

The Beacon

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April 2026

At hearing, MMA urges local aid boost

By Adrienne Núñez

During a hearing on the local aid areas of the fiscal 2027 state budget on March 23, the MMA and local leaders called for a strategic and substantive increase to Unrestricted General Government Aid.

MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine emphasized the importance of healthy cities and towns.

“Ultimately, the success of Massachusetts depends on the fiscal strength and stability of its cities and towns,” he told the Joint Committee on Ways and Means in Lawrence. “This is a core to any conversation of competitiveness or affordability. It’s another reason why additional investments for fiscal 2027 are an urgent issue for local taxpayers as well as the Commonwealth as a whole.”

Chapdelaine, joined by MMA President and Amesbury Mayor Cassandra Gove and Haverhill Mayor Melinda Barrett, expressed appreciation to legislators for

recent investments in education and transportation programs, and for their leadership as economic conditions across the Commonwealth change.

The panel outlined the fiscal challenges facing nearly all cities and towns, as documented in [two recent MMA reports](#), as well as the essential nature of municipal services and the need for greater state support.

“Cities and towns are the stewards of the foundational services and infrastructure necessary to everyday life,” Chapdelaine said. “Whether safe drinking water, solid waste management, road and bridge maintenance, protecting public health, emergency response, educating future generations, or securing elections — city and town governments are the bedrock



MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine, left, Amesbury Mayor Cassandra Gove, center, and Haverhill Mayor Melinda Barrett testify during a Joint Committee on Ways and Means hearing on the education and local aid portions of the state budget on March 23 in Lawrence.

of our economies. In order to maintain these foundational services, our local governments are in desperate need of additional state support.”

The MMA called for an infusion of funding for Unrestricted General Government Aid, referring to the

■ LOCAL AID *continued on 27*

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Committee advances bond bill with \$300M for Chapter 90

By Violet Gehr

The Legislature’s Joint Committee on Transportation has advanced a redrafted version of a transportation bond bill that would provide \$300 million for the Chapter 90 road and bridge maintenance program for fiscal 2027.

While the committee preserved the funding level of \$300 million, it shifted to a one-year authorization, rather than the \$1.2 billion over four years sought by the governor in the bill she filed in late January.

The redrafted bill ([H. 5279](#)) includes the provision to distribute \$100 million



MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine, left, testifies in support of a transportation bond bill that includes \$300 million per year for Chapter 90 during a hearing before the Joint Committee on Transportation on March 3. Sherborn Town Administrator Jeremy Marsette, center, and Yarmouth Public Works Director Jeff Colby also testified.

solely based on local road miles, rather than the traditional Chapter 90 formula.

The committee’s action follows a March 3 hearing at which an

■ CHAPTER 90 *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, MMAA First Vice President
Mayor, Peabody

Denise Casey, MMMA President
Town Administrator, Wakefield

Lisa Feltner, MMCA President
Councillor, Watertown

Joshua Garcia, MMAA President
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Jennifer Glass, MSA First Vice President
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Kevin Mizikar, MMMA First Vice President
Town Manager, Shrewsbury

Michael Ossing, MMCA First Vice President
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James Walters, ATFC First Vice President
Finance Committee, Halifax

Adam Chapdelaine (non-voting)
MMA Executive Director

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Waltham

Peter Cusolito, Select Board Member, Leicester

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Melissa Goff, Deputy Town Administrator,
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Heather Harper, Assistant Town Manager,
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Carole Julius, Select Board Member, East
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Ryan Pereria, Councillor, New Bedford

Israel Rivera, Councillor, Holyoke

Sam Squailia, Mayor, Fitchburg

Liz Sullivan, Town Administrator, Dennis

Michelle Wu, Mayor, Boston

Executive Director's Report

State budget season is here, and the MMA is advocating for you

Spring is officially upon us (I hope), which means that state budget writing in the Legislature is well underway — as it is in your cities and towns.

Here at the MMA, we always deeply engage in budget advocacy, but it feels different this year, as we are acutely aware of the challenges you are all facing — and we're well equipped with data and research stemming from last year's "[Perfect Storm](#)" analysis.

Last week, I had the opportunity to testify at the Joint Ways and Means Committee hearing, alongside Amesbury Mayor and MMA President Kassandra Gove and Haverhill Mayor Melinda Barrett. Collectively, we made a strong case for the needs of cities and towns in fiscal 2027.

In both our verbal and written testimony, we began with our ask for a reinvestment in Unrestricted General Government Aid. With allocations that can be flexibly deployed to respond to each community's unique needs on the ground, UGGA, if strategically boosted, is positioned to mitigate many of the fiscal pressures felt by cities and towns while reducing over-reliance on the property tax.

We reminded the committee that few events have reshaped local finances in Massachusetts as profoundly as the 2008 global financial crisis. Deep cuts were made to many programs, including



By Adam
Chapdelaine

UGGA, to address state revenue shortfalls. In the years that followed, the Commonwealth eventually regained its fiscal footing, but funding for UGGA was never corrected. The gap created from 2008 to 2011 became a long-term structural hole in the limited municipal revenue base. Even without adjusting for inflation, UGGA funding just passed its 2008

level in the fiscal 2026 state budget — 18 years after the reductions.

Increasing the investment by \$351 million in fiscal 2027 would restore the trajectory of the program since the Great Recession and renew the Commonwealth's commitment to the success and stability of cities and towns.

Next, we addressed Chapter 70 education aid. We began by urging the committee to increase minimum per pupil aid in fiscal 2027, to ensure that districts across the Commonwealth are equipped to continue to provide high-quality school programming. An estimated 80% of all districts will be considered minimum aid districts in the coming year. Cities, towns, and districts are deeply appreciative of last year's minimum aid increase to \$150 per pupil. Maintaining this level of aid would provide critical support to help districts meet student needs as costs continue to climb.

We further urged the committee to

■ **DIRECTOR'S REPORT** *continued on 24*



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

MMA holds spring Legislative Breakfast Meetings

By Daniel Yi

On three Fridays in March, legislators and local officials from across Massachusetts gathered for six MMA Legislative Breakfast Meetings, held in Pittsfield, Sharon, Clinton, Harwich, Boxford and Montague.

The spring meetings featured updates from MMA Legislative Division staff on the state revenue picture, fiscal 2027 state budget process, supplemental budgets, the governor's proposed Municipal Empowerment Act, clean energy siting and permitting regulations, and more.

Updates were followed by an opportunity for legislators and local leaders to discuss the many challenges facing municipalities, covering topics such as increasing fiscal pressures, housing, energy regulations, potential ballot



Rep. Kip Diggs addresses attendees during an MMA Legislative Breakfast Meeting on March 13 in Harwich.

initiatives, and other issues.

More than 260 municipal officials and state legislators registered for the spring meetings, including 10 legislators and a number of legislative staff members. The meetings were held on March 6, 13 and 20.

The MMA holds its Legislative Breakfast Meetings around the state each spring and fall to provide an opportunity for local officials to engage in informal discussions with legislators, fellow local officials, and MMA staff.

The MMA has hosted 254 breakfast meetings in more than 200 communities since 2007, with a goal of hosting a meeting in each of the state's 351 cities and towns. Communities that have not hosted an MMA Legislative Breakfast Meeting but would be interested in doing so are asked to contact Daniel Yi at dyi@mma.org or 617-426-7272, ext. 125.

• [Download the presentation from the meetings](#) (PDF)

House OK's consolidated \$1.8B supplemental budget bill

By Adrienne Núñez

The House passed a consolidated fiscal 2026 supplemental budget bill on March 18 that would allocate \$1.3 billion in Fair Share surtax revenue from fiscal 2025 and approximately \$500 million from the general fund.

The package ([H. 5280](#)), which combines key elements of three previously filed bills, aims to address several deficiencies across state government and direct surplus surtax revenue to transportation and education initiatives.

For municipalities, the noteworthy provisions are \$152 million for the Special Education Circuit Breaker account for fiscal 2027, \$3 million for a regional school transportation reserve account, which includes support for out-of-district vocational school transportation, and \$2 million for rural school aid. The Special Education Circuit Breaker funding would be added to \$652.7 million the governor proposed in her fiscal 2027 state budget bill, for a total of \$804.7 million.

The supplemental budget bill includes \$20 million for the [Green School Works](#) program to help with school energy efficiency projects.

Education and transportation investments include support for early education initiatives, regional transit

authorities, and the MBTA.

The bill includes several provisions that would adapt Massachusetts tax codes to soften the impacts of corporate policy changes included in the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which was enacted last July. Known as OB3, the law included numerous provisions with implications for Massachusetts' services and revenues. The Healey-Driscoll administration projects a loss of approximately \$400 million in revenue over fiscal 2026 and 2027 if state policy changes are not made.

The supplemental budget bill includes a provision intended to stabilize state revenues and ensure funding for the multitude of budget investments, including state aid to municipalities, in the event that voters approve a potential ballot measure to lower the state income tax rate from 5% to 4%. If the referendum were to pass, the state would permanently decouple the tax code changes from federal tax policies in order to mitigate an estimated \$5 billion revenue loss.

The House bill would address multiple



A fiscal 2026 supplemental budget passed by the House on March 18 included \$152 million for the Special Education Circuit Breaker account for fiscal 2027, \$3 million for a regional school transportation reserve account, and \$20 million for the Green School Works program to help with school energy efficiency projects.

state deficiencies, including \$300 million for the Group Insurance Commission to offset unexpected cost increases.

During the House session, members voted to amend the bill to include numerous earmarks for local and municipal projects and initiatives.

The bill has moved to the Senate for its consideration. ●

Regulations issued for Starter Home Zoning Districts

By John Ouellette

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities on March 13 published final regulations to implement the state's Starter Home Zoning District program under Chapter 40Y.

The regulations lay out the standards and steps for municipalities that choose to adopt [Starter Home Zoning Districts](#) to qualify for state incentive payments. The voluntary zoning tool is designed to support the development of modest-sized homes suitable for first-time homebuyers and moderate-income households.

The regulations have been published in the Massachusetts Register and are now in effect.

Housing and Livable Communities Interim Secretary Jennifer Maddox said the final regulations lay out a step-by-step process "so communities can move from interest to adoption to production with confidence."

Communities that choose to participate can create Starter Home Zoning Districts where qualifying homes are allowed as-of-right, and no special permit would be required for proposals that meet the

rules.

Chapter 40Y includes the following core requirements:

- Allow starter homes as-of-right
- Permit a minimum density of four units per acre of developable land
- Limit homes to 1,850 square feet of heated living area
- Require at least 50% of homes to contain three or more bedrooms
- Require income restrictions for larger developments, with at least 10% of units in developments of more than 12 starter homes restricted to households earning up to 110% of area median income
- Permit starter home accessory dwelling units

Municipalities must obtain a preliminary determination of eligibility from the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities before local adoption, and must receive final approval following adoption.

The statute also establishes zoning incentive payments and production bonus



Municipalities that adopt Starter Home Zoning Districts must allow starter homes as-of-right, limit homes to 1,850 square feet of heated living area, and have at least 50% of homes to contain three or more bedrooms, among other requirements.

payments.

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities held a public comment period on the draft regulations last summer. After reviewing public feedback, the agency made clarifications and refinements before filing the final regulations with the secretary of state for publication.

Chapter 40Y, the Starter Home Zoning Districts Act, was enacted as part of an economic development bond bill in late 2022. ●

MMA testifies at hearing on starter home ballot initiative

By Ali DiMatteo

As part of a series of legislative hearings on 11 initiative petitions that may end up on the statewide election ballot in November, a hearing was held on March 16 on a proposal that would allow single-family homes on small lots by right.

The proposal ([H. 5000](#)) would allow single-family homes to be built in residentially zoned areas on lots as small as 5,000 square feet, providing they have at least 50 feet of street frontage and access to public water and sewer services.

The MMA testified that the petition would preempt local zoning regulations, particularly with regard to minimum lot sizes.

"Zoning decisions are inherently local, and have been determined by the residents of our communities," MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine told the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions at the hearing. "Any attempt to preempt this local process with a one-size-fits-all policy strips local

residents and officials of their role and their voice."

As written, the petition would allow only reasonable restrictions on these single-family homes, such as setbacks and the bulk and height of the structure.

The MMA pointed out that, while the petition requires access to public water and sewer, it doesn't address the important issue of capacity — at a time when many municipal water and sewer systems are already at or near maximum capacity. The petition also does not require the homes to be affordable or sold at below-market rates, the MMA noted.

The MMA highlighted the [new Starter Home Zoning Districts](#) program under Chapter 40Y as an example of an effective tool, as it promotes local zoning decisions with incentives.

The starter homes initiative petition calls for the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to create guidelines and regulations for implementation.



MMA Legislative and Policy Counsel Ali DiMatteo testifies on a proposed starter homes ballot question before the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions on March 16 in Boston. MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine and MMA Legislative Director Dave Koffman also testified virtually.

The Legislature has until May 5 to act on any proposed initiative petition. If it chooses not to, proponents of the initiative must collect an additional 12,429 signatures for certification by mid-June in order to place it on the November 2026 ballot. ●

Administration finalizes streamlined energy siting

By Josie Ahlberg

The Healey-Driscoll administration has announced final regulations for a new statewide energy siting and permitting process.

In a prepared statement, Gov. Maura Healey said the reforms will create a faster, more predictable pathway to build new energy infrastructure while strengthening transparency and engagement with host communities. By accelerating the development of locally produced clean energy and grid infrastructure, she said, the new process will help lower energy costs, improve reliability, and reduce harmful emissions.

Projects are split up by size, with the Energy Facilities Siting Board responsible for all state and local permitting for large-scale projects, and municipalities retaining control over local permitting for small projects. In either instance, the permitting authority will issue a single consolidated permit within 12 months for small-scale projects and 15 months for large-scale projects.

The regulations are part of the implementation of a [clean energy and climate law](#) enacted in November 2024, and are based on recommendations from a special [Commission on Energy Infrastructure Siting and Permitting](#).

The climate law called for the Energy Facilities Siting Board, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and the Department of Energy Resources to play a key role in developing a new streamlined, consolidated application and review process for large and small clean energy infrastructure facilities.

The EFSB, which reviews proposals for power plants, electric transmission projects, intra-state gas pipelines, and natural gas storage tanks, had advanced draft regulations for public comment last fall. The state's Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Division also released draft regulations last fall for clean energy infrastructure facilities reviewed by local governments.

The new local siting and permitting process will apply to clean energy generation projects (e.g., solar, wind) under 25 megawatts; clean energy storage projects under 100 megawatt hours; and

certain transmission and distribution projects. The MMA raised municipal concerns with the Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Division [in a letter last October](#).

The climate law required the state to promulgate regulations to implement the new siting and permitting policies by March 1, 2026, and requires the EFSB to begin accepting applications and reviewing proposals for large clean energy infrastructure facilities using the new framework starting on July 1, 2026.

Municipalities may start offering the new consolidated permitting avenue as early as July 1, and must offer it by Oct. 1.

The administration said 97% of projects permitted in the past two years qualify as small infrastructure projects, meaning cities and towns will continue to have oversight over the vast majority of clean energy projects.

