waltham

Peter Cusolito, Select Board Member, Leicester

Denise Dembkoski, Town Administrator, Stow

Claire Freda, Councillor, Leominster

Melissa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator,
Brookline

Yolanda Greaves, Select Board Member, Ashland

Jill Hai, Select Board Member, Lexington

Heather Harper, Assistant Town Manager,
Sandwich

Christine Hoyt, Select Board Member, Adams

Carole Julius, Select Board Member, East
Bridgewater

Afroz Khan, Councillor, Newburyport

Andrea Llamas, Town Administrator, Northfield

Breanna Lungo-Koehn, Mayor, Medford

Mike McCabe, Mayor, Westfield

John McLaughlin, Councillor, Waltham

Shaunna O'Connell, Mayor, Taunton

Ryan Pereria, Councillor, New Bedford

Israel Rivera, Councillor, Holyoke

Sam Squailia, Mayor, Fitchburg

Liz Sullivan, Town Administrator, Dennis

Michelle Wu, Mayor, Boston

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Executive Director's Report

Connect 351 was a great launch pad for the work ahead

In the week following Connect 351, I continue to find myself overwhelmed with gratitude for the energizing and productive few days we had! As I look back on the conference, I am filled with so much appreciation for the community that makes the Massachusetts Municipal Association such a vibrant organization.



By Adam
Chapdelaine

This conference isn't just an event; it's collaboration in action. From the Berkshires to the Cape and everywhere in between, leaders from cities and towns across the state came together to share solutions, tackle our toughest challenges, and envision a stronger Commonwealth.

The success of this event wouldn't be possible without the contributions of so many people and organizations. Based on that, I need to express my most heartfelt thank you to:

Our Members and Attendees: Your dedication to public service is the heartbeat of Massachusetts. Thank you for showing up, leaning in, and bringing your expertise to the table. Most importantly, thank you for helping us demonstrate to Gov. Healey, Lt. Gov. Driscoll and U.S. Sens. Warren and Markey the significance of municipal government in the Commonwealth.

Our Speakers and Keynotes: Thank you for the insights and the "aha!" moments. You've given us the tools to

lead with more clarity and impact. We were so pleased to have had both Tim Shriver and Tami Pyfer join us at Connect 351 this year to share their timely and impactful tool, the Dignity Index. I'd also like to extend special thanks to Clarence Anthony and the whole team at the National League of Cities for being such an integral part of our conference experience this year.

Our Sponsors and Exhibitors: We couldn't do this without the support of so many key partners, whose support ensures that we can provide a world-class experience. Their innovations help keep our municipalities moving forward. I need to extend a sincere thank you to all who served as sponsors of Connect 351 this year: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, KP Law, Constellation, Abacus Health Solutions, Mass Save, Airbnb, Amalgamated Bank, Ameresco, Commodore Builders, Morgan, Brown & Joy, Nitsch Engineering, and Trane Technologies.

The MMA Staff: Behind every seamless session and event was a team working tirelessly. I am so proud of the work that all of the staff at the MMA put in to make Connect 351 a success. This work started months ago and culminated in three days of amazing effort at the convention center and the Omni Hotel. As you might expect, we'll be right back at

■ DIRECTOR'S REPORT *continued on 31*

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Communications Director
John Ouellette

Associate Editor
Jennifer Kavanaugh

Digital Communications Manager
Meredith Gabrilska

Massachusetts Municipal Association
Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association
3 Center Plaza, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108

617-426-7272 • www.mma.org

Twitter and Facebook: @massmunicipal

Communications Coordinator
Owen Page

Publisher
Adam Chapdelaine,
MMA Executive Director

Design
FCD, Inc.

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

1,400 leaders celebrate local government at Connect 351

By Meredith Gabrilksa

Collaboration, innovation and commitment to civility carried through as themes of the MMA's [Connect 351](#) conference on Jan. 22-24 in Boston, where some 1,400 municipal officials from across the state gathered for compelling speakers, timely workshops, countless networking opportunities, and a bustling Trade Show.

Convening at the Menino Convention and Exhibition Center in Boston's Seaport District for the second year, the event kicked off on Thursday afternoon, Jan. 22, with the Trade Show and two lively features — a Women Leading Government session called “Burning Questions,” with municipal leaders answering questions while eating progressively spicier wings and hot sauce, and an interactive “Boardroom Breakout” team-building exercise styled after the TV show “The Amazing Race.”

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu gave an energized welcome to attendees to kick off day two of the event on Jan. 23. Keynote speaker Timothy Shriver, CEO and founder of UNITE and co-creator of the Dignity Index, spoke about how vital it is to treat each other with dignity, especially when it comes to speech, regardless of differences or opposing views. Following Shriver were Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll, who had announcements about their state budget and Chapter 90 proposals, and the opening of the Community One Stop for Growth portal.

The conference was the third as MMA executive director for Adam Chapdelaine, a veteran of local government who attended many MMA conferences as a member.

“I know that, in these times, the work of local government has never been more important,” Chapdelaine said. “As the residents of the Commonwealth wake up every day to read the news, they are left wondering who they can trust and who they can rely on. And the reality is, they can trust you and your cities and towns.”

At the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Luncheon, Tami Pyfer, a former elected official in Utah, chief external affairs officer for UNITE and co-creator of the Dignity Index, discussed her career in public service and modeling civility at the local level.



Connect 351 attendees participate in Boardroom Breakout, an escape-room-style activity challenge, on Jan. 22 during Connect 351 in Boston.

The MMA presented four legislative awards during the Friday dinner.

On Saturday, Jan. 24, U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey discussed the delegation's efforts to protect funding for Massachusetts communities, and Lt. Gov. Driscoll returned to address the MMA's Annual Business Meeting.

The event featured 14 workshops and nine Learning Labs on Friday, and three larger, interactive sessions on Saturday that explored topics ranging from health insurance and collaborative planning to clean energy siting and permitting and artificial intelligence.

Presentation materials from the workshops are available on the [MMA website](#).

The Trade Show featured a record 287 exhibitors, including a number of environmental consulting, financial, energy and technology firms — plus the return of “EV Alley,” the debut of “AI Avenue,” and an expansion of Government Row.

The Massachusetts Mayors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, Massachusetts Select Board Association, and Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association held their annual business meetings on Saturday, electing leadership and discussing timely topics.



Andrew O'Malley, left, Yarmouth's deputy police chief, speaks during a workshop on public works recruitment, retention and succession planning during Connect 351 on Jan. 23 in Boston. Other participants included, l-r, Ricardo Morales, Pittsfield's public works commissioner; Jen Breaker, Danvers assistant town manager and communications director; and workshop moderator Roby Whitehouse, Yarmouth's assistant public works director and president of the Massachusetts Highway Association.

National League of Cities Executive Director Clarence Anthony, a former mayor, energized the Saturday morning crowd with a conversation that touched on bridging divides, building partnerships, and policy issues facing communities.

For the eighth year, the MMA's conference had a mobile app to help attendees make the most of their experience. The app features comprehensive information and interactive features, including the ability to access workshop materials, build a personal schedule, connect with fellow attendees, and receive important notifications and updates.

■ **CONNECT 351** *continued on 22*

Gov. files 4-year Ch. 90 bill with \$300M per year

By Violet Gehr

Speaking to local leaders from across Massachusetts at the MMA's Connect 351 conference on Jan. 23, Gov. Maura Healey announced that she was filing a four-year Chapter 90 bond bill that day that would provide a total of \$1.2 billion for the municipal road and bridge maintenance program.

The proposed \$300 million per year for base [Chapter 90](#) funding would match last year's level, which was a 50% increase over previous years.

The MMA has long advocated for a multi-year Chapter 90 authorization, paired with a substantial funding increase, to help municipalities budget more effectively and efficiently. A multi-year authorization enables communities to program longer-term projects and provides much-needed stability amid uncertain economic conditions.

Last year at Connect 351, the governor announced that she was filing a bond bill with \$1.5 billion for Chapter 90 over

five years. The Legislature ultimately authorized a one-year total of \$300 million for Chapter 90 in fiscal 2026, with \$200 million distributed through the traditional Chapter 90 formula and \$100 million allocated based solely on road miles.

In addition, a supplemental budget provided a one-time allocation of \$80 million for Chapter 90 in fiscal 2026.

Also at Connect 351, Healey announced the launch of the Funding for Accelerated Infrastructure Repair (FAIR) program to fund local transportation infrastructure projects. Supported by revenue from the Fair Share amendment (an income surtax on earnings above \$1 million), the new program would allocate \$75 million to help municipalities address a significant backlog of local bridges in urgent need of repair.

The governor's commitment to Chapter 90 funding is part of her broader [transportation funding plan](#), which is aimed at addressing long-standing



On Jan. 23, Gov. Maura Healey filed a four-year Chapter 90 bond bill that would provide a total of \$1.2 billion for the municipal road and bridge maintenance program.

infrastructure needs statewide. Healey said the goals are to improve roads, reduce traffic, make bridges safer, and ensure a transit system that works in every region.

The governor's Chapter 90 bill is expected to be referred to the Joint Committee on Transportation, which would review the proposal and hold a public hearing in the weeks ahead. ●

Governor files \$1.15 billion FY26 supplemental budget

By Adrienne Núñez

Along with her [fiscal 2027 state budget plan](#), Gov. Maura Healey today also filed a fiscal 2026 supplemental budget bill that would allocate \$1.15 billion in fiscal 2025 surplus revenue derived from the surtax on incomes over \$1 million, which must be invested in transportation and education initiatives.

Notably, the supplemental budget would allocate \$150 million for the Special Education Circuit Breaker to complement the \$652.7 million proposed in House 2, for a total of \$802.7 million, representing an 18.8% increase over fiscal 2026.

Her supplemental budget bill ([HD. 5607](#)) is intended to support fiscal 2026 initiatives and complement her \$62.8 billion state spending plan for fiscal 2027. It would invest \$785 million in the state's transportation system and \$358 million in education programs.

The supplemental budget also proposes \$7 million for the recently created [Unpaved Roads Grant Program](#), which helps municipalities repair, maintain, and improve unpaved roads, primarily in rural communities.



The Healey-Driscoll administration has filed a supplemental budget bill with \$7 million for the recently created Unpaved Roads Grant Program, which helps municipalities repair, maintain, and improve unpaved roads, primarily in rural communities.

Proposed transportation allocations include:

- \$644.7 million for MBTA operations and response to Federal Transit Administration recommendations
- \$80 million to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for workforce development, unpaved road grants, and a new tax credit for use of sustainable aviation fuel

- \$60 million for regional transit authorities, including \$15 million for microtransit and "last mile" transit grants to expand options for commuters to get to public transit systems

In addition to the Special Education Circuit Breaker investment, proposed education allocations include:

- \$150 million to replenish the Early Education and Care Trust Fund, used to support the early education system and daycare providers
- \$25 million for tutoring to help children in grades 1 to 3 develop foundational literacy skills
- \$18 million to supplemental financial aid for community college students through MassReconnect
- \$10 million for a new multi-year K-12 school initiative, called Accelerating Achievement, focused on rapidly improving student outcomes in the state's lowest-performing schools
- \$5 million for adult basic education and English for Speakers of Other Languages services, with an emphasis on vocational learning ●

Tim Shriver urges leaders to choose dignity over division

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

As they navigate this challenging time in America, the path through divisiveness and toward preserving democracy involves embracing other people's dignity, keynote speaker Timothy Shriver told more than 1,000 local leaders during [Connect 351](#) on Jan. 23 in Boston.

Shriver, chair of the Special Olympics and CEO and founder of UNITE, highlighted his work in co-creating the [Dignity Index](#), a tool that scores speech along a continuum ranging from dignity to contempt. The index is designed to help both political leaders and citizens rethink the language they use to describe people with opposing views.

The Dignity Index is part of Shriver's mission to overcome the contempt that he says is poisoning civic life, and to offer strategies for bridging divisions and seeing each other's humanity.

"You can't love this country and then hate your fellow Americans," Shriver said, adding that confronting contempt and dehumanization is just as important as every other policy and political issue that leaders face.

"We've got to choose dignity," Shriver said. "If you want to solve problems, and get the best ideas from the other side, we've got to treat them with dignity. There is no America without democracy, and there's no democracy without faith, and that depends on dignity."

UNITE works with political leaders, school districts, businesses and institutions to help ease divisions, prevent violence, and solve problems. Shriver created the Dignity Index in 2021 with Tami Pyfer and Tom Rosshirt. (Pyfer at the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Luncheon at Connect 351, and Shriver and Pyfer recorded an episode of the MMA's ["The 351" podcast](#).)

A nephew of the late President John F. Kennedy and U.S. Senators Robert F. Kennedy and Ted Kennedy, Boston-born Shriver emphasized his Massachusetts connections, cheering on the New England Patriots and giving a shout-out to local officials from Barnstable, home to the iconic Kennedy Compound in Hyannisport.

Shriver, who hosts the ["Need a Lift?" podcast](#), has dedicated himself to

confronting what he calls a "contempt industrial complex" that whips up widespread resentment and hooks people on contempt. "We're all getting tricked," he said, by partisan media outlets and manipulative algorithms that feed misleading information and tap into people's baser instincts.

"We judge a lot as human beings, but sometimes judgment goes from trying to gauge the situation to separation, to superiority and even to dehumanization," he said. "I would suggest that right now, we are in what I would call a culture of contempt, a culture where judgment and demonization and dehumanization have become normative."

Shriver estimated that 100 million Americans have disowned family members and friends with differing political views, while trust in government and all institutions is collapsing.

"Contempt is a toxin that is eating away at the social and cultural and trust and familial fabric for all of us," he said.

The antidote, he said, is treating people with dignity.

The Dignity Index is an eight-point scale that measures speech according to how much it does, or doesn't, embrace the humanity of people from different groups or opposing views. Speech that scores five or higher reaches toward dignity, while speech registering at four or below pushes toward contempt. In his talk, Shriver asked the audience to score quotes from historical and public figures.

The "country is starving" for more dignity in public and private life, he said, with polls showing that 80% or more of respondents agree on basic political principles, including the importance of fact-based information and compromise.

During a question-and-answer session, local leaders asked about practical applications of Shriver's index, particularly in a time of authoritarian threats and dehumanizing messages. Alex Pratt,



Timothy Shriver, CEO of UNITE, showing his support for the New England Patriots, discusses strategies for addressing contempt and preserving dignity in the public sector during his keynote address on Jan. 23 at Connect 351 in Boston.

Malden's director of strategic planning and community development, asked how to address the disconnect between a local government and the public.

"How do you engage with the community, where you have divisions that you described, of people getting totally different sets of facts, sets of information?" Pratt asked. "How do you apply the index more broadly to a larger group of people?"

Shriver urged community leaders to create a "subculture of dignity" that they can model for the public. He also suggested using the index as a mirror to examine one's own speech, and relying on trusted people to hold them accountable.

Treating opponents with dignity doesn't mean acquiescing in the face of ethical or moral threats, Shriver said. It's important to call out unjust and dehumanizing behaviors, policies and programs.

"Ironically, treating people with dignity actually unleashes you to hold them accountable for their policies, and their programs and their actions, because you've gone around the easy road, which is to just call them names," Shriver said. "What does [calling names] hold them accountable for? Nothing. You've called them names and you've given them a pass on their point of view." ●

Senators discuss infrastructure, federal impacts

By Owen Page

Health care costs, federal funding sources, infrastructure, and concerns about the Trump administration's immigration enforcement efforts were the key topics of addresses from U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey during the MMA's [Connect 351](#) conference on Jan. 24.

Both senators thanked municipal officials for their partnership in working for the residents of Massachusetts, while underscoring the importance of local government.

"At a time when people across this country are ... unconvinced that government can still work for them, you are the people who are on the front lines, giving this Commonwealth hope, and showing people what good government looks like," Warren said.

She noted that the costs associated with running a city or town have increased across the board, and "your municipal budgets have been stretched to the breaking point." She said federal funding cuts have adversely impacted schools and health care.

"It's tough, but tough doesn't mean that we don't fight back," Warren said. "And we are fighting back."

