

## LOOKING AT 2022

On behalf of the Maine Municipal Association (MMA), I am pleased to present the 2022 edition of the “MMA Year in Review.” It was a busy year for MMA, as staff responded to the emerging issues facing our members with a renewed focus on training, education, and communications.

Throughout the year, MMA implemented the training recommendations that were part of the Berry Dunn report by creating a training advisory council and offering enhanced training opportunities that included remote, in-person and hybrid options. And of course, MMA held its first in-person convention since 2019, in Bangor.

As the Legislature debated the merits of new housing legislation, Legislative Policy Committee collaborated with staff to shape a response that supported the development of housing while respecting municipal decision-making authority.

Staff continued to support the legal needs of municipalities, update legal manuals, and engage with state agencies on the implementation of ordinances for the sale, processing, and cultivation of cannabis.

Recruitment and retention efforts were also at the forefront, as MMA assisted in executive searches for six vacant manager positions and supported another 17 municipal contract negotiations.

Our staff in the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust and MMA’s Risk Management Services departments administered member-focused coverage and service programs, while maintaining costs for employers. Specific programs targeted at mental health, including a waiver of copays for remote mental health services and targeted training to reduce claims for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), were some of the highlights.

The staff at MMA continue to collaborate on addressing issues of concern for municipalities including cyber security and the integration of secure online transactions. In 2022 MMA rolled out changes to our member communication efforts via updates to our monthly magazine, along with the introduction of our podcast, Potholes and Politics. Coming soon is a new and improved website designed to help our members more easily access information and process transactions with MMA.

We hope this “MMA Year in Review” is informative and demonstrates the value of our services and programs. Please contact MMA if you would like more information or if you have any questions. We also invite you to visit MMA’s website ([www.memun.org](http://www.memun.org)) to learn more about the Association and its programs.

On behalf of MMA’s leadership and staff, thank you for your membership, support of the Maine Municipal Association, and continued local government service. It has been a privilege to serve elected and appointed municipal officials during these challenging times.

Best wishes and hopes for a better 2023.

Respectfully,  
Catherine M. Conlow, Executive Director





If I led my community...

### Top Sheet for Students

Thank you for entering our essay contest, "If I Led My Community..." – and best of luck. Here are some things that mayors, councilors and select board members in your community can and cannot do.

## ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS

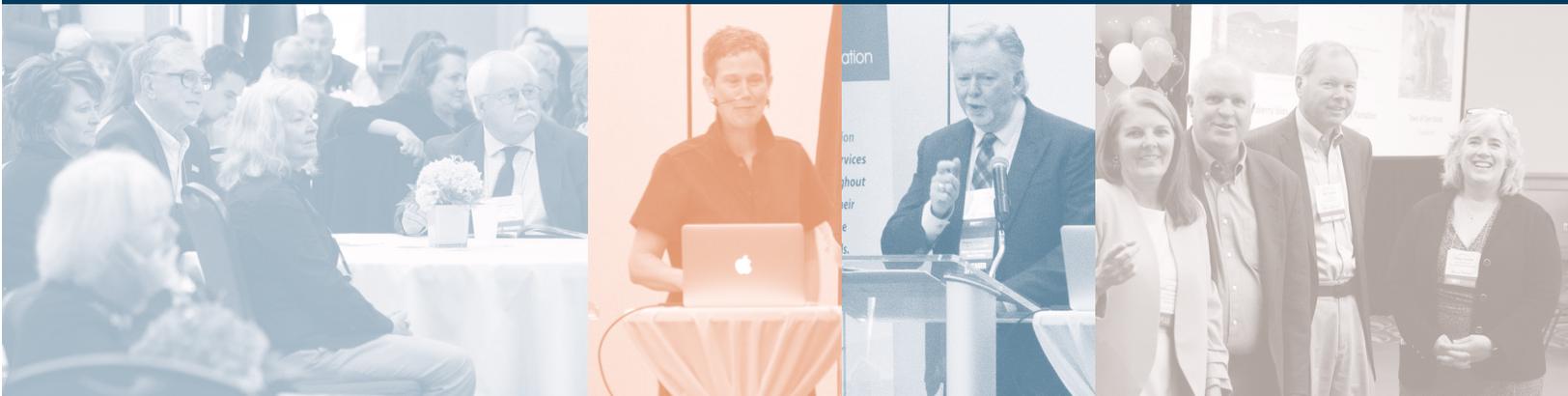
MMA's Advocacy & Communications Department provides services ensuring that the municipal perspective is considered when state laws are enacted, and state agency regulations are adopted. MMA's 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), which is made up of two municipal officials elected by the select boards and councils in each of the state's 35 Senate Districts, guides the Association's advocacy efforts. Additionally, the department is responsible for developing and maintaining effective communications with members, promoting MMA policy priorities, and helping the public better understand the importance and value of municipal government.