Appeals of EFSB decisions will go directly to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

Streamlined permitting

According to the administration, under the previous process, energy projects would have to secure numerous state and local permits on separate timelines, all subject to potentially lengthy individual appeals. Energy infrastructure such as substations, solar projects, battery storage, transmission, and distribution infrastructure could take years to build, leading to higher costs for ratepayers.

The intention of the new streamlined approach is to require developers to submit complete, "ready to review" applications, engage with stakeholders early in the process to mitigate concerns, and avoid appeals.

"Municipalities will receive better vetted, site-appropriate projects, state support to intervene in the siting process for large industrial-scale projects, appropriate mitigation measures to offset impacts, and new model bylaws to guide the local siting and permitting process," said Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll.

Community engagement and environmental justice

Prior to filing for state permits, project applicants will be required to meaningfully engage with stakeholders in host



New state regulations for the energy siting and permitting process aim to streamline permitting, increase community engagement, and accelerate local clean energy projects, according to the administration.

communities. Small projects undergoing consolidated permitting need to host at least one public meeting and engage with local officials prior to submitting an application. Large projects must host two public meetings, translate materials, summarize comments and responses, and discuss community benefits agreements and plans with stakeholders.

Municipalities will be granted automatic intervenor status in Energy Facilities Siting Board proceedings. A fund to support municipalities, organizations and individuals who lack the resources will help with qualified legal representation and expert analysis.

The reforms include a new requirement that large projects proposed in areas with existing health, environmental, and climate burdens be subject to a Cumulative Impact Analysis, guiding developers toward low-impact sites and supporting communities should they negotiate a community benefits agreement. The administration said this tool will be available by July 1.

Environmental assessment

Under the consolidated permitting process, most large and small projects will soon be required to conduct a [Site Suitability Assessment](#) using a new interactive mapping and scoring tool. This score provides applicants, local officials, and the public with a standardized, transparent guide to certain environmental impacts based on reputable, publicly available data vetted by environmental experts.

This process provides incentives to developers to make use of land parcels

■ ENERGY SITING *continued on 29*

Women leaders discuss self-reflection, communication

By Meredith Gabriliska

Women municipal leaders from around the state came together on March 5 to discuss productivity strategies and self-care, and to join colleagues from around the country for a SheLeadsGov virtual summit and “watch party” during the sixth annual Women Leading Government conference in Worcester.

Kate Fitzpatrick, a retired town manager and Northeast regional director for the International City/County Management Association, joined local alumni of the Women in the Civic Arena program for a discussion about the importance of making connections to create a support system in and out of the office.

During an interactive morning session, attendees used the work of author Kendra Adachi, of [The Lazy Genius Collective](#), to discuss personal management strategies. Attendees answered questions about what they are working on and excited about, hopes for the spring, and more. In small groups, they addressed accountability around their needs.

“How can you work together to come up with a strategy where you can take one step toward what you want to do next and commit to reaching out to each other over the next month to see if you’re getting there,” Fitzpatrick said.

Attendees discussed issues like creating “fake” appointments on their calendars to get work done, breaking out of the municipal bubble to see the broader local story, making time to notice what’s going on around them, and work-life balance.

Later in the morning, attendees worked



Zosia VanMeter, Lynn’s inspectional division director, asks a question during the Women Leading Government conference on March 5 in Worcester.

with Daniel Pink’s “2026: Designed” workbook and his four-part podcast series, to reflect, prioritize and build a framework for the year. Prompts included their biggest regret of 2025, what they learned and how they’ll you act upon it, and one word to define how you want to live.

They discussed strategies, such as:

- Protecting your first hour (of your day or your workday)
- The “two minute rule” (if something can be done in two minutes then just do it)
- A weekly reset
- Developing a network of people who will challenge you

SheLeadsGov

The second half of the day focused on the [SheLeadsGov](#) virtual summit, “Own Your Local Government Influence.”

A virtual panel for strategic communication for women in leadership roles asked panelists to reflect on communication as a superpower, and on the importance of commanding the message, both personally and professionally.

“I see it as a leadership discipline, not a press function,” said Susana Carbajal, assistant city manager in Austin, Texas. “When we communicate clearly and eliminate confusion, I think it builds community trust. It also develops trust with our own teams.”

When shaping a message, it’s important to consider the desired outcome, how the intended audience will interpret it, and how to achieve clarity.

“It’s not just what you say,” said Sharon Subadan, city manager in South Fulton, Georgia. “It’s how you say it, when you say it, and why you say it, that can define your leadership.”

Heather Strickland, senior director of communications at North Carolina’s Department of Health and Human Services, said message mapping and strategic planning are valuable



Kate Fitzpatrick, Northeast regional director for the International City/County Management Association and a former town manager in Needham, speaks during the Women Leading Government conference on March 5 in Worcester.

activities, to prepare for conversations that can shift quickly.

“It’s really easy to really get lost in all the mechanics of how things work and how systems change and how policy impacts people,” Strickland said. “But what we have to talk about is how people are benefiting from the work that we’re doing.”

Panelists discussed how conversations with elected officials, staff and the public should be handled differently. For example, with staff it’s important to explain how you can help them achieve their goals. With the public, it’s important to listen first to identify concerns, meet people where they are, and be as transparent as possible.

Storytelling can be foundational to connect with residents and explain projects or policies. Sharing personal stories can bring a level of humanity to a public position and build trust.

“It’s one thing to trust that somebody knows what they’re talking about,” Strickland said. “It’s a whole other thing to trust that a leader has integrity as they’re doing that work — and storytelling is what gets you there.”

Well-planned communication practices can help connect local leaders with residents, foster effective relationships, and support success.

“Often we’re evaluated on our delivery and our ability to deliver and communicate before we’re evaluated on our results,” Subadan said.

Leading through change

The second virtual session, on women

■ **WLG CONFERENCE** *continued on 30*

Micromobility commission makes 16 recommendations

By Violet Gehr

A Special Commission on Micromobility on Jan. 31 filed its final report with the Legislature, making a range of recommendations aimed at improving micromobility regulation, safety, and infrastructure across the state.

The [special commission](#) was established by a 2024 economic development law known as the [Mass Leads Act](#), which directed the commission to:

- Review state and local laws and regulations for micromobility vehicles (such as motorized bikes, scooters, skateboards and other vehicles)
- Make recommendations to regulate micromobility vehicles, including on bike paths, sidewalks and shared use paths
- Make recommendations to support the expansion of micromobility vehicle use and innovation

The [commission's report](#) addresses the following categories:

- **Legislative and regulatory changes:** Recommends adding legal definitions to state law and updating or removing outdated definitions related to micromobility devices
- **Speed classifications:** Recommends adopting a classification framework for micromobility devices based on speed, including requirements for operation, guidance on where devices may be used, and methods to identify different device types
- **Micro ID:** Recommends the establishment of a working group to design a statewide Micro ID Decal pilot program to link devices to a record confirming their classification tier



The Special Commission on Micromobility has recommended legislative and regulatory changes.

- **Police training:** Recommends that the State Police Academy and the Police Training Committee develop and deliver training for law enforcement on current and new micromobility laws, regulations, and guidelines
- **Crash report and vulnerable user data:** Recommends the amendment of state law to allow micromobility-related crashes to be included in the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's crash data system, which currently does not track incidents that do not involve a motor vehicle
- **Default maximum speed on paths:** Recommends establishing a statewide default maximum speed of 20 MPH on shared use paths, with municipalities or other path-operating entities retaining authority to lower the speed limit based on local conditions
- **Education:** Encourages law enforcement to collaborate with local partners, including Safe Routes to School, to educate micromobility users about safety practices and applicable laws

- **Automated enforcement:** Recommends legislation to authorize automated traffic safety enforcement on infractions that impact vulnerable users
- **Model ordinance:** Recommends that MassDOT include model micromobility traffic control regulations and provisions prohibiting obstruction of bicycle lanes in its Sample Regulation for a Standard Municipal Traffic Code
- **Design guidance:** Recommends that MassDOT and the Department of Conservation and Recreation develop a design guide for state and municipal trails and shared-use paths with recommended infrastructure standards
- **Transit integration:** Recommends that the MBTA and other regional transit authorities develop plans to better integrate micromobility options into transit systems
- **Funding for upgrades:** Recommends increased appropriations for existing programs that support municipal micromobility infrastructure and network expansion
- **Bikeshare expansion:** Recommends establishing a reliable and sustainable funding source to support publicly owned, docked micromobility share systems
- **More e-bike subsidies:** Recommends additional funding for the statewide e-bike rebate program
- **Commercial use study:** Recommends the allocation of funding for MassDOT to partner with an academic

■ MICROMOBILITY *continued on 29*

MassDOT launches cost estimating tool on Grant Central

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Highway Division has launched an online estimating tool for state aid-eligible transportation projects on Grant Central.

The new iteration of the [State Aid Reimbursable Programs Cost Estimating Tool](#) went live on Feb. 25.

MassDOT originally developed SARPET in 2022 to provide municipalities with a resource to better understand and develop cost estimates for projects

seeking funding through MassDOT programs. The tool has now been updated and integrated into Grant Central as a user-friendly estimator that is easier to navigate and regularly updated to reflect current construction pricing.

Using SARPET, cities and towns can save their project estimates, generate Preliminary Cost Estimates, and assess whether a project is a good fit before applying, according to MassDOT. This can help prevent unexpected costs and

reduce financial risk for taxpayers and local governments.

MassDOT launched [Grant Central](#), a one-stop shop for its municipal grant programs, two years ago.

Visit the [Grant Central website](#) for more information, or contact MMA Legislative Analyst Violet Gehr at vgehr@mma.org. ●

Federal court order restores climate resilience grants

By Owen Page

A U.S. District Court judge in Massachusetts on March 6 ordered the Federal Emergency Management Agency to restore funding for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program.

[FEMA had cancelled](#) fiscal 2024 BRIC awards in April 2025, and stated that no pending applications would be reviewed or awarded. The agency also called for undistributed BRIC funds from fiscal 2020 through 2023 to be returned to the Disaster Relief Fund or the U.S. Treasury.

FEMA's actions revoked \$90 million in grants for 18 communities, a regional planning commission and two state agencies in Massachusetts.

The March 6 court ruling was on a [February motion](#) filed by 24 states, including Massachusetts, to compel FEMA's compliance with a U.S. District court order from last December.

The [BRIC program](#) is an annual Hazard

Mitigation Assistance Grant funded by FEMA and administered in Massachusetts through a partnership with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. BRIC makes federal funds available to states, U.S. territories, federally recognized tribal governments, and local governments for hazard mitigation activities, which have become increasingly important given the rise in extreme weather events caused by climate change.

In a prepared statement, Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell said that the latest federal court order allows critical projects to proceed while bringing relief to communities across the country.

Massachusetts municipalities and agencies impacted by last year's cancellation of BRIC funding included Boston,



A U.S. District Court judge ordered the restoration of \$90 million in Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities funding that had been cancelled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. BRIC funding helps communities address climate-related risks, including flooding.

Chelsea and Everett (a joint project), Clarksburg, and Manchester-by-the-Sea, to name a few, for projects such as planning and climate-proofing vulnerable neighborhoods, bridge upgrades, tunnel fortifications, flood and drought protection, coastal flood resilience, and hazard mitigation planning. ●

Shrewsbury gets largest-ever EPA municipal recycling grant in state

By John Ouellette

The town of Shrewsbury has been awarded the largest federal recycling grant for a municipality in Massachusetts history, winning \$2.7 million from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for innovative waste management plans that will benefit residents and the environment.

The competitive [Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling](#) grant program drew 307 applicants nationwide, with requests totalling more than \$1 billion in infrastructure support. On March 3, the EPA announced that it had selected 17 projects nationwide, including Shrewsbury.

The town will use the funding to launch a Comprehensive Recycling and Composting Program, designed to maximize sustainability and expand service equity for all residents through a new municipal recycling facility and upgrades to the town's curbside collection program to include food waste composting.

A new recycling drop-off center at the town's Department of Public Works facility will provide a local, year-round solution for hard-to-recycle items such

as electronics and household hazardous waste (such as paint).

The introduction of townwide curbside composting will significantly expand access to sustainable disposal. While a limited number of residents have been able to participate in the town's pilot food waste drop-off program since last year, others had to contract with private services.

Town Manager Kevin Mizikar said the food composting program could remove up to 1,000 tons per year of general waste from the waste stream that's currently being incinerated.

"Every chance that we have to divert recycling from the solid-waste stream and get it recycled — it's better for the community, it's better for the environment," he said.

The grant builds on earlier environmental initiatives in Shrewsbury: a plastic bag ban in 2017, a Massachusetts Green Community designation in 2018, a polystyrene ban in schools in 2020, and a Climate Action and Resiliency Plan launched in 2023. The town also has a Sustainability Committee.

"Since her first day, Solid Waste and Recycling Program Manager Gosia Stolarska has been focused on bringing a visionary future for recycling to life," said Shrewsbury Select Board Chair Theresa Flynn. "Her persistence turned that vision into a reality, and we are deeply grateful."

Congressman Jim McGovern said the town's SWIFR grant "will provide a cleaner and healthier community for all residents" and "significantly reduce contamination and promote sustainability for years to come."

The EPA's [Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling](#) program, established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, provides funding to state, local and tribal governments to improve post-consumer materials management and infrastructure.

The city of Greenfield won a \$2 million SWIFR grant in 2025 to transition to a single-stream, fully automated recycling collection system, create a promotional and enforcement campaign, and increase the transfer station's transloading capabilities. ●

MBLC awards \$29 million in library construction grants

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners on March 5 awarded provisional construction grants totaling \$29.1 million to municipalities participating in the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program.

The town of Clinton was awarded \$11.3 million for its public library project, Montague received \$11 million for a new main library, and Springfield was awarded \$6.8 million for its East Springfield Branch Library.

Provisional construction grants for these projects cover 45% to 50% of estimated eligible project costs, according to the MBLC. Libraries have until June 30 to confirm local funding to support the project.

“Public libraries are needed now more than ever,” said MBLC Chair Vicky Biancolo. “These libraries stand for community, for education for all at any age, for reliable accurate information, for access to stories and ideas that represent the diverse world and experiences around us.”

The new East Springfield Branch Library, to be built on the lot of the current branch, will be an energy-efficient facility with separate spaces for children, teens, and adults, a children’s activity room and a community meeting room that can be used after hours.

The new Montague Main Library will offer a separate teen room, a sizable children’s room with its own program space, quiet study rooms, and a local history room. A large and fully accessible multipurpose room will be available for library and community events. The new library will also incorporate multiple spaces for art, reflecting Montague’s arts community.

The project in Clinton, a new 21,775

square-foot facility, will remedy issues found in the current building, which dates to 1903. The new library will be universally accessible, with modern technology and ample interior spaces dedicated to children, teens, and adult patrons. The library will feature quiet study rooms, a local history room, a makerspace, a community room, and accessible restrooms on every floor.

Commissioners also approved Green Library Incentives for Montague and Springfield in accordance with their intent to pursue net-zero library building projects. Montague will receive \$329,000, and Springfield will get an additional \$205,000 when they demonstrate compliance with one of the pathways to receive the incentive.

The projects were among the [13 approved for Planning and Design grants by the MBLC in January 2025](#) and recently completed the MPLCP Level of Design independent review, which ensures that each project is meeting MPLCP design guidelines.

It is anticipated that five projects will be considered for provisional grants at the April 2026 board meeting. [Blandford received its provisional construction award in December](#). Six projects that were waitlisted will receive provisional awards as funding becomes available.

The Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program has benefitted more than 250 towns and cities since its inception in 1987. [Funding to support the MPLCP’s 2023-2024 grant round](#) was included in the [Mass Leads Act](#).

MPLCP projects are underway in



The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners on March 5 awarded \$29.1 million to municipalities participating in the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program.

Amherst, Blandford, Deerfield, Fitchburg and Westford.

The [Swansea Free Public Library](#), [Sawyer Free Library in Gloucester](#), and Shutesbury Library recently celebrated the completion of library projects.

For more about the program, visit the [MBLC website](#), the [Building Literacy podcast](#), and the [MPLCP Municipal Impact website](#).

The [Board of Library Commissioners](#) is the state agency with the statutory authority and responsibility to organize, develop, coordinate and improve library services throughout the Commonwealth. The board advises municipalities and library trustees on the operation and maintenance of public libraries, including construction and renovation, administers state and federal grant programs for libraries, promotes cooperation among all types of libraries through regional library systems and automated resource sharing, and works to ensure that all residents of the Commonwealth have access to essential new electronic information technologies and significant electronic databases. ●

Municipal Cybersecurity Summit set for May 13 in Worcester

The MassCyberCenter is inviting local leaders to its sixth annual Municipal Cybersecurity Summit in Worcester on May 13.

The free summit offers training sessions, workshops and collaborative opportunities with leaders across the state to help municipal leaders, school districts,

first responders, utility providers and IT personnel increase their cyber resiliency.

The summit will help attendees better recognize cyberthreats, respond to cybersecurity incidents, and navigate statewide cybersecurity resources.

Experts will provide information about emerging threats facing Massachusetts

municipalities and state programs to bolster preparedness.

The event will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the DCU Center, located at 50 Foster St. in Worcester. [Registration is available online.](#) ●

Former Ambassador Cronin connects with WEMO

By Meredith Gabrilksa

Claire Cronin, a former U.S. ambassador to Ireland, spoke about her experience in elected office in Massachusetts before reaching the global stage during the Women Elected Municipal Officials annual leadership conference in Sturbridge on March 27.

Cronin recalled her uncles who served in elected office at both the local and state levels.

“It was just instilled in us very early on that, you know, you can be a part of the solution, not the problem, be involved in the community, and that public service was actually a noble field,” Cronin said.

Although she worked on political campaigns, she didn’t see politics as a path for herself — until 2012, when a legislative seat opened up in the district representing her hometown of Brockton and Easton, where she was raising a family. She won, and served in the House from 2013 to 2022.

An attorney, Cronin served as co-chair of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary — the first woman to do so — from 2017 to 2021, during which time the Legislature reformed the state’s criminal justice laws, including raising the age at which a child can be arrested.

“There’s data that shows that the earlier one enters the criminal justice system, the more likely they are to stay in it and then go on to the adult system,” Cronin



Claire Cronin, left, former U.S. ambassador to Ireland, participates in a fireside chat with Easton Select Board Member Dottie Fulginiti during the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Conference on March 27 in Sturbridge.

said. “So that one little piece of legislation ... stops a trajectory.”

The effort was controversial because people had strong opinions on criminal justice laws, she said. The key was finding balance. She invited every member of the House to meet with her, and by the end she knew everyone’s top three priorities for the bill. She said the support she had in the House helped during conference committee negotiations with the Senate as well.

“We would be in session, never would go home, and I would be there late at night,” she said. “But at the end of it, we got it done. So I’m really, really proud of that.”

The committee also tackled police reform, creating the Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission.

“My guiding thought ... was, I want to create an agency that if someone complains about a police officer, that police officer gets a fair shake,” Cronin said. “But also, the person complaining needs to get a fair shake. So that was really difficult. ... It requires listening, not talking.”

She also became the first woman to serve as majority

leader in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, from 2021 to 2022. What helped get her there, she said, was “a track record of not just delivering small pieces of legislation, but very big ones that got through.”

Cronin said she was fortunate that her children were older when she first ran for office — one in college and the other in high school. But her husband traveled frequently for work. She ultimately missed some moments, like her daughter preparing for the prom, which weighed on her.

“I remember I was running in my primary against three guys, and then I was running against another guy in my final election,” Cronin said. “And people would say, ‘What do you need?’ I’d be like, ‘I need a wife.’”

When Cronin first got involved in the presidential campaign of Joe Biden — in 2018, before he had announced — she did not expect that it would result in being appointed ambassador to Ireland.

Cronin said she had been trying to figure out how to get involved in the campaign when she got a text from her husband, who was sitting directly behind Biden on a commercial flight. Cronin urged her husband to pass Biden a note, and following a conversation after the plane landed, Biden called her



Members of the 2026 WEMO steering committee participate in a panel covering strategies for success during the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Conference on March 27 in Sturbridge. Pictured, l-r, are Randolph Town Councillor Katrina Huff-Larmond, Fitchburg City Councillor Sally Cragin, and Melrose Mayor Jennifer Grigoraitis, who moderated the panel.

■ WEMO continued on 34

Largest office-to-housing conversion in state advances

MassDevelopment announced on March 16 that it has partnered with a lender to provide \$51.2 million in loan financing to a real estate development company and property owner for the largest office-to-residential conversion in Massachusetts to date, located in Worcester near the downtown.

The loan will be used to redevelop and convert the former Fallon Community Health Plan headquarters at 10 Chestnut St. into 198 market-rate apartments.

Washington Trust provided \$47.57 million in loan financing while MassDevelopment provided a \$3.6 million Housing Development Incentive Program tax credit bridge loan. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities also provided a \$4 million HDIP award and a [\\$3.6 million Commercial Conversion Tax Credit award](#). The city of Worcester is supporting the project through a 15-year Tax Increment Exemption.

“Projects like this demonstrate how strategic public-private partnerships



MassDevelopment has partnered with a lender to provide \$51.2 million in loan financing to convert the Fallon Community Health Plan headquarters in Worcester into 198 market-rate apartments. (Photo courtesy of Synergy/MassDevelopment)

can unlock new economic potential in our downtowns,” said Economic Development Secretary Eric Paley, who serves as chair of MassDevelopment’s Board of Directors, in a prepared

statement.

Paley said the project will bring “new residents, foot traffic, and economic activity to downtown Worcester while making productive use of existing infrastructure.”

The 11-story building will feature 41 two-bedroom units, 85 one-bedroom units, and 72 studio apartments. The building will have amenities such as a fitness center, swimming pool, rooftop deck and underground parking. Construction is expected to finish in August.

Worcester Mayor Joseph Petty said the rehabilitation of the building “in the heart of Worcester” will spur additional activity in “an area that’s seeing a resurgence in vitality.”

MassDevelopment, the state’s development finance agency and land bank, offers financing solutions, real estate expertise, and other assistance. The agency partners with businesses, nonprofits, developers, banks, and municipalities, providing resources to help create jobs, build housing, and foster vibrant communities. ●

Federal Funds Office launches GrantWell portal

The Massachusetts Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office yesterday launched an artificial intelligence-powered tool to help communities find and apply for grants.

[GrantWell](#) is intended to help municipal and nonprofit leaders in Massachusetts find funding sources, save time and capacity, and help to level the playing field for communities seeking to advance their priority projects.

GrantWell was developed by the Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office in partnership with Northeastern University’s Burnes Center for Social Change.

GrantWell allows communities to:

- Find funding opportunities
- Scan and summarize grant requirements, eligibility criteria, and application deadlines
- Generate a draft project narrative to kickstart the grant-writing process
- Use an AI chatbot to ask questions relating to grant eligibility and requirements

GrantWell was developed with community input from across the state, and users can provide feedback on the [GrantWell homepage](#), which will help the office further improve the tool over time.

The Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office said it has heard consistently from

communities across the state that they lack the time and capacity to seek out and apply for funding opportunities. GrantWell seeks to change that.

The office points out that GrantWell is designed to support grant-writers and municipal staff, but it does not replace the grant-writing process.

GrantWell complements existing efforts at the state level to streamline the process for applying to state grants, including the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s [Grant Central portal](#), the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs [ECO One Stop](#), and the [Community One Stop for Growth](#) program. ●

MSA to hold annual rural, western Mass. conference on May 2

The Massachusetts Select Board Association’s annual Rural and Western Massachusetts Conference will be held on Saturday, May 2, in Holyoke.

The agenda will include a “View from Beacon Hill” panel discussion, and presentations focused on

policy issues affecting rural and western Massachusetts.

The full agenda and registration will be available soon at www.mma.org.

Registration and breakfast will open at 8 a.m. The program will begin at 8:30 and will conclude at noon with a networking

lunch. The cost to attend is \$25.

The event will be held at the Delaney House, located at 3 Country Club Road in Holyoke.

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

MMHR holds annual HR101 boot camp in Northampton

By Martin Davis

The Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources' annual HR101 boot camp on March 12 in Northampton focused on workplace culture, health insurance benefits, recruitment and onboarding, and personnel files and auditing.

Stacie Watson, owner and partner in Transformative Leadership Strategies, opened with a session on multigenerational competency in the workplace. She discussed the patterns across different generations and where tensions might appear, including around the pace of change, risk tolerance, technology adoption, and historical learning.

While narratives around generational differences are common, Watson said, "When generational tensions show up it is likely underlying issues. It could be a difference in communication style or a misalignment in expectations."

She highlighted effective communication practices that resonate across generations.

"It is critical to set clear expectations, base communication on curiosity rather than judgment, and create a culture of giving and inviting regular feedback," she said.

In groups, attendees practiced using a script designed to help move conversations from conflict to curiosity.

Watson then shifted the focus from individual-level interactions to the integration of multigenerational competency into different HR areas, including performance



Shrewsbury Assistant Town Manager Kristina Ordnung discusses strategies for preparing and organizing human resources files during the Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources annual HR 101 Boot Camp on March 12 in Northampton.

evaluation policies, succession planning, and leadership development.

Navigating health insurance plans

Representatives from Wellpoint gave a presentation on navigating health insurance plans. Benefit Consultant Elaine Pedrosa shared questions HR can use to help employees in determining what coverage is best for them and their families. She emphasized the importance of sharing information through a variety of channels, including internal Q&A sessions, joint webinars, bulletins, and emails, while using plain language and visual aids to ensure clarity.

Recruitment and onboarding

During the first afternoon session, Springfield Assistant HR Director and Benefits Administrator Caitlyn Julius gave a presentation on best practices for recruitment and onboarding.



Holyoke Human Resources Specialist Antoinette Smith speaks during a panel on municipal human resources basics during the Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources annual HR 101 Boot Camp on March 12 in Northampton.

She discussed how transitioning from a periodic to continuous recruitment strategy leads to better hiring outcomes. Such a shift may seem like it would be expensive, but she highlighted examples of cost-effective recruitment efforts, including using social media and promotional items, collaborating with other municipal departments and local news outlets, and having a presence at community events.

Julius discussed effective onboarding practices and provided examples of onboarding materials and structured timelines.

Personnel files, organization

In the workshop "HR Glow Up: From Messy Files to Audit Ready," Kristina Ordnung, assistant town manager – human capital in Shrewsbury, gave an overview of personnel files and what documentation belongs in them to ensure compliance with labor laws and minimize risk.

She discussed the role of HR practice audits, and what policies, processes, and programs a municipality should review.

Ordung concluded by focusing on HR health audits, specifically identifying and defining key performance indicators to measure workforce health and effectiveness and to help inform decision-making.

Municipal HR101

The conference concluded with "Municipal HR101: What I Wish I Knew in Year One," a panel discussion moderated by Pittsfield Human Resources Director Michael Taylor.

Panelists discussed navigating the transition from the private sector to public sector, where to look for guidance and mentorship, and how to build trust with other departments. ●



Mayors discuss energy affordability

Melissa Lavinson, right, director of the Office of Energy Transformation, and Undersecretary for Energy Michael Judge, speak during a Massachusetts Mayors' Association meeting on March 25 at the International Volleyball Hall of Fame in Holyoke. Katherine Antos, undersecretary of decarbonization and resilience, joined Lavinson and Judge, and the meeting also featured Jim Lavelle, executive director of Holyoke Gas and Electric.

State awards \$10M for community World Cup events

The Healey-Driscoll administration on March 23 announced \$10 million in awards to 17 recipients through the Sports and Entertainment Events Fund Grant program, which supports celebrations and community watch parties across Massachusetts related to the [2026 FIFA World Cup](#).

The grant program, operated in partnership with the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, supports costs associated with the World Cup, including public safety, transportation, and celebrations.

Gov. Maura Healey said investing in these activities ensures that the World Cup will have positive impacts throughout Massachusetts.

“These events will create opportunities for residents and visitors to come



The Healey-Driscoll administration awarded \$10 million in funding to 17 recipients for 2026 FIFA World Cup celebrations, community watch parties, and public safety expenses associated with these events.

together, celebrate the world’s game, support our local businesses, and experience the energy and connection that sports can inspire,” Healey said in a prepared statement.

Massachusetts will play host to seven World Cup matches from June 13 to July 9.

The \$10 million was appropriated through a [supplemental budget bill enacted last November](#).

Grants were awarded to Boston Soccer 2026, Boston, Brockton, Burlington, Cambridge, Chelsea, Easthampton, Everett, Greenfield, Lexington, the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, Meet Boston, Metrowest Tourism and Visitors Bureau, Revolutionary Valley Regional Tourism Council and the Latinx Center of Lowell, the U.S Haitian Chamber of Commerce, Weymouth, and Worcester.

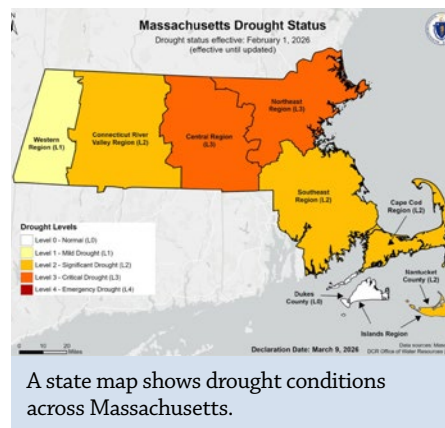
More information about the grant program and award recipients is [available online](#). ●

Drought concerns continue across Massachusetts

Following limited groundwater recharge over the course of the winter, Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper on March 9 announced an increase in the drought level for the Central, Northeast, Western and Connecticut River Valley regions, meaning that much of the state now faces significant to critical drought.

Despite a snowy February, there was not enough precipitation to replenish groundwater following an extended drought period over much of the past year, Tepper said. Below-freezing temperatures meant that water stayed locked in snow and the ground remained frozen and unable to absorb water, she said.

“This drought has been building since 2024, and we’re still seeing the effects in low streamflow and lower water levels across the state,” Tepper said. “Even though we had a snowy February,



A state map shows drought conditions across Massachusetts.

it won’t be enough to replenish the groundwater after such a long period of drought.”

As a result of the recent assessment, the Central and Northeast regions are now at Level 3: Critical Drought, the Connecticut River Valley is now at Level

2: Significant Drought, and the Western Region is now at Level 1: Mild Drought. The Southeast and Cape Cod regions remain at Level 2, while conditions in Nantucket County improved to Level 2.

Dukes County (Martha’s Vineyard) is not experiencing drought conditions.