She said she wouldn't vote for a federal budget bill that doesn't decrease health care costs, nor one that increases funding for the Department of Homeland Security, until "there are some meaningful restrictions in place" related to



U.S. Sens. Ed Markey, left, and Elizabeth Warren speak to local officials during the MMA's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 24 in Boston.



immigration enforcement.

"We have got to make a stand on the budget," she said. "You want to understand the values of the country, take a look at [the Trump administration's] budget."

Warren emphasized the need for housing of all types, pointing to a bipartisan bill with 40 provisions aimed at increasing housing supply, including faster environmental approvals and pre-approved building plans.

Markey noted that the Trump administration's immigration enforcement efforts "strain local public safety resources."

"It hurts small businesses, it hurts places of worship, and it hurts community centers, and it sends shock waves through our public schools," he said.

He underscored the importance of

public service and government, discussing recent legislative victories such as the Social Security Fairness Act, which restores benefits for public employees, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that secured \$1.7 billion for the Sagamore Bridge and \$150 million for West-East Rail in Massachusetts.

Such efforts, he said, "demonstrate that when we organize, when we advocate together, government can still deliver for our constituents."

Markey stressed the importance of advocacy, and pointed to ongoing efforts to retain federal funding for community health, transportation, sustainability, infrastructure, and veterans care. He also listed ongoing efforts to increase funding for cities and towns, including proposals for \$2 billion for community health centers, \$5 billion for public works projects, \$4 billion for home energy assistance, and \$20 million for Massachusetts fire departments.

"We are going to fight to get us back up to the levels we need to help us run our cities, and to help save lives," Markey said.

He acknowledged that communities are facing significant challenges and that, "the duty to protect, to care, for our constituents is heavier, and it seems to grow heavier every single day."

Evoking the country's 250th anniversary, Markey said: "Today, we are knocked down, but we are not knocked out," said Markey. "We're going to fight, and we're going to win, and it's going to come out of the cities and towns of Massachusetts that started the [American] Revolution."



Local leaders face 'Burning Questions'

Westwood Assistant Town Administrator Molly Fitzpatrick, far right, asks panelists a question during "Burning Questions," a panel featuring local government experts answering questions while eating progressively spicier chicken wings. Panelists included, l-r, Devon Fields, Chelsea deputy city manager for operations; Sean Dugan, Easton interim town administrator; Hillary Waite, Braintree stormwater manager; and Lexington Town Manager Steve Bartha.

NLC's Anthony urges local leaders to rise up

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

Clarence Anthony, CEO and executive director of the National League of Cities, urged local leaders to rise up and meet the challenges facing cities and towns during his keynote appearance at Connect 351 on Jan. 24 in Boston.

In a conversation with journalist Crystal Haynes, Anthony covered a range of topics facing municipal leaders, including fiscal challenges, incivility in public life, the growing influence of artificial intelligence, and the housing crisis.

Given the uncertainty about federal policies and their downstream effects on local services, Anthony told leaders to transcend the partisanship that is bogging down other levels of government and embrace their unique power — that they know their community's needs better than anyone — when advocating for more resources from state and federal officials.

"We need to stand up," Anthony said. "We need to be stronger about what we do and why we do it. We need to tell the stories that we see in our communities. We need to tell that on Beacon Hill, as well as in Washington, D.C., because sometimes, when we don't tell our story of what we see, they don't even know about it."

One of the nation's top municipal advocates, Anthony has been the NLC's executive director since 2013, but got his start at the local level. At age 24, he was elected mayor of South Bay, Florida, serving for 24 years there. While mayor, he was the NLC's president in 1999.

Speaking at a Boston convention center named for the late Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, Anthony recalled working with the mayor on an initiative at the NLC. He said the organization's Institute for Youth, Education and Families was Menino's brainchild and remains part of his legacy.

Anthony urged leaders to understand and examine the "why" of their public service. Rather than focusing on rubbing elbows with the powerful, he said, they should maintain their passion and intellectual energy for the work.

"That's what we need right now, empowered leaders who understand their role, who have studied what they need



Clarence Anthony, right, the CEO and executive director of the National League of Cities, addresses the Saturday general session during Connect 351 in Boston. Interviewed by journalist Crystal Haynes, he discussed building effective partnerships, navigating artificial intelligence, and addressing housing needs, among other topics.

in their communities," he said, "and making sure that when you go in rooms and advocate, you go in there with power. You don't go in there just taking pictures."

Anthony discussed the financial pressures facing municipalities, and applauded two recent MMA reports — "[A Perfect Storm](#)," and "[Navigating the Storm](#)" — that analyze the forces threatening the delivery of local services and outline policy recommendations for addressing municipal budget shortfalls.

"It's just important to put data to issues," he said, "and then the navigation piece really shows a vision on how you can get there."

Saying he wished he could "give you a silver bullet around these times of fiscal responsibility," Anthony advised municipal officials to set priorities, tighten budgets, get creative, and find ways to become more self-sustaining. In this new reality, they might still get some money from the federal government, but they shouldn't count on it.

"So a comprehensive vision for your community, and how you are going to fund that, is going to be important for the future," he said. "Because I don't want to tell you somebody is going to come to save you. We're going to save ourselves."

Anthony acknowledged that officials confront increasing hostility, and the erosion of boundaries between their public and private lives. He noted that 79% of local elected officials in America

have reported being harassed, or have witnessed their kids being bullied through social media. Local leaders must model civility and inclusivity for their residents, he said.

Anthony and Haynes discussed the rise of AI and its effects on governments. Anthony advised municipal leaders to embrace AI, but proceed with caution — adopt clear and transparent policies, communicate those policies to the public, and prioritize efficiency and innovation in delivering services.

"We have no choice, y'all," he said. "We have to jump on board, and we need to put policies in place in our communities around AI, or we're going to fall further behind."

On the housing affordability crisis, Anthony reassured local leaders that Massachusetts isn't alone. He urged them to be creative in encouraging more housing production, which might involve better ways of using municipal bonds and other financial techniques.

"We have to figure something out, because you and I are losing our future leaders and graduates from colleges to other communities because they can't live in your community," Anthony said. "Each of you have to focus on ways in which to address that issue that works for your community."

As municipal leaders navigate all of these complex challenges, Anthony had a closing message for them.

"Keep fighting," he said. ●

At Connect 351, Healey and Driscoll address priorities

By John Ouellette

Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll spoke to some 1,400 city and town leaders from across Massachusetts during [Connect 351](#), the MMA's annual conference, on Jan. 23 in Boston.

In an appearance that came the morning after the governor's State of the Commonwealth address and five days before she filed her [state budget plan for fiscal 2027](#), Healey and Driscoll touched on a number of their priorities, including affordability, housing, energy costs, health care and the popular [Community One Stop for Growth grant portal](#).

The governor announced that she was filing a [multi-year bond bill for the Chapter 90](#) local road and bridge program that would provide \$300 million per year for the next four years.

Healey also announced the launch of a Funding for Accelerated Infrastructure Repair (FAIR) program to fund local, municipal transportation projects across the state. The program, supported by leveraging Fair Share income surtax revenue to expand borrowing capacity, will help municipalities work through their backlog of municipal bridges in need of repair. The investment is made possible by the expansion of the Commonwealth Transportation Fund through the governor's \$8 billion transportation plan.

FAIR investments will be used to reopen



During their joint appearance at Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 23, Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll cover a range of topics affecting municipalities, including road and bridge funding, transportation, the state budget, schools, and health care.

closed bridges, remove postings on restricted bridges, and preserve additional bridges from falling into either category, the administration said. Projects in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties are already being evaluated, with additional locations to follow. The FAIR program is intended to reduce administrative burdens.

Driscoll discussed the administration's 10-year transportation plan, which includes an Accelerated Bridge Construction program.

The governor spoke about her [fiscal 2027 budget bill](#) only in broad strokes,

but separately released details regarding local aid accounts.

She and Driscoll also promoted her proposed [Municipal Empowerment Act](#), which would modernize local authority, expand municipal flexibility, and provide targeted local revenue options. The package is strongly supported by municipal officials and the MMA.

"There's a lot of reform in there," Driscoll said. "We're really hoping to get that over the goal line. It's going to take your help and advocacy."

■ HEALEY AND DRISCOLL *continued on 27*

MMA honors legislators during Connect 351

By Dave Koffman

During its Connect 351 conference on Jan. 23, the MMA recognized four legislators for their dedicated work in providing critical resources to cities and towns and promoting policy changes to modernize municipal government operations.

At a dinner reception, the MMA presented Legislator of the Year awards to Sen. Brendan Crighton and Rep. James Arciero. As chairs of the Joint Committee on Transportation, Crighton and Arciero provided critical support in passing a historic Chapter 90 infusion in 2025 — a top MMA priority. The effort resulted in a 50% increase to the base local road and bridge funding, to \$300 million.

Crighton, of Lynn, represents the Third Essex District in the Senate. Arciero, of Westford, represents the 2nd Middlesex

District in the House.

At the same reception, the MMA presented Municipal Advocate Awards to Sen. Jacob Oliveira and Rep. Danielle Gregoire, who introduced MMA priority legislation to codify current remote and hybrid public meeting options. Their work played a pivotal role in extending these provisions through June of 2027. Further, the provisions are included in the governor's proposed Municipal Empowerment Act, another MMA priority for this legislative session.

Oliveira, of Ludlow, represents the Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester District in the Senate. Gregoire, of



Winners of four MMA legislative awards gather during Connect 351 on Jan. 23 in Boston. Pictured, l-r, are Sen. Brendan Crighton, Rep. Danielle Gregoire, Rep. James Arciero, and Sen. Jake Oliveira.

Marlborough, represents the 4th Middlesex District in the House. ●

Tami Pyfer discusses rhetoric, empathy, dignity

By Meredith Gabrilksa

During the MMA's [Connect 351](#) conference in Boston, Tami Pyfer, the chief external affairs officer for UNITE, spoke about her years of public service at the local and state levels, how women have a responsibility to raise others up alongside themselves, and how the [Dignity Index](#) she co-created can improve communications at all levels of government.

Pyfer sat for an interview with Amherst Councillor Lynn Griesemer for the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Luncheon on Jan. 23. She began by reflecting on gender-related challenges she has encountered, and the impact that political rhetoric has had for her.

Pyfer served for eight years as a city councillor in Logan, Utah, for four years on the Utah State Board of Education, and for seven years as education policy advisor to former Utah Gov. Gary Herbert before joining UNITE in 2020.

Pyfer said her five children all have differing political views, and she is proud of her kids' reasons for aligning with the different political groups. But she said there was a period during the past five years when they were struggling to get along.

"How has it impacted women?" Pyfer asked, referring to the political divisions of today. "Well, it has affected our families. And, therefore, it has impacted me, and has really increased the urgency that I feel to work on these issues."

When asked about women uplifting others into public office, Pyfer said sometimes, instead of helping each other and creating space for others to do well, women compete against each other in their drive to do well and to make a difference in their communities.

"We should be there opening the door and ... encouraging and leading the way for others," Pyfer said.

She said competitiveness can contribute to contempt-based rhetoric in politics, for women on the left and the right. Women can do a better job of supporting each other if they look beyond labels and focus on the work.

"When you start to pull the labels away and see all the good work that they're doing, that has also helped me reach

out and say ... I just want to know who you are, and I know as a woman, you represent me," Pyfer said. "So when I see two people on a ballot that, for all intents and purposes, their experiences are the same ... I'm going to [select] a woman every time. I just am, because I need someone that thinks more like I do."

On national and international issues becoming more present in local politics, and local issues gaining national attention, Pyfer acknowledged the challenge for municipal officials being held accountable at public meetings for issues they have no control over and being confronted with contempt-based rhetoric seeping down from the national stage.

"It's hurting us," she said.

Pyfer explained UNITE's [Dignity Index](#), a tool that measures political speech along an eight-point continuum from contempt to dignity. She said UNITE is pursuing a two-part strategy — "grass tops" and "grass roots" — by working with governors ("grass tops") to adopt the index, and with local officials and, through them, their constituents ("grass roots").

Pyfer gave examples of the index being adopted by city councils in different parts of the country with positive results, sharing stories from local leaders who paused during a meeting to adjust their language, and of constituents who recognized harmful language from previous comments and apologized.

Pyfer said UNITE is working toward "a groundswell of people who are starting to understand the language of contempt and dignity, recognize it, and take a public stand, saying, 'Yeah, I'm not going to do that anymore.'"

She urged local leaders "to model that different behavior," so constituents say, "I went to the town council meeting and ... the town moderator got up and said, 'We've adopted this Dignity Index. We just want you all to know that this



Dignity Index co-creator Tami Pyfer discusses her experiences as a former city councillor and her work to create productive dialogue during the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Luncheon on Jan. 23 in Boston. She was interviewed by Amherst Town Councillor and WEMO Chair Lynn Griesemer.

is how we're going to treat you. We're going to stay on the dignity side of the scale. If you hear us dipping down below, I want you to let us know."

Pyfer noted data from the book "Invisible Women" showing that peace agreements are not only more likely to be reached when women are at the negotiating table, but they're also more likely to last. Women have often been excluded from the table, even when decisions are being made that affect them, but women can help solve divisions in our country in no small part because of their empathy.

"Empathy is a quality generally that women are born with," she said. "That's like the best thing you can bring to your work ... being able to understand someone else's point of view and position."

"I want to make sure you understand how powerful you are as women," Pyfer said. "And ... how desperately we need [your voices]. ... You're going to help make your communities better."

Also at the luncheon, [WEMO inducted its committee for 2026](#). ●

2026 MMA Board of Directors installed

The 2026 MMA Board of Directors was installed during the association's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 24.

The voting directors are elected by the following MMA organizations: the Massachusetts Mayors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, Massachusetts Select Board Association, and Association of Town Finance Committees.

The immediate past president of the MMA is an ex-officio member.

The board members for 2026 are:

Appointed directors

MMA President: Kassandra Gove*

Mayor, Amesbury

MMA Vice President: Kiana Baskin*

Select Board Member, Sharon

Mayors' Association President:

Joshua Garcia*

Mayor, Holyoke

Mayors' Association First Vice

President: Ted Bettencourt*

Mayor, Peabody

Mayors' Association Second Vice

President: Michelle Wu

Mayor, Boston

Councillors' Association President: Lisa

Feltner*

Councillor, Watertown

Councillors' Association First Vice

President: Michael Ossing*

Councillor, Marlborough

Councillors' Association Second Vice

President: John McLaughlin

Councillor, Waltham

Management Association President:

Denise Casey*

Town Administrator, Wakefield

Management Association First Vice

President: Kevin Mizikar*



Members of the 2026 MMA Board of Directors gather on Jan. 24 at the closing reception during Connect 351.

Town Manager, Shrewsbury
Management Association Second Vice

President: Liz Sullivan

Town Administrator, Dennis

Select Board Association President:

Debra Roberts*

Select Board, Stoughton

Select Board Association First Vice

President: Jennifer Glass*

Select Board, Lincoln

Select Board Association Second Vice

President: Jill Hai

Select Board, Lexington

Finance Committees President: Kevin

Sullivan*

Finance Committee, Hanson

Finance Committees First Vice

President: James Walters*

Finance Committee, Halifax

MMA Immediate Past President and

MMMA District 2 Representative:

Jamie Hellen*

Town Administrator, Franklin

MMA Executive Director: Adam

Chapdelaine* (ex-officio, non-voting)

Elected directors

Colleen Bradley-McArthur, Councillor,

Waltham

Peter Cusolito, Select Board Member,

Leicester

Denise Demboski, Town

Administrator, Stow

Claire Freda, Councillor, Leominster

Melissa Goff, Deputy Town

Administrator, Brookline

Yolanda Greaves, Select Board Member,

Ashland

Heather Harper, Assistant Town

Manager, Sandwich

Christine Hoyt, Select Board Member,

Adams

Carole Julius, Select Board Member,

East Bridgewater

Afroz Khan, Councillor, Newburyport

Andrea Llamas, Town Administrator,

Northfield

Breanna Lungo-Koehn, Mayor, Medford

Mike McCabe, Mayor, Westfield

Shaunna O'Connell, Mayor, Taunton

Ryan Pereria, Councillor, New Bedford

Israel Rivera, Councillor, Holyoke

Sam Squailia, Mayor, Fitchburg

* Denotes Executive Committee

member ●

Members OK fiscal resolution at MMA Business Meeting

During the MMA's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 24 in Boston, local leaders from member communities across Massachusetts overwhelmingly approved a policy resolution on the state-local fiscal partnership.

