

Maine Town & City

The magazine of the Maine Municipal Association

JUNE 2025 | VOLUME 87 | ISSUE 6

Emerald Ash Borer



Small but mighty
and destructive.

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7th GRADE ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

DOUGLAS M. EUGLEY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



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Emerald Ash Borer. According to Maine Forest Services, the emerald ash borer is responsible for killing millions of hardwood ash trees in Maine, threatening the production of tools, furniture, baseball bats and hockey sticks. **Page 7**

Q&A with Deborah Crocker. 2024 Welfare Director of the Year, Deborah Crocker, discusses how a lifelong desire to help those in need brought her from the medical field to municipal government. **Page 15**

Municipal Profiles. This month the Town & City turns its attention to Jenn Cross, Scarborough Animal Control Officer, who has been described as one to "take the bull by the horns" and to go over and above the call of duty. **Page 23**

MMA Tech Conference Takeaways. During the May tech conference, one message was made abundantly clear, while AI technology will improve the delivery of municipal services, the human touch is a vital component of the tool's effectiveness. **Page 27**

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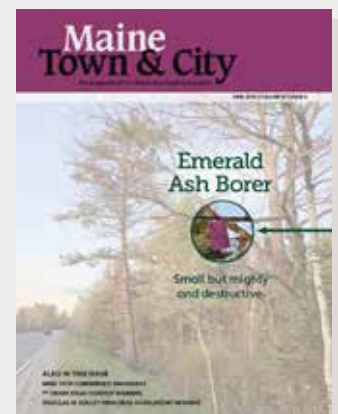
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A purple prism trap hangs in an ash tree on the east side of Corinth at the town line with Hudson in mid-May. (Photo by Janine Pineo)



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Investing in Our Future Leaders

By Kate Dufour / Director / Advocacy & Communications



As MMA employees begin to eye retirement, some of the association's attention has turned to succession planning to ensure the continuity and quality of the programs and services our members deserve as time marches on. While no one is rushing out the door anytime soon, when those inevitable days come, the planning efforts currently underway will help to ensure that the transition is seamless.

In recognizing that the association's workforce issues are not unique and instead mirror the recruitment and retention realities facing towns and cities across the state, MMA's Executive Committee has implemented programs that draw attention to municipal government as a life-long, satisfying, and meaningful career.

MMA's better-known programs include Maine Hometown Careers, which provides information about the many jobs available in municipal government, the nature of the work, and the skills required to successfully accomplish the required tasks. The Education and Training Advisory Council, represented by elected and appointed municipal officials, plays a pivotal role in supporting and advising MMA in fulfilling municipal education and training needs. Additionally, the association collaborates with the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center's Maine Government Summer Internship Program by providing four \$4,300 competitive grants to member municipalities that agree to host an intern. Of the 47 students enrolled in the 2025 program, 11 interns will have the opportunity to work alongside seasoned municipal leaders as they tackle road inventories, learn the roles and responsibilities of the code enforcement officer, and walk a mile in the shoes filled by municipal planners.

As featured in this edition of the *Town & City* magazine, the association's efforts also seek to promote municipal government service among our future leaders, including both high school seniors and seventh graders.

Through MMA's "If I led..." essay contest, middle school students are provided the opportunity to share their perspective on what is important in their communities and the services they would provide to residents, if they were in charge. The submissions raise awareness of the issues facing municipalities statewide with thoughtfulness and empathy and at times, with a dash of humor.

The students' goals include making schools safer, providing food and shelter to the less fortunate, promoting economic development, building bike paths to improve physical and mental health, and creating stick libraries for our four-legged friends. The proposals illustrate an understanding

of community and the need to provide and fund a variety of programs that deliver services to all, including those whose voices are often unheard.

The three winning essays are published starting on page 11.

Additionally, to bridge the gap between the essay contest and the college internship program, in 2023 MMA implemented the Douglas M. Eugley Memorial Scholarship for Public Service. The program, named in honor of a beloved MMA employee, provides \$1,500 scholarships to five high school seniors enrolled in a community college or university program focused on a career in public service. This year's winners, featured on page 19, will attend Thomas College, Southern Maine Community College, the University of New England, and the University of Southern Maine to study political science, criminal justice and criminology.

As you will read, these students have accomplished much to date. Soon to be Lawrence High School graduate, Broden Easton-Foster, started a high school fly-fishing tying club out of respect for Maine's natural history and traditions. Aja Marzilli, Orono High School, founded "Project Professionalism," a three-session seminar that provides participants with the professional business skills needed to enter "the real world." Elizabeth Roy, Fort Kent Community High School, participated in the Link Crew Freshman Mentoring Committee which is designed to provide support and guidance to incoming freshmen throughout their first year of high school.

Municipal leaders appreciate the opportunity to play a small role in supporting these students as they start down their career paths.

In summary, the accomplishments of these eight students bode well for the future of municipal government. MMA is hopeful that continued investment in the essay contest, scholarship, and internship will not only ignite the local government spark in our future leaders but also foster lifelong careers in public service. 🏔️



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Emerald Ash Borer Invasion

A small but mighty and destructive force.

By Janine Pineo

It's hard to imagine the loss of two percent of the trees in Maine's forests.

That's what's under threat as the emerald ash borer continues to spread across the state, attacking native ash species. An infected tree generally dies within three to five years of attack as the larvae feed under the bark, girdling the tree and killing it by cutting off the flow of water and nutrients.

It is a tale we've seen before in the United States, as chestnut blight wiped out up to four billion American chestnut trees more than a century ago, and Dutch elm disease killed tens of millions of American elms starting in the 1930s.

Likely introduced in the 1990s on infected wood from Asia, the emerald ash borer (EAB) was discovered in Michigan in 2002 and has since killed more than 100 million trees and threatens an estimated eight billion more. Its spread into Maine was discovered in 2018 in Aroostook and York counties, followed by Cumberland County in 2019. Since then, nearly 100 municipalities with infected trees have been identified across the state, with the most recent found by professional arborists in Belfast and on Mount Desert Island in the village of Town Hill, which is part of Bar Harbor.

Three species of susceptible trees grow in Maine: white ash, *Fraxinus americana*; green ash, *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*; and black or brown ash, *Fraxinus nigra*. Brown ash in particular is a cultural keystone species for the Wabanaki who use it as the primary material in their basketry. For the state, it has been a vital component of its hardwood forest products, used in everything from tools to furniture to baseball bats and hockey sticks. Ash is also used as an ornamental, including on municipal streets and in parks.

While two percent sounds small, Maine is about 90 percent forest. A USDA report from 2021 estimated that the state's forest held nearly 23 billion trees.

"You're still talking millions and millions of [ash] trees," said Jan Santerre, urban and community forest program director of the Maine Forest Service, during a May webinar on the status of EAB.



An inevitable invasion

A USDA Forest Service paper on the biology and invasion history of EAB notes that in its native range of China and the Russian Far East where EAB evolved, the native Asian ash varieties tend to be resistant to the beetle, except during periods of stress to the tree such as drought.

Once in the U.S., EAB was found to invade and kill all 16 species of native ash and at all stages of growth, from sapling to mature specimens. It doesn't matter if the tree is in a park or deep in a forest.

This half-inch-long beetle is active from June through August, although it is rarely seen near the ground as most of its time is spent in and around the canopy of ash trees. Its narrow, bullet-shaped body is metallic green. Eggs are laid either between the bark layers or in the crevices and hatch in a week to 18 days, with each female averaging 40 to more than 70 eggs before dying. The larvae then tunnel straight to the cambial layer of the tree, which is the main driver in a tree's growth and the destruction of which, as the larvae feed, girdles the tree and ultimately kills it.

Mature larvae tunnel nearly to the outer bark before they overwinter in the pupal stage. When they emerge the next year as adult beetles, they enlarge the tunnel and exit the tree through a D-shaped hole.

On its own, EAB can travel several miles a year through flying, but transportation via humans through nursery stock, logs and firewood is the source of the widespread dispersal across 37 states and Washington, D.C., and into bordering regions of Canada.

With that knowledge, Maine enacted a quarantine plan in 2019, adding areas as EAB was found, such as all of MDI this year. What it means is restrictions on movement of the susceptible ash from a regulated area to an unregulated one can only happen with a valid compliance agreement with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, with some ash products barred from any exceptions.

Within a regulated area, there are no restrictions, although the state recommends following best management practices to help stem the spread. Those include moving ash wood only within five miles of its origin and transporting ash wood to a mill or kiln between Oct. 1 and

About the Author: Janine Pineo is a freelance writer from Hudson and regular contributor to *Maine Town & City*. jepineo@gmail.com

May 1 for processing (heat treatments kill the larvae).

As of May, all but Washington County had a quarantine in effect for all or part of each county.

Detecting the presence of EAB is a problem because the dying crown is the most visible sign of an infestation. Since 2007, the state has deployed 200 purple prism traps in cooperation with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Maine also uses tree traps, which sacrifice a healthy ash tree by girdling it, which requires removing a complete section of bark from around the trunk. This method stresses the tree and releases compounds that attract EAB. Also used is biosurveillance, where the state and volunteers seek colonies of a native, non-stinging wasp, *Cerceris fumipennis*, that kills metallic wood-boring beetles and fills its nest with the bodies.

A disappointing surprise

Firewood is the suspected carrier of EAB into both Belfast and Town Hill, likely to campgrounds.

The appearance of EAB on Mount Desert Island was a particular surprise simply because it is an island.