State officials hope that rainfall and snowmelt will have some impact on replenishing water systems during March.

[The state’s drought status and resources are available online](#).

The state has also developed [drought management](#) and [water conservation](#) resources for individuals and municipalities to reduce strains on the water supply. Some immediate steps that communities can take include water restriction enforcement, establishing water-use reduction targets, and providing drought and water conservation information to residents and businesses. ●

MMCA to hold regional breakfast on April 10 in Watertown

All city and town councillors are invited to a Massachusetts Municipal Councillors’ Association regional breakfast meeting on April 10 in Watertown.

“How Fiscal Policies Shape Our Communities” will feature a speaker panel followed by Q&A.

Speakers will include Watertown

Auditor Megan Langan and Marlborough Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Meredith Harris. MMA Legislative Director Dave Koffman will join the panel to discuss the MMA’s “[Perfect Storm](#)” fiscal report and its “[Navigating the Storm](#)” recommendations, both released late last year.

The free meeting will run from 8 to 10 a.m. at the Forge Life Science Building in Arsenal Yards, Watertown.

Registration is [available online](#).

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

MMA Webinars

SAPHE 2.0 program

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

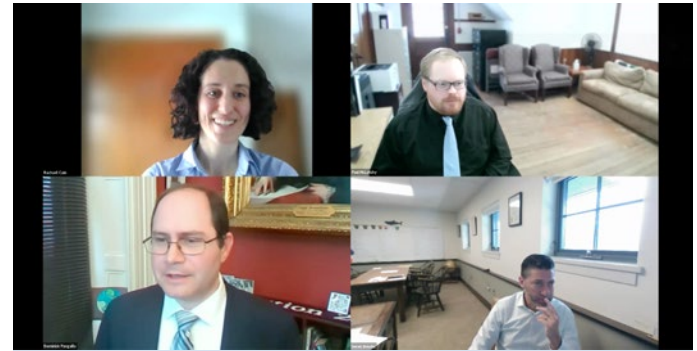
Rachel Cain, deputy director of the Office of Local and Regional Health, explained some of the ongoing investments in local public health as a result of SAPHE 2.0, which was enacted last November as part of an economic development law and creates new requirements for all participants in the Massachusetts local public health system.

Key changes include establishing the state's first local public health performance standards, offering technical support to all municipalities on a range of subjects, and having regular contact across the state through webinars, emails and press releases.

Shared service arrangements allow municipalities to pool staff, resources, and services to strengthen local health systems regardless of community size or budget, Cain said. There are currently 54 shared service arrangements, representing 322 cities and towns statewide.

Salem Mayor Dominick Pangallo said the North Shore Public Health Collaborative is a "force multiplier" for each of the eight participating municipalities. By pooling resources, the team has hosted vaccine and blood pressure clinics, conducted hundreds of inspections, and provided data analysis and reporting, all of which would be impossible for each individual community to manage on its own.

Ashfield Town Administrator Paul McLatchy III said regional efforts are crucial for small municipalities, like his, that have limited capabilities, resources and staffing. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments Collaborative Public Health Program gives towns like Ashfield access to eight experienced,



Panelists discuss the State Action for Public Health Excellence program during a recent MMA webinar. Speakers included, clockwise from top left, Rachel Cain, deputy director of the Office of Local and Regional Health; Ashfield Town Administrator Paul McLatchy III; Plymouth Town Manager Derek Brindisi; and Salem Mayor Dominick Pangallo.

Date: March 3

Length: 60 minutes

[VIEW WEBINAR ↗](#)

full-time health professionals, a significant upgrade from their limited, part-time contractors.

Plymouth Town Manager Derek Brindisi said the Southern Plymouth County Public Health Excellence Collaborative provided its communities with a shared epidemiologist, who gave local boards of health access to data that can help set priorities and guide select board decisions.

Cain moderated 15 minutes of questions and answers, addressing inquiries regarding beginning the shared services agreement conversation, predicted changes to current funding, and how to retain employees with a yearly grant.

– *Kristianna Lapierre*

Building media strategies

Massachusetts Municipal Communicators hosted a virtual meeting on March 24 to discuss building a powerful media strategy with limited resources.

The presentation focused on video messaging and why it's essential in modern municipal communications. Nantucket Communications Manager Florencia Rullo said video outperforms text on nearly every platform and reaches a broader audience.

To streamline production, Jess Torres, Nantucket's digital communications coordinator, recommends identifying the priority topics of the video early and using repeatable templates, which make it easy to grow content over time. Torres highlighted Nantucket's success in reaching younger residents by collaborating with high school students on projects like bicycle safety campaigns.

MMC Vice Chair Jeremy Warnick, director of media relations and content strategy in Cambridge, shared examples of leveraging community resources to support content creation, such as working with local cable access channels, students and

internship programs, community organizations, and regional collaborations with other municipalities.

Mia Filler, a Northeastern student who has completed two co-ops with the city of Cambridge, presented some of the brief videos she has created for the city, noting the importance of simple video elements, captioning, and branding for best engagement.

To end the meeting, MMC members had the opportunity to learn from one another by asking questions and sharing advice on video content creation.

– *Kristianna Lapierre*

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.

MMA Webinars

Municipal guidelines for AI use

The MMA hosted the third session of its webinar series on artificial intelligence on March 11, focusing on the municipal guidelines needed for the responsible implementation of AI.

Michael Alvarez, the chief technology officer in Nantucket, discussed how the town approached the creation of its AI guidelines and the main principles.

He said the town's policy is not entirely new, since most of the issues related to AI are covered by existing municipal policies regarding internet use, computer use, data handling, and public records. But Nantucket wanted to create clear guidance specific to "generative AI" because the technology "introduces new workflows and new risks that staff might not immediately recognize."

Alvarez said policies should:

- Include clear definitions and the purpose of the document
- Be brief but informative
- Avoid overly technical language so everyone can understand it
- Be a working document, because AI continues to evolve

Nantucket Communications Manager Florencia Rullo discussed how the guidelines look in practice, using her department's work as an example.

Alvarez and Rullo advised municipal employees to avoid entering personal information in AI systems, consider any biases that may be reflected in AI-generated items, disclose AI use, and always

Communicating municipal budgets

An MMA webinar on March 17 discussed strategies for visually communicating municipal budgets.

The presentation was led by Dave Kartunen, an award-winning broadcast journalist and founder of [kartoonEDU](#), who discussed how municipal leaders can communicate their budgets in a visually compelling and accessible way. KartoonEDU, an MMA featured service, uses custom animation to explain complex concepts and increase community engagement across public institutions.

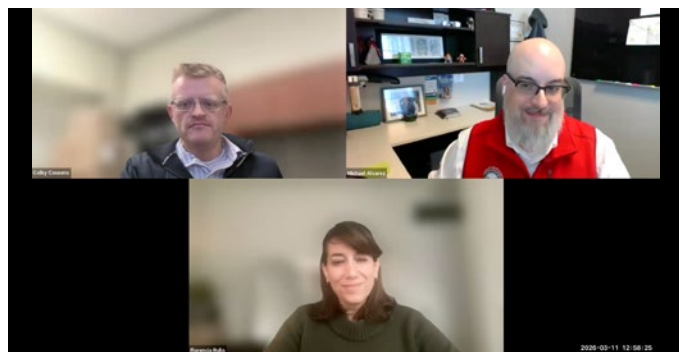
Kartunen recommended an effective messaging architecture:

- First, identify the shared values that will bring people together
- Define the problem and avoid jargon
- Clearly share the benefits of the presented solution
- End each communication with a call to action

Jayne Wellman, acting town manager in Reading, said statements of shared values were "the foundation for building consensus with our residents" during the town's past debt exclusion initiatives. Many residents who don't understand municipal budgets are more engaged in the conversation when they can relate to the unifying statements.

Kartunen shared brief, animated videos, created by kartoonEDU, to illustrate how communities like Wakefield and Reading have explained various topics to residents.

Doug Lyons, the superintendent of schools in Wakefield, said many families are concerned about the issue of revolving funds.



Panelists discuss responsible AI implementation during a recent MMA webinar. Speakers included Michael Alvarez, top right, Nantucket chief technology officer, and Florencia Rullo, bottom, Nantucket communications manager. Colby Cousens, Danvers chief information officer, moderated the panel.

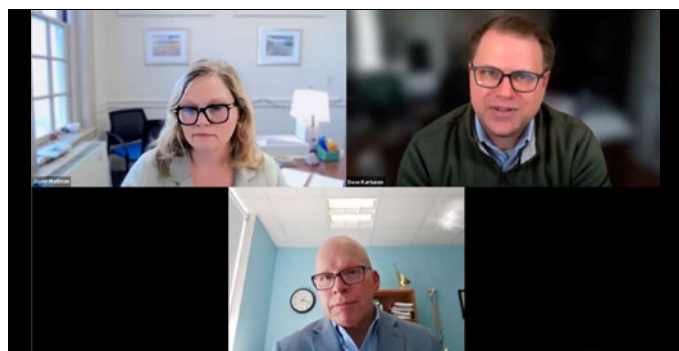
Date: March 11 **Length:** 60 minutes

[VIEW WEBINAR ↗](#)

edit and verify all outputs before using them.

Colby Cousens, chief information officer in Danvers, moderated 25 minutes of questions and answers, addressing inquiries regarding the use of paid versus free ChatGPT accounts, public feedback on Nantucket's AI use, and concerns within municipal departments about Nantucket's implementation of AI.

– *Kristianna Lapierre*



Panelists discuss strategies for effectively communicating budget information during a recent MMA webinar. Speakers included Jayne Wellman, top left, Reading's acting town manager; Dave Kartunen, top right, journalist and founder of kartoonEDU; and Doug Lyons, Wakefield schools superintendent.

Date: March 17 **Length:** 75 minutes

[VIEW WEBINAR ↗](#)

By clearly communicating that the use of the funds is guided by state laws and restricted to specific purposes, he said, the "temperature of these conversations comes down."

Wellman moderated 15 minutes of questions and answers, addressing inquiries regarding how to communicate differences in the use of funds to residents, balancing transparency with information overload, and strategies to drive traffic to municipal websites.

– *Kristianna Lapierre*

MMMA, MMHR to hold joint meeting on April 16

A joint meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association and Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources on April 16 in Salem will feature a panel discussion on the evolving role of human resources in municipal leadership.

A panel of HR directors, managers, and administrators will discuss the critical relationship between managers and HR professionals, focusing on key areas where these groups work together. Panelists will share their perspectives on what each group needs to understand about the other and identify opportunities to enhance collaboration and further strengthen working relationships.

Panelists will be:

- Katherine Bird, assistant town manager for administration and

operations in Ashland

- Denise Casey, town administrator in Wakefield
- Vanessa Hale, assistant town administrator in Southborough
- Jessica Porter, assistant town manager and human resources director in Concord

Jen Breaker, MMHR chair and assistant town manager and communications director in Danvers, will be the moderator.

The meeting is open to all MMMA and MMHR members and will be held at the Hawthorne Hotel in Salem. The



Katherine Bird



Denise Casey



Vanessa Hale

registration fee of \$40 includes coffee and lunch.

More information, as well as an agenda and registration link, are available at www.mma.org.

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

MMHR to hold Labor Relations Seminar on May 7

Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources will hold its annual Labor Relations Seminar on Thursday, May 7, in Devens.

Rachel Shaw, president and principal consultant of Shaw HR Consulting, will lead a training on mental health issues and the intersection of discipline and disability. With more than 15 years of executive-level HR experience, Shaw is recognized in California as a leader in helping public and private sector employers manage their most challenging personnel issues. Shaw spoke on the ADA Disability Interactive Process at MMHR's most recent labor relations seminar in October.



Rachel Shaw

The agenda will include a legislative update from the MMA, a labor law update from an attorney, and two concurrent workshops in the afternoon.

The agenda will be available in the coming weeks at www.mma.org.

Seminar registration and a networking coffee will begin at 8:30 a.m., and the event will conclude at 3 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

The registration fee is \$90 for MMHR members and \$110 for nonmembers.

The seminar will be held at the Devens Common Center, 31 Andrews Parkway in Devens.

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



MMA policy committees kick off 2026

Members from several of the MMA's five policy committees gather on March 9 in the MMA office as part of a series of meetings to kick off the year. The meetings, held on March 9 and 10, featured an introduction to the MMA's Legislative Division, an overview of policy committee service, a legislative update, and time for policy committee members to get to know each other while discussing their committees' work in the year ahead.

MMA-Suffolk certificate program accepting applications

By Kate Evarts

Applications are due by April 30 for the Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program offered by the MMA and Suffolk University.

The certificate program application is available on the [MMA website](#). This is a competitive application process; applicants will be notified of their status by mid-May.

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

Municipal Fellowship

April 7 webinar will cover cryptokiosk issues

The MMA and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office will host a webinar on April 7 on cryptokiosk considerations for municipalities.

The webinar will cover recent developments related to cryptocurrency kiosk fraud, including legislative and enforcement initiatives.

There will also be updates on municipal efforts to address cryptokiosk fraud.

A cryptocurrency kiosk is similar to an ATM, often located in convenience stores, airports and gas stations and used to buy or sell cryptocurrencies using cash or debit cards.

Panelists will be:

- Kelli Gunagan, director of the attorney general's Municipal Law Unit
- Lisa Mead, partner, Mead, Talerman & Costa
- Glenn Kaplan, chief of the attorney general's Financial Services Division



Applications for the Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program offered by the MMA and Suffolk University are due by April 30.

Municipal professionals interested in pursuing a [master of public administration](#) degree at Suffolk 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.

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.



Lisa Mead



Glenn Kaplan

The 60-minute webinar will begin at 11 a.m. [Online registration is available](#). Attendees are asked to submit questions in advance on the Zoom registration page.

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](mailto:klapierre@mma.org) at klapierre@mma.org



Managers cover risk management

Jaime Kenny, a partner at Clifford & Kenny, discusses risk management during a Massachusetts Municipal Management Association meeting on March 19 in Boylston. Kenny and John Clifford, also a partner at the firm, highlighted key human resources issues and emphasized the need for responsible decision-making.

MunEnergy to hold webinar April 8

The MMA and its partner in the MunEnergy program, [Constellation](#), will host a free webinar on April 8 to reset the energy landscape following New England's 16th coldest winter on record, and to analyze what these shifts mean for municipal power procurement strategies.

The webinar will also cover the impacts of weather on New England wholesale prices for power and natural gas; natural gas fundamentals, including storage, production and natural gas demand drivers; upcoming spring and summer temperatures; and how to be strategic in today's energy market.

Featured speakers will be Brandon Fong, principal of Constellation's Commodities Management Group, and Bill Bartlett, Constellation's Senior Relationship Manager.

Constellation has been MMA's endorsed



Brandon Fong



Bill Bartlett

supplier for MunEnergy, the MMA's municipal energy program, for more than two decades. The Constellation team offers a wide range of services to help communities manage summer energy costs, including strategic energy buying, efficiency projects, and clean energy options. As electricity production is struggling to keep up with demand and New England prices rise, Constellation can help cities

and towns explore alternative energy and cost-savings solutions.

For more than 25 years, [MunEnergy](#) has helped cities and towns manage energy costs through a program designed specifically for public entities. For more information, visit the [MunEnergy webpage](#) or contact MMA Deputy Executive Director Katie McCue at 617-426-7272, ext. 111, or kmccue@mma.org.