The [fiscal resolution](#) seeks to ensure a strong partnership between cities and towns and the state in fiscal 2027. It identifies municipal needs in areas including unrestricted aid; education and charter school finance; capital needs such as

road maintenance, municipal and school facilities, water and wastewater systems, and climate resilience; and local-option flexibility for local revenues.

As state and municipal leaders prepare for the coming fiscal year, and economists predict modest growth and continued economic uncertainty fueled by federal policy actions, municipalities across Massachusetts are grappling with tightly capped property tax limits, inflation that has significantly outpaced revenue

growth, and discretionary state aid that has not recovered from the 2008 Great Recession.

The MMA's two recent reports — "[A Perfect Storm](#)" and "[Navigating the Storm](#)" — document the fiscal reality that cities and towns are experiencing, along with policy solutions focused on targeted relief. The member-endorsed resolution contends that a renewed state-local partnership, fueled by the collective advocacy

■ BUSINESS MEETING *continued on 23*

Administration opens Community One Stop for Growth

By Owen Page

At the MMA's Connect 351 conference on Jan. 23, Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll announced the launch of the fiscal 2027 application for Community One Stop for Growth, a portal that provides access for municipalities and organizations to 14 state economic development grant programs.

Programs in the One Stop offer direct funding and support to housing and economic development projects related to placemaking, planning and zoning, site preparation, building construction, and infrastructure.

Driscoll encouraged communities who have not yet participated in One Stop to join the process.

[Community One Stop](#) offers a streamlined process for communities, organizations, and developers to access a range of economic development grants and technical assistance across multiple agencies. One Stop grant programs are administered by the Executive Office of Economic Development, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, and the quasi-public MassDevelopment agency.

Municipalities and organizations wishing to apply for funding through Community One Stop may begin by participating in

an [optional Expression of Interest](#) process that runs through June 3. During this time, applicants may receive guidance on priority projects from Executive Office of Economic Development staff before submitting a full application.

Interested communities may also participate in [virtual office hours](#) throughout February, March and April that cover both general One Stop information as well as specific grants within the One Stop program.

In addition, the state will host a [webinar series](#) in February covering One Stop topics, including a general overview session on Feb. 2, an application guidance session on Feb. 4, and prerecorded webinars covering the One Stop technology system, to be posted on Feb. 5, and individual grant programs, to be posted on Feb. 12.

Applicants may begin working on their applications now in the portal. The EOED will accept full application submissions from May 4 through June 3, with awards announced in October with contracting expected to begin in November.

Grant programs accessible through Community One Stop include the MassWorks Infrastructure Program, the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, Vacant Storefront Program, the Rural Development Fund, the Housing Choice

Grant Program, the Community Planning Grant Program, the HousingWorks Infrastructure Program, the Underutilized Properties Program, the Site Readiness Program, the Brownfields Redevelopment Fund, and the Real Estate Services Technical Assistance, and The TDI Equity Investment Program.

This year, Community One Stop is adding two existing state economic development programs to the portal: the Seaport Economic Council Grant Program and the MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund.

The Seaport Economic Council Grant Program provides capital funds to coastal communities for community planning and investment to stimulate economic development, advance maritime technology development and innovation, and to construct, enhance and protect coastal assets.

The MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund supports activities related to horizontal infrastructure associated with housing.

Since its launch in 2021, Community One Stop has given nearly 1,500 awards totaling more than \$744 million in grants to 306 communities, including \$227 million to Gateway Cities and \$179 million to rural and small towns.

For more information and application details, visit www.mass.gov/onestop. ●

Culvert replacement grant application opens

The Division of Ecological Restoration on Jan. 20 announced that it is seeking proposals for its Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance grant program, with applications due by March 20.

According to the Division of Ecological Restoration, roughly \$2.9 million is anticipated to be available for fiscal 2027, and individual grant awards typically range from \$25,000 to \$400,000, with larger awards generally supporting construction projects. Requests between \$400,000 and \$650,000 will also be considered this year.

Funding may support field data collection, design and engineering, permitting, and/or construction.

Information about the Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance program, along with six other environmental grant programs, is available through

the new [Environment and Climate One Stop \(ECO One Stop\) portal](#).

The Request for Responses and application can be accessed through a new [Grants Management System](#). Applicants must create a MyMassGov account through the Grant Management System before completing their application.

The [ECO One Stop Grants Catalogue](#) has descriptions of all participating grant programs. A [matrix of the required information by grant program](#) is also available online.

All RFR materials are available through [COMMBUYS](#) as well.

Questions regarding the fiscal 2027 CRMA and the fiscal 2027 ECO One Stop RFR must be submitted electronically by Feb. 18 at 11:59 p.m., either by email to ecoonestop@mass.gov or via the [Bid Q&A tab on COMMBUYS](#).



The Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program provides funding to remove or replace culverts in areas of high ecological value.

Responses to questions are anticipated to be published to COMMBUYS by Feb. 25.

The DER will hold [MassEnviroScreen](#) office hours on Wednesday, Feb. 11, 3-4 p.m. ([Click here to register](#).) ●

MSBA accepting Statements of Interest

On Jan. 12, the Massachusetts School Building Authority began accepting Statements of Interest for consideration in 2026.

Submitting an SOI is the critical first step in the MSBA's program for school building construction, addition, and/or renovation or repair grants. It allows districts to inform the MSBA about deficiencies that may exist in a local school facility and how those deficiencies inhibit the delivery of the district's educational program.

April 17 is the SOI closing date for districts submitting for consideration under the Core Program, which is intended for new construction, additions, and/or renovation projects. For more information, see the [Core Program SOI](#)



The Massachusetts School Building Authority is accepting Statements of Interest until April 17 for its Core Program.

[Overview](#) on the MSBA website.

The Accelerated Repair Program, which is intended for roofs, windows and doors, and heat pump conversions in existing school facilities, will reopen in 2027, consistent with its biennial schedule.

The MSBA encourages all interested districts to submit an SOI to the MSBA.

The MSBA has made changes to its SOI template for the 2026 filing period. If the district submitted a Core Program or ARP SOI in 2025 and intends to use the pre-populate option to update this year's SOI, changes to the SOI template may impact responses to certain questions.

Supporting material is required when selecting Statutory Priorities 1 and 3. Districts may also decide to provide supplemental material. In both cases, the information must be electronically uploaded to the SOI system as a condition of submitting an SOI this year. Hard copies will no longer be accepted. ●

State leaders estimate 2.9% state revenue growth in FY27

By **Adrienne Núñez**

On Jan. 14, state budget leaders announced an agreement on a state revenue forecast for fiscal 2027, predicting a 2.9% increase.

Facing predictions of slow economic growth and general uncertainty due to federal policy actions, Administration and Finance Secretary Matthew Gorzkowicz, Senate Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues and House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz estimate that the Commonwealth will collect \$44.9 billion total tax revenue in fiscal 2027.

This figure includes \$2.7 billion in revenue from the surtax on incomes over \$1 million, a revenue stream that must be used for transportation and education programs. Excluding the surtax, leaders estimate \$42.2 billion in tax revenue for the coming fiscal year, representing a 2.4% increase.

State leaders agreed to limit surtax spending to the projected \$2.7 billion — \$300 million more than was budgeted for fiscal 2026.

In addition to the revenue projections, budget leaders noted that the agreement accounts for projected impacts associated with last year's federal One Big

Beautiful Bill Act, also known as "OB3."

Each year, state budget officials are required to convene to establish a joint revenue forecast, with final estimates due by Jan. 15. The process includes the [consensus revenue hearing](#), which was held on Dec. 16, where budget experts and economists are invited to offer insight to inform budget leaders' decisionmaking.

Gov. Maura Healey, the House, and the Senate use the consensus revenue estimate in building their respective fiscal 2027 state budget recommendations. ●

Housing Choice designation applications open for 2026

The Executive Office of Housing and Liveable Communities announced on Jan. 13 that it has opened the application period for the 2026 [Housing Choice Initiative Designation](#).

The program has two designations: the Housing Choice Community Designation and a new [Rural and Small Town Housing Choice Community Designation](#). The Executive Office of Housing and Liveable Communities defines rural and small towns as communities with a population under 7,000 or with a population density of fewer than 500 residents per square mile.

The Housing Choice Initiative rewards municipalities that have built

new housing units at certain rates or amounts in the last five years and have adopted housing best practices to sustain a modern workforce and increase access to opportunity for Massachusetts residents.

Housing Choice communities receive exclusive access to the [Housing Choice Grant Program](#) and receive bonus points or other considerations for [other participating programs](#).

Application criteria and best practices for the [Housing Choice Community Designation](#) and the [Rural and Small Town Housing Choice Community Designation](#) have been made available for interested communities.

Applicants must provide their community's total year-round housing units from the 2020 Census and the net increase in year-round housing units from Jan. 1, 2021, through Dec. 31, 2025. Applicants must also demonstrate the best housing practices and policies their community has implemented.

Applications are due by Feb. 27.

Additional information about the designation program is [available online](#).

Applicants may sign up for [one-on-one technical assistance office hours](#) with EOHL staff to discuss questions prior to submitting an application. ●

‘Power Forward’ initiative aims to expedite housing

The Healey-Driscoll administration is partnering with the state’s two largest electric utilities – Eversource and National Grid – to launch Power Forward, an initiative to get housing connected to the electric grid faster.

Power Forward will support municipalities in evaluating electric grid capacity in areas that are primed for development, with the goal of bringing more housing online as quickly, efficiently and affordably as possible.

Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll announced the initiative during [Connect 351](#) on Jan. 24. She said Power Forward is one of several collaborative efforts between state agencies, local officials, utilities and developers to meet the state’s urgent housing needs.

The administration said the program will make it “easier and more affordable to get new housing connected to our grid, which means getting people in homes faster.”

“Developers have told us limited grid capacity and long timelines create real challenges for getting the housing we need built,” Driscoll said.

She added that Power Forward will give developers and municipalities “the early information they need to make informed decisions about where to build and how to get needed housing projects online quickly.”

Power Forward is intended to help streamline planning and provide greater clarity on the infrastructure costs needed for electrification.

Housing and real estate developers, municipalities, and businesses currently face a complex and evolving process to connect new development projects to the electric grid, according to the administration. It can be challenging and time-consuming for developers to understand where there is grid capacity and how much it will cost to connect to the grid. Developers must pay for studies to determine precisely how much electricity is available at a site and what grid upgrades — such as new transformers, distribution lines and substation upgrades — are needed to safely connect their project. This process can take anywhere from several weeks to multiple years, depending on the project scope, and can add significant time and costs to much-needed housing developments.

“Municipalities across Massachusetts

know well that our clean energy future needs a strong partnership between local governments, state government, and our utilities to provide clean, reliable service to our residents and businesses,” said MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine. “The MMA appreciates the Power Forward initiative, announced at our annual conference for municipal leaders, as an important opportunity to make progress in the Commonwealth.”

Power Forward details

Power Forward will conduct advanced grid studies for cities and towns, providing a clear pathway to evaluate where new affordable, energy-efficient housing can be built quickly and cost-effectively.

Dedicated project managers at the utilities will support municipalities in understanding grid readiness and what upgrades are needed to advance projects submitted through Power Forward.

The Department of Energy Resources will also support up to 60 advanced grid studies over the next two years for designated municipalities.

Both utilities and the DOER will provide additional information and resources on Power Forward, including a webinar for municipal officials, this spring — in advance of accepting applications in April.

Other improvements

The administration and all three investor-owned utilities — Eversource, National Grid, and Unitil — also announced the launch of several other resources and efforts aimed at further streamlining and standardizing the grid connection process.

Eversource has launched a new, online tool to identify real-time grid capacity at the parcel level within its service territory. National Grid also hosts a real-time grid capacity map online. Eversource and National Grid will hold an event for municipal leaders on Feb. 27 at noon to demonstrate the maps’ capabilities and how municipalities can use them.

All three utilities now have a “Step Zero” offering, which provides customers with detailed information on available grid capacity at a site prior to submitting a new service request. All three utilities also have processes to enable customers to escalate delays or other pain points in the new service connection process to the correct utility supervisor or leadership



The Healey-Driscoll administration is partnering with the state’s two largest electric utilities to support municipalities in evaluating electric grid capacity in order to expedite housing development.

team member.

Eversource and National Grid will hold a webinar for municipal officials on Feb. 6 at 1 p.m. to explain the grid connection process and answer questions.

Resources

A [new one-stop website](#) offers information on these initiatives and more about the customer grid connection process, providing easy-to-understand information on the connection process, frequently asked questions, and links to relevant utility websites and tools, including the utilities’ grid capacity maps.

The administration also established the “Electric Connections Improvements Forum,” which will bring the utilities, developers, state agencies, and other stakeholders together semi-annually to address issues in the grid connection process and develop solutions. The first two Electric Connections Improvements Forums will be held on March 17 and Sept. 15 at 100 Cambridge St. in Boston. More information on the forums is on the new [grid connection website](#).

The administration said its proposed [Energy Affordability, Independence and Innovation Act](#) would also improve the grid connection processes for new development by creating processes to proactively identify and build utility infrastructure to facilitate economic development and housing, further integrating economic development needs into ongoing grid-planning efforts. The legislation would also require electric utilities to provide flexible interconnection solutions to reduce customer costs and timelines for interconnection, at no cost to other customers. ●

MMA Webinars

Digital accessibility

An MMA webinar on Jan. 14 covered what municipalities need to know about digital accessibility.

Panelists were Adam Gojanovich, accessibility training coordinator, and Mindy Johnson, documents and communications accessibility coordinator, from the Commonwealth's [Accessibility Center for Consulting, Education and Support Services](#) (ACCESS) team.

Gojanovich describes digital accessibility as “ensuring that the digital world offers equal access for everyone,” including municipal content management systems, websites, applications, emails, and social media.

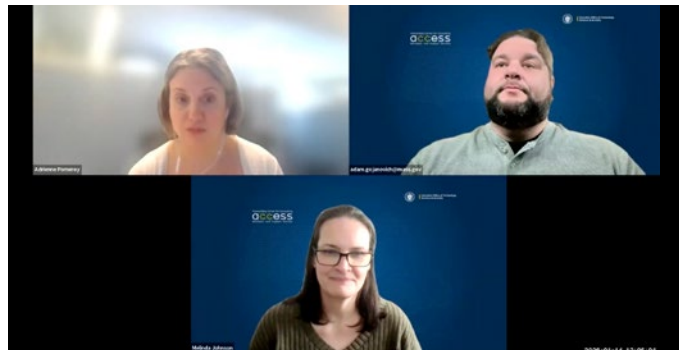
In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice updated [Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#), which requires public entities to ensure that web content and mobile apps are accessible based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) A and AA standards. Municipalities with a total population of 50,000 or more must meet the standards by April 24, 2026. Smaller communities have until April 2027.

Any documents placed in archives, such as those kept only for public record and reference, do not need to be made accessible until requested.

Gojanovich said digital accessibility work requires effort across multiple departments, and no single person can handle it alone. He recommended that municipalities begin by creating

Webinar topic suggestion form available

The MMA invites members to submit topic ideas for webinars or offer their expertise to present on a topic. Visit the [webinars form](#) on our website.



Panelists discuss digital accessibility and provide resources regarding upcoming federal accessibility requirements during a recent MMA webinar. Speakers include Adam Gojanovich, top right, accessibility training coordinator, and Mindy Johnson, bottom, documents and communications accessibility coordinator, from the Commonwealth's Accessibility Center for Consulting, Education and Support Services (ACCESS) team. Adrienne Pomeroy, Somerville's Americans with Disability Act coordinator, moderated the webinar.

Date: Jan. 14 **Length: 75 minutes**

[VIEW WEBINAR ↗](#)

an inventory of all the content they produce to help prioritize their starting point.

The ACCESS team shared resources for municipalities to use as they prepare for the new rules, including their [accessibility training resource center](#) and their [office hours](#).

