LOOKING AT 2019

The Maine Municipal Association (MMA) is pleased to provide you with this 2019 edition of the “MMA Year in Review.” The report outlines the programs and services MMA provided its members during the past twelve months. In addition to offering members core services such as legal, personnel, advocacy, publications, training, technical assistance, and group self-funded insurance programs in 2019, MMA also focused on a number of emerging areas for its members.

Those focus areas included a legislative platform centered on property tax relief; reestablishing a positive working partnership with state government; promoting municipal jobs and careers in a tough labor market; promoting civility; assisting members with recreational and medical marijuana; launching a web-based municipal fiscal survey; providing cyber security help; offering member training on emerging topics and administering quality Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust and MMA Risk Management Services (RMS) programs. I am pleased to report that the Association’s and Health Trust’s leadership and MMA staff made significant strides in all these focus areas in 2019.

We hope you find this “MMA Year in Review” informative. We encourage you to contact MMA if you would like additional information on membership services and programs or if you have any questions. We also invite you to visit MMA’s website www.memun.org to learn more about the Association.

On behalf of the MMA Executive Committee and staff, we thank you for your municipality’s membership in the Maine Municipal Association. It is a privilege to serve local elected and appointed officials. We are a member and mission driven organization.

Offering our best wishes for 2020...

Respectfully,

Stephen W. Gove
Executive Director
ADVOCA Y SERVICES

MMA’s State & Federal Relations (S&FR) Department provides advocacy services focused on ensuring that the municipal perspective is considered when state laws are enacted and state agency regulations are adopted. MMA’s 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), which is made up of two municipal officials elected by the select boards and councils in each of the state’s 35 Senate Districts, guides the Association’s advocacy efforts.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- An increase in the amount of state sales and income tax revenue distributed to municipalities under the Revenue Sharing Program from 2% ($74 million) in FY 2019 to 3% ($105 million) in FY 2020 and to 3.75% ($143 million) in FY 2021.
- By act of the Legislature, on April 1, 2020, an increase in the homestead exemption from $20,000 to $25,000 and state reimbursement for related property tax revenue losses will increase from 62.5% to 70%.
- Enactment of several MMA LPC priorities, including an initiative to ensure that qualifying incarcerated individuals are enrolled in the Medicaid program, thereby reducing county jail costs, and a bill seeking to add the creation and operation of “community broadband systems” to the list of essential public functions.
- The carryover of a bill to the 2020 legislative session requiring the state to share 25% of adult use marijuana related sales and excise tax revenues with host municipalities.
- Improvements in the state/municipal partnership. State agencies, with growing frequency, reached out and worked with municipal officials to advance public policy priorities, many of which, such as plastic bag bans, originated at the local level.
- A MMA Executive Committee meeting in March with Governor Mills reestablishing the Governor’s Municipal Advisory Committee to discuss municipal legislative priorities. And a commitment to meet at least annually.
- The state’s Office of Marijuana Policy finally adopted the regulations and licensing standards allowing adult use marijuana retail stores and cultivation, manufacturing and testing facilities to operate in communities that have authorized the operation of those businesses within municipal boundaries.
- A veto by Governor Mills of a bill seeking to make public sector employer/employee negotiations over salaries, retirement and insurance benefits binding in the process of arbitration.
- The 35th edition of the MMA Federal Issues Paper. The paper serves as the agenda for the March meetings organized by MMA and held in Washington, D.C. between Maine’s Congressional Delegation and town and city officials. This year, over 20 municipal officials representing the communities of Augusta, Auburn, Bath, Brewer, Gardiner, Portland, Saco and Vassalboro participated in the meetings.