[Online registration is available](#) for the 60-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

MMA webinar will cover how managers can support staff

An MMA webinar on April 15 will cover how managers can best support their staff by understanding their needs.

Municipal leaders and staff are expected to perform with a high level of skill and grace, but consistently high performance can be impossible if staff don't feel valued. It's a common mistake for management to make decisions about what will make their staff happy, but employees, like their managers, want to decide what they need to be successful in their work.

This webinar will explore the "top 10 wishlist of the internal customer,"

moving beyond management assumptions to identify what employees actually require to thrive. By understanding the needs of the "internal customer," municipalities can better support the teams responsible for public service.

The webinar will be led by Stephen Coleman, the fire chief and assistant



Stephen Coleman

town manager in Auburn, who has led talks nationally on customer service and leadership.

[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

\$3.5 million in grants awarded for body-worn cameras

The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security on March 3 announced the award of nearly \$3.5 million in fiscal 2026 grants for law enforcement body-worn cameras.

[According to the EOPSS](#), the grant program seeks to enhance public safety, strengthen relations between community and police, increase accountability for police actions, deter detrimental or inappropriate behavior by both police and the public, and provide digital/audio recordings that can be used as evidence as well as training materials.

Grants ranging from \$9,532 to \$231,635 were awarded to police



The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security awarded nearly \$3.5 million in fiscal 2026 grants to 32 municipalities for law enforcement body-worn cameras.

departments in Berkley, Braintree, Chelmsford, Conway, Dedham,

Dover, Dracut, Dudley, Freetown, Harvard, Haverhill, Holden, Lakeville, Leominster, Leverett, Marlborough, Maynard, Medford, Mendon, Millbury, Otis, Revere, Shelburne, Shirely, Somerville, Southwick, Upton, West Newbury, West Springfield, West Stockbridge, Westfield, and Wrentham.

Since its inception, the program has awarded nearly \$13 million to 144 local police departments for the purchase of more than 4,800 body-worn cameras, along with equipment needed to operate and maintain them.

[More information about the program](#) is available online. ●

House passes PROTECT Act

By Dave Koffman

On March 25, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed a [revised version](#) of legislation “promoting the rule of law, oversight, trust, and equal constitutional treatment,” also known as the PROTECT Act.

The bill would establish new statewide standards governing interactions between state and local entities and federal civil immigration enforcement.

In particular, the legislation seeks to regulate how public safety agencies, courts, and other institutions engage with federal immigration authorities, focusing on courthouse access and due process.

Notable provisions in the House bill would:

- Prohibit law enforcement from inquiring about immigration status, unless the inquiry is directly material to a specific criminal offense.
- Ban the use of local resources for civil immigration enforcement.
- Restrict the sharing of nonpublic information and advance release notifications without a legal requirement or judicial warrant.
- Prohibit law enforcement agencies and political subdivisions from executing or renewing a 287(g) memorandum of agreement with federal immigration authorities, with some limited exceptions.
- Limit civil arrests in courthouses by requiring a judicial warrant or order.
- Authorize the governor to restrict civil

immigration enforcement in nonpublic areas of state facilities, and require multilingual guidance for agencies, private entities, law enforcement, and the public.

- Authorize the attorney general to enforce through civil actions.

The bill now heads to the Senate, where leaders have indicated strong interest in a similar proposal in the near future.

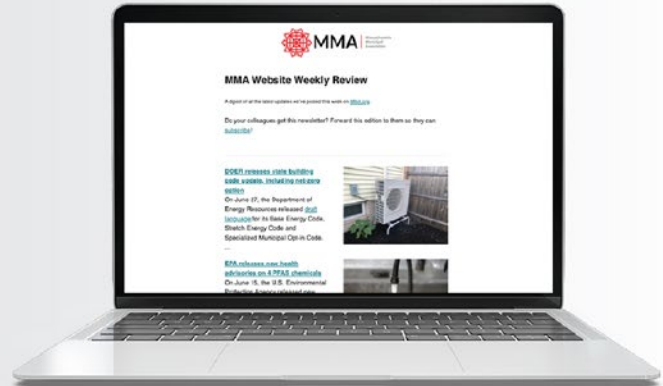
In January, members of the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus filed [an earlier version of the PROTECT Act](#), which served as the starting point for the House bill, following a public hearing and outreach among House members.

The legislative activity follows related executive action and proposals by Gov. Maura Healey [earlier this year](#). ●

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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MassDEP offers Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants

Applications for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants will open on April 15 and are due May 15.

The grant program awards between \$3,000 and \$10,000 for projects that reduce waste through efforts to reuse, repair, donate, share, and/or rescue items.

Eligible applicants include

municipalities, nonprofits, businesses, schools and colleges, and regional authorities.

Projects must be based in Massachusetts and may take up to one year to complete. Of particular interest to the construction and demolition stakeholder community is that building material reuse and deconstruction projects are eligible for consideration. Recycling and composting projects, however, are not

eligible.

For more information, see the [Micro-Grant Webpage](#) and the [Grant Guidelines](#), which provide information including evaluation criteria, eligible uses of funds, project ideas, and a glossary of terms.

Questions may be directed to Leah Kelleher at leah.kelleher@mass.gov until April 29. ●

Administration awards \$4 million in municipal IT grants

The Healey-Driscoll administration on March 17 announced \$4 million in information technology grants to support projects that enhance cybersecurity and implement new digital tools that increase municipal efficiency.

The grants are administered through the [Community Compact](#) grant program.

The fiscal 2026 cycle marks the first time that accessibility projects were

prioritized for information technology grant funding as a way to support compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Digital Accessibility Rule.

Technology Services and Security Secretary Jason Snyder said prioritizing accessibility helps municipalities "build digital platforms that better serve all residents while improving efficiency and

protecting critical local systems."

Funding amounts of between \$5,000 and \$140,000 were awarded to 67 municipalities. The full list of awards is available on the [Community Compact website](#).

The IT grant program has provided 602 grants totaling \$38.1 million to support 315 municipal and school district projects since fiscal 2016. ●

Meeting space wanted

Does your municipality have a public meeting space that would be appropriate for an MMA event?

With more than 60 member group meetings each year, the MMA uses several different types of function spaces around the state. The use of municipally owned meeting rooms greatly improves the organization's ability to sponsor affordable educational events in a variety of places.

To offer your town or city's municipal function space, contact Timmery Kuck, the MMA's assistant director of events, at tkuck@mma.org. ●



MMA delegation travels to DC

Municipal leaders and MMA staff gather on March 18 with Rep. Katherine Clark, minority whip in the U.S. House of Representatives, during a trip to Washington, D.C., for the National League of Cities Congressional City Conference. Pictured, l-r, are Cambridge City Councillor Catherine Zusy, MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine, MMA President and Amesbury Mayor Cassandra Gove, Clark, MMA Legislative Director David Koffman, MMA Legislative Analyst Violet Gehr, and MMA Senior Legislative Analyst Josie Ahlberg. During the trip, MMA representatives also met with other federal officials, including Sen. Ed Markey and Rep. James McGovern.

\$8.7M in grants help close gaps for sustainability projects

On March 13, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's [Gap Energy Grant Program](#) announced 34 awards totalling \$8.7 million.

The streamlined energy grant funding model has helped municipal water utilities reduce their energy usage and operating costs while improving the environment, according to the MassDEP.

The grant is designed to fill the last "gap" in project financing, enabling and encouraging facilities to use energy

utility incentives as well as funding from other sources to install selected energy efficiency and clean energy generation projects. Grants help to complete financing for projects that would otherwise be delayed or difficult to move forward.

Awarded projects are expected to collectively save more than \$1.6 million in energy costs every year and more than 10.6 million kilowatt hours of annual electricity savings, while reducing carbon emissions by 2,440 metric tons.

In a prepared statement, Energy and

Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper said the grants provide a model for what communities can pursue to reduce costs and protect the environment.

"This program shows what is possible when municipal water facilities, small businesses and nonprofits can invest in energy-efficient building upgrades, clean energy installations, and energy storage systems," Tepper said.

Visit www.mass.gov for more information. ●

Administration awards \$5.5 million for community transportation

The Healey-Driscoll administration on March 20 announced nearly \$5.5 million in grant funding through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's [Community Transit Grant program](#).

The grant funding supports operating programs and pilots that involve volunteer drivers, purchased rides, or other services to provide transportation, as well as mobility management initiatives to help residents learn about and use

available transit options.

Jane Burns, director of elder services in Andover, said the funding will help to provide transportation and access to services for the town's most vulnerable residents.

"By removing transportation barriers, we are effectively opening doors to the care and connection in our community," Burns said.

Forty-seven grants, ranging from

\$8,000 to \$500,000, were awarded to 40 regional transit authorities, municipalities and nonprofits. The grants will support projects such as a long-distance medical shuttle, door-to-door transportation to medical appointments, and ride programs in rural areas with limited public transit.

A full list of recipients and projects, along with information about the Community Transit Grant Program, is [available online](#). ●

State awards \$7 million in loans for clean water projects

The Massachusetts Clean Water Trust's Board of Trustees on March 4 approved \$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 \$7 million in clean water project funding went to the Provincetown Satellite Treatment Facility project in Provincetown.

A School Water Improvement Grant of \$15,000 was awarded to the Amherst Regional Public Schools.

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



MMA holds Legislative Breakfast Meetings

Norfolk Select Board Chair Anita Mecklenberg, right, speaks during an MMA Legislative Breakfast Meeting in Sharon on March 6. Also pictured is Franklin Town Councillor Maxwell Morrongiello. The MMA held six Legislative Breakfast Meetings throughout the state in March, from Pittsfield to Harwich. See related story on page 3.

Getting organized can support health, productivity

By Joyce McMahon

When life gets busy, organization is often one of the first things to slip. Papers pile up, inboxes overflow, and before long, the clutter starts to feel like part of the scenery.

But that backdrop may be doing more than making a space look untidy. It may also be affecting focus, mood, and the ability to manage the day with a clear head.

Organization is not just about appearance. It is about reducing friction. When workspaces and home environments are easier to manage, people can feel less overwhelmed and better able to focus on what is in front of them. [An article published this spring by WebMD](#) cites the benefits of decluttering, including stress reduction and improved productivity.

The impact of clutter

Research helps explain why clutter can feel so draining. When multiple stimuli are present in the visual field at the same time, they “compete for neural representation,” according to a study published in the Journal of Neuroscience. Physical clutter can create extra visual input that requires attention, even when a person is

trying to concentrate on another task.

The connection between home organization and mental health is also reflected in research published in 2016 in the Journal of Environmental Psychology, which notes that clutter can undermine a person’s sense of home as a place where they feel settled, secure and themselves.

This helps explain why a crowded room, desk or workspace can feel mentally exhausting. Even if people are not consciously thinking about the mess around them, it may still be competing for their attention. Dr. Joseph Kandel makes a similar point in an [article published last fall](#).

“When you reduce disorganization,” Kandel writes, “you free up mental ‘storage space’ for focus, memory, and clear thinking.”

Professional benefits

These issues matter on both a personal and a professional level. A more organized work environment can support concentration, reduce frustration, and make it easier to stay on top of details. A clearer workspace can help with task management. A better filing system can reduce wasted time. And a more



Organizing and reducing clutter in work and personal spaces can improve focus and task management, while reducing stress.

functional home can also make it easier to reset after work and prepare for the next day.

This is especially relevant for people balancing deadlines, public-facing responsibilities, caregiving, paperwork, and constant interruptions. In demanding jobs, even small points of friction can add up. Organization is not only about creating a nicer-looking space. It can also help create better conditions for focus and follow-through.

Strategies for getting started

Getting organized does not have to mean a major overhaul. In many cases, small steps can make a space feel more

■ MIIA continued on 30

Rewards and grant reminders from MIIA Risk Management program

MIIA budgeted \$2.4 million for the MIIA Rewards program for fiscal 2026, and approximately \$1.6 million has been allocated to date.

Members who have Rewards information to submit are asked to do so as soon as possible, as the program will close once the \$2.4 million has been allocated.

All fiscal 2026 Rewards documentation must be submitted to miirewards@mma.org, with a copy to your risk manager. Member training documentation should only be submitted for the specific topics listed on the [Rewards](#)

[status report](#).

All MIIA and EAP (Rewards eligible) training is tracked internally by MIIA staff, so there is no need to resubmit it. Members who have participated fully in the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security’s KnowB4 cyber security training do not need to submit that information, as EOTSS shares it with MIIA directly.

Please note the following deadlines:

- May 1: Member Activity Submittal
- May 20: Member Directed Training

MIIA grants

The \$1 million MIIA budgeted for the fiscal 2026 Risk Management Grants has been awarded to 146 MIIA members.

This year’s grants focused on empowering members to effectively address challenges related to evolving weather patterns, employee health and safety, and emerging cybersecurity threats.

The fiscal 2027 grants program will open this summer. For more information, visit www.emiia.org/risk-management-resources/grant-program. ●

New Lexington institute focuses on women's leadership, growth

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

Cheered on by Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll and other leaders, 18 women employees in Lexington graduated last month from a new town leadership program that's helping women build support networks and gain a better sense of their own possibilities.

The March 19 ceremony concluded the first six-month session of the Lexington Women's Institute for Learning and Leadership, which is believed to be the first municipal program in Massachusetts to empower women employees and help them overcome barriers in the workplace. The program's creators hope the institute will boost confidence and leadership skills, which in turn will make the employees stronger advocates for local government and the residents they serve.

The program grew out of discussions that Deputy Town Manager Kelly Axtell has heard and participated in during professional conferences and meetings, including the MMA's Women Leading Government group.

"Just talking to colleagues, meeting people across the country, and just talking with our employees themselves, I feel committed to lifting and supporting women," Axtell said. "And starting here in Lexington with my fellow colleagues is a natural thing for me."

Axtell worked with Abraham Fofanah, who recently completed a management fellowship in Lexington. Fofanah researched women's institutes in other states, including Texas and Michigan. They also reviewed research from the International City/County Management Association about women's trajectories in local government and the obstacles they face.

Last June, Lexington held a lunch-and-learn session with staff, and their feedback helped shape the curriculum for the program.

The first cohort

In building the first cohort, Lexington sought employees from different departments and job levels, and ultimately got employees from nearly every department. In the application, employees were asked why they wanted to participate.



Melissa Battite, right, Lexington's director of recreation and community programs, joins Deputy Town Manager Kelly Axtell to speak with students in the Women's Institute for Learning and Leadership during the institute's final session on March 19 in Lexington.

"I have to say, the answers that came in, they blew me away," Axtell said. "They were so thoughtful. People really wanted this."

Starting in October, the 18 women met monthly, assessing their strengths and goals and participating in exercises about professional development topics such as handling difficult conversations, public speaking, and capitalizing on personality strengths for leadership. Guest speakers included Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan, Lexington Select Board Member Vineeta Kumar, and Patricia Vinchesi, a retired town administrator in numerous communities.

Melissa Battite, director of recreation and community programs, worked with Axtell to develop the institute and select the 18 participants. She said the program encourages participants to view themselves differently.

"What we're finding is that most people wouldn't sign up for a professional development like this," Battite said. "Their jobs were very skill-focused, so they might go to a technology class or a MUNIS class, or they might go to learn to get stronger skills to do their job, but they never thought of themselves as a leader in that position."