Adrienne Pomeroy, ADA coordinator for the city of Somerville, moderated 25 minutes of questions and answers, addressing inquiries regarding how to label archived documents, how artificial intelligence impacts digital accessibility, and prior social media posts.

– *Kristianna Lapierre*

MMA launches AI webinar series on Feb. 11

On Feb. 11, the MMA will kick off its artificial intelligence webinar series with an introductory webinar on the power of context for AI use.

The webinar will discuss how artificial intelligence can fit into municipal work, including the importance of context in AI outcomes, what “AI literacy” means for public sector teams, and a responsible starting point for municipalities.

Presenters will be Kevin Gulley and Brendan McSheffrey from the [Kendall Project](#), a Massachusetts-based company that helps organizations develop the clarity, shared language, and operating



Kevin Gulley



Brendan McSheffrey

foundations needed to use AI safely and effectively.

This MMA webinar is the first in a series

on AI. Sessions will also cover practical AI applications for municipal use and creating AI policies.

[Online registration is available](#) for the 90-minute webinar, which will begin at noon. Only MMA members may register. MMA members include elected officials and municipal employees from MMA member communities across the state. Media members are not permitted to attend.

Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator *Kristianna Lapierre* at klapierre@mma.org

Symposium examining town meeting is March 11

“Deliberation and Division: Making Change at the New England Town Meeting,” a free symposium focused on the history, operations, and contemporary challenges and innovations related to town meeting, will be held at the University of Massachusetts Amherst on March 11.

MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine will serve as a panelist at

the event, which is hosted by the UMass Amherst Political Science Department and features keynote speaker [Jane Mansbridge](#) of Harvard University.

A number of panels will focus on all aspects of town meeting. The event will also feature interactive case studies to evaluate different town meeting scenarios, skill-building sessions, and networking opportunities.

Complete information about participants, panels and the schedule is [available online](#). Attendees should [RSVP](#) in advance. Registration is free and open to the public, with an online attendance option for those unable to attend in person. ●

Application training available for CDBG programs

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities anticipates the availability of funding for the following federal fiscal 2026 Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant program components: Community Development Fund and Mini-Entitlement Program.

The Massachusetts CDBG program provides federal funds on a competitive basis to municipalities with a population of less than 50,000 that are not designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as entitlement areas.

Communities may apply to the Community Development Fund or the Mini-Entitlement Program for a variety of projects, including rehabilitation of housing stock, improvements to infrastructure, stabilization of neighborhoods, planning, public social services and downtown related projects.

An information session providing application guidance will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams on Feb. 12 from 9:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Those wishing to participate in the application training should use the meeting

ID 256 641 293 770 83 and the passcode Te2fy3nC. To join, visit teams.microsoft.com/join/25664129377083?p=6A53D-mY7yM5lZeS9Us.

Application guidance materials will be available online at www.mass.gov/service-details/community-development-block-grant-cdbg.

The CDBG online application is planned for release on Feb. 17.

Questions about the training may be directed to Kathryn.McNelis@mass.gov. ●

MMA announces town report contest winners

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

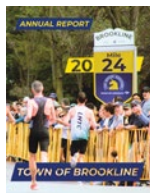
Brookline, Foxborough, Tyngsborough and Northfield took the top prizes in their respective categories in the MMA's Annual [Town Report Contest](#).

The award winners were recognized during the MMA's [Connect 351](#) conference in Boston on Jan. 23.

The following communities received awards:

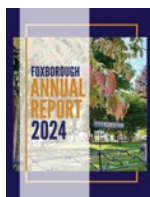
Category 1 (population above 30,000)

- 1st place: Brookline
- 2nd place: Andover
- 3rd place: Arlington



Category 2 (population of 15,001-30,000)

- 1st place: Foxborough
- 2nd place: Middleborough
- 3rd place: Concord



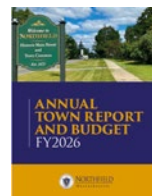
Category 3 (population of 5,000-15,000)

- 1st place: Tyngsborough
- 2nd place: Weston
- 3rd place: Littleton



Category 4 (population below 5,000)

- 1st place: Northfield
- 2nd place: Avon
- 3rd place: Hubbardston



Judging criteria include visual appeal, arrangement of material, layout and cover design, presentation of statistics and data, summary of the year's achievements, evidence of local planning for the future, and the report's usefulness.

State law ([Ch. 40, Sect. 49](#)) requires towns to prepare and publish an annual town report before their annual town meeting. The reports typically include financial information, highlights of the previous calendar year, reports from

major boards, committees and key officials (including the select board), election results, and town meeting information.

Serving as judges for the MMA contest this year were Greg Federspiel, a retired manager who most recently served as the town administrator in Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Keith Bergman, a retired town manager who now serves as a senior advisor for the International City/County Management Association and the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association. ●

MMA group and affiliated organization officers for 2026

At their annual business meetings held during Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 24, member groups representing the state's mayors, councillors, town managers and administrators, and select board members elected their officers for 2026.

Women Elected Municipal Officials named its 2026 Steering Committee at its annual Leadership Luncheon on Jan. 23. Other groups closely affiliated with the MMA selected their leadership in the summer or fall of 2025.

Massachusetts Mayors' Association



Joshua Garcia

President: Joshua Garcia, Holyoke
 First vice president: Ted Bettencourt, Peabody
 Second vice president: Michelle Wu, Boston
 District 1: Michael McCabe, Westfield
 District 2: Sam Squailia, Fitchburg

District 3: Kassandra Gove, Amesbury
 District 4: Breanna Lungo-Koehn, Medford
 District 5: Shaunna O'Connell, Taunton

Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association



Lisa Feltner

President: Lisa Feltner, Watertown
 First vice president: Michael Ossing, Marlborough
 Second vice president: John McLaughlin, Waltham
 District 1: Israel Rivera, Holyoke
 District 2: Claire Freda, Leominster

District 3: Afroz Khan, Newburyport
 District 4: Ryan Pereria, New Bedford
 District 5: Colleen Bradley-McArthur, Waltham

Massachusetts Municipal Management Association



Denise Casey

President: Denise Casey, town administrator, Wakefield
 First vice president: Kevin Mizikar, town manager, Shrewsbury
 Second vice president: Liz Sullivan, town administrator, Dennis
 Secretary/treasurer: John Mangiaratti, town manager, Acton

District 1: Andrea Llamas, town administrator, Northfield
 District 2: Jamie Hellen, town administrator, Franklin

District 3: Denise Demboski, town administrator, Stow
 District 4: Melissa Goff, deputy town administrator, Brookline
 District 5: Heather Harper, assistant town manager, Sandwich
 At-large representatives:
 Peter Lombardi, town manager, Brewster
 Jay McGrail, town manager, Middleborough
 Marc Strange, town administrator, Ludlow
 Ryan McLane, town administrator, Carl

Massachusetts Select Board Association



Debra Roberts

President: Debra Roberts, Stoughton
 First vice president: Jennifer Glass, Lincoln
 Second vice president: Jill Hai, Lexington
 Secretary: Kathryn Coughlin, Natick
 District 1: Christine Hoyt, Adams

District 2: Yolanda Greaves, Ashland
 District 3: Kiana Baskin, Sharon
 District 4: Carole Julius, East Bridgewater
 District 5: Peter Cusolito, Leicester

Association of Town Finance Committees



Kevin Sullivan

President: Kevin Sullivan, Finance Committee member, Hanson
 First vice president: James Walters, Finance Committee member, Halifax
 Second vice president: Jonathan Harris, Finance Committee member, Weston
 Treasurer: Al Tosti, Finance Committee member, Arlington

Directors:
 Dana DeCosta, Finance Committee member, Harwich
 William Stuart, Finance Committee member, Rockland
 Kaitlin Morin, Finance Committee secretary, Webster
 Mary McBride, Finance Committee member, Billerica
 Ira Miller, Finance Committee member, Sharon

Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources Association



Jen Breaker

Chair: Jen Breaker, assistant town manager and communications director, Danvers
 Vice chair: Michael Taylor, human resources director, Pittsfield

Treasurer: Molly Fitzpatrick, assistant town administrator/human resources director, Westwood
 Secretary: Kristina Ordnung, assistant town manager – human capital, Shrewsbury
 Past president: Mary Beth Bernard, retired
 Directors: Karen Bratt, human resources director, Franklin
 Marie Buckner, human resources director, Sandwich
 Gregory Enos, assistant town administrator/human resources director, Wrentham
 Sandra Knight, human resources director, Brockton
 Caitlyn Julius, assistant human resources director, Springfield
 Michelle Pizzi O'Brien, human resources director, Newton
 Christine Purple, human resources director, Marlborough
 Emily Russo, human resources director, Easthampton
 Lisa Ugliarolo, human resources director, Norwood

Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts



Ryan McLane

Chair: Ryan McLane, town administrator, Carlisle
 Vice chair: Denise Demboski, town administrator, Stow
 Secretary/Treasurer: Paul McLatchy III, town administrator, Ashfield

Women Elected Municipal Officials



Lynn Griesemer

Chair: Lynn Griesemer, councillor, Amherst
 First vice chair: Lisa Kouchakdjian, Select Board member, Sudbury
 Directors: Jennifer Grigoraitis, mayor, Melrose; Sally Cragin, councillor, Fitchburg; Hanna Switekowski, Select Board member, Sharon;
 Katrina Huff-Larmond, councillor, Randolph

Massachusetts Municipal Communicators



Sean Dugan

Chair: Sean Dugan, assistant town administrator, Easton
 Vice Chair: Jeremy Warnick, director of media relations and content strategy, Cambridge

MMA presents municipal website awards

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

Five communities from across the state were recognized as winners of the MMA's annual [municipal website awards](#) during the [Connect 351](#) conference in Boston on Jan. 23.

The awards recognize excellence in customer service, functionality, convenience and government transparency delivered by a municipal website in Massachusetts.

Awards are given in five population categories:

More than 35,000: Brookline —

www.brooklinema.gov

25,001 to 35,000: Wellesley —

www.wellesleyma.gov

12,001 to 25,000: Webster —

www.webster-ma.gov

5,001 to 12,000: Maynard —

www.townofmaynard-ma.gov

Under 5,000: Truro —

www.truro-ma.gov

Municipal websites are evaluated using the following criteria:

- Clear branding as the official municipal government site, with local government address and hours prominently listed
- Intuitive navigation tools and organization of material
- Robust search function
- Current and timely information
- Availability of public records
- Mobile-friendly or mobile-responsive design
- Resources for residents such as the ability to apply for licenses and permits, pay bills, order documents and make suggestions
- Tools to promote economic development (e.g., ability to obtain licenses and

permits or view list of developable land and vacant sites)

- Information about departments (e.g., key personnel, contact information, office hours, and department mission or purpose)
- Use of social media and tools for online community engagement
- Visual appeal and overall experience

Previous winners are not eligible to re-enter the contest unless their website has undergone a significant redesign.

This year's contest judges were Wendy Foxmyn, a retired town administrator in Deerfield who served as the chief administrative officer, assistant chief administrative officer, and interim town administrator in more than a dozen western Massachusetts communities; and Jeanne Ostroff, the digital media manager in Watertown. ●

MMHR presents Skop Award to Michael Taylor of Pittsfield

By Martin Davis

Pittsfield Human Resources Director Michael Taylor received the 2025 Emil S. Skop Award during a Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources-sponsored workshop at [Connect 351](#) on Jan. 23 in Boston.

The Skop Award is given each year in recognition of outstanding contributions made to the field of municipal human resources management.

In presenting the award, Westwood Assistant Town Administrator Molly Fitzpatrick, the Skop Award recipient in 2024, lauded Taylor's achievements.

"In his community, he has taken a thoughtful, forward-looking approach to municipal HR — modernizing systems, centering equity and inclusion, and building employee supports that are both thoughtful and practical," Fitzpatrick said.



Westwood Assistant Town Administrator Molly Fitzpatrick, left, presents the 2025 Emil Skop Award to Pittsfield Human Resources Director Michael Taylor during a Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources-sponsored workshop at Connect 351 on Jan. 23 in Boston.

"Municipal HR professionals from across the state regularly turn to him for advice, perspective, and calm guidance through some very complex personnel and labor issues," she added.

Fitzpatrick also highlighted Taylor's role in MMHR, noting his effectiveness in turning ideas into action, especially with MMHR's new Pathways program, which helps members tailor their professional development journey around key HR disciplines.

"Because of Michael Taylor's leadership, Pathways didn't stay a concept," Fitzpatrick said. "It launched this year — which means fewer conversations about why we need it, and more conversations about how well it's working. ... But beyond the accomplishments, and there are many, what stands out most to me is how this person shows up."

Skop was one of the founding members of the Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association (renamed MMHR in 2019) and served as its first executive secretary. He's remembered for his tireless commitment to the municipal HR profession. ●

MMA to host webinar on municipal applications of AI

On Feb. 25, the second webinar in the MMA's AI Webinar Series will offer examples of how municipal leaders throughout the Commonwealth are using artificial intelligence.

Longmeadow Town Manager Lyn Simmons will showcase examples of

how she has used AI in her role, and additional panelists will be announced in the coming weeks.

[Online registration is available](#) for the 75-minute webinar, which will begin at noon. Only MMA members may register. MMA members include elected

officials and municipal employees from MMA member communities across the state. Media members are not permitted to attend.

Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre at klapierre@mma.org ●

Applications opened for MMA-Suffolk Certificate

By Kate Evarts

The application for the MMA-Suffolk Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program became available on the MMA website on Feb. 1, and the deadline to apply is April 30.

This is a competitive application process; applicants will be notified of their status by mid-May.

The MMA and Suffolk University will hold a Zoom information session on March 11 about upcoming offerings of the program. To register, visit www.mma.org or [click here](#). The one-hour session will begin at 10 a.m.

The graduate-level certificate program provides a solid grounding in municipal management, and covers topics such as human resources management, budgeting and financial management, and strategic leadership.

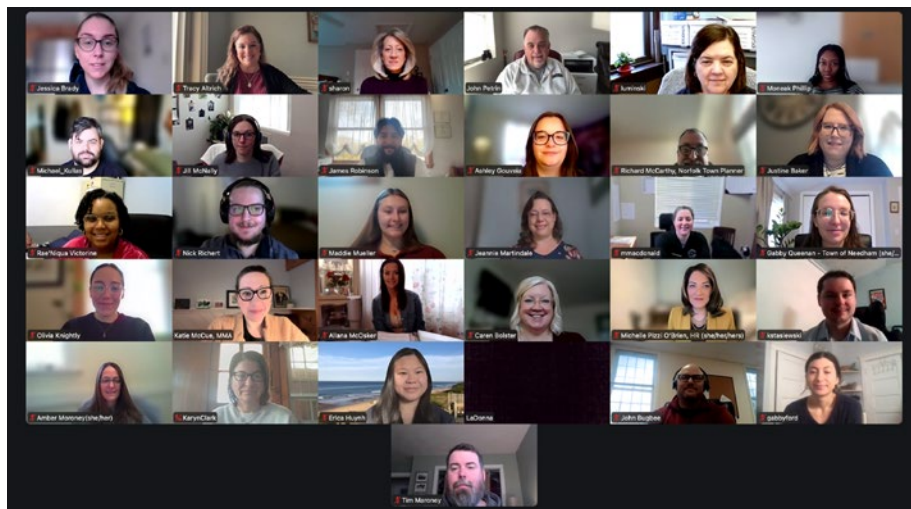
The program is held over the course of 25 Fridays from September through May. The 2026-2027 certificate programs will be hosted in Littleton,

MMA to host SAPHE 2.0 webinar on March 3

The MMA will host a webinar with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on March 3 covering the State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE 2.0) program.

The Department of Public Health is dedicated to improving the health of everyone in the Commonwealth by transforming the local public health system to meet today's needs. A key to this transformation is the SAPHE 2.0 law that passed in November 2024.

This webinar, designed for municipal



Students from the winter session of the MMA-Suffolk Municipal Finance Management Seminar gather online for their orientation on Jan. 9. There are 26 students in this 19th session of the seminar. The session is one of several offerings from the MMA-Suffolk program this year.

Medfield and Palmer. The program is held in person (40%) and on Zoom (60%). Each location can accommodate up to 25 students.