One advantage MDI has is the presence of Acadia National Park, which has been actively mapping and monitoring the ash on MDI, the Schoodic Peninsula and Isle au Haut.

Jesse Wheeler, vegetation program manager at Acadia National Park, said the park has less than one percent of ash, most of it white, with some green and statistically no brown ash. The park, which covers about half of the island, has been using purple prism traps, green funnel traps and girdled trap trees and thus far has seen no sign of EAB within the park.

"Folks may remember the fire of 1947 that burned a tremendous amount of land in Bar Harbor, kind of half of MDI," Wheeler said. The western side remains spruce with a little mix of hardwoods, he said, while the fire-ravaged eastern side is now a wider mix, including ash, beech and birch.

Part of the mapping of Acadia and its environs—as well as the Katahdin Woods and Waters region—has been done by the International Space Station using hyperspectral imaging, Wheeler said.

Hyperspectral imaging obtains the electromagnetic spectrum for each pixel of an image, and in this case, can be used to find ash trees and look for the health and any possible decline of the trees in the canopy.

Bangor's targeted plan

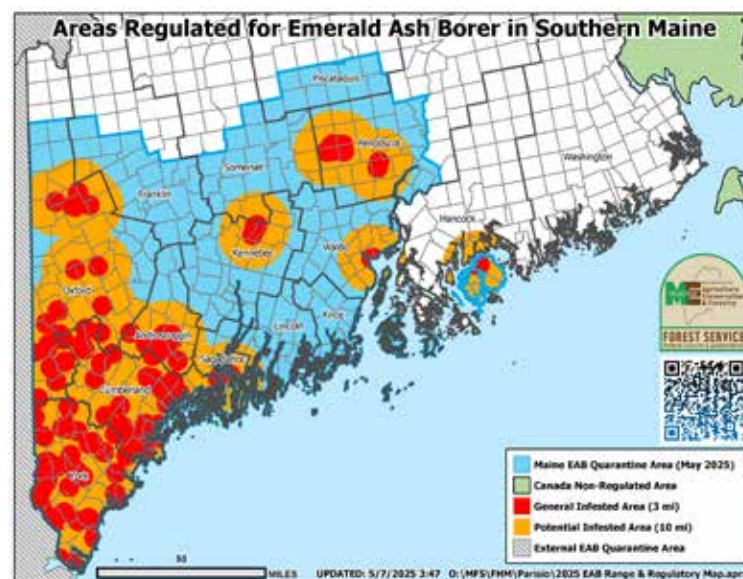
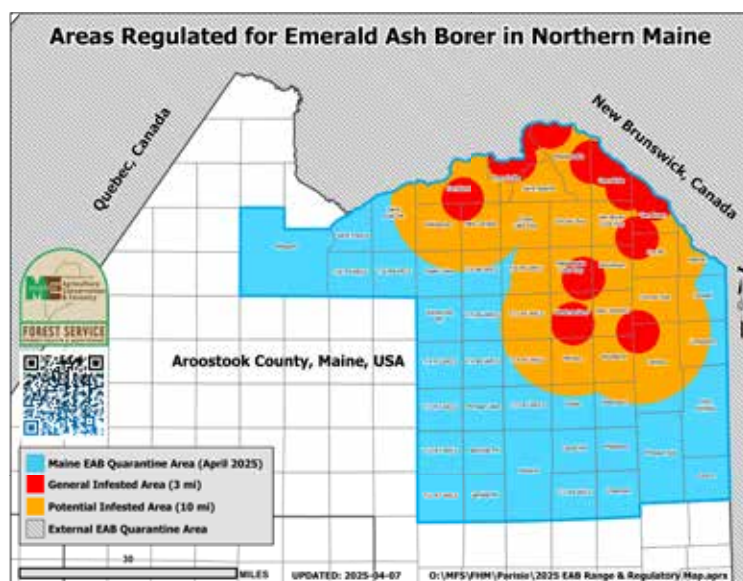
In Penobscot County, the beetle was discovered in three towns in 2023: Hermon, Corinna and Newport. In 2025, EAB was reported east of Corinna and Newport, as well as in Exeter and Stetson.

As of early May, the largest municipality next to Hermon, the City of Bangor, had not seen any signs of the insect. However, the city has not been idle as the threat has grown.

In 2024, Bangor did a complete tree survey with summer intern Sophia Cameron, a master of forestry student in the School of Forest Resources at the University of Maine. As part of her master's project, she has been working on Bangor's response plan, which included GIS mapping as well as recording the health and size of the trees.

"This was quite the undertaking," Cameron said during the webinar, "but it allowed us to make some really specific recommendations for the city."

The results of Cameron's and three other interns' work showed that more than 20 percent of the city's urban tree composition are ash, mostly green with some white, and second only to Norway maple, which is now considered an invasive species. Record-



ed was a total of 1,854 ash trees, excluding any private trees or those in forested areas.

Part of what Cameron and the other interns did was rate not just the health of each tree, but to note whether the tree was a hazard in some way.

The goal was to identify trees that should be removed within a certain time frame and replanted with a different type of tree. It also was to identify trees that should be saved, with a plan to treat 250 trees with an insecticide called emamectin benzoate, which is applied on a three-year cycle.

The insecticide, which can be used on mildly infested trees, is supposed to be utilized on a nine-year treatment timeline.

One of Cameron's charts broke down the costs:

- 250 treatment trees at a cost of just under \$27,000 for the nine-year treatment timeline,
- 436 required removal trees at a cost of more than \$330,000 to remove over four years, and
- \$165,000, roughly, to replace the removed trees over four years.

Cameron said the first 250 trees will be treated this year or next and will begin with trees on the western side of Kenduskeag Stream because they are closer to Hermon.

The discussion now centers on what do with the remaining 1,168 ash trees, Cameron said. Should more be treated or should more be removed and replaced, or should they be left and only removed once they've been infected? She pointed out that the quoted removal costs were only for city employees who would likely not be able to keep up with the volume of removal and that contractors would likely need to be hired but at a higher cost.

Benjamin Arruda, Bangor's forestry manager, said the city also has started an ash seed bank, collecting seeds from the trees in the Roland Perry Forest, which is rich with brown ash.

The city, he said, has 361 properties that total about 3,400 acres to manage. For 2025, wooded rural parks will be inventoried along with high-use trails obtaining a permanent inventory and tagging under specific conditions.

Arruda noted that the students' work added up to 3,200 hours of labor as they charted rights-of-way, public ways, parks and schoolgrounds.

"It does take quite a bit, but it's doable," Arruda said.

For more information

The DACF website has a dedicated EAB section located at: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/eab/index.shtml 🏞️

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If I led my community...

7th grade students describe the innovative ways they would lead their communities.

As part of MMA's effort to foster interest in municipal government service among residents of all ages, the annual "If I led..." essay contest turns the reigns over local government, theoretically speaking, to seventh grade students across the state. The essays detail the many ways our younger residents would lead our communities through the creation and implementation of the programs and services designed to improve the quality of life for all. Themes of understanding, empathy, belonging and safety resonate through the submitted essays, as does compassion for our four-legged friends through the creation of stick libraries.

Congratulations to Cory Michaud-Kidder and Caleb DiDonato from Ellsworth Middle School and Sidney Palmer, from Reeds Brook Middle School in Hampden, for their award-winning essays. Thank you to all the teachers who encouraged their students to participate in this year's contest, as well as to MMA staff—Abby DiPasquale, Adelia Weber, Amanda Campbell, Rebecca Lambert and Kelly Maines—who had the yeoman's task of selecting the winners among the 70 contenders.

What follows are the winning essays for 2025.



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Caleb DiDonato
Ellsworth Elementary Middle School



Hi, I'm Caleb DiDonato from Ellsworth Elementary Middle School. I think my community needs more bike paths, a bike program for kids, a bike bridge to the school, bike lanes on the bridge and roads for safe riding. We also need upgraded equipment for the park to make exercise for kids more accessible. For our pets, we need more sidewalks, dog parks, and poop bag stations around our community.

I recommend increasing the number of bike paths on main streets because it helps people stay healthy, get more exercise, improves sleep, and reduces stress. Also, bike paths are a great way to reduce pollution and become a "greener" community. Working with city planners to make this happen will be important.

A bike program for young kids will help kids get more exercise before school, which could improve concentration in school. Better access to biking will also help the environment by reducing exhaust in the air around the school and in our town.

A bike bridge, or more biking lanes can help reduce bike-related accidents. Every year there are 150,000 accidents involving bikes. So, a bike bridge and more biking paths, like in bigger communities, might keep people safer while biking. Bike lanes could make it easier for people to bike to work, school, and parks, which will help the environment. I feel we can work with the city and state to use a portion of property taxes, or car registration fees, to build more bike lanes and paths.

Our town is very spread out and not kid-friendly. I feel improving the playground equipment, and adding more equipment, could lead to more active families and children. New age-appropriate playground equipment will help kids get more exercise and fun. When I usually go to the park, I get bored quickly because there is not a lot of equipment, or activities, for my age.

Stick "libraries," which is a cost-free addition to our town, could make happier dogs and pet owners. Plus, adding poop bag stations, like in Bar Harbor, is a great way to keep the town clean. Most people don't clean up after their pets if they don't have poop bags, so this will help. Working with the recreation department, or obtaining grants, could make this a great addition.