### 2022 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Merging Functions.** MMA morphed its lobbying and communication functions into the Advocacy & Communications Department, which fostered opportunities for inter-departmental collaboration and provided a path for adapting the way in which MMA advocates for and communicates with its members.
- **Advocacy.** Staff participated in several interim and permanent study commissions to provide the municipal perspective on important issues ranging from affordable and workforce housing to public records requests and remote public meetings and engaged with municipal officials during listening sessions held by the Office of Cannabis Policy to gain an understanding of the regional pressures associated with the expanding industry. We continued wraparound supports

for all aspects of ARPA, most notably the first reporting deadline in 2022, offered presentations to individual municipalities and affiliate groups, and collaborated with public and private partners to assist in getting new programs launched, including the state land bank redevelopment authority, an extended producer responsibility program for packaging waste, and a distributed generation 2.0 plan. As is the case in each even numbered year, MMA conducted the election of the Legislative Policy Committee, which will guide the Association's advocacy efforts in 2023 and 2024.

- **Communications, Social Media & Website.** MMA published 11 editions of the Maine Town & City magazine exploring numerous issues of importance to municipal leaders, including PFAS, workforce development and recruitment, recreation programs and solid waste management. To improve its social media presence, MMA also launched a growing and well received podcast, Potholes & Politics, to share stories of municipal work, pressures, and challenges with a broader audience, as well as to keep the public apprised of MMA's advocacy efforts. The podcast currently has six episodes streaming on all major platforms with over 500 total downloads. Staff also began the process of overhauling MMA's website with improved user experience driving the work. The modernized website will be unveiled in 2023.
- **Citizen Education.** Staff conducted the "If I led my community" essay contest, generating submissions from 120 seventh grade students from 10 Maine schools. The essays described the issues students would address if elected or appointed to municipal office, including repairing roads, expanding broadband access, and investing in recreation programs. The annual town and city



report competition was held in September, where 15 out of 175 municipalities received recognition for their submitted reports. Staff also developed several new initiatives, including the creation of a legislative handbook and the Douglas M. Eugley Memorial Scholarship.

- **Salary Survey.** Staff continued to provide members with municipal salary and benefits data through MMA’s 2022 Municipal Salary Survey platform, with 212 members contributing data.

## EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The Educational Services Department manages municipal training and professional development efforts, including workshops, webinars, conferences, and MMA’s Annual Convention. Educational Services also provides administrative and support services to professional affiliate associations comprised of municipal employees to administer their memberships, trainings, certification programs and much more.

### 2022 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **MMA-Sponsored Trainings and Workshops.** This year, we planned and facilitated 35 trainings and workshops, spanning topics as diverse as: elected officials’ workshops; verbal judo; customer service excellence; planning boards and boards of appeal workshops; ARPA; crisis communications; municipal broadband; workplace violence prevention; and more. MMA’s workshops continue to be a mix of in-person events held all over the state paired with the use of Zoom webinars for even wider accessibility. Recorded trainings and workshops are frequently added to our Video Training Library, which currently

includes almost 70 recorded trainings accessible to members 24/7.

- **In-Person MMA Annual Convention and Municipal HR & Management Conference.** In 2022, the Municipal HR & Management Conference and the MMA Annual Convention were the first large-scale in-person events MMA has hosted since 2019. Members, exhibitors, speakers, and MMA staff were all thrilled to be back together for these events. This year’s HR & Management Conference was held at Thomas College in Waterville and featured a variety of speakers and sessions related to health promotion, conflict resolution, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), employment law, performance improvement, and more. The MMA Annual Convention was held at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor and featured a mix of speakers and sessions that addressed both “big picture” and “nuts and bolts” topics. Three keynote and featured speakers discussed how to anticipate the future of local government, and highlighted Maine’s economic future as well as innovative programming and funding for training. Twenty-six concurrent sessions, featuring a total of 84 speakers, focused on a diverse set of topics, including: public safety health and wellness; comprehensive plans; drafting warrants, articles, and ballot questions; recruiting and retaining younger workers; senior tax statutes; DEI; affordable housing development; local roads and bridges; protecting election officials; PFAS; municipal broadband; cybersecurity; and more.
- **Affiliate Association Services.** We proudly served 13 municipal affiliate associations in 2022, providing an array of administrative and professional services to their members. MMA professional services span informational, financial, membership, and web-based categories, as well as meeting and event