Municipal Fellowship

Municipal professionals interested in pursuing a master of public administration degree at Suffolk

■ MMA-SUFFOLK *continued on 34*

leaders, will provide an overview of the ongoing local public health system transformation and how it is improving municipalities and the health and safety of Massachusetts residents.

Guest speakers will share specific examples of local system transformation in their communities, supported by the DPH's Public Health Excellence Grant Program.

[Online registration is available](#) for the 75-minute webinar, which will begin at noon. Only MMA members may

register. MMA members include elected officials and municipal employees from MMA member communities across the state. Media members are not permitted to attend.

The MMA hosted an introductory webinar on the SAPHE 2.0 program and elevating local public health in December 2025. (The recording is [available on mma.org](#).)

Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre at klapierre@mma.org

Administration awards \$2M in marsh restoration funding

The Healey-Driscoll administration on Jan. 13 announced more than \$2 million in funding to restore and monitor salt marshes along the Massachusetts coastline.

Salt marshes are important ecosystems that help to prevent flooding and storm damage to communities. They also function as habitat for fish and wildlife, and absorb carbon that would otherwise contribute to climate change.

The Salt Marsh Restoration and

Monitoring grants, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, will support seven projects to restore and monitor degraded salt marsh ecosystems, according to the administration. The resulting data will help identify effective restoration techniques, and combinations of techniques, to inform future restoration efforts and investment.

The grants are part of the administration's efforts to promote resilience and

support ecological restoration projects, including the issuance of salt marsh restoration guidance by MassDEP.

Awards between \$40,000 and \$389,000 were made to projects in Boston, Buzzards Bay, Dennis and Falmouth, Eastham, the North Shore, and Newbury, Essex and Ipswich.

Additional information, along with a full list of projects, is available at mass.gov. ●

MMA webinar to cover municipal budget presentation

On March 17, the MMA will host a webinar on visually communicating municipal budgets.

What are municipal leaders doing to make their annual budget digestible, accessible, and engaging for constituents? Award-winning broadcast journalist Dave Kartunen, founder of [kartoonEDU](#), finds that many cities and towns are not presenting their budgets in a way that resonates with their community, despite having the communication tools to do so.

In this webinar, Kartunen will walk attendees through a visual storytelling campaign that any municipality can leverage to tell their budget story — to



Jayne Wellman



Dave Kartunen

any audience, through any medium, and on any platform.

[kartoonEDU](#) uses custom animation to explain complex concepts and has worked on topics from budgets to

recruitment to capital construction projects.

In addition to Kartunen, speakers will include Wakefield Superintendent Doug Lyons and Reading Assistant Town Manager Jayne Wellman.

[Online registration is available](#) for the 75-minute webinar, which will begin at noon. Only MMA members may register. MMA members include elected officials and municipal employees from MMA member communities across the state. Media members are not permitted to attend.

Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre at klapierre@mma.org

Women Leading Government to hold annual conference on March 5

Women Leading Government will hold its sixth annual conference on March 5 at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester.

The full-day event is designed for women in appointed positions in local government who are interested in advancing

their careers and building their management and leadership skills.

The cost is \$60, including lunch.

Women Leading Government events are open to all staff in appointed positions in local government. More information

and online registration are available on www.mma.org.

Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker at dbaker@mma.org

Everything new on the MMA website, straight to your inbox.

MMA.org is the best source for the latest developments affecting Mass. cities & towns:

- State budget & local aid
- State & federal grant opportunities
- Member group meetings & webinars
- Connect 351 announcements
- And much more!



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MMA

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Municipal
Association

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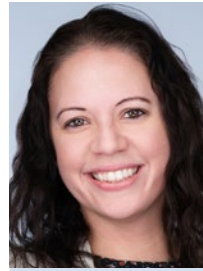
Management Association to hold half-day boot camp

The Massachusetts Municipal Management Association will hold a half-day boot camp on Feb. 26 at Middleborough Town Hall.

The free event will focus on management best practices and transitioning into the top position. Speakers will include Middleborough Town Manager Jay McGrail, Plymouth Town Manager Derek Brindisi, Bridgewater Town Manager Justin Casanova-Davis and Swansea Town Administrator Mallory Aronstein, who will share their experiences and expertise. There will be ample opportunity for networking.



Justin Casanova-Davis



Mallory Aronstein

Local government staff are invited to attend this free

event.

The meeting will run from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Lunch will be provided. Online registration is available on www.mma.org.

Contact: Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker at dbaker@mma.org

Seaport Economic Council changes, \$16.7M in grants announced

The Healey-Driscoll administration on Jan. 7 announced the signing of an [Executive Order](#) reconstituting the Seaport Economic Council and updating the council's mission and membership, along with a recommendation of \$16.7 million in fiscal 2026 grants for 21 projects.

The grants will support maritime economic development planning projects, port and terminal infrastructure improvements, enhancements to recreational boating and coastal tourism assets, and dredging design and permitting work to improve navigation, public safety, and long-term coastal resilience.

The administration said the actions will strengthen the state's maritime economy and support the long-term vitality of the state's waterfronts and harbors. A \$4 billion economic development bill enacted in 2024, known as the Mass Leads Act, included a \$100 million reauthorization for the Seaport Economic Council.



The Healey-Driscoll administration on Jan. 7 announced the signing of an executive order that reconstituted the Seaport Economic Council and updated the council's mission and membership.

The administration said the new council membership ensures specific expertise related to integral components of the maritime economy, such as boating, tourism and fisheries. The council will also advise the Healey-Driscoll administration on coastal planning coordination, economic development, and resilience efforts.

The council includes a designee of the mayor of Boston, as well as Gloucester Mayor Paul Lundberg, New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell, Salem Mayor Dominick Pangallo, and Fall River Mayor Paul Coogan.

Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll, chair of the council, discussed the grants and swore in new council members during a council meeting at the New England Boat Show in Boston.

The council's grant recommendations, ranging from \$88,000 to \$2.6 million, include projects in Barnstable, Beverly, Boston, Chatham, Dennis, Fairhaven, Fall River, Falmouth, Gloucester, Hull, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Newburyport, Plymouth, Quincy, Rockport, Salem, Swansea, Truro, Wareham, Wellfleet and Weymouth.

The full list of grants and project descriptions is [available online](#). ●

State awards \$1.3 million for drinking, stormwater projects

The Healey-Driscoll administration on Jan. 15 announced nearly \$1.3 million in grants for drinking water and stormwater projects in Massachusetts communities.

One set of grants comes from the Water Management Act Grant Program, administered by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, which helps to maintain healthy rivers and

streams while restoring degraded water resources. The communities of Attleboro, Hadley, Hopkinton, Milford, Provincetown, Shrewsbury and Webster received awards ranging from \$20,000 to \$120,000.

The second set of grants comes from the the Small, Underserved and Disadvantaged Communities Grant Program, which provides additional support to meet federal drinking water requirements, reduce PFAS exposure,

eliminate lead, and tackle other drinking water challenges. Awards ranged from \$9,546 to \$460,000 and went to Blandford, Dighton, Long Pond Realty Trust (Plymouth), and Toria Heights Condominium (Oxford).

Visit MassDEP's [Water Management Act Program](#) web page for more information. ●

MIIA recognizes municipal leaders in risk management

Each year, MIIA honors member communities that demonstrate outstanding and sustained commitment to risk management and wellness.

With nominations made by MIIA staff, the annual awards shine a light on members who don't just meet requirements but go above and beyond by building cultures of safety and wellness across every department and leadership level.

MIIA presented this year's awards during its Annual Business Meeting and breakfast during [Connect 351](#) in Boston on Jan. 24.

Outstanding Commitment to Workplace Safety: Erving

Erving's town administrator and employees demonstrate a strong dedication to workplace safety through consistent engagement in training and adherence to federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and state Department of Labor Standards policies and procedures. The town's ongoing safety practices — including providing appropriate personal protective equipment and tools — demonstrate its commitment to protecting both employees and residents. This shared dedication fosters a culture of accountability and proactive risk management across all departments.



Seven communities received MIIA awards on Jan. 24 during Connect 351 in Boston, including the town of Pepperell, which received an award for its work in wellness.

Strong Commitment to Safety and Innovation: Lee

Lee's cross-departmental safety committee ensures that safety remains a top priority across the schools, town, and county-wide operations. The Department of Public Works effectively manages and maintains town infrastructure through scheduled preventive maintenance and well-coordinated seasonal preparedness efforts. Lee is also a leader in technology implementation, maintaining strong

systems across IT and water infrastructure. The schools use current generation building management systems with emergency features, allowing them to serve as designated emergency shelters for the town.

A Leader in Hosting Risk Management Training: Plymouth

Over the past three years, Plymouth has created a strong relationship between the

■ MIIA *continued on 29*

MIIA offers new supplemental group benefits program

As its member communities work to attract and retain employees while managing costs, MIIA has developed a supplemental group benefits offering that strengthens existing benefits packages without adding administrative burden — providing employees with meaningful financial protection and peace of mind.

Through its partnerships with Cabot Risk Strategies and National Enrollment Partners, MIIA offers access to comprehensive plans and highly competitive rates on group life insurance, accidental death and

dismemberment, voluntary life, long-term disability, and voluntary supplemental health coverage. Flexible employee and family coverage options are paired with education and enrollment support, as well as customized communications to ensure employees understand and can easily access available benefits.

MIIA's comprehensive approach includes benefits administration through the Employee Navigator Human Resources Information System (HRIS) platform at no cost, and complimentary Flexible Spending Account

administration, among other programs from selected carrier partners. Together, these offerings enhance overall benefits packages, delivering cost savings, convenience, and peace of mind for employees while supporting the broader human resources goals of MIIA's members.

For more information on the Supplemental Group Benefits program, contact MIIA Member Services at 800-526-6442 or visit www.emiia.org/supplemental-group-benefits. ●

EOHLC advances public housing upgrades

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities on Jan. 7 announced that construction upgrades totaling approximately \$26.1 million are moving forward at 48 local housing authorities across Massachusetts, supported by investments strengthened through the Affordable Homes Act and other capital resources.

Massachusetts oversees about 43,000 units of state-funded public housing. The construction contracts authorized this fall (September through November) advance improvements that help housing authorities modernize aging

systems, address health and safety needs, and prepare units for rapid re-occupancy.

This work includes electrical, drainage, and paving improvements, building and roof repairs, and life safety upgrades. Upgrades ranged from \$63,540 to \$1.7 million in cost.

A full list of contracts, including award amounts, is available at mass.gov. ●



Construction upgrades totaling approximately \$26.1 million are moving forward at 48 local housing authorities across Massachusetts, supported by investments strengthened through the Affordable Homes Act and other capital resources.

WEMO to hold annual Leadership Conference on March 27

Women Elected Municipal Officials will hold its annual Leadership Conference on March 27 in Sturbridge.

All women elected municipal officials in Massachusetts are considered members of WEMO and are invited.

The conference will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Publick House, 277 Main St. in Sturbridge. Lunch will be provided.

More information, as well as an agenda and registration link, will be emailed to WEMO members and made available at

www.mma.org in the coming weeks.

Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis at mdavis@mma.org

MMHR to hold annual HR 101 Boot Camp on March 12

Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources will hold its annual HR 101 Boot Camp on March 12 in Northampton.

The event is geared toward newer municipal human resources professionals and those with a background in the private sector. Veterans in the field are also

welcome to attend for a refresher.

The boot camp will run from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Hotel Northampton, 36 King St. in Northampton. The registration fee is \$100 for members and \$120 for nonmembers. Lunch will be provided.

The agenda and registration information will be made available at www.mma.org and emailed to MMHR members in the coming weeks.

Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis at mdavis@mma.org

CONNECT 351

Continued from page 3

The event brought back two popular features: a Headshot Station that offered MMA members free professional headshots, and a “Why I Serve” activity in the entrance hall, where attendees could take a moment to share why they chose to enter public service.

Awards were announced to recognize the best municipal websites, town reports, and innovative programs.

“Once again, we’re really thrilled with the level of engagement and excitement shown by our members during Connect 351,” Chapdelaine said. “We had record attendance for the event, and a record-breaking Trade Show! It’s so important for our members to be able to reconnect and make new connections,

and to learn more about the challenges they’re facing and the solutions and innovations that can move their communities forward.

“Everyone on the MMA team worked very hard, starting many months ago, to create an event that felt lively and fresh, while retaining a comfortable feeling that members look forward to. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and we appreciate the support of so many members who came to further enhance their outstanding public service to their communities.”

Next year’s Connect 351 — on Jan. 21-23, 2027 — will return to the Menino Convention and Exhibition



The MMA Trade Show during Connect 351 allowed city and town officials to interact with exhibitors offering products and services for municipal needs.

Center and the Omni Boston Hotel in Boston’s Seaport District. ●

State awards \$377M in loans for clean water projects

The Massachusetts Clean Water Trust's Board of Trustees on Jan. 16 approved \$376.7 million in low-interest loans and grants to cities, towns and water utilities through the Massachusetts State Revolving Funds.

The funds help communities build or replace water infrastructure that enhances existing water resources, ensures drinking water safety, protects public health, and increases community resilience.

More than \$247 million went to clean

water projects in Barnstable, Dennis, Harwich, Lowell, Mashpee, New Bedford, and Yarmouth.

A total of \$129 million went to drinking water projects in Attleboro, Barnstable, Bellingham, Braintree, Franklin, Grafton, Holbrook, Middleborough, Plainville, Randolph, Scituate, Sharon, Shrewsbury, Uxbridge, Webster, and Westford.

Holyoke received a total of \$50,000 in related cybersecurity improvement

grants, and Dudley received a grant totalling \$250,000 for sewer overflow mitigation and stormwater reuse. A \$24,000 School Water Improvement Grant was awarded to the Amherst Regional Public Schools.

For more information, visit the [SRF programs webpage](#). Information on the state's [Loan Forgiveness Program](#) is also available online. ●

MassRecycle Conference set for March 24 in Boxborough

The 2026 MassRecycle Conference and Trade Show, featuring education, connection and advocacy related to sustainable materials management will be held on March 24 in Boxborough.

The event brings together Massachusetts municipalities, colleges, universities, nonprofits, and industry partners to discuss current challenges and the resources that are available.

Keefe Harrison, CEO of the Recycling

Partnership, will be the keynote speaker.

Experts will propose solutions to challenges including:

- Implementing Extended Producer Responsibility in Massachusetts
- Using behavioral science and creativity to inspire sustainable practices
- Working toward a sustainable future with reuse and zero waste programming

- Improving recycling access and performance in multifamily properties
- Food waste management and diversion

Interactive roundtable sessions on a range of topics relevant to today's waste diversion challenges will provide an opportunity to ask questions, receive guidance, and connect with others.

[More information and registration are available online.](#) ●

ATFC publishes updated Finance Committee Handbook

The Association of Town Finance Committees' Finance Committee Handbook was updated last fall and is now available.

The handbook features chapters on budgeting, capital planning, borrowing, contracting and procurement, general government and accounting operations, IT, establishing fees, employee benefits (including other post-employment benefits, or OPEB), revenue and expenditure forecasting, banking, and Proposition 2½.

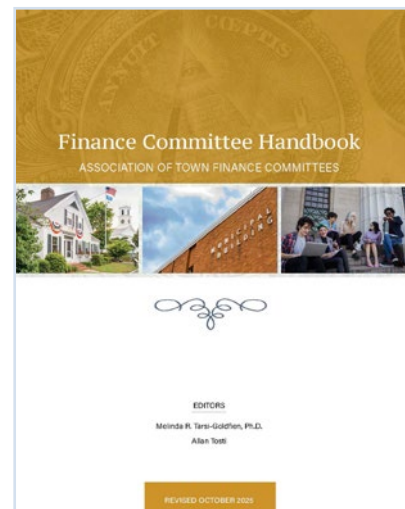
Published as a PDF, the handbook includes general updates to all chapters.

Its co-editors are Mansfield Finance

Committee Member Melinda Tarsi-Goldfien and Arlington Finance Committee Member Allan Tosti, both of whom are members of the ATFC Governing Board.