Dog parks are a good idea for exercise. Dogs want to play with their owner, and the owners with them. This gives both the dog and the owner a lot of exercise. Using existing land the city owns to develop walking paths and a dog park could be a great way to exercise both dogs and owners.

There are many ways to fund these ideas. There are multiple grants available through the state. Working with town councilors and the recreation department to provide funding for these ideas could also be helpful. There are also fundraisers that can be done, at a community level, that could provide funding for matching grant opportunities with private or public grant organizations.

Cory Michaud-Kidder
Ellsworth Elementary Middle School



If I led my community, my biggest goal would be to help as many people as possible. A strong community is built on kindness, support, and action, and if we all work together, we can make a real difference in people's lives. However, I can't do this alone - I need the help of everyone in our community to create real change.

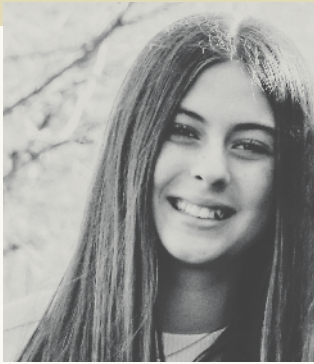
One of the most important things I would focus on is helping the homeless. No one should have to sleep on the streets or go to bed hungry. I would work to make sure that people experiencing homelessness have access to food, clean water, and shelter, especially during the cold months. Too often, we see people struggling, and while some individuals try to help, we need a bigger, organized effort. I would work with local businesses, churches, and volunteers to set up food drives, collect warm clothing, and create safe shelters for those in need.

But helping the homeless is just one part of making our community better. Another big issue I have noticed is traffic safety. I have seen way too many cars speeding down streets where kids play, people walk, and families live. There are times when drivers are going 40, 50, or even 60 miles per hour in areas where the speed limit is only 25. That is dangerous, and we need to do something about it. If I were in charge, I would push for better enforcement of speed limits. I would ask the police to be more active in stopping reckless driving and keeping our streets safe. Speeding may not seem like a big deal to some, but it only takes one mistake to cause a tragic accident.

Beyond just stopping crime and helping the homeless, I believe that a strong community is one where people support each other in all aspects of life. I would love to see more programs for young people to keep them engaged and on the right path. Schools should have better resources, after-school activities, and mentorship programs to help kids reach their full potential. I want to create spaces where young people feel safe and have opportunities to grow, learn, and succeed. Whether it's sports, music, art, or academic clubs, we need more activities that give kids positive ways to spend their time.

Additionally, I would encourage community clean-ups to keep our neighborhoods looking nice and welcoming. When our streets are clean and well-maintained, people feel more pride in where they live. If we all pitch in, we can keep parks, sidewalks, and public spaces free from litter and make our community a place we're proud to call home.

Leading a community is about more than just making rules - it's about listening to people, understanding their struggles, and working together to find solutions. I may not have all the answers, but with the help of everyone in our community, I know we can make a real, lasting impact. Together, we can create a place where everyone feels safe, supported, and valued.



Sidney Palmer

Reeds Brook Middle School

If I led my community, I would make sure that all of our children and parents would feel safe within their schools. When you go to school you want to feel safe and protected. I want to create a community where your children can grow up feeling safe and loved, I want everyone to wake up in the morning feeling that comfort that they are protected and they can let their kids go to school safe, not having to worry about them and the students not having to worry about someone coming in to hurt them.

I have researched and come up with a solution for our community that I would put into place if I led my community. The solution is called: Safety Shelters. Safety Shelters can vary in sizes and are designed to accommodate 1.5 square feet per child in elementary school and 2 square feet per child in high school. Most common sized safety shelter will house 25 students per classroom.

There are currently 2,270 students at RSU 22. The average cost of each Safety Shelter is \$1000 per student/teacher. This would yield an average cost of \$2,360,000.00. This number may appear large for our budget, however, in another town named Bangor, the School District has recently signed a contract with a company to implement call buttons for each teacher to wear so that if a shooter enters, they can call the police. This is still waiting time for the police to arrive and the shooter to shoot! The average cost for their buttons is \$2,045,000,00 over the course of 5 years. This program has been going on for two years now. Our program would be paid up front and last for 5 plus years.

Safety Shelters are fully carpeted, with seating, and are bullet proof, tornado proof, hurricane proof, knife proof and earthquake proof. Each unit houses cameras to see outside the safety shelter, and has sound proof walls. The Safety Shelters can be used daily for reading nooks/ lounges for both young and older children. The Safety Shelters also accommodate TVs so that children can watch an educational video-learning activity inside. While the Safety Shelters are being used as reading lounges, the door remains open however when lockdowns occur the students will practice going into the safety shelters and remain seated. The positive aspect about these shelters for children is that teachers can allow their students to talk and engage with each other and continue their learning inside the shelters via video or listening to music because the students and teachers remain safe. This would alleviate weekly and monthly fear and stress for parents, students and teachers alike.

In conclusion, if I led my community, I would make sure that it is a place where every child and parent can feel safe and not live in constant fear, and be protected and loved!

Deborah Crocker: Helping Those in Need

By Liz Mockler

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic linger today as skyrocketing rental costs are driving people out of their apartments and making it hard for them to afford other basic necessities such as food and electricity.

"It's heartbreaking," said Deborah Crocker, human services administrator for the Town of Brunswick and 2024 Maine Welfare Director of the Year. "I can tell you I have a lot of concern for the people I serve" as local officials worry about potential—and likely—severe cuts to Medicaid and food stamps that were being debated at press time.

"I will do my best to fight to keep services," Crocker said. "The people I serve have little to begin with. (The funding) should never be cut. I think there are other places that can be cut, but not for people who are in need."

Crocker joined the town staff in 2020 as COVID-19 swept the country. She was approached to apply for the Brunswick job after ending a 33-year career in the medical field, including several years as an eligibility specialist for benefits such as SNAP, or food stamps, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

She worked her way up from a CNA to administration. "Everything I've done has led me to my purpose here serving people," she said.

When COVID struck in 2020, out-of-state residents came to Maine to buy up housing property, which drove up rental and home sale prices and caused both a dearth of available homes and a crisis in the rental market. The key reasons people flocked to Maine is because they thought they would be safe from COVID, and could work from home, Crocker said.

While a person's rent should constitute 30% of their income, "the rent has skyrocketed so much they are paying as much as 60% to 70%" of their income, or being evicted whether or not they have a place to go. Many are homeless, Crocker said.

"Landlords knew they could get that (high) amount of money, and they continue to do so," she said.

Crocker recently took time to elaborate on her work,



Deborah Crocker

the challenges of the job and ideas to combat homelessness in Maine.

Q. How would you describe what you do?

A. I'd like to begin by saying how proud I am to work for the Town of Brunswick. I have the privilege of working alongside extraordinary individuals who are always ready to lend their support. The town also benefits from a strong network of service providers, and together, we collaborate to ensure our community has access to the resources and care they need. My work is

divided into two main areas: General Assistance and human services. General Assistance focuses on providing emergency support for basic needs, including rental assistance, food, electricity, heating, household supplies, baby items and prescription medications. Human services are broader in scope, aiming to address a wide range of human needs and enhance quality of life through supportive programs. This includes services in healthcare, counseling, social work and community development—designed to help individuals and families not only meet their immediate needs but also move toward long-term stability and well-being. The ultimate goal of both areas is to empower people to lead healthier, more productive, and fulfilling lives. I collaborate with local partners such as hospitals, shelters, schools, the United Way and other community organizations to provide comprehensive support.

Q. What is the most challenging issue you work on day-to-day?

A. One of the most pressing challenges recently has been the reduction in critical funding at both the federal and state levels. In 2025, Maine is facing potential cuts to its General Assistance (GA) program, which provides essential support such as housing for low-income residents. The proposed changes include restrictions on housing assistance, and limited timeframes which could significantly affect individuals and families at risk of homelessness.

Q. Would federal cuts to Medicaid, SNAP and other programs impact your office?

A. If Medicaid funding is reduced, we will likely see a rise

in requests for help with prescription medications. If a client loses healthcare, they may incur medical bills which would further the inability to pay for basic needs. Similarly, cuts to SNAP benefits would further strain resources in an already food-insecure state, leading to increased demand for food assistance. General Assistance, Medicaid, SNAP and TANF are essential programs designed to support individuals living in poverty and should never be considered for budget cuts. The people who rely on these services do so out of genuine need—if they could manage without them, they undoubtedly would.

Q. Are there any problems you can't help people with?

A. I can't offer legal advice or represent someone in legal matters like child custody, eviction or immigration cases. While I can give general information, I'm not a licensed mental health professional or doctor, so I can't diagnose or treat health conditions. General Assistance cannot find housing for recipients when there is a lack of affordable units. Once our clients find housing we can potentially assist with rental payments.

Q. What is the most common problem you deal with?

A. We receive a high volume of calls requesting help with rent and Central Maine Power assistance. Rising

rental costs have made it difficult for individuals and families to keep up, leaving many unable to cover their bills with their current income. The increasing cost of electricity has only added to the strain, forcing people to make tough choices about which expenses to prioritize. While resources like food pantries and SNAP benefits are available to address food insecurity, these programs are also being impacted by funding cuts. Every day, more food pantries and shelters close due to a lack of federal and state financial support.