management. This year, we supported 65 affiliate association trainings, workshops, and conferences. Additionally, we provided administrative support for a number of board and committee meetings throughout the year.

- **MMA Education and Training Advisory Council.** Planning and implementation of recommendations from MMA's Curriculum Inventory & Gap Analysis, completed with Berry Dunn in 2021, have been underway since MMA's Director of Educational Services joined the Association in May 2022. The formation of an MMA Education and Training Advisory Council is the first recommendation that we focused on this year, and it will provide capacity, wisdom, and strategic guidance for the other recommendations ahead. We have assembled a group of municipal officials, education and training partners, and other stakeholders to devise a Council structure that will ensure we are responsive to members and are able to leverage subject matter expertise across the state to address pressing education and training needs.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) SERVICES

MMA's Information Technology (IT) department manages a vast array of services necessary for the successful operation of an IT environment within the organization. Fundamental needs include infrastructure, applications, security, remote access, and training. MMA recognizes the increasing need for IT support and education within the municipal community. This is driven in part by continued threats that jeopardize the safety and security of city and town information resources.

### 2022 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Cyber Liability Requirements.** MMA's IT staff assisted members in meeting requirements for cyber liability coverage through the MMA Property & Casualty Pool as well as infrastructure or network assessments performed by MMA's partner vendor at a reduced market rate.
- **Policy Development.** MMA assisted members in developing or updating Computer Use Policies, Privacy Policies, Vendor Confidentiality Agreements and other required or necessary documentation.
- **Internal Applications.** MMA implemented stronger controls and methods to protect infrastructure and data from cyber-attacks and continued to shift additional infrastructure to the cloud to ensure high availability to aid in disaster recovery.
- **On-site Training.** MMA continues to offer on-site group training programs for municipal employees to strengthen computer security awareness. Programs are tailored to each community's needs.



# PERSONNEL SERVICES & LABOR RELATIONS

The Personnel Services & Labor Relations department staff has two distinct functional areas: providing human resource management for the MMA organization; and providing personnel management and labor relations advice, training, and consulting services to MMA's municipal and associate members.

## 2022 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Labor Relations.** MMA Personnel Services & Labor Relations represented six municipalities as they negotiated with 17 different collective bargaining units. This was an unprecedented year for bargaining as towns and cities dealt with the double hit of historically high inflation and a significant shortage of potential workers. This led to negotiations being almost exclusively about wages and recruiting issues. Annual wage adjustments haven't been this high in decades.
- **Executive Searches.** MMA assisted six municipalities in searches for new town or city managers. This service provides beginning-to-end assistance to the select board or council as it seeks a new or replacement municipal manager. MMA maintains a list on our website of individuals available to be considered for interim town manager positions when the current manager resigns or retires.
- **General Personnel Management Assistance.** Staff responded to many inquiries from members regarding workplace issues arising from COVID-19 and all the related impacts on employment issues. Staff provided on-site entry level testing for a number of police and fire departments as they recruited new police officers or firefighters. Staff also responded to several hundred general personnel inquiries from our members on issues as diverse as FMLA and the federal health care reform laws. Staff participated in training programs to assist our members in having proper HR practices.
- **Maine Public Employees Retirement System (MainePERS).** MMA has been actively involved as a member of the PLD (Participating Local Districts) Advisory Committee. In 2022, the Advisory Committee monitored system performance to



continue its responsibility to protect the health of the PLD retirement plan, as well as participated in the creation of a disability insurance product that is available to PLDs.