The handbook is a member benefit provided to all finance committee members of dues-paying ATFC communities. These members may receive access to the handbook by emailing Katherine Christy at kchristy@mma.org at the MMA.

Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker at dbaker@mma.org



BUSINESS MEETING

Continued from page 10

of municipal leaders, will be essential in order to “navigate the storm.”

The resolution calls for a fortification of the state-local partnership through increases to Unrestricted General Government Aid, adequate funding for public education and associated

transportation, support for critical infrastructure projects, and municipal government modernization.

The resolution calls on state policymakers to act on a broad fiscal program focused on stabilizing all 351 cities and towns.

The resolution was drafted last fall by the MMA Fiscal Policy Committee and endorsed by the MMA Board of Directors. It includes priorities raised by

municipal officials from all regions of the Commonwealth, representing communities large, small, coastal, inland, urban, suburban, and rural.

The MMA's Annual Business Meeting is a key component of the [Connect 351 conference](#). Resolutions adopted by the membership at the meeting help guide the advocacy work of the MMA in the year ahead. ●

All-America City Award deadline extended to March 5

The National Civic League has extended its application deadline for the 2026 All-America City Award to March 5.

To further support applicants, the program is hosting three informal open office hours this month to answer questions about the application process. These sessions are designed to be flexible; participants are welcome to join for a few minutes or stay for the full hour and may attend one or all sessions.

Zoom office hours will be held on Feb. 6 at 1 p.m., Feb. 13 at 1 p.m., and Feb. 20 at 1 p.m. ([RSVP online](#))

The award program honors communities that harness the power of civic engagement, collaboration, inclusivity and innovation to effectively tackle local



challenges. Since 1949, the National Civic League has recognized more than 500 communities, including 19 from Massachusetts.

The 2026 theme is “America at 250: Strengthening Civic Health and Building Trust.” The league is seeking communities that engage residents, businesses,

and public institutions in civic dialogue, collaboration, and community-building efforts that not only strengthen civic life and rebuild trust but also address pressing challenges and lay the foundation for a better future.

In March, the [National Civic League](#) will announce the finalists, who will have an opportunity to convene in Denver from June 26 to 28 to showcase their community’s achievements at the All-America City Award event.

The application fee is \$250 for communities.

For more information and the application, visit the [All-America City Award website](#). ●

MMHR launches Pathways Program for professional development

By **Martin Davis**

Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources has launched a Pathways Program to help members tailor their professional development and earn recognition.

Each pathway highlights a core area of HR practice and provides structured learning, with programming and resources aligned to that focus.

The pathways were developed based on feedback compiled from the membership over the past two years. Members can choose to explore topics across all pathways or “opt in” to one pathway that best supports their career goals.

The following are the five pathways categories:

- Talent Strategy and Workforce Planning — Focus: Recruitment, retention, onboarding, succession planning
- Technology, Data and Innovation — Focus: AI, data analytics, and emerging HR technologies
- Employee Wellness and Mental Health — Focus: Building resilience, supporting holistic well-being, promoting work-life balance, preventing burnout
- Employee Relations and Culture — Focus: Creating respectful workplaces, managing conflict, legal

and compliance obligations, fostering equity and inclusion

- Employee Benefits — Focus: Health insurance, retirement, leave policies, compensation structures, and creative perks that support employee needs

Members can earn a Pathway Distinction and an accompanying digital badge by completing five programs in a chosen pathway. Members are responsible for tracking their participation in programs aligned with their selected pathways.

MMHR is committed to ensuring that all members have equitable access to pathway programs, including virtual options and accommodations as needed. MMHR event agendas will include details on which pathway a specific session aligns with.

More information about the Pathways Program will be made available shortly on the [MMHR webpage](#). ●



MMA-branded gear available

Watertown City Councillor Lisa Feltner, president of the Massachusetts Municipal Councillors’ Association, wears one of the new MMA-branded baseball caps during Connect 351. MMA members interested in showing off their municipal pride and connection to the association can now purchase MMA apparel and accessories. Products featuring the MMA logo include shirts, T-shirts and jerseys, puffer vests, hats and baseball caps, tote bags, and a backpack, all available in multiple colors. Visit the [MMA’s online store](#) for details.

Mass Innovations

Three communities recognized with Innovation Awards

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

This month's Mass Innovations column showcases the winners of the MMA's annual [Kenneth Pickard Municipal Innovation Award](#).

The awards went to projects that:

- Motivated a town's youth with an engaging before-school program
- Highlighted the work of municipal employees with a photo exhibit
- Partnered with a local nonprofit to ease food insecurity

The winners were announced on Jan. 23 during the Connect 351 conference in Boston. The award is named in honor of Kenneth Pickard, the executive secretary of the Massachusetts League of Cities and Towns from 1969 to 1973.

Amherst's Movement and Mentoring program gives students an early-morning boost

A small, informal effort to motivate Amherst students in the early morning has grown over the past few years into a town initiative that engages about 100 students from grades seven through nine before classes start for the day.

Three times per week, Amherst's Morning Movement and Mentoring Program offers an early-morning space for students to play sports, lift weights, participate in arts and crafts and other activities, interact with mentors, and get homework help. The program — a partnership involving town departments, the schools and external institutions — aims to bolster students' physical wellness, mental health and preparedness, and sense of belonging.

With extensive community buy-in, program leaders said that Morning Movement and Mentoring has transformed the lives of many students, resulting in better communication between students and adults, improved school attendance and academic performance, realistic goal-setting, and better behavioral and emotional outcomes.

"That's what it really takes when you're working with, particularly the subset of youth that we're working with — it takes a village to find the resources to give them access to the tools that will help them be



Members of the women's basketball team at UMass Amherst gather with Amherst public school students participating in the town's Morning Movement and Mentoring Program, which gives students in grades seven through nine space and time before school to engage in activities that bolster their physical wellness, mental health and preparedness, and sense of belonging. (Photo courtesy town of Amherst)

successful long term," said Recreation Outreach Director Becky Demling. "And I feel like that's one thing we've done really well with Morning Movement, is build those partnerships."

The program began several years ago when Seiha Krouch, a paraeducator in the Amherst schools, began hosting kids in the high school gym and weight room to motivate them before school. Krouch, a Cambodian refugee who found community in Amherst as a child, sought to pass on that sense of belonging to students.

"My goal is and will forever be to give youth a safe place and space to exercise before and after school," Krouch said in a statement about the program. "My other goal is to develop trust with youth, create friendships, and demonstrate what a big family is about."

Krouch's work soon got wider attention, as it aligned with the school district's work to support more at-risk families and children with additional services. In 2023, the town started providing transportation to kids with the greatest need, and offering other resources. Now, of the nearly 100 students registered, roughly 50 students show up on any given day.

The initiative involves numerous partners, including the Recreation Department and the schools; the police and fire departments; Community Responders for Equity, Safety and Service, or CRESS;

the Hampshire County Sheriff's Office; the Hampshire County Superior Court; Amherst College, and UMass Amherst, among others.

"I think [Amherst] has this great example of how you build a community," said Marta Guevara, director of student and family engagement for the Amherst-Pelham Regional Public Schools. "You support students, you provide mentoring, and you prioritize well-being and success in life for all of your students."

The program serves diverse populations. According to the town, the program's participants self-identify as 25% Hispanic or Latino, 22.4% Black or African American, 22.4% white or Caucasian, 19.7% belonging to two or more races or ethnicities, and 6.6% Asian. Half of the students receive special education or disability-related services, and 60% qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

The program focuses on students in grades seven through nine because those children are facing significant developmental transitions, including the progression to high school, Guevara said. Soon, the program will also involve older students as mentors.

Some of the program's highlights have included field trips to college campuses, sporting events, and the State House. The mentoring relationships with adults from police, the colleges and other public and private agencies have also made a significant impact on the students, the program's leaders said.

In particular, the interactions between the students and police mentors have helped build trust between police and youth and strengthen the community as a whole, officials said. Officer William Laramee, who makes the program a regular part of his workweek, works with the students on weight-room training.

"They're lifting weights, they're learning a skill," Laramee said. "But it's really about the connection."

For more information, contact Recreation Outreach Director Becky Demling at demlingb@amherstma.gov.

■ MASS INNOVATIONS *continued on 26*

Mass Innovations

MASS INNOVATIONS

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'Andover at Work' exhibit celebrates municipal work

A recent exhibition featuring photos of Andover town employees at work has sought to change how the public views municipal work and how the employees see themselves.

The town worked for more than a year with photographer David Whitney, a town resident, resulting in "[Andover at Work](#)." The town granted extensive access to Whitney, who embedded with different town departments to capture the work of everyone from water and sewer workers and first responders to librarians and accountants, and made the largely unseen rhythms of municipal work visible to the public.

Town officials said the partnership with Whitney reflects the use of art as civic engagement, fostering civic pride and helping to build employee morale by publicly recognizing their value. Town Manager Andrew Flanagan said the exhibit has helped to humanize the services that residents receive.

"This project helps residents see and connect with the people who work every day to keep Andover running," Flanagan said. "It strengthens the town's mission by creating a stronger sense of connection between residents and the dedicated employees who deliver the services they count on. The project demonstrates the professionalism of the town's workforce and the care and expertise that go into delivering services, which in turn builds greater confidence among residents in how their local government operates."

Whitney's interest in Andover employees as a subject grew out of his attendance in 2023 at a town Leadership Academy, when he decided to use photography to tell the story of the employees' professionalism and commitment. He pitched the idea to the Leadership Academy organizers, who brought the idea to Flanagan.

While spending time with different departments, Whitney gained the trust of employees, learning their routines and capturing their work without being disruptive — an approach that allowed him to capture their work authentically.



In a collaboration with the town, David Whitney spent 15 months photographing Andover's municipal employees in an effort to showcase the full scope of municipal work. (Photo courtesy David Whitney/town of Andover)

"I wanted to show what the job was and give some insight into the person who was doing the job," Whitney told the MMA last year.

The exhibit's 130 black-and-white photos show Andover employees doing all kinds of work — responding to fires, repairing machinery, typing away in offices, working with seniors, shelving library books, and inspecting buildings.

The Andover Cultural Council supported the project by awarding a \$3,000 grant toward the exhibit production and installation costs.

The exhibit ran last year at the town's senior center and at the Memorial Hall Library, and endures in an online gallery. Photos from the exhibit were also featured on the town's fiscal 2026 budget book, and some departments have displayed images in their offices and facilities.

"I think it is basic human nature that when people feel valued that they

contribute differently to the overall culture of the organization and carry their pride through all aspects of their work," Flanagan said. "For us, we have seen that pride show in the form of reliability, responsiveness and professionalism."

Flanagan said it's more important than ever for cities and towns to engage in proactive communications. If municipalities communicate with residents only during emergencies, controversies, or budget season, he said, the public increasingly associates government with problems rather than service.

"The project has reinforced the importance of acknowledging that behind every issue is a person who cares about their work and takes pride in what they do," Flanagan said. "I think that has had a powerful impact on the community and increased the sense of appreciation for what people do who work on their behalf."

For more information, visit the "[Andover at Work](#)" website.

North Attleborough, local YMCA partner to address food insecurity

As communities see food insecurity on the rise among their residents, a partnership between North Attleborough and the Hockomock Area YMCA will provide free groceries to families in need throughout the region.

Over the past few years, North Attleborough has worked with the YMCA to create a regional food security distribution center, which is expected to open later this year in a building recently acquired by the town. The center will replace a smaller food pantry that had operated out of Town Hall for years, and will serve households well beyond North Attleborough.

Town Manager Michael Borg said the partnership combines the town's resources with the YMCA's operational expertise and network to give people more sustainable, and more dignified, access to food. The new center will share building space with several health and human services departments, creating a one-stop center for some of the town's more vulnerable residents.

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Mass Innovations

MASS INNOVATIONS

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Borg, who also serves on the YMCA's Board of Incorporators, saw a partnership with the YMCA as a vehicle to create a regional model for addressing food insecurity.

"When there's an opportunity for us to work regionally, we do it even better, right?" Borg said. "So I think that's what kind of drove us to it. That's why regionalization was so important. The need was out there. We partnered with a great organization that already had a regional impact, and are just making it all work for our residents, and the residents around us as well."

Borg said the town and the YMCA started getting more requests for food assistance during the pandemic, and the need has persisted in the years since.

Lenore's Pantry had operated out of Town Hall for the past several decades, having started with a closet that the town's long-time public health nurse, Lenore Paquin, kept stocked with nonperishable foods, often items from her own home. Paquin died in 2019, but her daughter Leslie is involved in the plans for the regional center, which will bear Paquin's name.

To accommodate a new regional center, North Attleborough bought a former academic building from Fisher College about a year ago. The town used \$5.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds for the purchase and renovations.

Borg said the new center, which takes up



The Lenore's Pantry Strategic Steering Committee gathers in its new pantry space during remodeling. Pictured, l-r, are North Attleborough Town Manager Michael Borg; Jim Downs, CEO of the Hockomock Area YMCA; Public Health Director Anne Marie Fleming; Town Councillor Daniel Donovan; and Caitlin Gibbs, Hockomock Area YMCA associate vice president of social action services. (Photo courtesy town of North Attleborough)

roughly 2,600 square feet in a much larger building, has been designed with a grocery store layout, intended to provide an improved experience over the old food-pantry model, where people are handed a bag of groceries, whether or not they actually liked or could eat the food inside. The new center will allow people to select foods with dignity, he said.

"They can walk through like anybody else at a different place and get the items they need," Borg said. "So that, to me, was the big, huge success here."

While the town will manage the building and the property, the YMCA will oversee the food pantry operations, including client intake, scheduling, volunteer coordination, food sourcing, and managing partnerships with other organizations

to strengthen the impact, according to Jim Downs, CEO of the Hockomock Area YMCA.

"Partnering with the town of North Attleborough allows us to align municipal leadership, community needs and health priorities — and our Y's focus on community-based support — in a way that no single organization could do alone," Downs said. "The town brings deep local knowledge, trust, and infrastructure, while the YMCA brings experience operating food access programs at scale, regional partnerships, and social supports for families."

The project will allow the town to place the food pantry in one location with the Senior Center and the veterans and health departments, enabling the town to address the needs of seniors, veterans and other vulnerable residents more holistically, and in a more coordinated manner, Borg said. The town and the YMCA also worked with the local transit authority to extend bus routes to serve the new facility.

For more information, contact Assistant Town Manager Antonio Morabito at amorabito@nattleboro.com.

MMA Communications Coordinator Owen Page contributed to this report.

This column highlights some of the innovative approaches and strategies Massachusetts municipalities are using to deliver services and solve problems. If you know of a Mass Innovation that could be featured in this column, email us at innovations@mma.org.

HEALEY AND DRISCOLL

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On the state's housing shortage, the governor said 100,000 units have been "built, permitted or are under construction" in the past three years, but more must be done to close a gap estimated at 220,000 housing units. Healey and Driscoll noted that the need for "workforce housing" is critical for economic development as well as for municipal employees.

Options on the table, Healey said, include the promotion of office-to-housing conversions and using state-owned land for housing. She thanked local leaders for their efforts related to the [MBTA Communities Act](#), which requires zoning for multifamily housing near transit nodes.

"We're going to continue to stay laser-focused on building more [housing] and building faster," Healey said.

Healey and Driscoll highlighted the administration's efforts to preserve

health insurance coverage for 270,000 residents in the face of drastic federal funding cuts, and the formation of a health care affordability task force.

Regarding energy costs, Driscoll said more than 180 communities have signed up for [municipal aggregation programs](#) in order to reduce electricity rates for their residents and businesses.

"Now's the time to do it," she said. "We're saving hundreds of millions of dollars for ratepayers through municipal aggregation." ●

People

On Jan. 20, **Robert Garrity** became the new town administrator in Norfolk, where he had served as a Select Board member from 2008 to 2014.

For the past three years, Garrity was the senior director of operations at Northeastern University. Previously, he served in numerous state government roles, including as the deputy chief of staff for innovation under former Gov. Charlie Baker, and as chief of staff and undersecretary for operations management at the Department of Transportation. He also served as director of sustainability for the city of Newton and as executive director of the Massachusetts Climate Action Network.

He has a bachelor's degree in public administration from Northeastern University, and a master's degree in public administration from the Harvard Kennedy School.