Q. Has the need for General Assistance declined or increased since the COVID-19 pandemic?

A. Since the end of the Emergency Rental Assistance funds provided during COVID-19, we've observed an increase in the need for rental assistance. Hotel stays, which rose during the pandemic, have now declined significantly. New General Assistance guidance, which began in July 2024, allows up to a 30-day hotel stay within a 12-month period. General Assistance has state-mandated maximums which are much lower than a 30-day stay in a hotel. This means the maximum may only be a week or two. Additionally, many local hotels are reluctant to allow stays longer than a few days, often emphasizing that they do not operate as shelters.

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Q. Homelessness is an entrenched problem in the nation and state. How do you see the problem in Brunswick and is there anything more that can be done for the unhoused?

A. Homelessness is indeed a pressing issue, both nationally and locally, and Brunswick is not immune to its effects. In Brunswick, homelessness often intersects with challenges such as a lack of affordable housing, mental health issues, substance use and limited access to consistent social services. While the community has made some strides—through shelters, food programs and local nonprofits—there remains a gap in long-term solutions. More can be done nationally and statewide to address the root causes of homelessness and support sustainable outcomes for the unhoused. This could include:

- Expanding affordable housing initiatives. Investing in low-income and supportive housing options can provide stability for individuals and families in crisis.
- Enhancing mental health and addiction services. Accessible, community-based care helps address some of the core drivers of chronic homelessness.
- Strengthening partnerships. Local governments, nonprofits, businesses and faith-based groups can collaborate more deeply to provide coordinated support.
- Offering workforce training and placement pro-

grams. Employment opportunities are key to long-term self-sufficiency.

- Creating safe, low-barrier shelter options, especially during extreme weather or for people who might not qualify for traditional shelters.

Ultimately, sustaining these programs and maintaining adequate staffing will require continued support through federal and state funding.

Q. Were you surprised to win welfare director of the year?

A. I was deeply moved and genuinely surprised to see my family, coworkers, the town manager, a town council member, the human resources director, and even our recently-retired town manager all present to show their support. I am incredibly honored and humbled by this recognition. As vice president of the welfare directors, I had no idea that my fellow directors, along with my family and coworkers, had kept this a secret. It's truly a privilege to be acknowledged for the important work we all do together. I was also honored to receive the Community Impact Award from Bowdoin College's McKeen Center, recognizing the monthly provider meeting I organize for new Mainers. This gathering brings together local service providers to collaborate, address challenges, and meet the needs of our new neighbors. I'm proud to share this award with all the participating providers—our collective efforts truly make a difference. We are stronger together. 🏡

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2025 Douglas M. Eugley Memorial Scholarship for Public Service Winners

In 2023, The Maine Municipal Association (MMA) began offering scholarships to high school seniors with the goal of supporting workforce development within public service professions and encouraging the growth of future leaders within our communities. Due to the success of the program, in 2024 the number of scholarships and the dollar amount increased to five \$1,500 awards, continuing at that level in 2025.

MMA values the commitment its own employees show to their communities and encourages staff to be involved and to volunteer in their hometowns. To that end, the scholarship's namesake, Douglas M. Eugley, dedicated 15 years to MMA as a senior accountant. He was unfortunately diagnosed with cancer in 2020 and succumbed to his illness quickly thereafter.

In life, Doug gave back to his community by serving on the Sidney selectboard. After his time on the selectboard, he filled the role of town moderator and served on the appeals board and budget committee. Doug was very involved with his children's lives, including coaching youth sports. When Doug was diagnosed with his illness, he wrote his own obituary where his wit and humor were at the forefront. These characteristics kept coworkers, members, friends and family laughing—his presence is greatly missed. Doug was passionate about education and would be honored to have MMA promote this scholarship in his name.

MMA appreciates all the seniors who applied and are pleased to share the 2025 recipients of this year's memorial scholarships. Also, thanks are owed to MMA Executive Committee members, David Cyr, Frenchville town manager, and Anthony Ward, Casco town manager, for assisting in selecting this year's winners.



Broden Eaton-Foster

"I am a student that does not only persistently work hard academically, but also, I constantly try to improve my own community's quality of life by doing volunteer work." Broden Eaton-Foster

Broden Eaton-Foster, a 2025 graduate from Lawrence High School, has enrolled at Thomas College in Waterville to focus on criminal justice studies with the end goal of becoming a game warden, supporting his lifelong passion for nature, wildlife, and safely preserving recreational uses.

A dedicated and motivated student, Broden has demonstrated a solid work ethic and leadership qualities both on and off the baseball field, according to his baseball coach. He approaches every task with focus and is always willing to put in the time and effort to reach his goals. Broden's dedication to helping others is evidenced through his work with a nonprofit organization, PAL Sports, which provides sports opportunities to youth in the community, middle school basketball coaching, and his role in implementing a fly-fishing tying club at the high school.

Congratulations Broden, from all of us at MMA and best of luck in your future!



Ashlee Jarvis

"Women bring unique strengths to policing... which are essential to building trust within communities. By pursuing this career, I hope to not only serve and protect, but also inspire other young women to consider law enforcement as a viable and rewarding path." Ashlee Jarvis

Ashlee Jarvis is also a 2025 graduate from Lawrence High School and has enrolled at Southern Maine Community College for criminology with plans to enter a career in law enforcement specializing in community policing and victim advocacy. Beyond Ashlee's personal dream to enter the law enforcement profession, she is driven by a mission to create positive change and to help bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community by fostering relationships built on trust and mutual respect.

In addition to her volunteer opportunities, Ashlee has participated in varsity field hockey all four years of high school while maintaining a rigorous academic schedule. She plans to continue learning through community service events such as mentorships from seasoned officers, participating in community outreach programs, and taking part in law enforcement ride along programs.

MMA is pleased to present this scholarship to a very deserving candidate. Best of luck, Ashlee!

Aja Marzilli

"...I founded "Project Professionalism," a three-session seminar at Orono High School, driven by a desire to empower my peers with the skills I gained. In the seminars, I taught students the basics of business professional skills necessary to go out into the real world with preparedness and confidence." Aja Marzilli

Aja Marzilli is a 2025 Orono High School graduate and has enrolled at the University of Southern Maine to study marketing and political science. When Aja took on the role of Student Public Relations/Social Media Director at the United Technologies Center (UTC) in Bangor, it ignited her passion for being a part of her community. In this role she worked hand in hand with the center director to interview individuals and organize content for the greater UTC community.

Empowered by the skills she learned at UTC, Aja wanted to share this information with her peers at Orono High School, leading to her creation of "Project Professionalism." This project is a three-session seminar that teaches students the basics of professional business skills needed to be prepared and confident when emerging into the real world. In her free time, Aja volunteers as a social companion and facilitator for individuals with Alzheimer's and participates in many fundraisers to benefit her community.

In addition to her impressive community service involvement, Aja is on track to graduate high school with an associate's degree in business. MMA is proud to award this scholarship to Aja and wishes her tremendous success in future endeavors!



Samantha Rondo

"I want to be part of a much-needed change in our country and society. A change where everyone is treated equally under the law, to the expectations that our society has put in place for all people." Samantha Rondo



Samantha graduated from Noble High School in 2025 and has enrolled at the University of New England in Biddeford for criminology studies and plans to enter a career in law enforcement. Samantha took an interest in law enforcement and started pursuing her dream in high school by attending the Sanford Regional Technical Center as a junior and enrolling in the two-year law enforcement program.

Along with maintaining an impressive grade point average and being a member of the National Honor Society (NHS) and the French Honors Society (FHS), Samantha also participated in outdoor track and cheerleading for all four years of high school. Additionally, her work on the NHS and FHS offered her the opportunity to participate in several community service projects.

Samantha's law enforcement instructor sees her as possessing the tenacity needed to be successful in her chosen career and looks forward to her strong presence in the law enforcement community for years to come. MMA is happy to provide this award to support her educational future. Congratulations, Samantha!



Elizabeth "Ellie" Roy

"Ellie has a unique ability to foster thoughtful discourse, often posing questions that challenge her peers' perspectives and lead to meaningful, civil discussions." Kendra Raymond, Fort Kent Community High School Social Studies Facilitator

Ellie is a 2025 graduate from Fort Kent High School and has enrolled at the University of Southern Maine for a degree in criminology and social/behavioral science with a goal of becoming a crime scene investigator. During her time in high school, not only has she shown commitment to her academic success, but she also participated and excelled in numerous clubs and athletics all while working part time jobs.

Additionally, above and beyond the requirement, Ellie's application included three impressive letters of recommendation that spoke to her leadership abilities among peers, both on and off the athletic field. She participated in the Link Crew Freshman Mentoring Committee which is a program designed to mentor incoming freshman students throughout their first year in high school, helping to acclimate them to opportunities available to high school students. One letter pointed out that Ellie is a "quiet but powerful leader," which speaks to her ability to communicate effectively and educate others as one of her greatest strengths.

Ellie is a dedicated student leader who will no doubt succeed in her future as a crime scene investigator. Congratulations, Ellie!

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Profiles of Service...Jenn Cross, Scarborough Animal Control Officer

By Stephanie Bouchard

Recently, Scarborough's animal control officer, Jenn Cross, was called to a residence because five squirrels were stuck in a chain-link fence. The young squirrels' tails were matted together due to what's called squirrel king—a situation in which the squirrels' tails get bound up together in the nest due to tree sap, typically, but sometimes with things like plastic. The squirrels can't get untangled without human intervention.

Unable to separate, the young squirrels got out of the nest and then managed to get their enmeshed tails caught in the chain-link fence. When Cross arrived at the residence and assessed the situation, she contacted Saco River Wildlife Center in her hometown of Limington for advice.