Program leaders said they witnessed dramatic transformations over the six months, including watching more reserved employees embrace public speaking. Communications Director Taylor Galusha, who was also involved



Lexington employees gather on March 19 for the final session of the Women's Institute for Learning and Leadership. Participants included, l-r, Colleen Dunbar, Julia Flood, Siqing Pan and Julie Laflamme.

in launching the institute, said mixing women from different levels of leadership helped encourage the employees' development.

"So you're not just a bunch of department heads in a room talking about leadership," Galusha said. "You're also helping to motivate, maybe, other people within the organization that might not have seen themselves in that leadership position before, but might now."

Lexington partnered with outside organizations and individuals for program support, receiving a \$2,500 grant from the Jacquelyn R. Smith Memorial Fund, and donated time from speakers. In addition, local organizations donated space to allow participants to focus away from their usual municipal settings.

Axtell said Lexington now expects to run the program in two-year cycles. For the second year, Lexington plans to partner with nearby communities to mentor women interested in pursuing careers as town managers, a session that could launch as early as this fall.

Graduation day

During the final session, participants reflected on their experiences, and women from the town's senior management team discussed the experiences that led them to Lexington. The graduates watched a congratulatory video message from ICMA CEO and Executive Director Julia Novak, a former assistant town manager in Lexington.

■ MASS INNOVATIONS *continued on 29*

MMA webinar to cover new public health data platform

The MMA will host a webinar with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on May 19 about Metrik, the state's new public health data and workflow platform.

Metrik's goal is to provide access for all Massachusetts municipalities to clear, reliable data and simple, modern tools for collecting, managing, analyzing, and reporting public health data.

With Metrik, the DPH strives to help municipalities reduce administrative burdens, improve visibility into local trends, enhance the ability of communities to provide efficient and effective public health services, and ensure access to the same secure, high-quality reporting tools throughout the Commonwealth.

The webinar will cover:

- What Metrik is, what it will do, and why it's being built
- What Metrik means for municipal

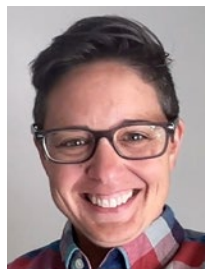
leaders, staff, departments, and budgets

- How Metrik will add value for municipal staff, local businesses, and constituents
- How the DPH is incorporating local perspectives into Metrik's design and planning, and building it to address the real needs of Massachusetts communities

Presenters from the DPH's Office of Local and Regional Health will be:

- Aimee Petrosky, director of performance standards and data systems
- Rike Sterrett, assistant director of data systems

They will be joined by Shin-Yi Lao, commissioner in Newton's Health and Human



Aimee Petrosky



Rike Sterrett



Shin-Yi Lao

Services Department.

[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](mailto:Kристиanna.Lapierre@mma.org) at klapierre@mma.org

Applications for farm partnership grants open

Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education is accepting applications through April 15 for its Partnership Grants program, which awards up to \$30,000 for projects that partner with farmers to address agricultural sustainability.

Eligible applicants include municipalities, nonprofits, farms and farmers, farming industry businesses, and colleges and universities.

Projects must be located in the northeastern United States, explore innovative topics through experiments, surveys, or other research and education techniques, impact both the farmer partner and farms in the region, and include outreach activities to the wider farming community.

More information is available on the [Northeast SARE website](#) or the call for proposals at northeast.sare.org/

[PartnershipGrantCall](#), which provides full applicant and project eligibility information.

Northeast SARE is one of four regional SARE programs funded by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and offers grants and education to farmers and stakeholders to address key issues affecting the sustainability of agriculture throughout the region. ●

DIRECTORS REPORT

Continued from page 2

address the growing issue of untenable required local contributions that are stressing local budgets by forcing cities and towns to prioritize these contributions over investments in other essential municipal services. We strongly recommend reforming the required local contribution aspect of the Student Opportunity Act, to protect critical non-school services alongside education investments.

We advocated for full funding of the Special Education Circuit Breaker, charter school impact mitigation payments, rural school aid, student transportation reimbursements, regional school

transportation, out-of-district vocational transportation, McKinney-Vento, and payments in lieu of taxes.

Finally, we expressed our unequivocal opposition to the governor's proposal to discontinue Registry of Motor Vehicle holds for delinquent payments. The governor's proposal would change the process by which cities and towns may collect outstanding excise taxes, parking ticket payments, and abandoned vehicle fines.

Cities and towns are deeply concerned that the elimination of a helpful and practical tool that encourages payment of key municipal charges will compromise revenues, collection rates, and therefore, municipal bond ratings. During

a time when municipalities across the Commonwealth are struggling to balance budgets and maintain essential services, we strongly urged the committee to maintain existing practice and oppose these sections of the governor's budget.

As you know, the budget process is just beginning at the state level, and we will continue to advocate for you through each stage of the process. Please look for our updates and calls to action as the House budget and Senate budget are released over the course of the next two months. Working together, I am confident that we can achieve adequate funding in the fiscal 2027 state budget that provides much-needed support for your communities. ●

Around the Commonwealth

Belchertown

Small town is leader in strategic use of AI

On Feb. 26, Gov. Maura Healey announced a Google partnership with the Massachusetts Artificial Intelligence Hub to offer state residents free training on AI skills.

In attendance for the announcement were representatives of 80 technology and finance companies, startups and nonprofits — and two representatives from Belchertown, a community of about 14,000 in western Massachusetts and the only municipality represented at the event.

Belchertown's move to embrace AI tools has saved significant staff time and resources and made the town a leader in integrating these tools with municipal workflows, according to state officials.

Belchertown's path to AI integration began in 2024 with work by the town's Communications Committee, which develops and recommends strategies for both public and internal communications in Belchertown.

"We were just looking for ways to move things along a little faster, ways to make it easier for all the different committees and the different groups in town to get their work done," said Chris Martin, Communications Committee chair.

The Communications Committee began using AI tools to write draft meeting minutes, which were then reviewed and approved by the committee.

"We were shaving hours off of our workload," Martin said of the process.

Members of the Communications Committee and Belchertown town staff soon met to discuss the town's approach to AI tools.

Town Manager Steve Williams said he had discussed strategies for ensuring that any AI tools used by staff did not have access to sensitive town information. It became clear that a policy was needed, he said.

"We needed to train people on what [AI] really was, because there seem to be some misconceptions out there about how it's being used," Williams said.

"The last thing we want to do is throw a new technology into the mix and suddenly everybody's in trouble and we're breaking laws," Martin said.

The town has been working on an AI policy since late 2024, a protracted process intended to mitigate potential legal impacts in the AI field and adapt to technological changes as they arise.

Martin said that the final policy may be akin to a "living document" that can be swiftly updated in response to new technology or AI use cases.

While the policy remains in draft form, Belchertown staff have found ways to integrate AI into their daily work. Police officers are using AI tools to scan and redact sensitive information in bodycam footage, a process that Martin said has reduced staff time spent reviewing footage from several hours down to 30 minutes.

Belchertown's Fire Department is using AI to scan footage for potential leads on missing persons and create a map that can be used to narrow a search radius. Belchertown Community Television has an AI tool that identifies equipment and equipment parts that can be used to replace aging items while the town library uses AI to support its grant writing efforts.

Belchertown has found partners both local and statewide for its AI implementation work. The town has worked with the Massachusetts AI Hub to connect with other organizations navigating AI integration and has also partnered with the UMass Amherst Public Interest Technology Initiative to develop AI training sessions for town staff.

Williams said that he has used AI to develop legal summaries, but "it doesn't replace the work leading up to that."

"We still need to read the document that we're summarizing," he said.

The town recognizes that AI has arrived, and is becoming a part of daily life.

"We need to educate ourselves so we can



Belchertown staff participate in a workshop on AI Safety and Literacy presented by the Public Interest Technology Initiative at UMass Amherst. Pictured, l-r, are Francine Berman, UMass PIT director; Esther Glovacki, Belchertown Community Television manager; Belchertown Police Chief Kevin Pacunas; Adam Burdick, Belchertown firefighter/paramedic; Cyndi Harbeson, Clapp Memorial Library director; and Chris Martin, Belchertown Communications Committee chair.

use it properly and not subject ourselves to any ramifications or negative consequences," he said. "But it's not going away."

— Owen Page

Amherst

Retrofit creates emergency operations center

After a recent retrofitting, the Amherst Town Council meeting room can be used for any number of activities — public comment, procedural votes, and emergency operations.

Several months ago, the town began updating the room for a dual purpose: to hold public meetings and to function as an emergency operations center. The upgrades will allow officials to coordinate public safety responses during large-scale community events and emergencies such as natural disasters and water shortages.

Communities often locate emergency operations centers in public safety buildings, but Amherst officials said the council room offered more space and better technology than other facilities in town. The project dovetailed with town efforts to enhance its emergency preparedness, as well as its real-time response to larger events and incidents, according to Fire Chief Lindsay

■ COMMONWEALTH *continued on 26*

Around the Commonwealth

COMMONWEALTH

Continued from page 25

Stromgren, who serves as the town's emergency management director.

"I think it's awareness about being ready for things that go beyond the day-to-day activity," Stromgren said. "You know, we're dealing with emergencies all day, police and fire every day. It's just trying to show [the public] that the town needs to be ready for other things."

The town activated its new emergency operations center for the first time on March 7, to coordinate its response to an unsanctioned, off-campus gathering involving UMass Amherst students — an annual tradition that has historically resulted in alcohol-related arrests and medical responses. The town wanted to test its new EOC on an anticipated event, rather than an unexpected emergency.

In previous years, Amherst public-safety officials would join their university counterparts at UMass Amherst's EOC. The university's EOC is nice, Stromgren said, but the town lacked a home field advantage, technologically speaking, by being at an external facility.

"So to go do an away game, as we call it, at the UMass EOC just made it tough for us to have all the technology and resources that we wanted," Stromgren said, "which is obviously computer internet access, but beyond that, ideally we want to be into our network, because there are things we can get to more easily on our network versus over the internet."

The council room already had wifi, ample seating, and network connectivity, as well as projectors and a large screen for council meetings. The room is also located near several town departments, additional meeting rooms, bathrooms, and breakroom amenities that could be helpful for multi-day events, said Sean Hannon, the town's information technology director.

Hannon's department had to ensure that all network and power outlets were functioning properly, and that they could run radio communications out of Town Hall and over their network. They also set up a dispatch area for use during EOC operations.



In its retrofit of the Town Council meeting room, Amherst added emergency dispatch equipment so that the room could also be used as an emergency operations center when needed. (Photo courtesy town of Amherst)

Stromgren and Hannon said the March 7 test went well, with participation from the town manager's office, the Amherst police, fire and IT departments, state police, the local hospital system, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, and UMass, which also had its EOC operating.

During the event, Hannon's team created a Zoom feed from cameras around town, and three drones flying overhead. Officials could watch the images on the big screen in the EOC, Stromgren said, and send the link out to incident commanders out in the field and over to the UMass EOC.

So far, the upgrades have cost the town IT staff time and about \$15,000 for additional dispatch equipment, officials said. Going forward, Amherst also wants to purchase standalone radios, costing about \$30,000, to storm-proof the EOC during power outages. The town hopes it can secure state emergency management grant funding through MEMA to defray the costs.

— Jennifer Kavanaugh

Mattapoissett

Town receives federal grant for culvert replacement

The coastal town of Mattapoissett is embarking on a multi-year culvert replacement project after receiving a \$3.5 million federal grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The culvert on Mattapoissett Neck Road is within a large salt marsh in the upper



The interior of the culvert on Mattapoissett Neck Road shows evidence of deterioration. (Photo courtesy town of Mattapoissett)

part of Mattapoissett Harbor, near the mouth of the Mattapoissett River. The marsh is one of the largest contiguous systems in Buzzard's Bay.

The marsh has been losing vegetation for years now, according to Town Administrator Michael Lorenzo, because of the undersized and deteriorating culvert. The deterioration is also jeopardizing the roadway, which is the only way in and out for about 250 homes. The culvert in question, between Molly's Cove and the Mattapoissett Neck salt marsh system, is one of three in the area.

"For any coastal community, marsh land is important," Lorenzo said. "It provides a buffer for storm events, sea level rise, as well as a habitat for wildlife and other things."

Town officials first heard from local groups more than six years ago that the marsh was compromised and that the culvert was the suspected culprit. That suspicion was confirmed by a study completed in 2024.

The undersized culvert prevents proper flushing of the marsh during high tide, which traps salt, and is completely underwater during high tide, which is both damaging to the marsh environment as well as the physical structure.

Using a number of small state grants, the town partnered with Mattapoissett Land Trust, Buzzards Bay Coalition and Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program to do preliminary research and analysis on tidal impacts on Molly's Cove, the culvert and the roadway to determine what would need to be done. The

■ COMMONWEALTH continued on 27

Around the Commonwealth

COMMONWEALTH

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partnership has continued through the federal grant process.

“That set us up for the grant application with the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, because we had enough facts to show that there’s some hydrologic concerns that could be impacting the marshlands,” Lorenzo said.

He said state staff worked with the town and its partners for several months to help draft the competitive grant application. The project was particularly appealing because multiple groups were working together.

“I think when you have everybody on the same page, just at that base level,

it makes it very easy to kind of push a project forward,” Lorenzo said. “I’m not a scientist — that’s not what the town’s job is — but partnering with people who are, who are good in that area, this whole group who have experience dealing with these issues, obviously the process is much easier.”

The town is now working on the survey, design and permitting phase of the project — a process expected to conclude in the summer of 2027, with construction beginning that September. The longer timeline for the project is due to tidal changes impacting when work can be completed, and needing to maintain access to the road for area residents, Lorenzo noted.

He said state help was vital in the cumbersome application process for the reimbursement grant.

“None of this would have been possible without the Office of Coastal Zone Management and their team, and the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program,” Lorenzo said. “We had gone through a couple rounds of grants to lead us up to this big application. Without their assistance, we wouldn’t be in the position that we are today.”

— *Meredith Gabrilka*

This monthly column features local and regional news items related to local government in Massachusetts. To suggest an item for this column, email editor@mma.org.

LOCAL AID

Continued from page 1

program as “the pillar of our state and local partnership.”

On public education aid, Chapdelaine expressed support for the governor’s proposal to fully fund the sixth and final year of the Student Opportunity Act implementation schedule, and encouraged legislators to boost minimum per pupil aid to at least \$150 per pupil, which would continue the level of funding included in the fiscal 2026 budget.

Gove discussed conditions on the ground in municipalities across Massachusetts, including her city.

“After a failed [Proposition 2½] override in November,” she said, “there’s no doubt that these changes impact the quality of services for residents.”

She emphasized the need for increases for UGGA and per pupil minimum aid, which would apply to 80% of all school districts, including Amesbury.

“For level service, we anticipate costs would increase roughly \$791 per pupil — a far cry from the proposed \$75,” she said. “I urge you to increase the per pupil aid so that the vast majority of districts are better supported in managing the increased costs needed to educate our youth.”

“No municipality should be forced to choose between maintaining public safety and supporting its schools. Yet that is precisely the position our current fiscal trajectory is placing us in.”

— *Haverhill Mayor Melinda Barrett*

Barrett emphasized the pressure on Haverhill’s budget, in part due to local assessments outweighing state investments.