In Norfolk, Garrity replaced **Justin Casanova-Davis**, who left after almost three years to become the town manager in Bridgewater last July. **Michael Gallagher** served as the interim town administrator.



Steven Solbo

Steven Solbo became the new town administrator in Halifax on Jan. 26.

For almost two years, Solbo served as the energy manager for the towns of Norwood and Sharon. Previously, he served as the

project and operations administrator for the town of Middleborough, environmental planner and conservation agent for the town of Bridgewater, and conservation agent for the town of Mashpee. He also worked as a scientist in the private sector. He has a bachelor's degree in aquaculture, fisheries and wildlife biology from Clemson University, and a master's degree in public administration from Bridgewater State University. He also has a certificate from the MMA-Suffolk Municipal Human Resources Seminar.

In Halifax, Solbo replaced **Cody Haddad**,

who became the new town administrator in Dartmouth in July after serving for two-and-a-half years in the role. **Robert Fennessy** served as the interim town administrator.



Mallory Aronstein

Mallory Aronstein will become the new town manager in Mansfield on March 23.

Aronstein has been the town administrator in Swansea for more than five years. Previously, she served for three years as the town administrator in Dighton, for nine years as the assistant town manager in West Bridgewater, and for two-and-a-half years as the recording secretary for the West Bridgewater Finance Committee. She also spent five years as a part-time adjunct faculty member at Stonehill College, teaching public administration and public policy.

She has a bachelor's degree in political science and communication from Stonehill, and a master's degree in public administration from Northwestern University.

In Mansfield, Aronstein will replace **Kevin Dumas**, who left in August after more than seven years in the role. **Joshua Reinke** has been serving as the interim town manager.



Dr. Eric Goralnick

On Jan. 12, Gov. Maura Healey announced the appointment of Dr. **Eric Goralnick** as the new secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans Services.

Goralnick brings more than two decades of experience to the role, as an emergency medicine doctor, a U.S. Navy veteran, and a health system leader with experience in health care operations, military-civilian health care partnerships, and care for service members, veterans and underserved

communities. He has served in various leadership roles at the departmental, hospital, and system levels within Brigham and Women's Hospital and Mass General Brigham, and as an associate professor at Harvard Medical School.

Goralnick succeeds **Jon Santiago**, who served for two-and-a-half years as secretary. Dr. **Andrea Gayle-Bennett** has been serving as the interim secretary.



Lynn Rose

Lynn Rose joined MIIA on Jan. 26 as the new senior risk management trainer.

Rose has provided environmental health and safety training, technical assistance and program development for more than 35 years with and across state, federal, and municipal agencies. She has presented hundreds of trainings and written numerous manuals on environmental health and safety topics. She developed a transfer station program for MIIA members, and has won several state and national awards for her work.

Rose served in numerous capacities in the town of Deerfield between 2000 and 2023, including as the hazardous waste coordinator, and as a member of the Open Space Committee, the Planning Board, the Economic Development Committee, and the Community Preservation Committee. She has a bachelor's degree in environmental sciences and education from Evergreen State College.

Within the space of two days last month, the city of Quincy lost two former mayors and a former first lady.

Former Mayor **James Sheets** died on Jan. 15 at age 90. He had served for 17 years as a city councillor until he became mayor in 1990, a role he held for a dozen years. He had also served as a state representative while serving on the City Council.

The next day, former Mayor **Arthur**

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PEOPLE

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Tobin died at age 95. A Korean War veteran who served in the U.S. Marines, Tobin was mayor from 1978 to 1982. He had also served as a Quincy city councillor, a state representative and senator, and for more than four decades as a clerk magistrate for the Quincy District Court. His wife, **Shirley Tobin**, age 97, died the day before him. They were married for more than 70 years.

Former Worcester City Councillor **Dennis Irish** died on Jan. 8 at age 78. Irish served for four terms as a councillor-at-large



Dennis Irish

during the late 1990s and the 2000s. He also served on the Worcester Housing Authority and on the board of the Worcester Public Library Foundation.



Michael Condon

2011. He stepped down at the end of 2013. He had also served on the School Committee for the Greater Lawrence Technical School.

Former Methuen City Councillor **Michael Condon** died on Dec. 30 at age 70.

Condon served on the council for a number of years over two different time periods, and was most recently elected in

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.

MIIA

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town and schools through its townwide risk management committee. Plymouth Public Schools actively participate in safety committee meetings, addressing property, cyber, and workers' compensation exposures contributing to the safety of town operations. Plymouth consistently engages in MIIA Rewards and grant programs and regularly hosts MIIA training sessions, not just for their employees but for MIIA members across the South Shore and Cape Cod.

Dedicated Commitment to Safety: Wilmington

Wilmington's town leadership conducts quarterly safety committee meetings with representatives from all departments to review loss trends and develop preventive safety strategies, building maintenance plans, and training goals. The town consistently uses the MIIA Risk Management Grant program, participates in MIIA trainings, and maximizes the Rewards program. Wilmington's consolidated facilities department oversees both school and municipal buildings, emphasizing formalized inspections, preventive maintenance, and long-term capital planning to ensure balanced townwide facility management.

Most Innovative Wellness Champion: Lisa Marrone, Chelmsford

In just 18 months, Human Resources Director Lisa Marrone has significantly expanded Chelmsford's Wellness Program,

resulting in substantial increases in employee participation. Last fall's step challenge, for example, attracted 181 participants — double the typical enrollment. Her passion, creativity and dedication to employee wellness fosters a culture of wellness for both town and school staff. Marrone designs and implements fun, meaningful and engaging programs, ranging from department-specific to townwide initiatives, successfully engaging even hard-to-reach employees.

Best Overall Wellness Champion: Natalie Croteau, Littleton Public Schools

Natalie Croteau, technology systems coordinator for Littleton Public Schools, is an exemplary wellness champion. She actively participates in all wellness committee meetings, distributes notes, and joins all on-site wellness programs. Croteau spearheaded a chair massage program across all school sites and successfully applied for a wellness grant on behalf of the schools. She also volunteered to share her personal experience with a vendor partner program during a Working Well Together meeting, demonstrating a collaborative and engaged approach to wellness leadership.

Best Wellness Committee: Lee

Lee's Wellness Committee consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to employee well-being and participation in MIIA wellness programs. Composed of representatives from both the school system and town departments, the committee actively integrates new initiatives and makes informed decisions based on

employee feedback. The committee encourages broad program participation by maintaining a wellness bulletin board at Town Hall and allocating time during the school day to talk with staff about available wellness benefits, thereby creating a healthy and engaged workforce.

Best Wellness Newcomer: Pepperell

As a new member of the Health Benefits Trust, Pepperell's Wellness Committee quickly established a department-wide culture of health and connection. The committee launched a range of initiatives, including art therapy and self-care workshops, onsite fitness opportunities, and walking challenges. The enthusiasm and leadership of Wellness Champions Tracie Looney and Staci Padovano inspired strong participation, strengthened cross-departmental collaboration, and helped build a vibrant culture of well-being. ●

MMA PRESIDENT, VP

Continued from page 1

recently on the MMA's "The 351" podcast that the organization's strength comes from the collaboration it promotes among municipal leaders.

"My biggest takeaway is that we all have the same challenges," Gove said. "It almost doesn't matter even the size of your community. There are so many similarities, and there's so much we can learn from each other. I've connected with select board members, city councillors, mayors and managers that may not even be near my community, but have so much in common with us."

Gove has been mayor of Amesbury since January 2020, and is the District 3 representative for the Massachusetts Mayors' Association. A fifth-generation Amesbury resident, she was previously executive director of the Amesbury Chamber of Commerce. She has also been a real estate agent and worked as an assistant director for programs serving students and alumni at Boston University and Clark University.

Gove began her mayoral career by steering Amesbury through the COVID-19 pandemic. Now she is tackling another challenge: the worsening fiscal conditions that threaten local government services. Municipal revenue streams aren't keeping pace with the costs of delivering services, she said, and municipalities have very limited tools to address the gap, while taxpayers already feel overburdened.

"We just had a failed override in the fall," Gove said on The 351. "We are seeing the pressure on our taxpayers, and the limitations of our other revenue options, and the inability to continue delivering basic services. We have made reductions across the board — and for many of our departments, we're looking at some sort of forced innovation and ways to deliver services to different populations in our community that have never been done before."

As MMA president, Gove will help lead the MMA's efforts to ease the municipal fiscal crunch. Last fall, the MMA released two reports — "A Perfect Storm," and "Navigating the Storm" — that analyzed the forces threatening the delivery of local services, and outlined policy recommendations for stabilizing municipal finances and giving communities greater budget and revenue-raising flexibility.

"So now here I am positioned to carry this torch, and that is really what I'm most excited about," Gove said. "I feel very well-positioned, [and] very passionate about this being the upstream solution here for affordability in Massachusetts, and I can't wait to really dive more into this and work with the staff and our leaders at the State House on making progress in these areas."

Baskin agreed that engaging in the MMA's fiscal-strengthening efforts is a central priority this year. She also wants to focus on the need for more affordable housing, since "too many people are living without the safety and stability of a secure home." She said the MMA can play a key role in

pursuing effective solutions.

Baskin said she wants to ensure that an equity lens is applied to MMA advocacy efforts, "so that proposed policies and funding decisions account for their impact on historically excluded and underinvested communities and help reduce, rather than deepen, existing disparities across our municipalities."

In 2022, Baskin, an attorney, was the first Black person elected to the Sharon Select Board. She is an assistant teaching professor and dean of belonging at Northeastern University School of Law, and was previously a senior law lecturer at Bentley University.

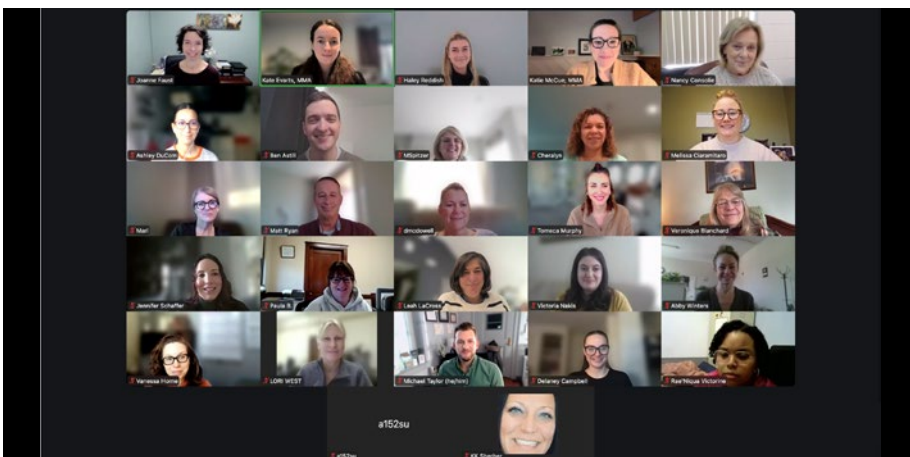
Named Sharon's Citizen of the Year in 2021, Baskin has chaired the town's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, and is president of the Sharon Racial Equity Alliance. She also serves on the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Gubernatorial Council, on the MBTA Advisory Board, and on the Boston Bar Association's DEI Steering Committee.

"Through this work, I realized that my voice and the voices of others from historically excluded backgrounds were needed at the decision-making table," Baskin said. "While Sharon is a diverse community, that diversity was not well-reflected in town leadership, and I felt a responsibility to help change that. I also believed that my professional background and lived experiences could bring valuable perspective to the Select Board, particularly around equity, access, and community trust."

Baskin sees the shared challenges across municipalities, including housing, finances, infrastructure and public engagement. The MMA plays a critical role in connecting municipalities, she said, and her involvement is a natural extension of her public service and professional mission.

"It is a way to amplify them and bring a local perspective to the statewide level, strengthening partnerships across communities, and helping ensure that the MMA remains responsive, inclusive, and forward-looking," Baskin said. "I view this role as an opportunity to give back to an organization that has been essential to my own growth as a municipal leader and to help position Massachusetts municipalities for long-term success."

As vice president, Baskin would be in line to assume the presidency of the MMA in 2027. ●



MMA-Suffolk HR session begins

Students from the winter session of the MMA-Suffolk Municipal Human Resources Seminar gather online for their orientation on Jan. 9. There are 22 students in this sixth session of the HR seminar. For more information about the MMA-Suffolk program, see page 18.

FY27 BUDGET

Continued from page 1

Here's a review of key municipal accounts in the governor's bill:

Unrestricted General Government Aid

House 2 proposes an increase of 2.5%, or \$33 million, for the Unrestricted General Government Aid account, totalling \$1.36 billion. The MMA recently [published two reports](#) that emphasize the large structural gap in unrestricted aid, and this proposal falls well short of the MMA's recommended target for the Commonwealth's 351 cities and towns. This account remains a priority for the MMA, which is advising local officials to continue focusing on it as they discuss priorities with state legislators.

Chapter 70

House 2 would fund Chapter 70 education aid at \$7.6 billion, a 3.2% increase, or \$242 million, over fiscal 2026. Fiscal 2027 is the final year of the Student Opportunity Act's six-year implementation schedule.

House 2 recommends that "minimum aid" districts — accounting for [roughly 85% of all school districts](#) — receive a \$75 per pupil increase, rather than the statutorily required \$30 per pupil. The minimum per pupil aid was set at \$150 in the fiscal 2026 budget.

Special Education Circuit Breaker

The governor proposed \$652.7 million in House 2 for the Special Education Circuit Breaker program, but would supplement it with \$150 million from a proposed [fiscal 2026 "Fair Share" supplemental budget bill](#), for a total of \$802.7 million, representing a 18.8% increase over fiscal 2026. The administration said the total would represent full funding of the state's statutory obligation costs as outlined in the Student Opportunity Act.

(See related story for more on the supplemental budget bill.)

Charter school reimbursements

The governor's budget would fund the

charter school mitigation account at \$200.4 million, a slight increase over fiscal 2026. The MMA and other stakeholders contend that charter schools continue to divert a large percentage of Chapter 70 funds away from many municipally operated school districts, and place a strain on districts that serve the vast majority of public schoolchildren.

Rural School Aid

In response to unique fiscal challenges faced by rural districts, the governor's budget would boost Rural School Aid by \$8 million, or 67%, over fiscal 2026, to \$20 million. The proposal would expand eligibility to agricultural schools, independent vocational schools, charter schools, and collaboratives.

Regional School Transportation

House 2 would fund regional school transportation reimbursements at \$112.3 million for fiscal 2027, a \$6 million increase above fiscal 2026. The administration said this represents 87% of eligible local transportation costs.

Out-of-District Vocational Transportation

The governor's budget proposal includes \$6.8 million for reimbursements for transportation of out-of-district vocational school students, which was funded at \$1 million in fiscal 2026. The administration said this investment would fund 100% of expected costs.

McKinney-Vento

Reimbursements for the transportation of homeless students under the federal McKinney-Vento Act would be funded at \$35.2 million, a \$6.5 million increase.

PILOT

The governor's budget would fund payments-in-lieu-of-taxes for state-owned land at \$55.4 million, an increase of 1.6% (\$851,000) over fiscal 2026, which is intended to hold communities harmless from updated valuation changes.

Outside Sections

RMV holds for delinquent municipal revenues: House 2 includes several outside sections that would change the process by which cities and towns may collect

outstanding excise taxes, parking ticket payments, and abandoned vehicle fines. The sections would change the current process that flags delinquent accounts for non-renewal of associated driver's licenses and vehicle registrations.

The proposal would create a new system that would require reporting to both the Division of Revenue and Comptroller to allow payment of delinquent bills via the state's Intercept program, which allows deductions to be made to an individual's state tax return, lottery winnings over \$600, of payments from the Commonwealth's accounting system. Rules for the proposed program would be set by a forthcoming regulatory process.

The MMA has strong concerns that the new process, proposed through the Department of Revenue, cannot replace a critical tool that the current process provides to collect important municipal revenue. Many communities find the current process to be the only practical way to collect delinquent motor vehicle excise bills and parking tickets.

Other local accounts

House 2 proposes \$20.4 million for local aid to public libraries to support their many essential community resources.