The wildlife center was able to get a volunteer to go to the residence and the two of them spent a good hour slowly and gently clearing enough of the tangle to release the squirrels from the fence without causing injury to the squirrels or getting themselves scratched and bitten by the freaked out squirrels. They then wrangled the young squirrels into a carrier and they were taken to the wildlife center for care.

"She's very, very passionate about the care and welfare of both domesticated animals as well as our wildlife," said Sergeant Andrew Flynn, the special enforcement officer in Scarborough's police department who is Cross's supervisor. "She really goes above and beyond, I would argue almost every day, to make sure that the wildlife is protected and that our town ordinances are followed and that our domesticated dogs and cats and other pets are well taken care of as well. She's really taken the bull by the horns since she started, and she's not afraid to step outside of her comfort zone."

Cross began working as Scarborough's animal control officer in June of 2023. She'd never been in animal control before, although some might argue that 18 years working as a bartender and waitress, five years working as a parking control officer in Portland, and stint as a corrections officer at York County Jail prepared her well for the job.



Jenn Cross

"Bartending brought me out of my shell a little bit. It taught me that if you try and reach out to people that most people like to talk and most people will talk about themselves, if you just ask 'em. It's not as intimidating as it needs to be. It gave me the courage to just speak with all different types of people," Cross said.

"And then when I went to corrections, I learned a lot of things about social situations, psychology, how to work with difficult people, and that helped me immensely. I gained a lot of bravery with

approaching people . . . and with Portland parking, I learned a lot about conflict resolution, as you can imagine, because you're constantly taking people in, booting vehicles . . . so I had to learn to find my charm and talk with all different kinds of people and try to relate and really work with them."

Bringing all that experience—and a love and passion for helping animals—makes Cross a "rock star," her supervisor said. She recently had to testify for the first time in front of a grand jury in an aggravated assault case involving a dog, Flynn said, and she got a standing ovation from all the jurors.

"I've been a police officer for 18 years, and I've never heard of that happening," he said. "So for her to show her passion and her dedication to the point where everyone in that room recognized the work that she was doing, that's pretty impressive. She's an unbelievably incredible asset to our police department and to the community."

Cross got her love of animals from her father, who was an avid outdoorsman and kept dogs for hunting. But being an animal control officer wasn't on her radar at all because she didn't even know such a thing existed.

She learned about animal control officers when she was working as a parking control officer. The role, she said, didn't really fit her "bubbly" personality so she was looking for something new and different. She spotted a job for an animal control officer in her hometown, but it was only part-time. She kept looking and got her first job as an animal control officer for Scarborough. (She concurrently was the animal control officer in Westbrook, through an agreement with Scarborough, but that ends in July of this year.)

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The job has brought her a lot of satisfaction, as well as surprises, she said. Being able to help animals and people is among the most rewarding aspects of her job she says.

She recently responded to a man who was out on a trail with his dog and the dog stepped on a piece of glass and was bleeding heavily. When she got the call, she drove out to the trail, used her deer sled to get the dog off the trail and eventually to the veterinarian, who said they were lucky to have gotten the dog out in time because he could have bled out.

"I feel very fortunate to be able to do that, to be in that position, to be there for them, or to work with people sometimes with conflicts or mental illness where they just need help, and I can be compassionate and not come in as super cop and just say, 'I'm going to write you all these citations,'" she said. "I can speak with people and work on educating them and work on changing things with them."

In addition to Cross's compassion and kindness, her focus on education without judgment is an attribute that stands out about her, said Lauri Haller, the director of operations at the Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland in Westbrook. "My experience with Jenn is that she goes into whatever the scenario is without judgment, and I love that, and it's what it takes," she said. "She definitely is about educating somebody because not every bad situation means that an animal shouldn't necessarily be with the person."

For instance, there's a person in the community who has had a dog for many years, and who loves his dog deeply, she said. The person, however, has significant mental health challenges and is occasionally hospitalized because of them.

"Jenn recognizes that though not the best scenario at the moment for the dog, when (the person) is healthier, this dog is so well taken care of and he's not hurt by this person at all. He's really loved by the person," Haller said.

Instead of permanently removing the dog, Cross arranges for the dog to be temporarily housed at the Animal Refuge League until the person is back at home and well enough again to be reunited. Then she follows up

with them by doing check-ins.

"She's just very compassionate," Haller said. "It's easy to get really angry... at the system when you see enough things . . . but there's always empathy (from Jenn) to everyone involved, all while advocating for the animal's best interest."

"What makes Jenn good at her job is she is full of compassion for people and animals," said Bethany Brown, founder and director of Saco River Wildlife Center. "She is there to make sure the animal has a voice."

To that end, if she is unsure about something or isn't knowledgeable about a situation, she doesn't hesitate to ask questions and get advice, Brown said, and be respectful and grateful for what is shared, which is one of the things that makes her a great partner.

"When it comes to wildlife, if there's a situation she can handle, she handles it and then gets in touch with us," Brown said. "But if there's a situation she can't handle, she immediately will contact us and we'll discuss the situation and see if it's something she can do, or if not, then I'll take over the situation for her. As a partner, she very, very much communicates what's going on."

Such good communication is essential in animal sheltering and rescue, where resources are usually stretched thin and intervention can mean life or death.

"It sounds kind of silly, but I'm really thankful that they dispatch me to (pick up a dead possum) because I'm an animal lover and that possum might have babies in its pouch," Cross said. "One time, I was able to take six little possum babies to Saco River Wildlife in Limington, and that made me so happy that Scarborough supports me in that as well. It allows me to work hands-on with everything going on in Scarborough and with the wildlife, and I just think that's a fantastic asset and an awesome opportunity." 🏠

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This series focuses on the people who work in municipal government. Do you know someone who should be featured? If so, please email Kate Dufour at kdufour@memun.org.

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TRAINING CALENDAR

JULY

7/8	Tues.	MTCCA Municipal Law Training	Augusta - MMA & Zoom Webinar Hybrid	MTCCA
7/10	Thurs.	MMA For A Day	Greenville -Public Safety Building	MMA
7/10	Thurs.	MBOIA July Membership Meeting & Training	Augusta - MMA	MBOIA
7/22	Tues.	MTCCA Licensing Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MTCCA
7/24	Thurs.	MMTCTA I've Got the Job - What Now? Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
7/29	Tues.	Planning Board/Boards of Appeal	Freeport - Hilton Garden Inn	MMA

AUGUST

8/5	Tues.	You're the boss - Now what?	Augusta - MMA	MMA
8/5 & 6	Tues. & Wed.	MTCCA New Clerks Training	Orono - Orono Town Hall & Zoom	MTCCA
8/13-15	Wed.-Fri.	MTCMA New England Management Institute	Newry - Sunday River - The Jordan Hotel	MTCMA
8/14	Thurs.	MLGHRA Summer Training	Augusta - MMA & Zoom Webinar Hybrid	MLGHRA
8/19	Tues.	MMA Lunch & Learn	Zoom Meeting	MMA
8/21 & 22	Thurs. & Fri.	MMTCTA Governmental Accounting Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
8/26	Tues.	MTCCA Voter Registration Workshop	Augusta - Augusta Civic Center	MTCCA
8/27	Wed.	MTCCA Title 21A Workshop	Augusta - Augusta Civic Center	MTCCA
8/27 & 28	Wed. & Thur.	MTCCA Athenian Dialogue	Zoom Meeting	MTCCA

SEPTEMBER

9/3 - 5	Wed. - Fri.	MAAO Fall Conference & Annual Meeting	Newry - Sunday River - The Jordan Hotel	MAAO
9/3	Wed.	Understanding the Freedom of Access Act	Zoom Webinar	MMA
9/9	Tues.	Elected Officials Workshop	Augusta - MMA & Zoom Webinar Hybrid	MMA
9/10	Wed.	MTCCA Networking Day & Annual Meeting	Brewer - Jeff's Catering	MTCCA
9/11	Thurs.	MBOIA September Membership Meeting & Training	Portland - Portland Elks Lodge #188	MBOIA
9/17	Wed.	MFCA Membership Meeting	Brunswick - Greenwood Emergency Vehicles	MFCA
9/17-9/19	Wed. - Fri.	MeWEA Fall Convention	Newry - Sunday River - Grand Summit Hotel	MEWEA
9/24	Wed.	MMTCTA Payroll Procedures	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
9/26	Fri.	MWDA GA Basics Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MWDA
9/29	Mon.	Verbal Judo for the Contact Professional - 1 DAY	Portland - Portland Elks Lodge #188	MMA
TBD		MTCCA Voter Registration Workshop	Presque Isle- location TBD	MTCCA
TBD		MTCCA Title 21A Workshop	Presque Isle- location TBD	MTCCA

OCTOBER

10/8 & 9	WED. & THURS.	MMA 89TH ANNUAL CONVENTION	BANGOR - CROSS INSURANCE ARENA	MMA
10/16	Thurs.	MMTCTA Municipal Law for Tax Collectors & Treasurers	Augusta - MMA	MMTCTA
10/17	Fri.	MWDA Advanced GA Workshop	Augusta - MMA	MWDA
10/21	Tues.	MMA Lunch & Learn	Zoom Meeting	MMA
10/22	Wed.	Labor & Employment Law	Augusta - MMA & Zoom Webinar Hybrid	MMA

Registration for trainings is typically open 8 weeks prior to the event date, please check the website for availability – www.memun.org/Training

MMA Tech Conference Takeaways

AI the focus of the all-day event.