“Under the governor’s proposal, Haverhill would receive a combined \$688,000 from Unrestricted General Government Aid and charter school tuition reimbursement,” she said. “However, the city faces a combined school choice and charter assessment burden of just over \$1 million, a net reduction of \$362,000 from fiscal 2026.”

Barrett added, “On the city side, our police force is undersized for our population. Our fire department has just recently been right-sized with the help of a federal grant. Our water and

wastewater departments struggle to keep staffing due to competition and pay for technical and skilled positions.”

A significant UGGA increase would benefit the community and help to address these and other needs.

“No municipality should be forced to choose between maintaining public safety and supporting its schools,” she said. “Yet that is precisely the position our current fiscal trajectory is placing us in.”

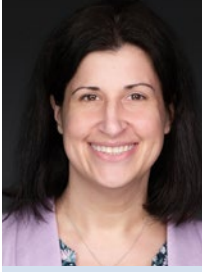
The MMA panel also asked the committee to oppose several outside sections included in the [governor’s budget bill](#) (House 2) that would change the process by which cities and towns may collect outstanding motor vehicle excise taxes and parking tickets.

The MMA will submit written testimony outlining additional municipal priorities for the fiscal 2027 state budget.

The Joint Committee on Ways and Means held a series of budget hearings during March and will conclude its hearings in the coming week.

The House is expected to draft and debate its state budget bill in April, with the Senate deliberating its own bill in May. The Legislature will aim to send a reconciled budget package to the governor before the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1. ●

People



Kristen Rubin

Kristen Rubin became the new town manager in Upton on March 2.

Most recently, Rubin served for three-and-a-half years as the town administrator in Berlin. Previously, she spent eight years in the

town of Leicester, including six years as assistant to the town administrator and two years as assistant town administrator. She also worked for three years for the city of Worcester, as the transitional housing manager and as the commercial and industrial development manager, and she was a redevelopment and housing project analyst for Monterey County in California.

Rubin has a bachelor's degree in international studies and a master's degree in public administration with a focus on international management, both from Middlebury College.

In Upton, Rubin replaced **Joseph Laydon**, who had served for more than three years before becoming the Bellingham town administrator in September. Public Works Director **Dennis Westgate Jr.** had served as the interim town manager.



Elizabeth Dennehy

Elizabeth Dennehy will become the new town administrator in Easton on April 27.

Dennehy has been the town administrator in Plympton for the past nine years. Previously, she served for two years

as the director of community and economic development in Walpole, and for eight years as the planning director and environmental affairs officer in Fall River. She has a master's degree in public administration from Bridgewater State University.

In Easton, Dennehy will replace **Connor Read**, who left to become the town administrator in Westwood in February. Assistant Town Administrator **Sean Dugan** has been serving as the interim town administrator.



Adam Lamontagne

Adam Lamontagne became the new town administrator in Acushnet on April 1.

For the past year, Lamontagne served as the chief administrative officer in Phillipston. Previously, he

served for more than four years as the town administrator in Templeton, after being the assistant town administrator and a municipal management fellow there. Lamontagne served as a city councillor in Chicopee from 2014 to 2017, and as a member of the city's School Committee from 2008 to 2014. He also served on that city's Conservation Commission and Mobile Home Rent Control Board. He has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in public administration, both from Westfield State University.

In Acushnet, Lamontagne is replacing **James Kelley**, who is retiring after serving for more than four years.



Richard Agnew

Richard Agnew, a former longtime town administrator in Scituate, died on Feb. 14 at age 79.

Agnew served for nearly two decades in Scituate, until 2009. He previously served as a town administrator in

Needham and Marshfield. A Vietnam War veteran, Agnew received the Bronze Star

Medal for his Army service.



Denis Fraine

Denis Fraine, who served as the Bellingham town administrator for nearly four decades before his recent retirement, died on March 17 at age 65, after a battle with cancer.

According to his obituary, Fraine served as a captain in the U.S. Air Force "before finding his true calling in public administration." He started in Bellingham in 1987 and retired in 2023, but he stayed on for another couple of years while the town found his successor, **Joseph Laydon**.

In a statement, Rep. **Michael Soter**, who previously served on the Bellingham Select Board, praised the former town administrator's professionalism and stewardship of town operations, and recalled their friendship.

Toward the end of Fraine's career, the town's municipal building was renamed the Denis C. Fraine Municipal Center. A town announcement about Fraine's death recalled his "unwavering commitment" to the community and its residents.

"He was a leader like no other, generously sharing his knowledge, experience, and passion with all he encountered," the statement said. "Denis was unassuming, supportive, diplomatic, and approachable, all qualities that distinguished him and earned the respect and admiration of colleagues, residents, and anyone who knew him."

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.

New select board members elected in spring town elections

The following are new select board members elected in annual town elections from March 2 through March 25.

This listing is meant to highlight first-time

select board members, but it's possible that some listed here are returning to their board after an absence. If we are missing a new member, let us know by

emailing newselectboard@mma.org.

Ludlow: Antonio Leano Sanches

Orange: Reid Jeffries Anderson Jr., Kelli Gervais ●

ENERGY SITING

Continued from page 5

that are already developed or will have lower impacts. Project sites will be scored based on five criteria: agricultural resources, biodiversity, carbon storage and sequestration, climate resilience, and social and environmental burdens.

Projects proposed on protected open space will automatically be scored as having a high impact. Projects on landfills, brownfields, parking lots, and other previously developed lots will be scored as having very low impacts.

Depending on the criteria scores, applicants may be required to develop a series of measures designed to minimize or mitigate certain impacts. Minimization could include preservation of wildlife corridors through the impacted project site, for example. Mitigation measures could include tree planting in another location in the host community, if tree removal on the site is necessary but a suitable location is not available onsite.

A [draft mapping tool](#) is available online, and the site suitability tool will be available by July 1.

Guidance for municipalities

Cities and towns will also be able to use

new model bylaws, being finalized by the Department of Energy Resources, to update their own zoning bylaws, thereby ensuring that their local rules and processes are aligned with state law and new regulations.

The model bylaws, however, will not be finalized with enough time for all interested municipalities — particularly those with spring town meetings — to review and adopt their own versions ahead of Oct. 1. Nonetheless, the model bylaws can serve as helpful examples as communities prepare for implementation over the next few years.

One aspect of the streamlined local permitting process that municipal officials should begin to consider is the designation of a “Local Government Representative,” who will:

- Serve as a single point of contact between the municipality and the applicant
- Receive all project pre-filing checklists and applications
- Coordinate the review of these materials with local boards and committees
- Ultimately issue decisions

The representative, per the regulations, is defined as the chief administrative

officer of the municipality, or their designee(s), or officials designated in a municipality’s bylaw or ordinance.

The local government representative must determine if an applicant has completed all pre-filing requirements within 10 days of receiving a pre-filing engagement completion checklist. The representative shall also determine whether an application is complete within 30 days of receiving it, a timeframe that begins with the representative’s signature on a pre-filing engagement completion checklist.

The [DOER’s Energy Infrastructure Siting and Permitting Reforms website](#) will provide:

- Final regulations for small clean energy infrastructure facility siting and permitting
- Draft guidelines that provide clarity on how to implement the regulations
- Draft model bylaws for solar and battery energy storage systems

The DOER has [regional coordinators](#) to support cities and towns navigating the changes to the permitting process. The DOER will also roll out technical assistance programs this spring to help cities and towns and other stakeholders with the new processes. ●

MICROMOBILITY

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institution to study the use of micromobility devices in commercial settings, such as food delivery

- **Presumed liability study:** Recommends that MassDOT work with an academic partner to study the

hierarchy of responsibility in a crash, and the potential effects of introducing a “presumed liability” law

The 15-member [special commission](#) included two MMA representatives — Beverly Police Chief John LeLacheur and Amherst Senior Planner Nathaniel Malloy — along with representatives

from MassDOT, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Legislature, law enforcement, and the electric bike and scooter industries.

The [report](#) is a result of five public meetings held during 2025. ●

MASS INNOVATIONS

Continued from page 23

Driscoll, a former mayor of Salem, commended the women for investing in themselves. When women do this work, she said, “we’re really uplifting women and being able to cheer on peers and put ourselves in a position to be able to make room at the table for others.”

The graduates talked about how the program has helped them. Public Facilities Office Manager Lisa Whelan said she appreciated hearing about the

experiences and challenges other women face throughout Lexington’s government.

“It really helps to know that you’re not alone,” Whelan said.

Michelle Kelleher, Lexington’s senior services director, said she wanted to participate to become a better leader for her employees.

“I think just listening to all of the other senior managers that work for the town and how they got to where they are now is so important and inspiring,” Kelleher said. “So I feel very inspired today, and I

can’t wait to go back to work and serve the people of the community.”

For more information about Lexington’s institute, please contact Kelly Axtell at kaxtell@lexingtonmma.gov.

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.

MIIA

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workable. Clearing a desk surface, sorting one drawer, creating a home for paperwork, or setting aside a few minutes at the end of the day for a quick reset can all help reduce visual clutter and make routines easier.

It also helps to focus first on the areas that affect daily life most directly, such as a workspace, kitchen counter, entryway, or work bag. Prioritizing function over appearance can make the task feel less overwhelming and more useful.

The following are some organization tips from Indeed and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration:

- Sort paperwork on desks, chairs and shelves into categories, such as working on currently, file/store, or shred.
- Create dedicated areas in your office

for common tasks, and keep related supplies in those spaces so materials are easier to find when needed.

- Clear your desk daily, using a tray or reserved file for ongoing work.
- Scan paperwork when possible, to reduce paper buildup.
- Conduct prompt general housekeeping, including removal of obvious tripping hazards such as electrical cords, so work areas stay easier to navigate and safer to use.
- Sort mail immediately to limit clutter and distraction on your desk.
- Manage email by using labeled folders, deleting outdated messages, and setting aside regular time to sort email to help reduce inbox clutter. Use simple systems, such as automatic filing rules, to make important messages easier to find and manage.

Progress over perfection

None of this means people need spotless homes or picture-perfect offices. In fact, striving for perfection can become another source of pressure. The better goal is to build systems that make daily life easier.

Many tips and tricks can be found in books and online. [MIIA Health members can access free video training sessions](#) such as “Simplify Your Shared Spaces.”

In the end, getting organized is not about being neat for the sake of being neat. It is about creating conditions that support focus, reduce stress, and help people feel more capable in both their work and personal lives, which can make each day feel a little more manageable. ●

WLG CONFERENCE

Continued from page 6

leading through change, discussed the importance of influence over authority, and how influence can show up in different ways.

Emily Colon, a partner at The Southern Group and a member of the SheLeadsGov Committee, recalled a time when she was brought in to lead a department in crisis and was met by a team that had many years of experience.

“You have to earn the choice to be influential,” she said, in part by being a team player.

Marcia Frazier, the city manager in Douglasville, Georgia, said leaders need to understand the power of empathy, and have the ability to understand all sides.

“I don’t think I’ve met a person yet — even in the most hostile environments — that, when I start to deliver their message back to them with understanding, there is not some level of recentering,” Frazier said.

Key features of a strong leader are recognizing the environment you’re in, the strengths you have, and the strengths of your team.

“And you just have to know that you are who you are, and you have a gift that is truly your own gift ... and to bring that to wherever you go,” said Ginger Spencer, assistant city manager in Phoenix, Arizona.

Prioritizing rest is essential to avoiding burnout, panelists said. Spencer recommended scheduling time to disconnect and rest, read, engage in movement or

practice hobbies.

Each panelist offered strategies to improve leadership skills.

“Stay curious,” Colon said. “You build relationships when you ask questions. ... You’re a better leader when you know the people.”

Frazier advised doing a self-assessment of the things that you’re doing, personally or professionally, and what it is adding up to. Is it taking you where you want to go, even if that is right where you are?

Spencer advised those starting their careers to aim for their highest goal. Those in mid-career or making a change should be sure to take their seat at the table and bring something to contribute. And those with experience in leadership roles should pass the baton to the next generation through mentorship. ●

CHAPTER 90

Continued from page 1

[MMA panel testified in strong support of the bill](#), emphasizing the need for continuing the \$300 million annual funding level achieved last year and the importance of a multi-year authorization. The four panelists highlighted how Chapter 90 funding enables their communities to maintain critical infrastructure, and they shared stories of the

positive impacts of last year’s funding increase. They also underscored how the road-mile-based distribution benefits smaller and rural communities.

The transportation bond bill also includes:

- \$200 million for transportation improvements that support expanded housing development
- \$200 million for a new Parkway Resilience Improvement and Safety

Modernization investment program

- \$500 million for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s Bridge and Pavement Lifecycle Asset Management Programs
- \$200 million for the MBTA’s Rail Reliability Program

The bill has been referred to the Joint Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures, and State Assets. ●

Classified Advertisements

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Real Estate Attorney

KP Law, P.C.

Boston mid-sized law firm seeks an attorney with experience in transactional real estate work to join a dynamic firm with sophisticated practice. Applicant must have at least three to five years of experience in a wide variety of real estate matters, including purchase and sale agreements, leases, title issues, and closings. Municipal experience preferred but not required. Excellent writing, research, and communication skills required, as is the ability to work independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced environment. Portables not required. Full-time applicants only. Excellent compensation and benefits package. To apply, please submit: cover letter, resume and writing sample in confidence to: jobs@k-plaw.com. EOE

Board of Health Agent

Town of Rockland

The town of Rockland seeks a qualified and experienced public health professional to serve as Board of Health Agent. This leadership position is responsible for administering and enforcing public health laws and regulations in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, the State Sanitary Code, local bylaws, and Board of Health regulations. The Health Agent serves as the town's chief public health official and oversees all operations of the Health Department, including regulatory enforcement, inspections, emergency response, and program administration. Key Responsibilities: Enforce provisions of the State Sanitary Code and applicable public health regulations. Conduct and oversee inspections of food establishments, housing, septic systems, recreational facilities, and other regulated entities. Investigate public health complaints and environmental health concerns. Serve as local public health authority during declared public health emergencies. Supervise department staff and manage departmental operations and budget. Maintain official Board of Health records and present reports to the Board and other municipal bodies. Serve as the town's designated coordinator for activities associated with the Public Health Excellence (PHE) Grant, working collaboratively with Rockland as host community to support compliance, reporting, and implementation of shared public health services. Oversee operations of the Rockland Recycling Center and municipal curbside solid waste and recycling services, including staff supervision, bid preparation, contract execution, and contract administration. Ensure compliance with applicable solid waste regulations; maintain accurate tonnage records; submit required annual reports to MassDEP; report recycling rates and materials collected; and maintain documentation supporting compliance with the Commonwealth's Solid Waste Master Plan and municipal waste reduction goals. *Grant-related duties are subject to funding availability and applicable inter-municipal agreements. Qualifications: Bachelor's degree in public health, environmental health, health administration, or related field required; Master's degree preferred. Minimum of five years of progressively responsible public health experience, including regulatory enforcement and program administration. Supervisory and/or municipal experience preferred. Must meet certification requirements for Health Agent appointment under Massachusetts law. Strong knowledge of Massachusetts General Laws and State

Sanitary Codes. Excellent leadership, organizational, and communication skills. Salary: \$87,500 annually. The town of Rockland offers a competitive municipal benefits package including BCBS health insurance at a 79% employer contribution. Visit rockland-ma.gov/184/Employment-Opportunities for the full job description and application details. To apply, please submit a cover letter and resume to: HR Director Lori Taylor at ltaylor@rockland-ma.gov. The town of Rockland is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Procurement Specialist

Town of Burlington

The town of Burlington is seeking a Procurement Specialist to join the department of Public Works (DPW) Engineering Division. Reporting to the Town Engineer, this position performs administrative, technical, and clerical work in support of procurement, purchasing, contract administration, and related operational functions. Key Responsibilities: Provide administrative and procurement support to DPW Engineering. Coordinate procurement activities, including preparation of purchase orders, requests for quotes, bids, and contract documentation in compliance with Massachusetts procurement law and town policies. Assist with contract administration: maintain files, track renewals, and monitor budgets. Serve as a liaison with vendors, contractors, and internal departments regarding procurement and purchasing matters. Input and maintain plan imaging, utility permitting, and other town infrastructure records in database or GIS format; support the Division web page. Qualifications: Minimum five years of experience in administrative, procurement, purchasing, or related work, preferably in municipal/public-sector settings. Strong organizational skills, attention to detail, and ability to manage multiple priorities. Designation as a Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official, or ability to obtain certification within six months of hire. Details: Union position within the Burlington Municipal Employees Association, Grade 7. Full-time, 35 hours/week; pay \$31.61 to \$45.16/hr with step increases. Tuition reimbursement/professional

development available to support MCPPO certification. To view full posting and to apply, please visit: burlington.catson.com/careers.