The bill also proposes \$2 million for the Community Compact Program to help municipalities implement best practices in key areas, including cybersecurity, housing production, and solid waste management.

The budget would allocate \$2 million to enhance staffing and emergency response capacity in communities with populations of at least 60,000 and police department operating budgets below \$200 per capita in fiscal 2025.

The Local Finance Commonwealth Fellowship Program would be funded at \$500,000, to provide approximately 30 participants from community colleges with municipal finance training and hands-on, work-based learning through placements in host communities. ●

DIRECTORS REPORT

Continued from page 2

planning for 2027 before too long.

The conversations we started at

Connect 351 don't end at the Menino Convention and Exhibition Center. My hope is that you take the momentum back to your town and city halls and continue building a brighter future for

every resident in the Commonwealth. ●

Classified Advertisements

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Town Accountant

Town of Saugus

The town of Saugus is hiring a Town Accountant. The Town Accountant provides professional accounting work of an administrative, supervisory and participatory nature with responsibility for maintaining the town's fiscal health including but not limited to maintenance of the town's General Ledger, the processing of accounts payable, payroll, and overseeing and monitoring the expenditure of town funds versus budgetary amounts, classification of revenues and the preparation of various financial reports in accordance with applicable local, state (Ch. 41, Secs. 50-61) and/or federal laws and regulations, keeping financial records, auditing of all department financial records, reporting to the state on a yearly basis, and reporting to the town all receipts and expenditures of the town for the past financial year. This role also supervises three subordinate staff. Minimum qualifications for the position include a bachelor's degree (accounting or related field); five years of progressively responsible accounting, budgeting and auditing experience; or equivalent combination of education and experience. Certified Governmental Accountant preferred; MUNIS experienced highly desired. This is a full-time position; current annual salary range is \$120,000 to \$150,000; offer at hire DOQ and experience. Candidates with prior municipal accounting experience preferred. To apply, email resume and cover letter to Shalini Malik, Human Resources Manager at smalik@saugus-ma.gov; position open until filled. Visit the town's Human Resources website for a complete job description: www.saugus-ma.gov/human-resources/pages/town-employment.

Principal Clerk-Assessor

Town of Saugus

The town of Saugus Assessors office is seeking a principal clerk to perform varied routine technical and clerical work in maintaining the operations of the Assessor's Office. The individual must possess a working knowledge of general office procedures and skills required in the performance of secretarial and clerical duties. Minimum qualifications required: Applicants must have a minimum of an associate degree in business, public administration, real estate or related fields. Knowledge of Massachusetts General Laws (relating to property tax, abatement, exemption, motor vehicle and boat excise and statutory exemption) or ability to quickly learn them. Basic understanding of real property records, assessment processes, and municipal procedures preferred. Computer proficiency, especially in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook) required and municipal software like MUNIS or property assessment systems preferred. Proficient in the use and understanding of word processing, spreadsheets and internet research. Schedule: Monday through Friday (in-house, full-time position, 36.50 hours per week) Benefits: Comprehensive benefits package, including participation in the town's Retirement system. Pay rate: (Union Scale): \$54,776.05 to \$59,743.82. To apply, email a resume and cover letter to Shalini Malik, Human Resources Manager at smalik@saugus-ma.gov; position open until filled. Visit the town's Human Resources website for a complete job description:

www.saugus-ma.gov/human-resources/pages/town-employment.

Principal Clerk to Treasurer/Collector Town of Saugus

Applications are being accepted for two full-time Principal Clerk(s) to support the Treasurer/Collector's Office within the town of Saugus. The individual must possess a thorough knowledge of the office-related computer software including but not limited to Microsoft applications; must possess knowledge of general accounting principles; must possess the ability to analyze data; must be able to work independently and with others; must be able to work well with the public and appropriately resolve consumer concerns; must be able to take direction from superiors. Minimum qualifications include an associate 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. Prior experience working with MUNIS is a plus. Schedule: Monday through Friday (in-house, full-time position, 36.50 hours per week) Benefits: Comprehensive benefits package, including participation in the town's Retirement system. Starting salary: (Union Scale): \$54,776.05 annually. To apply, email a resume and cover letter to Shalini Malik, Human Resources Manager at smalik@saugus-ma.gov; position open until filled. Visit the town's Human Resources website for a complete job description: <https://www.saugus-ma.gov/human-resources/pages/town-employment>.

Planner

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) seeks a full-time Planner for the Planning and Development department. Duties include multidisciplinary, complex, local, and regional planning assignments. Experience with economic development, environment, housing, rural and/or urban planning, and/or related planning disciplines, and public outreach is sought. Grant writing and

administration are pluses. GIS and AICP are pluses. Minimum job requirements: Bachelor's degree and up to five-plus years of experience in local or urban planning, or related field, or acceptable combination of education and experience. Salary range \$55,000 to \$75,000, DOQ. See full job descriptions and salaries at www.mrpc.org. Send resume and cover letter by email to mrpc@mrpc.org by 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 13. Posted Tuesday, Jan. 13. EEO/AA

CAREERS AT MMA/MIIA

Driver Training Instructor - EVOC and Simulator MMA/MIIA

The Massachusetts Municipal Association and the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association are seeking a part-time Driver Training Instructor (Simulator and EVOC) to oversee the driver simulator training program across the Commonwealth. The individual will also be a Certified Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOC) Instructor to train police officers in emergency driving scenarios. The nonpartisan Massachusetts Municipal Association provides an array of services to its member cities and towns statewide, including advocacy, education and training, research and analysis, and publications and information programs. As the voice of local government in Massachusetts, the MMA works to advance the interests of all cities and towns. The Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association provides property, liability, workers compensation, and group health insurance to cities and towns in Massachusetts. MIIA is a nonprofit organization and a subsidiary of the Massachusetts Municipal Association. About the position: The MIIA simulator is a state-of-the-art driving simulator available to MIIA member communities and offers a safe environment for driver operators to experience a variety of

■ CLASSIFIEDS *continued on 33*

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 www.mma.org, though a discount is available for those who request placement of an ad only on the website.

Member rates

- web only, 200 words or less: \$115; 201-400 words: \$225
- web & Beacon, 200 words or less: \$165; 201-400 words: \$325

Nonmember rates

- web only, 200 words or less: \$175; 201-400 words: \$285
- web & Beacon, 200 words or less: \$225; 201-400 words: \$385

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 published in mid-July.

March Beacon

Deadline: February 24
Publication: March 2

April Beacon

Deadline: March 26
Publication: April 1

Placing an ad

You may use our convenient online form at www.mma.org/municipal-marketplace/add-listing/.

For more information, call Owen Page at the MMA at 617-426-7272, ext. 135.

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

See www.mma.org for details.

Classified Advertisements

CLASSIFIEDS

Continued from page 32

scenarios and conditions typical to emergency response situations. Simulator duties: The Driving Instructor will have knowledge of or ability to be trained in the use of the Doran simulator computer system, including police, fire, DPW and general municipal driving scenarios. They will be responsible for curriculum development, including vehicle and scenario updates. They will work with Doran to ensure a 24-hour customer support onsite visit with followup. They schedule and confirm training while maintaining the truck, trailer and simulator. They will track and communicate participant performance to their Police Chief/Fire Chief or Training Officer. EVOG Instructor duties: the Driving Instructor will train participants on vehicle pre-trip inspections, defensive driving, backing emergency response pursuit and vehicle limitations. They will also discuss the importance of attitude, skill, capability and driving conditions. They will be responsible for course development, including setup and breakdown of courses. They will handle the onsite training logistics and facilitate driving instruction while supervising a team of EVOG instructors. Qualifications: The candidate must have knowledge and fluency of Police/Fire response policies, a valid driver license and the ability to drive the truck while towing the simulator trailer. They must have an understanding of the interaction between dispatchers and officers. EVOG Certification or the ability to obtain certification is required. Knowledge of EVOG course design, statement of program objectives and understanding of vehicle dynamics are necessary. Knowledge of commercial vehicles, federal highway regulations and CDL licensing is important. They must possess a DOT medical card. Five years of public safety employment, training and supervisory experience is preferred. Simulator experience is a plus. The salary range for this position is \$75,000 to \$100,000. How to Apply: Please send a PDF of your cover letter and resume to: hr@mma.org.

The MMA and MIIA are committed to diversity in the workplace and are proud to be equal opportunity employers. Diverse candidates are encouraged to apply. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, genetics information, pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, disability, age, or military or veteran status.

SERVICES

Municipal Energy Services

Through the MMA's MunEnergy program, MMA members have access to an energy contract designed exclusively for Massachusetts cities and towns. The MunEnergy program offers access to energy experts at Constellation, a vetted municipal energy contract, and options for sustainability programs. Energy professionals at Constellation, the MMA-endorsed supplier for MunEnergy, work with municipalities to manage electricity costs for the long term. Constellation is also on the forefront of sustainability programs and provides financial support to the MMA for its promotional and marketing efforts. To

learn more, visit www.mma.org/munenergy. To be notified about MunEnergy events, send contact information for the person on your team who handles energy for your city or town to energy@mma.org.

Tax Title Legal Services

KP Law 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, cost-effective 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.

Municipal Accounting and Consulting Services

Our outstanding team specializes in municipal financial consulting and outsourced accounting. Since 2008, we have worked with many Massachusetts cities and towns with interim accounting, special projects, fraud risk assessments, financial forecasts, and budgeting. We also provide permanent outsourced accounting solutions, which have proven successful for many years. Please contact Eric Kinsherf at eric@erickinsherfcpa.com or visit our website erickinsherfcpa.com for further information.

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 www.VADARsystems.com. Locally owned and operated at 20 Main St., Suite G1, Acton, MA 01701.

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.

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 long-term 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.

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 Bartlett St., Suite 186, Andover, MA 01810; 978-474-0200; hrcsconsulting@comcast.net; or visit www.hrcsconsultinginc.com. WBE certified.

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.

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 who 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@mrigrv.com.

Town Counsel/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 Paul DeRensis for all public law issues at 857-259-5200.

■ CLASSIFIEDS continued on 34

Classified Advertisements

CLASSIFIEDS

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Navigating Employment Law

Navigate the intricate world of public employment law with this indispensable guide, crafted to address some of the most challenging and pressing issues faced by public employers today. While it's impossible to cover every facet of employment law in a single volume, this resource focuses on providing practical guidance on key topics, including: Harassment in the Workplace; Combatting Disability Discrimination; FLSA; FMLA; Labor Relations; Management Rights; Freedom of Speech; IOD; Personnel Records. For more information or to purchase, visit mpitraining.com/product/navigating-employment-law-a-practical-guide-for-municipal-leaders.

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.

Municipal Support Services

Capital Strategic Solutions (CSS) is a Massachusetts-based, certified woman-owned, disadvantaged business enterprise composed of municipal experts. We have hands-on experience that allows us to formulate and implement strategies tailored to the communities we serve. We specialize in public

administration and municipal finance, human resources and policy development, emergency management services and public safety, public works and infrastructure operations, public relations and community engagement, project management and oversight, grant writing and administration, and onsite support services. For more information, visit www.capital-strategic-solutions.com, call 508-690-0046, or email info@capital-strategic-solutions.com.

Town Counsel Services

Harrington Heep 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@harringtonheep.com or 617-489-1600.

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.

Special Counsel, Public Construction and Infrastructure Services

Petrini & Associates P.C. (P&A) is a recognized statewide leader in representing public owners in public construction and infrastructure disputes and litigation. P&A has decades of experience, having represented public owners in numerous bid protests, delay claims, differing site conditions, disputes between design professionals and project owners, and a broad variety of other construction disputes. Since its founding in 2004, P&A has represented more than 40 cities, towns, school districts and water and sewer districts in public construction litigation. For further information, please visit www.petrinilaw.com or contact Christopher Petrini at cpetrini@petrinilaw.com or 508-665-4310.

Human Capital Solutions

MGT provides executive recruiting, comprehensive interim staffing, and human capital consulting for local governments, school districts, businesses, and nonprofits. Drawing on decades of experience working across the country, our team collaborates with your organization to understand your unique needs, culture, and goals to deliver tangible results. We tackle immediate challenges, anticipate future workplace needs, bridge talent gaps, and enhance policies to foster lasting positive transformation within your organization. Visit us at mgt.us, post to our job board at govhrjobs.com, or contact our team of experts at 847-380-3240. ●

MMA-SUFFOLK

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University are encouraged to apply for the Municipal Fellowship program.

Launched in partnership with the MMA in 2021, the program offers a significant scholarship, while the recipient's municipality commits to continuing their salary and position while they attend the program part-time.

Fellowship applicants must be accepted for admission to Suffolk's master of public administration program and must receive the support of the chief municipal official in their municipality. Additional consideration will be given to graduates

of the MMA-Suffolk Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program.

Those interested in the Municipal Fellowship should check off, on Suffolk's application, that they are a municipal employee interested in the fellowship, and apply to Suffolk by May 1. The fellowship selection committee will interview qualified applicants and award up to two fellowships in June.

The MMA and Suffolk University will host an information session about the Suffolk MPA program and the Municipal Fellowship on Feb. 26 at noon. To register for this information session, click here.

More information

The MMA has partnered with Suffolk University since 2011 to offer programs designed exclusively for municipal employees to help them further their professional careers.

For more information on any of the MMA-Suffolk programs, visit mma.org/suffolk or contact Katie McCue at 617-426-7272, ext. 111, or kmccue@mma.org, or Kate Evarts at 617-426-7272, ext. 172, or kevarts@mma.org. ●

Calendar



The Beacon

Massachusetts Municipal Association

3 Center Plaza, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108

FEBRUARY

10 Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, board meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m., hybrid, MMA office, Boston. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

10 MMA Board of Directors, 10-11:45 a.m., hybrid, MMA office, Boston. Contact: MMA Executive Assistant Elanienne Coste

10 Local Government Advisory Commission, hybrid meeting, 1-2 p.m. Contact: MMA Executive Assistant Elanienne Coste

11 MMA webinar, demystifying AI, 12-1:30 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

25 MMA webinar, practical AI applications, 12-1:15 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

26 Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, mini boot camp, 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m., Middleborough Town Hall. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

MARCH

3 MMA webinar, local public health, 12-1:15 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

5 Women Leading Government, conference, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Holy Cross, Worcester. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

11 MMA-Suffolk certificate program, virtual information session, 10-11 a.m. Visit www.mma.org to register.

11 MMA webinar, developing an AI policy, 12-1:15 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

12 Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, boot camp, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Hotel Northampton, Northampton. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis

17 MMA webinar, communicating your budget, 12-1:15 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

19 Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, meeting, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Cyprian Keyes Golf Club, Boylston. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

25 Massachusetts Mayors' Association, meeting, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Contact: MMA Membership and Project Assistant Katherine Christy

27 Women Elected Municipal Officials, leadership conference, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Publick House, Sturbridge. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis

APRIL

9 Association of Town Finance Committees, regional meeting, Middlesex County, 7-9 p.m. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

10 Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, regional meeting, 8-10 a.m. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

14 Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, board meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m., hybrid, MMA office, Boston. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

14 MMA Board of Directors, 10-11:45 a.m., hybrid, MMA office, Boston. Contact: MMA Executive Assistant Elanienne Coste

14 Local Government Advisory Commission, hybrid meeting, 1-2 p.m. Contact: MMA Executive Assistant Elanienne Coste

15 MMA webinar, wishlist of the internal customer, 12-1:15 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

16 Massachusetts Municipal Management Association and Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, joint meeting, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Hawthorne Hotel, Salem. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker and MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis

16 Association of Town Finance Committees, regional meeting, western Massachusetts, 5-7 p.m. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

29 Massachusetts Mayors' Association, meeting 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Contact: MMA Membership and Project Assistant Katherine Christy

MAY

2 Massachusetts Select Board Association, Western and Rural Massachusetts Conference, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., The Delaney House, Holyoke. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis

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

Katherine Christy can be reached at kchristy@mma.org.

Elanienne Coste can be reached at ecoste@mma.org

Martin Davis can be reached at mdavis@mma.org

Timmery Kuck can be reached at tkuck@mma.org

Kristianna Lapierre can be reached at klapierre@mma.org

For more information, visit www.mma.org.