- **MMA Personnel Management.** We were faced, like all our members, with the challenges of hiring new employees in a very tight labor market and the increased pressure on wages. We have worked to make sure our wages are competitive and that we are positioned to be able to hire the experienced employees we need to provide services to our member municipalities. MMA had several retirements and vacancies during this year and HR has been working with MMA departments to find new employees to continue MMA's work for our members.

# LEGAL SERVICES

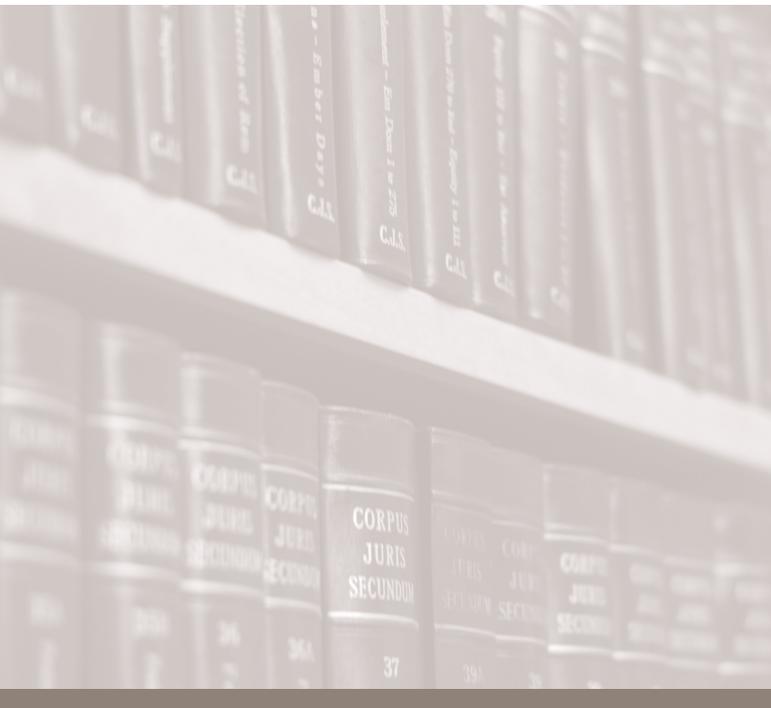
MMA's Legal Services program provides legal opinions to municipal officials, produces manuals, information packets and other guidance, participates in the development and delivery of training programs, and advocates for municipal interests through "friend of the court" briefs. The Legal Services department consists of six attorneys and an administrative assistant.

## 2022 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Legal Inquiry Service.** During 2022 we expect to respond to over 6,000 inquiries from municipal members. A focus of member interest this year was implementation of the new affordable housing law and the property tax bill stabilization law. We also advised on a wide variety of municipal legal issues, including use of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds, vaccine mandates and other COVID-19 pandemic related issues, regulation of cannabis, tax liens, poverty abatements, citizen petitions, elections, land use and the Freedom of Access Act.
- **Legal Guidance Materials.** Legal Services maintains 13 manuals and over 60 information packets providing detailed guidance on a variety of municipal legal issues. This past year Legal Services also produced numerous guidance documents

to help members navigate emerging issues such as COVID-19 pandemic response, vaccination laws, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, municipal regulation of cannabis, the affordable housing law, the tax stabilization law, broadband service options, and others. In 2022, we published supplements updating our Municipal Officers and Town Meetings and Elections manuals. A new edition of our Tax Collectors and Treasurers Manual is imminent and we have made substantial progress in revising our Code Enforcement Officers Manual. We have also significantly revised MMA's Model General Assistance Ordinance and completed numerous updates to our legal information packets. Our staff also continues to author a monthly "Legal Notes" column in the Maine Town & City Magazine.

- **Legal Training.** Our staff participated in MMA and Affiliate Group training programs, including workshops on Town Meetings & Elections, Municipal Law for Clerks, Law for Tax Collectors, Law for Treasurers, Managing FOAA Requests, ARPA Funding and Reporting, Cannabis Update, ABCs of Assessing for Non-Assessors and several workshops for Planning Boards/Boards of Appeals and Elected Officials. Legal Services staff also taught a session on drafting warrants at MMA's annual convention and spoke at four state-sponsored cannabis seminars and a DOT training event. Legal Services staff continues to coordinate legal educational programming for meetings of the Portland-based ROMA group of municipal attorneys.
- **Advocacy.** No qualifying requests were received to file amicus curiae ("friend of the court") briefs in 2022.
- **Legislative Support.** Legal Services staff is a resource to MMA's Advocacy and Communications staff on municipal legal issues presented by pending legislation. During the 2022 legislative session, the Legal Services staff provided significant input on proposed legislation dealing with a variety of municipal topics.