Civil Engineer

Town of Burlington

The town of Burlington seeks a Civil Engineer to assist in coordinating municipal engineering functions, reporting to the Town Engineer. This role requires knowledge of civil engineering principles applied to municipal infrastructure, excellent organizational and interpersonal skills, and the ability to work effectively with the public. Key Responsibilities: Design, permit, inspect, and oversee municipal infrastructure projects, review plans and specifications for public construction contracts, maintain inspection records, reports, and digital documentation, provide technical guidance to town staff, Boards, Commissions, and the public, investigate complaints regarding public works, traffic, drainage, and road maintenance, administer programs and funding sources (e.g., Chapter 90, MWRA grants/loans) and maintain work orders and incident logs, develop and maintain GIS mapping projects, stay current on regulations, technology, and town bylaws, assist with supervision of winter plowing operations. Qualifications: Bachelor's degree in civil engineering or related field, two years of design and/or field construction experience in public works (municipal preferred) or equivalent experience, EIT or SIT certification preferred, valid driver's license required. Details: full-time, 40 hours/week; BMEA union position, Grade 6. Salary: \$38.66 to \$42.22 an hour, depending on experience. To view full posting and to apply, please visit: burlington.catson.com/careers.

Town Planner/Community Development Director

Town of Old Orchard Beach, Maine

General: This is a responsible administrative and technical position working in the fields of community development and town planning. Supervision received: Any direct supervision is received from the Town

■ CLASSIFIEDS *continued on 32*

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.

May Beacon

Deadline: April 27
Publication: May 1

June Beacon

Deadline: May 27
Publication: June 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 31

Manager, although considerable independent judgment is exercised in performing the daily functions of the position. Supervision exercised: Supervision is exercised over the following positions: Associate Planner. Planning and Code Administrative Assistant. Essential duties and responsibilities: Provides staff advice to the Town Planning Board and Design Review Committee with site plan, subdivision, conditional use, certificate of appropriateness, zoning map amendments, and zoning ordinance amendments. Provides staff assistance to the Comprehensive Planning Committee for the purpose of comprehensive plan development and implementation. Provides staff assistance to the Town Manager and Town Council in the area of land use, planning, and economic development. Works with staff on various development projects and economic development initiatives. Works to promote the development of commercial businesses in Old Orchard Beach in order to improve employment opportunities and the tax base. Meets with developers and the general public to explain the town's land use regulations, development activities, Planning Board applications, and other planning and land use matters. Conducts periodic review of the town's land use ordinances and comprehensive plan and makes recommendations to the Planning Board and Town Council for needed revisions. Prepares ordinances and presents to the Planning Board and Town Council. Represents the town on regional committees and boards when assigned by the Town Manager or appointed by the Town Council. Coordinates the town's community development planning activities with State and Federal agencies and other town departments. Maintains data on the town's growth and development, economy and employment, land use and demographics; prepares and disseminates information about the town of Old Orchard Beach and responds to requests for information. Prepares applications for and administers State and Federal grants and assistance. To apply, or for more information please visit: www.oobmaine.com/department/human-resources/career-opportunities.

Director of Assessing Town of Scituate

The town of Scituate seeks qualified applicants for the position of Director of Assessing. Responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Assessor's Office, including supervision of assigned staff, valuing property and taxable personal property, and managing the abatement and appeal processes. Also prepares tax and growth revenue projections working with other members of the town's financial team, and performs other associated tasks. Bachelor's degree with five years of experience in tax administration in assessing or a related field. Accredited by Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officials preferred. This union, salaried position is compensated between \$98,303 and \$111,225 annually, DOE. Complete job description available on town of Scituate website. Interested applicants should submit cover letter and resume to HR@scituatema.gov.

Manager of Transit Planning Southeastern Regional Transit Authority

The Manager of Transit Planning drives SRTA's mission to provide efficient and equitable mobility. The manager coordinates with external contractors to lead service planning and data-driven engagement for short- and long-term initiatives. By aligning technical

planning with civil rights compliance, the Manager ensures that all SRTA investments and service updates uphold federal, state, and local standards and promote community-wide equity. Essential Functions: The essential functions or duties listed below are illustrations of the various types of work performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related, or a logical assignment to the position. Analyzes ridership, performance metrics, demographic data, and land-use trends to evaluate existing transit services. Collaborates with the Authority's operational division to identify customer needs and to provide data for route/schedule analyses and feedback on any service problems identified; ensures the accurate collection and analysis of data as input for scheduling, route design, service evaluation system reporting. Develops service change recommendations including route modifications and schedule, span of service, and frequency adjustments to enhance passenger experience while ensuring consistent and high-quality service. Conducts Title VI and equity analyses related to service changes. Assists in preparation of long-range transit plans, transit development plans, annual reports and other transit-related studies. Serves as a point of contact for system service and bus stop change requests; reviews, analyzes and makes recommendations for modifications, as deemed appropriate. Serves as the Authority's Title VI Compliance officer and monitors the Authority's Customer Service programs. Support grant applications and planning components of FTA funding programs. Participates in public meetings and stakeholder outreach activities; provides oral presentations, as needed. Minimum Requirement: Bachelor's degree in urban planning, transportation planning, public administration, geography, or related field. Three to five years of experience in transportation or transit planning (internship experience considered). Strong analytical, quantitative, and written communication skills. Preferred Qualifications: Master's degree in urban or transportation planning or related field. Experience with public transit service planning or scheduling. Familiarity with FTA regulations, Title VI, ADA, and equity analysis. Proficiency with GIS, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), Excel, and data visualization tools. Interested parties can forward their resume to ksniezek@srtabus.com.

Town Administrator Town of Berlin

The town of Berlin (pop. 3,400), is seeking a candidate experienced in all phases of small-town local government qualified to be the community's third Town Administrator. The incumbent Administrator is moving on to another opportunity. Currently governed by a three-member Select Board, the town has recently voted to adopt an increase in the Board from three to five members, which will most likely become effective for the 2027 town election. Berlin operates under an open town meeting structure and is governed in accordance with the Select Board and Town Administrator Act. The Town Administrator supervises, manages and coordinates the day-to-day activities of all town departments and employees under the jurisdiction and policy guidance of the Select Board and acts as chief procurement officer, budget director and human resources manager. The town has 41 FT employees, approximately 37 PT employees, and an operating budget for FY26 of \$18,077,874. Berlin is part of a regional school district. Candidates should have a collaborative leadership style grounded in personal and professional integrity while managing

local governance in a transparent manner. The candidate should possess excellent verbal and written skills while having the ability to utilize the latest technologies and relevant municipal applications. The town is a classic New England community with a rural heritage but has been aggressive in developing a strong commercial component at its borders. Route 62 runs through Berlin, which is also strategically located on the I-495 corridor, near I-90, I-290, and Route 2. Berlin is uniquely located to be an easy day trip to Boston or Worcester with all the educational, health, and cultural opportunities found in those cities, as well as within easy reach of all the New England states. Bachelor's degree in a related field (master's preferred), and at least five years of progressive municipal management and leadership experience, or relevant combination of experience and education. MCPPO certification or the ability to obtain this designation is a primary consideration for the successful candidate. Salary range of \$150,000 to \$175,000 will be offered commensurate with qualifications and experience. The community offers a competitive benefits package. The town of Berlin is an Equal Opportunity Employer. For further information potential candidates are directed to the Municipal Resources, Inc. website at www.mrigov.com/career or to contact Municipal Resources Inc. at 603-279-0352 ext. 330. To apply, submit a resume and cover letter, in confidence, as a single PDF attachment to recruitment@mrigov.com by 8 a.m. on April 20.

Chief Administrative Aide to the Town Manager

Town of Saugus

The Town Manager's Office in the town of Saugus seeks a highly organized and discreet professional to provide confidential, high-level administrative support. This position manages daily office operations, coordinates the Town Manager's schedule, and prepares reports, correspondence, and official documents. The role serves as a key liaison with municipal departments, public officials, vendors, and residents, ensuring timely communication and resolution of inquiries. Responsibilities include supporting budget administration, processing accounts payable, maintaining financial records, and assisting with Civil Service and labor relations processes, including scheduling interviews and hearings. The position also coordinates meetings, events, and facility use, while supervising clerical staff as assigned. Qualified candidates will have an associate degree or equivalent and at least five years of administrative experience; municipal experience preferred. Strong organizational, communication, and multitasking skills are essential. Benefits: Comprehensive benefits package, including participation in the town's Retirement system. To apply: Please email a resume and cover letter to jmeredith@saugus-ma.gov. Please include "HR Open Position - [Your Name]" in the subject line of your email. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. The town of Saugus is an equal opportunity employer. Federal law forbids discrimination based on race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, gender orientation or disability.

Human Resources Director Town of Saugus

Applications are being accepted for the position of a full-time Human Resources Director. Bachelor's degree in human resources, business administration or related field desired. Certificate and/or master's degree a plus. Five years of progressively responsible experience

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Classified Advertisements

CLASSIFIEDS

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in human resources management required. Experience in municipal personnel administration a plus or any equivalent combination of education and experience. This position reports directly to the Town manager. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. To apply: Please email a resume and cover letter to jmeredith@saugus-ma.gov. Please include "HR Open Position - [Your Name]" in the subject line of your email. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. The town of Saugus is an equal opportunity employer. Federal law forbids discrimination based on race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, gender orientation or disability.

Human Resources Generalist

Town of Saugus

Applications are being accepted for a full-time Human Resources Generalist for the town of Saugus. This individual will have excellent customer service skills. They will manage an electronic filing system and various programs within the Department. The ideal candidate must be detail oriented, computer savvy (including MUNIS and Excel Spreadsheets), an effective communicator, able to work on multiple projects simultaneously, keep matters confidential, work with our Payroll Department and other departments throughout the town. Must be able to manage their own workload, manage all files and update them on a regular basis, be able to develop new systems as needed, be able to work independently, be able to think outside the box, collaborate with other personnel to effectively serve our employee's needs. Must be able to stay current with office paperwork and prompt filing of employee records. This position will also be trained on our payroll and billing system, MUNIS, for processing of Department payroll and accounts payable. Manages insurance claims by coordinating with the town's insurance company for accidental claims, property damage and motor vehicle claims. This person will develop more efficient communication tools for the Human Resources department. Candidate must have a college degree in related field and four-plus years of human resources (or similar) experience. Municipality experience a plus. Must have a thorough understanding of employee benefits including worker's compensation, 111F leave, FMLA and other benefits. Good oral and written communication skills and a thorough knowledge of Microsoft Office. Applications will be accepted until position is filled. To apply: Please email a resume and cover letter to jmeredith@saugus-ma.gov. Please include "HR Open Position - [Your Name]" in the subject line of your email. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. The town of Saugus is an equal opportunity employer. Federal law forbids discrimination based on race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, gender orientation or disability.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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@mrigov.com.

Executive Recruiting, Management and Governance Consulting Services

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

Tax Title Legal Services

KP Law has been providing a full range of legal services to municipal treasurers and collectors for more than

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Classified Advertisements

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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.

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 Resources Consulting

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

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.

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.

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.

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. ●

WEMO

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that night. She stayed in touch with his staff, and hosted his first fundraiser in Massachusetts. His transition team later asked her to submit a resume, and asked her to serve as ambassador.

“Being an ambassador, I did a lot of the same things that I did as a state representative,” Cronin said. “Just at a global level instead of a local or state level.”

Cronin felt welcomed into the role by the Irish because she was just a regular politician, and not a wealthy donor.

“The people in the Irish government literally considered me one of their own,” Cronin said.

She worked on a number of issues, including the beginning of the war in

Ukraine, human trafficking in the fishing industry, and drug cartels, Cronin focused on connecting with students and building on strong economic ties between the Irelands and the United States.

“When I arrived in Ireland, it was the ninth-largest foreign direct investor in the United States — think of that, a country of 5 million people, fewer than in Massachusetts,” Cronin said. “When I left, we jumped to sixth, and that’s something we worked really hard at at the embassy, creating those relationships with Irish companies to get them to invest in the United States.”

Every week, Cronin would invite groups of up to 100 students to her ambassador residence for a tour and town hall to talk about what ambassadors do. She said she would give each student the

paperwork for a J-1 visa.

In response to questions from WEMO attendees, Cronin shared anecdotes from her time in the Legislature and offered advice for staying connected to constituents and making sure women’s voices are heard in male-dominated environments.

During the WEMO conference, attendees also engage in an “empty chair” panel discussion, inviting volunteers to answer questions about their biggest wins while in office, how they make sure underrepresented voices in their communities are being heard, and how to find allies in their work. ●

Calendar



The Beacon

Massachusetts Municipal Association

3 Center Plaza, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108

APRIL

7 MMA webinar, cryptocurrency kiosks, 11 a.m.-12 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

8 MMA webinar, MunEnergy program, 12-1 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

10 Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, regional meeting, 8-10 a.m., Watertown. 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

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

7 Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, labor relations seminar, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Devens Common Center, Devens. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis

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

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

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

13-15 Massachusetts Mayors' Association, spring conference. Contact: MMA Membership and Project Assistant Katherine Christy

19 MMA webinar, Metrik's local health data, 12-1:15 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

27-29 Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, spring conference, Ocean Edge, Brewster. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

JUNE

4 Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, annual meeting, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Cyprian Keyes, Boylston. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis

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

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

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

11 Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, mini boot camp, 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m., Marlborough Public Library, Marlborough. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

12 Massachusetts Select Board Association, newly elected training, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Devens Common Center, Devens. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Martin Davis

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

25 Women Leading Government, meeting, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., UMass Amherst. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

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

MMA contacts

Denise Baker can be reached at dbaker@mma.org

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

Timmy Kuck can be reached at tkuck@mma.org

Kristianna Lapierre can be reached at klapierre@mma.org

For more information, visit www.mma.org.