By Betty Adams

**Keep the “human in the loop”
when using artificial intelligence
to help conduct business.**

No one could miss that prominent message at the Maine Municipal Association’s 2025 Municipal Technology Conference, held May 14 at the University of Maine at Augusta, which concentrated on “Leveraging AI for Towns and Cities.”

A Library of Congress LC Labs report says, “A ‘human-in-the-loop’ process in machine learning is one in which humans and algorithms work together to solve problems more efficiently and accurately than each could on their own.”



Cassandra Madison, keynote speaker, COO of the nonprofit Center for Public Sector AI, told the conference audience of several hundred people, “AI isn’t coming; it’s already here,” and moving at a dizzying pace. She emphasized “making sure there are humans there seeing what’s being produced and making the decisions so that you’re not just letting these things loose and not

having the right people to oversee it.”

For municipalities in particular, she said, “It’s about writing the rules for how technology is going to be delivered and whether it serves our constituents. The local government is where AI is going to be felt first because you are the connection, (you) have the strongest connection to your local constituents.” Madison added, “You’re the touchpoint for people’s everyday needs—from permits to marriage licenses to access to food and housing and transportation and public safety. So, if AI is going to make these systems more accessible, faster and more human-centered, people in your communities are going to feel that. And if it makes it worse, they’re going to notice that too.”

The Center for Public Sector AI’s website says, “Our mission is to equip government leaders with the tools,

knowledge, and expertise they need to make thoughtful decisions about where and how to deploy AI and other emerging technologies to address their most pressing service delivery challenges.”

She told the conference attendee—many of them municipal officials and employees—that “You all have the power and the burden to set precedence for how AI is used in your cities, towns and communities” and emphasized, “It’s not AI for AI’s sake. It’s about really making sure your residents, and your people aren’t left behind.”

She recommended starting with a pilot project: “something that’s manageable in scope but significant enough to deliver something of value.” Madison added that starting with a “back-office” project rather than “customer-facing” one is better and that having the expertise to monitor the system when it goes live is imperative.

Madison surveyed the audience about who was using generative AI at work—about half said they were—and why others were not. “What’s getting in the way: limited resources, lack of expertise, general fear and uncertainty, no policy yet?” Most indicated expertise seemed to be the most difficult challenge.

The Computer Security Research Center—part of the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology—offers a definition of generative AI: “The class of AI models that emulate the structure and characteristics of input data in order to generate derived synthetic content. This can include images, videos, audio, text, and other digital content.”

Generative AI tools include ChatGPT, Microsoft’s Copilot, Google’s Gemini and Anthropic’s Claude.

“While technology is just a tool and not an end in itself, the reality is that in 2025 when some constituent goes to a municipal website and tries to research how to apply for a permit or pays their property taxes or tries to report an infrastructure outage, it shapes their perception not only of government written large, but of the public servants in it,” Madison said.

She urged them to increase the expertise in increments and to consider sharing that knowledge: “With AI you can play with it now. Start a work group. Learn from each other.”

Madison said, “Find one pain point that’s frustrating for your residents or your staff and ask that question: ‘Can you make this better?’ And let that be your anchor.”

About the Author: Betty Adams is a freelance writer from Sidney and regular contributor to Maine Town & City. adamsbetty00@gmail.com



Thomaston Town Manager **Kara George** had some specific goals for herself at the conference: “I would like to lessen people’s fears and make them more open to using AI and understanding that it can make them more efficient,” she said. “I’d like the rest of our staff to learn more about it and maybe embrace it.”

George finds AI to be a time-saver, using it to help her write job descriptions, as an editing tool for letters and speeches, and she is currently using it to help create a survey that will ask people which of the town’s services they use and what they’d like to see for a long-term goal plan.

Yanina Nickless, director of human resources for the Town of Kennebunkport, was among those who identified herself as a “superuser” of AI when Madison asked for those people to stand up.



Nickless told the audience she finds that ChatGPT helps her keep her emotions in check and suggests changes when she crafts a response to someone’s angry email. It also helped her look a little differently at the responses she received to a survey of the 65 town employees (who could remain anonymous) asking them how the town was doing as an employer, what could be done better and what do people think of the benefits. She put the responses into ChatGPT. “It gave me answers in all those categories, which I found very interesting because I saw something different from the first glance,” she said.

Later, Nickless explained, “I use ChatGPT and different software to help me do my work.” That includes analyzing data, refining emails, reviewing resumes and looking for ways to promote an open house for the town. “The town manager knows I use it a lot,” she said.

She sees AI uses for many municipal departments, including analyzing finances, reviewing planning and development applications and as a meeting note-taker. “If I find anything useful, I try to share it,” she said, telling others, “This will improve your day-to-day work.”

Bob Kurek, a selectboard member in the Town of Palermo, asked Madison how the town could use AI technology to help with cash reconciliation for accounts. Madison told him some vendors offer assistance for free or low cost—which she anticipates will rise later—and to check what other municipalities are doing. “Start small,” she advised.

Maine Municipal Association’s director of IT and Administration **Brian McDonald** presented a session on “Shaping Responsible AI Policies for Your Organization.” He said, “Artificial intelligence is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem-solving, decision-making, (and) creativity.”



He noted that AI is everywhere, including such services as Instagram and TikTok, Perplexity and Google’s Gemini.

“Robotic process automation is the root or core of AI,” McDonald said, adding that it “is a technology that uses software robots or bots to automate tasks that are typically performed by humans.”

McDonald said an AI policy could be included in an acceptable use agreement which is likely already in place in the workplace.

He described how to build an AI policy framework for an organization, and cautioned that before enactment, the policy be vetted by a legal expert to ensure compliance with other policies, rules and laws. He listed 11 items in a framework for a policy governing AI use: purpose, scope, governance, eligibility, acceptable use, ethics, data management, mismanagement, training, monitoring and sanctions.

“The goal of AI is to elevate people, not eliminate people,” McDonald said.

He said that acceptable use could include generative AI for such processes as “content-generation, brainstorming, outlining, summarizing documents, compiling documents together, grammar correction, editing for clarity, formatting, style—so long as these items are reviewed by a human prior to publication or use.”

McDonald also said it can be used for “analytics, including forecasting, process improvement, budget analysis, cost assessment and any other type of comparative analysis.” He added that it can be particularly valuable when comparing RFPs: “AI can do about 40 hours of work for you in 10 seconds.”

At a session on using AI at work, Kyle Hadyniak, director of IT and Communications for the Town of Gray, told attendees that a 2024 Work Trend Index report from Microsoft and LinkedIn indicated “as of this week last year, 75% of people were using AI at work.”

Hadyniak defined a recently coined “frontier firm” as “an organization that leverages AI on a large scale within the organization,” and asked, “Why should municipal government lag behind on this new frontier?”

He equated AI with digital labor, and said he used generative AI function when he was creating an AI policy for

the town. His prompt asked for a comparative analysis of municipal AI policies and received a 22-page research paper with 168 citations in a brief amount of time.

Review results yourself, Hadyniak cautioned, emphasizing the “human in the loop” requirement. “It is essential to have human reasoning still a part of this process.” He added, “Use generative AI as an advisor; check the answers.”

Hadyniak occasionally uses generative AI as a sounding board when he’s considering suggesting something new at work to be sure he’s considered all the ramifications.

In the windup session, participants heard from Lena Geraghty, founder and principal of Data Spark Consulting, a business which “helps mission-driven organizations explore their challenges and drive toward data—and stakeholder-informed solutions while focused on long-term, achievable outcomes,” according to its website. One of Geraghty’s previous roles was serving as the first director of innovation and performance management for the City of Portland.

At the conference, she offered a description of steps municipalities could take toward safely using AI: embedding ethics, having “clear expectations for when human review is required” and a system to “update internal processes, build capacity and culture.” She also echoed the keynote speaker, when she recommended choosing a manageable task. “Start with the biggest pain points. Document everything . . . Ask the hard questions before problems arise.”

In between the sessions, attendees visited with conference sponsors and vendors who had exhibits in Jewett Hall’s Danforth Gallery and who offered some demonstrations and presentations.

Tamara Lilly, business support specialist at **Burgess Technology Services** in Bath, said the firm offers network security, help desk support and on-site cyber security, data

backup and email protection and monitoring services for organizations. It also helps to protect against web-based attacks.

Motorola Solutions’ Connor Young, channel sales executive in northern New England, talked of the safety and security systems that offer controlled access to buildings and offices, including public safety buildings, fire departments and schools, as well as video surveillance and air quality monitoring, among other services.

The Portland-based **Roux Institute of Northeastern University**, gave a presentation describing ways that AI and innovation in the form of a tail-light-embedded camera that can help keep roads safer by providing real-time audio alerts to cyclists and by sending data to the municipality about locations where maintenance is needed.

The Roux Institute’s **Chris Torina** said real-time data such as this can help lower municipal costs.

Lindsay (Pike) LaPlante, regional manager for **Indus, Inc.**, spoke about the firm’s expertise in pavement preservation.

Preparing to leave UMA’s Jewett Hall after the closing presentation to drive back to Portland and catch the ferry home, **Beth Marchak**, an IT administrative team member in the Town of Long Island, carried a bag full of handouts and a mission.