COMMUNICATION & EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The Communication & Educational Services (C&ES) staff has an array of responsibilities critical to MMA’s mission of member service. The department is responsible for developing and maintaining effective communication vehicles for MMA and associate members, promoting MMA policy priorities and helping the public better understand the importance and value of municipal government. The department oversees MMA training and professional development efforts, including more than 90 workshops held throughout the state, two annual conferences and the annual MMA convention. It works closely with professional affiliate groups comprised of municipal employees.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Expanded general topic video training offerings. MMA produced a five-minute video on Best Practices for Newly Elected Officials. We added (some require Members Area access): A Legal Services’ Update on Marijuana; How to Write Effective Medial Releases; Moderating Town Meetings; and, Social Media Dos and Don’ts.
- Continuation of HoMEtown Career initiative. MMA’s web-oriented, municipal employee recruitment campaign, launched in 2018. It features municipal officials from across Maine talking about the benefits of their careers in local government and giving back to their communities. More than 2 million digital “impressions” have been posted over the two-year period. The project will continue in 2020 with more digital ads and social media promotions.
- In its fourth year, the MMA Salary Survey – a searchable, electronic database featuring hundreds of municipal jobs, salaries and benefits – enjoyed remarkable popularity among members. More than 215 members entered local data. MMA members ran more than 2,000 reports from the survey in 2019.
- Serving our Affiliate Groups. We serve 15 professional associations comprised of thousands of municipal officials, ranging from managers to tax collectors to animal control officers to firefighters. MMA staffs many of their training events, board meetings and oversees their member databases and launches their websites.
- Sponsored major conferences. MMA held its Annual Convention and our annual Technology Conference at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor, drawing more than 1,000 attendees to those two events. The HR-Management Conference, in its fourth year, was held at Thomas College in Waterville, and drew 150.
- Offering timely, practical training to municipal officials. Every year, MMA offers programs to help members deal with new trends and challenges. 2019 was no exception. We hosted workshops on legal marijuana, active shooter safety, managing diversity and regulating short-term vacation rentals, among others.
- Publishing the Maine Town & City magazine. MMA was privileged to have two prominent Mainers – former U.S. Sen. Olympia Snowe and former U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell – pen articles for our monthly magazine about the importance of civility in governance. The magazine also published numerous articles on emerging municipal issues.
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) SERVICES

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

2019 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

■ Cyber Liability Requirements. MMA’s IT staff assisted members in meeting requirements for cyber liability coverage through the MMA Property & Casualty Pool.

■ Policy Development. MMA assisted members in developing or updating Computer Use Policies, Privacy Policies, Vendor Confidentiality Agreements and other required or necessary documentation.

■ Internal Assessments. MMA offered internal risk assessments as well as infrastructure or network assessments performed by MMA’s partner vendor at a reduced market rate.

■ Compliance Assistance. MMA helped cities and towns meet various regulatory requirements.

■ On Site Training. MMA offered on-site group training programs for municipal employees to strengthen computer security awareness. Programs are tailored to each community’s needs.

LEGAL SERVICES

MMA’s Legal Services program provides legal opinions in response to inquiries from municipal officials, produces manuals, information packets and other publications, participates in the development and delivery of training programs, and advocates for municipal interests by filing “friend of the court” briefs.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

■ Responding to member inquiries. Our six attorneys expect to log over 5,800 email and phone inquiries from members on such topics as recreational marijuana, moratorium ordinances, food sovereignty, election procedures, tax liens, poverty abatements, citizen petitions and public records requests.

■ Producing manuals, issue updates, legal notes and videos. Legal Services maintains 13 manuals and over 60 information packets providing detailed guidance on municipal legal issues. We published a new edition of our Assessment Manual, and updated 16 information packets. We published numerous updates, guidance materials and sample forms, including updates relating to recreational and medical marijuana legislation, food sovereignty, election procedures, tax liens, wage and hour laws, general assistance and tax-acquired property. We created video guidance on marijuana laws in 2019 and plan updated video guidance on social media in early 2020. We author a monthly “Legal Notes,” column in the Maine Town & City magazine addressing current legal issues facing municipalities. All of our publications are available to members free of charge on the MMA website.

■ Legal Training. Our staff participated in numerous MMA and Affiliate Group training programs throughout the year, including workshops dealing with Town Meetings & Elections, Municipal Law for Clerks, Municipal Law for Tax Collectors & Treasurers, Managing Freedom of Access Requests, Marijuana and numerous workshops for Planning Boards/Boards of Appeals and Elected Officials. Legal Services staff taught three sessions at MMA’s Annual Convention, and participated in outside trainings for harbormasters, public works personnel and for land use planners.

■ Assistance with Legislation. Legal Services staff is a resource to MMA’s State & Federal Relations staff on municipal legal issues presented by pending legislation. In 2019, the Legal Services staff provided significant input on municipal regulation of recreational marijuana, medical marijuana, roads and property tax lien issues.

PERSONNEL SERVICES & LABOR RELATIONS

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

2019 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

■ Labor Relations. MMA Personnel Services & Labor Relations represented five municipalities as they negotiated with 16 different collective bargaining units. Several of the collective bargaining efforts included representation in mediation after the parties reached an impasse.

■ Executive Searches. MMA assisted eight municipalities in searches for new town or city managers. This service provides beginning-to-end assistance to the selectmen or council as they seek a new or replacement municipal manager. MMA maintains a list on our website of individuals available to be considered for interim town manager positions when the current manager resigns or retires.