## MAINE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH TRUST

The Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust (MMEHT) provides cost-effective, quality employee benefit plans and superior service to local government and eligible quasi-governmental employees, retirees, and their dependents. The Trust, administered by MMA, allows participating employers to aggregate their purchasing power and take advantage of self-insurance, an efficient financial tool. MMEHT provides health insurance benefits to nearly 20,000 participants in its medical plans, which are offered by more than 470 municipalities, counties, and special districts. The Trust also offers dental, life, vision, and short term and long-term disability plans.

### 2022 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Meeting Employers' Needs.** Seven new employers joined the Health Trust in 2022. In addition, 15 employers changed or added health plans, and 35 employers added new benefits. The Trust offers high quality health coverage and other benefits related programs which employers can choose from to create a competitive total compensation package to attract and retain employees.
- **Providing Value.** Once again, the Health Trust staff answered thousands of emails, calls and inquiries from our members and employer group representatives. Member Services staff acted as a liaison between Health Trust members and the Trust's third-party administrators (Anthem, Delta Dental, and Unum), and aided in the resolution of claims questions. Health Trust Billing and Enrollment representatives assisted employers, employees, retirees, and their families with eligibility and billing. Health Trust Field Services staff resumed onsite field visits and enrollment meetings to ensure that employers' and employees' needs were being met. Health Trust staff held online Annual Reporting Meetings, to provide Trust participants with updates on the Trust's financial condition and upcoming benefit changes; and worked with employers and their auditors to provide reporting required under GASB 75, and to administer the COBRA subsidies provided under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
- **Improving Health.** Many employees and dependents took advantage of the Health Trust's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through Anthem in 2022, as well as the expanded Telephonic Diabetes Education and Support (TDES) program. In addition, employers and employees were able to participate in a variety of programs through Wellness Works, the Health Trust's health education and promotion program. In 2022, Wellness Works staff further expanded their reach to members from groups of all sizes, by developing several timely new online classes and on-demand webinars, including a new certification in Mental Health First Aid.
- **Lowering Costs and Financial Security.** The Health Trust continued to provide high quality benefits and outstanding service coupled with low administrative costs in 2022. The Trust maintains a strong financial position, and the Trustees were able to utilize reserve funds to provide employers and members with significantly lower rate adjustments than are being seen in the general health insurance market.

# RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICES

MMA's Risk Management Services (RMS) administers three major group, self-funded programs for MMA's municipal and associate members. RMS provides specialized Underwriting, Loss Control and Claims Management unique to municipal government and special districts. The Workers' Compensation Fund serves 575 members and proudly covers more than 41,000 employees throughout the State of Maine. The Property & Casualty Pool specializes in municipal exposures and provides coverage to municipalities and special districts throughout Maine. The Unemployment Compensation (UC) Fund was created to assist members with meeting their obligations under the Employment Security Act. The UC Fund has 248 members and provides services to over 8,000 employees.

## 2022 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Risk Reduction Grants.** The Property & Casualty Pool Risk Reduction program awarded 52 grants for a total of \$125,429. This program is designed to assist members reduce property and liability exposures. Typical request were vehicle backup cameras, plow wing lasers, backup generators and improved lighting and security systems.
- **Safety Incentive Programs.** RMS increased participation in the Workers' Compensation Safety Incentive Program, which is designed to improve workplace safety and provide a financial incentive to reward our partnership toward safety.
- **Virtual Driver Training.** RMS rolled out an online virtual driver training tool exclusively for MMA Workers' Compensation Fund members. The free courses focus on police, fire and municipal defensive driving education designed to change behavior through sound decision making.
- **Dividends.** RMS distributed over \$1.6 million to eligible members of the Property & Casualty Pool, Workers' Compensation Fund and Unemployment Fund.
- **Ed MacDonald Safety Grants.** RMS awarded 158 Safety Grants for a total of \$336,109 through the Ed MacDonald Safety Grants and Scholarship Program to fund equipment purchases necessary to reduce the frequency and severity of workers' compensation claims.