“It’s incredibly overwhelming,” she said, “but they gave us a lot of succinctly organized information that will help me work with everybody on the island. These handouts are incredibly valuable, and I intend to share them with town officials.” 🏡



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Through this partnership, MMA member communities have access to two courses:

- **USING GENERATIVE AI AT WORK.** This track consists of modules focused on the ethical implications, risk mitigation, and practical applications of AI in public service work.
- **SCALING AI IN YOUR ORGANIZATION.** This track provides participants with the tools necessary to determine when it is most appropriate to use AI tools to achieve intended outcomes, including ensuring data quality.

Both courses include: (1) hands-on activities enabling participants to experience how AI can be used; (2) information and tips from industry experts; and (3) flexible learning options, allowing participants to work through sessions at a pace that is comfortable, accommodates learning styles and supports the work-family-life balance. Participants will receive a certificate once the training is completed.

In addition to the online courses, InnovateUS offers weekly workshops on a variety of topics, including sessions focused on program evaluation and data use. Not only are the workshops free but they are also recorded, enabling municipal officials to review sessions as schedules allow.

For more information about this exciting and free training opportunity, please visit InnovateUS at <https://innovate-us.org/partner/maine-municipal-association> or simply use the QR code!





Alsina Brenenstuhl

Alsina Brenenstuhl for the post, permanently. She was hired last July to fill a new position as communications director/project manager. In January, Brenenstuhl was named interim manager following the retirement of **Jack Clukey**, who managed the town for 20 years.

Michael Montpetit has been named Ashland police chief, capping off his 30-year career in law enforcement. He replaces Christopher Cyr, who resigned just months after being hired last November. Montpetit was born at Loring Air Force Base in Limestone and grew up in Masardis. He joined the Ashland Police Department as a reserve officer in 1995 and accepted a full-time position in 1999. He was a member of the 2000 Maine Criminal Justice Academy class and served as acting chief before winning the job permanently.

After 50 years of public service in the Town of Peru, **Don Roach** received the Spirit of America award, which recognizes outstanding community service. Over five decades, Roach has served in many appointed and elected offices, including the town finance committee, appeals board, planning board and school director. Roach, a Vietnam veteran, also served for many years as town meeting moderator.



Twila Fisher

Twila Fisher has been named Ellsworth economic development director, effective June 9. Most recently she served as director of community and economic development at The Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. There, she worked as executive director of the Hobart's Run Neighborhood District. She also has worked for the Reading, Pennsylvania Department of Community Development. Fisher holds an Executive Master of Science in Cities degree from the London School of Economics and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Pennsylvania.

The Stockton Springs selectboard has hired **Sadie Lloyd Mudge** as its next town manager. Lloyd Mudge, who lives in Waldo, worked as city planner for Belfast and owns an agricultural-related company. She is excited about the opportunity to move the community forward, while honoring its roots.

Former longtime Bangor city forester **Rolland Perry** died May 15 at the age of 89. He resigned at 70 after serving as the city forester for 42 years. He is credited with planting 812,809 trees and building the city's multiple forests and woods. The Bangor City Forest is named for Perry.

Bangor Public Works Director **Aaron Huotari** was named Fort Fairfield town manager in mid-April. He will begin the new position in June, replacing **Timothy Goff**, who resigned in February. Huotari emerged quickly as the "dream candidate," officials said, with strong municipal experience and an eagerness to join the town. Huotari left the private sector in 2020 to accept the Bangor job.



Aaron Huotari

Raquel Welch-Day has resigned as Mexico town manager after five years on the job. She planned to work for a month to help with the transition to a new manager. She began work as the manager on July 1, 2020. During her tenure, Welch-Day was awarded the Spirit of America award for outstanding service to the community. She will continue her service on the Peru Selectboard.



Carolynn Lear

Bangor city councilors in May named **Carolynn Lear** as their new city manager, replacing **Debbie Laurie**, who is resigning after a 30-year career with the city—the last three as city manager. Lear, a lawyer, most recently worked for the IRS Office of the Taxpayer Advocate. She previously served as a senior attorney and advisor to the deputy IRS commissioner. She worked for nearly 10 years for the New Hampshire Department of Revenue, first as a representative for the agency and then as assistant commissioner. A Belfast native, Lear graduated from Northeastern University and earned degrees from Roger Williams University School of Law and the Boston University School of Law. 🌲

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NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

STATEWIDE

Canadian travelers are following through on their threat to boycott Maine and other border states over President Donald Trump's trade policies and his insistence that Canada would be better off as the nation's 51st state. In the first three months after Trump took office for a second time, there were 166,000 fewer travelers than the same period in 2024. Canadian visits to Maine in April showed a 35% decline, or 147,000, from April 2024. State and local officials join small businesses in worrying that the ongoing tension will wreck the 2024 summer tourism season. The number of travelers from Canada to all northern border states from February to April declined by 2.4 million, or 21%, over the same period in 2024. Even a 10% drop in Canadian tourism to the U.S. would cost \$2.1 billion in spending and an estimated 140,000 jobs, tourism officials said.

CAMDEN

A San Diego-based tech company will be helping the town enforce its short-term rental rules as the first tourist season since their adoption arrives. The company will identify and document all the short-term rentals in town. Local officials will follow up to inspect and license the often-controversial rentals, and to verify they meet the town's zoning requirements. Licensing fees will vary from \$350 for owners who use the property as their primary residence, to \$1,000 for those who don't. The fee for seasonal rentals, including lake houses and cottages, will be \$500. Any property that uses the town's septic system will pay an additional \$100. One of the biggest knocks on short-term rentals is that they take houses off the market during a persistent and acute housing shortage. The average short-term rental in Camden raises \$79,000 in revenue for the owners annually.

DEER ISLE

A tower of ash at the town's transfer station has been removed after decades at a cost of \$225,000. Officials hope to use the remaining dedicated funds of \$75,000 to pave over the site, which will likely result in a reorganization of the transfer station. Officials originally thought the site was polluted with high levels of lead but found there were only low levels. That allowed the contractor to take the ash to the Juniper Ridge Landfill in Old Town at a significantly lower cost. It took weeks of hauling to erase the 15-foot, 1,800 ton pile.

JAY, WILTON

Officials in Jay and Wilton in western Maine have approved the formation of a joint committee to consider options that could bolster both towns' police departments. The towns hope the committee will find new options for collaboration between the departments, at a time when both are experiencing recruitment challenges, rising costs and other public safety concerns. The committee will be comprised of two selectboard members and two residents from each town. Town managers from each community will also participate in the effort, as well as both police departments.

LEWISTON

Officials have recommended removing all 215 coin-operated parking meters to counter the perception that the downtown area is difficult to navigate and expensive to park. Under the proposal, most parking spaces would be for two hours, while some 15-minute spaces would also be created. A major focus of the plan is offering two hours of free parking in any of the city's five parking garages and erecting signs to direct motorists to the garages. The pro-

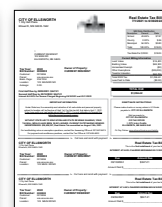
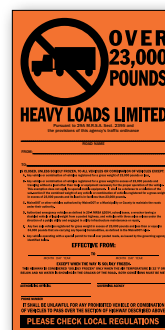
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posed changes have been endorsed by the police and public works departments, as well as the economic and community development office and the Lewiston Downtown Association. The city's parking meters are quarter fed at a time when most people don't carry quarters, officials said. They are so old, the city must turn to the online sellers on eBay to get parts for repairs. Officials said the \$25,000 the city receives from metered parking would be made up by parking enforcement.

PRESQUE ISLE

The Presque Isle City Council in May tabled a loan request for \$150,000 from Homeless Services of Aroostook, agreeing that more towns must step up and help the only homeless shelter in the county. There are 40 communities that have not responded to a request for funding for the shelter, although it serves all 70 Aroostook County municipalities. Homeless Services asked the towns for \$2 per resident; the 30 towns that donated raised a combined \$46,000. Shelter leaders told the council they would seek funding from the county commissioners and continue seeking funding from towns. They stipulated that a loan would be paid back with expected state funds.

PROSPECT, VERONA

The state has hired a contractor to install a chain-link barrier along the Penobscot Narrows Bridge to deter people from jumping to their deaths. Advocates have asked the state to install the curved chain-link fence for 10 years. Since its opening in 2006, the bridge has been the site of 24 suicides. Meanwhile, they said, Memorial Bridge in Augusta, with the steel barrier, has seen no suicides since it was constructed. The state allocated up to \$2 million for the project, which must be completed by July 2. The bridge connects the towns of Prospect and Verona.

RUMFORD

The town is seeking proposals to lease its 1923 fire station for a restaurant, microbrewery or similar enterprise. While structurally sound, the floor can only bear 10,000 pounds of weight, making it off limits for many businesses. The town was told in the 1990s, when renovations were made to the downtown station, that the floor could handle 44,000 pounds. The station is attached to the town hall, limiting any arrangement to lease-only. Officials said they were approached in the past to rent the facility, so they are hopeful it's doable. They will accept proposals until Sept. 29. 🏡

Interested in having your community featured in the People or News segments of the Maine Town & City? Share your successes with municipal officials across the state.

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REQUIRED INFORMATION ON TAX BILLS

Property tax bills are not required by Maine law although they are commonly sent as a courtesy to taxpayers. Regardless of whether a tax bill is sent, property owners are presumed to know that taxes will be due on their real and personal property each year. See e.g., *McNaughton v. Kelsey*, 1997 ME 182.