■ General Personnel Management Assistance. Staff provided on-site entry level testing for a number of police and fire departments as they recruited new police officers or firefighters. Staff also responded to several hundred general personnel inquiries from our members on issues as diverse as FMLA and the federal health care reform laws. Staff participated in a number of training programs to assist our members in having proper HR practices.

■ Maine Public Employee Retirement System (MPERS). MMA has been actively involved as a member of the PLD (Participating Local Districts) Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee continues to monitor system performance to continue their responsibility to protect the health of the PLD retirement plan, as well as overseeing the distribution of surplus MePERS funds back to member PLDs.
MAINE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH TRUST

The Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust (MMEHT or the Trust) provides cost-effective, quality employee benefit plans at competitive rates on a self-insured basis to local government and eligible quasi-governmental employees, retirees, and their dependents. The MMEHT, administered by MMA, allows participating employers to aggregate their purchasing power and take advantage of self-insurance, an efficient financial tool.

The MMEHT provides health insurance benefits to nearly 20,000 participants in its medical plans, offered by more than 450 municipalities, counties, and special districts. The Trust also offers dental, life, vision, short term and long term disability plans.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Offering Flexibility.** Employees may choose among several different health insurance plans, as well as the additional benefits listed above.

- **Improving Health.** Through the Health Trust's Wellness Works program, employers and employees can take advantage of a variety of health education classes, receive funding through the wellness incentive grant program, and encourage healthy behavior through the wellness incentive program. We conducted 400 wellness classes reaching over 4,200 employees and provided employers with over $100,000 in wellness grants. Additional programs include the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through Anthem, and the Telephonic Diabetes Education and Support (TDES) program through Medical Care Development Public Health.

- **Providing Value.** Trust staff provided a variety of meetings and workshops in 2019, including: Administrative Workshops, to assist employers in administering their coverage through the Health Trust; Retiree Workshops, to educate retirees and soon-to-be-retirees on the coverage available to them through the Health Trust after they retire; Annual Reporting Meetings, to provide Trust participants with updates on the Trust's financial condition and upcoming benefit changes; and ACA Reporting Workshops, to assist employers with their 1095-C reporting.

Trust staff met with many of the Trust's large, individually rated employers to discuss their health plan claims experience and cost drivers, in an effort to assist these groups in better managing their health care costs. Staff also worked with employers and their auditors, to provide the required reporting under GASB 75.

- **Lowering Costs and Improving Quality.** The Trust is committed to helping participants get the highest quality and value out of their health care dollars. The Trust continued its support of the Healthcare Purchaser Alliance of Maine, a purchaser-led partnership among multiple stakeholders. The Trust's overall cost for administering its benefit plans is well below the industry average.

RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICES

MMA's Risk Management Services (RMS) administers three major group, self-funded programs for MMA's municipal and associate members.

**Workers’ Compensation Fund.** The Fund serves 572 members by administering their workers’ compensation claims and provides Third Party Administrator services to the City of Portland and the City of Bangor, both of which are self-insured. The Workers’ Compensation Fund proudly covers more than 40,000 employees throughout the State of Maine.

**Property & Casualty Pool.** The Pool currently has 467 municipalities and special districts. The Pool covers over $5 billion worth of buildings, vehicles, mobile equipment and computer assets throughout the state of Maine.

**Unemployment Compensation Fund.** The UC Fund includes 194 municipal members and 51 associate members and provides services to over 8,000 employees. MMA approved an average contribution rate decrease of 1.46% and the distribution of $400,000 in excess balances and dividends for the 2019 Fund Year.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- RMS provided educational training designed specifically for law enforcement focused on the dangers and liability of driving a police cruiser.

- Added Active Shooter Coverage exclusive to and shared by all Property & Casualty Pool members July 1, 2019. The coverage has policy limit of $5,000,000 per occurrence with an aggregate of $5,000,000.

- A desktop simulator driver training tool is now offered free of charge to our members. This simulator is a great hands-on training tool to both new and experienced drivers about why it is important to use more caution when driving.

- **Human Resource Assistance - EPL Assist - is offered to P&C members at no additional cost. The program includes a telephone and email hotline providing expert legal advice on issues surrounding employee discipline, wage and hour, disability accommodation and other employment related questions that our members often face.**

- RMS awarded 214 Safety Grants for a total of $294,026 through the Ed MacDonald Safety Grants and Scholarship Program in an effort to reduce the frequency and severity of worker compensation claims.

- FirstNet NextGen is an online safety training tool that is available at no cost to RMS members. It combines online training with member specific policies to meet training requirements. In 2019, RMS member employees completed over 16,000 courses.

- RMS staff made over 1,000 member visits including coverage and claims reviews, program and property evaluations, drone surveys, training and consultations specific to municipal exposures.