However, if the municipal tax collector chooses to send a tax bill, state law (36 M.R.S. § 507) requires the bill to contain the following information:

- The date interest begins to accrue on delinquent taxes;
- A statement or calculation demonstrating the amount or percentage by which the taxpayer's tax has been reduced by the distribution of state-municipal revenue sharing, state reimbursement for the Maine resident homestead property tax exemption, and state aid for education;
- The percentage of property taxes distributed to education and local, county, and state government; and
- The outstanding bonded indebtedness of the municipality as of the date the bill is issued.

To assist municipal collectors, Maine Revenue Services (MRS) has issued guidance on the required calculations. See the MRS Property Tax Division's "Assessor's Page"

webpage (www.maine.gov/revenue/taxes/property-tax/assessor). Estimated state revenue sharing distributions by municipality are published annually on the State Treasurer's website (www.maine.gov/treasurer/revenue-sharing/projections) and information on state aid to education is available annually on the Maine Department of Education's website (www.maine.gov/doe/funding/reports/propertytaxbill).

Aside from the items listed above, no other information or format is required for tax bills. We recommend that the bills be clear enough to inform taxpayers of the type and amount of tax owed and that bills contain information on any discounts, delinquency dates and interest rates adopted by the municipality.

Since a tax bill is not required by law, any error or omission in the bill will have no effect on the validity of the property tax itself. For more information, see MMA Legal Services' *Tax Collectors & Treasurers Manual* available in the "Legal" section of MMA's website. (By S.F.P.)

MUNICIPALITIES, INCOME TAXES & CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Under common-law principles of intergovernmental tax immunity, states and their political subdivisions (e.g., municipalities, counties) are generally not subject to federal income tax or tax filing requirements. With respect to state income taxes, Maine law does not impose an income tax on municipalities.

Municipalities are not 501(c)(3) entities and do not receive an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) status "determination" per se. According to the IRS website, the IRS will provide a free "governmental information letter" to a municipality upon request (call 877-829-5500) generally describing a municipality's exemption from income tax and the rules relating to charitable contributions. See www.irs.gov/government-entities/federal-state-local-governments/governmental-information-letter. The letter may be helpful substantiation for grant applications, vendors or donors who often ask municipalities to provide documentation of their federal tax-exempt status. Entities that are not political subdivisions of the state but that exercise certain government functions may be tax exempt under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) § 115. Those entities may seek an IRS letter ruling addressing their status.

Pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 170(c)(1), contributions or gifts to a municipality are considered "charitable contributions" and potentially tax-deductible by the donor if made "for exclusively public purposes." Likewise, Maine's income tax rules generally follow federal rules for income and deductions, including charitable deductions, but there are differences in state law that can impact the deduct-

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ibility of charitable contributions by specific taxpayers.

Municipalities that solicit gifts should characterize contributions as “qualifying” for a tax deduction (assuming the gifts are made for exclusively public purposes) but should not promise donors that gifts are in fact deductible on their state or federal tax returns. Whether a particular taxpayer can take an income tax deduction, and the amount of the deduction, depends upon a variety of factors.

For gifts of any size, it is helpful for the municipality to issue donors a receipt acknowledging the gift. However, for a gift of cash or property of \$250 or more, the IRS currently requires that the donor obtains and retains a contemporaneous written acknowledgment from the recipient (e.g., municipality) indicating the amount of the cash or a description of any property, and that states whether the recipient provided any goods or services in exchange for the gift. See IRS Tax Topic No. 506 (www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc506).

Of course, any gift of money or property to a municipality must first be accepted before it may be used or applied. The general rule is that gifts may only be accepted by vote of the municipal legislative body (town meeting or council). This includes gifts of money or property in trust (30-A M.R.S. § 5653), conditional gifts (30-A M.R.S. § 5654), and unconditional gifts (30-A M.R.S. § 5655). There is an exception for donations of money to supplement a specific appropriation already made, to reduce the tax assessment or to reduce the permanent debt; those donations may be accepted by the municipal officers at a public board meeting (30-A M.R.S. § 5652) and then forwarded to the municipal treasurer for deposit in municipal accounts.

For more information on the requirements governing acceptance of gifts, see the statutes cited above and our *Municipal Officers Manual*, available in the “Legal” section of MMA’s website (www.memun.org/legal) (By S.F.P.)

ARE BIDS PUBLIC RECORDS?

(Updating the January 2016 Legal Notes)

Are bids or proposals for goods or services submitted to a municipality considered public documents under the Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA)? The answer, of course, is yes, bids are public records.

Maine’s FOAA defines “public records” to include “any written, printed or graphic matter or mechanical or electronic data... in the possession or custody of an agency or public official... and has been received or prepared for use in connection with the transaction of public or governmental business.” See 1 M.R.S. § 402(2). We can’t think of any reason why bids or proposals, once submitted to a municipality, would not qualify under this definition.

Municipal Calendar

BY JULY 15 – Monthly/quarterly/semi-annual expenditure statement/claim for General Assistance reimbursement to be filed via online portal, faxed to (207) 287-3455, emailed to GeneralAssistance.DHHS@maine.gov, or sent to DHHS, General Assistance Unit, #11 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333-0011 (22 M.R.S. § 4311).

BY JULY 31 – Deadline for employers required to submit quarterly withholding taxes to file a return and remit payment to the State Tax Assessor (36 M.R.S. § 5253).

BETWEEN MAY 1 AND OCTOBER 1 – Municipal officers may conduct process to close certain town ways to maintenance during winter months (23 M.R.S. § 2953). See MMA’s Municipal Roads Manual.

BY AUGUST 15 – Monthly/quarterly/semi-annual expenditure statement/claim for General Assistance reimbursement to be filed via online portal, faxed to (207) 287-3455, emailed to GeneralAssistance.DHHS@maine.gov, or sent to DHHS, General Assistance Unit, #11 SHS,

If bids or proposals are sealed, however, until they are opened they are “public” only in their sealed form, that is, only the outside of the envelope is a public record. But once opened, their contents are a public record too, even if they have not been officially reviewed or acted on. (See “‘Draft’ Records Are Public,” *Maine Town & City*, Legal Notes, July 2009). To the extent bids or proposals might contain bits of confidential information (e.g., social security numbers) this information can be redacted before the record is released.

Pursuant to the FOAA, a request to inspect, or for copies of, opened bids or proposals must be acknowledged within five working days of receipt and the records themselves made available within a reasonable time. See 1 M.R.S. § 408-A. We don’t believe this means they must be made available to the public immediately upon opening; however, if requested and if possible, they should be made available promptly thereafter and within the time frames required by FOAA.

Note that this Legal Note discusses bids and proposals seeking contractors to provide goods and services; however, resumes and applications for employment positions with a municipality are a different matter. Resumes, applications and related materials concerning

application for municipal employment are confidential pursuant to 30-A M.R.S. § 2702, although the application materials of a person actually hired by the municipality become public (with some exceptions) upon hire.

For more on the FOAA, including information on requirements for acknowledging and fulfilling record requests, see our Right to Know Information Packet. For information on bids and proposals, see our Contracts & Competitive Bidding Information Packet. Both are free to members at www.memun.org/legal. (By S.P.F./R.P.F.)

REGISTRY MARGIN REQUIREMENTS

In May of 2024, the Maine Registers of Deeds Association (MRODA) issued updated recording requirements for the state's Registries of Deeds. These standards include margin and font size requirements for recorded documents. See: www.maineregistryofdeeds.com/forms (scroll to "Formatting Requirements 5-2024").

Generally, to meet all Maine County Registry of Deeds requirements, the following clean margins are necessary:

- Side margin of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch on all pages;
- Top margin of $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches across on first page of document (all other pages need a 1-inch top margin); and
- Bottom margin of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches across bottom of last page.

Contact your county Registry of Deeds for more information on how the margin requirements are implemented in your county.

It has come to our attention that some MMA Legal Services sample forms do not meet current margin requirements and have been refused for recording. One cause of recording problems may be the fact that our sample forms are usually published within a Legal Services manual appendix (e.g., *Guide to Municipal Liens*), and therefore usually include an additional appendix title and number, explanatory note and/or a page number located within the Registry's required margin space.

We recommend that explanatory notes, page titles, appendix and page numbers on MMA Legal Services sample forms should always be removed when the form is used because they are not actually part of the form. In many cases, removing this information from the form allows sufficient margin space for recording. In other cases, it may still be necessary to move the text of the form to accommodate Registry requirements.

We are currently updating our sample forms that require recording (particularly those contained in the *Guide to Municipal Liens*) to meet recording requirements. We expect many updates to be completed later this year. In the meantime, we recommend that members remove unnecessary information and/or reformat forms to allow for recording. (By S.F.P.) 🏡



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August						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

September						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Friday, August 1st – Application Deadline

Wednesday, August 27th – Application Approval (Board Meeting)

Wednesday, September 10th – Preliminary opinions and loan agreements due from bond counsel of each borrower

Thursday, September 18th – Last date for signing school contracts and rates in place for water district. PUC approvals due

Week of September 29th – Maine Municipal Bond Bank Pricing

Thursday, October 23rd – Final documents due from bond counsel

Wednesday, November 5th – Pre-closing

Thursday, November 6th – Closing – Bond proceeds available (1:00pm)

If you would like to participate in or have any questions regarding this bond issue, please contact Toni Reed at (207)622-9386 ext. 213 or treed@mmbb.com.





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