

February 2012

maine townsman

The Magazine of the Maine Municipal Association



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Technology, MMA and You

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Maine Municipal Association President Sophia Wilson explains how technology is changing the municipal landscape and how MMA has responded to new member needs and questions.

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The Maine Military Authority in Limestone is gradually moving away from up-arming Humvees. It's getting into the field of refurbishing municipal vehicles and school buses.

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Municipalities throughout the state made many decisions after a new state law expanded what kinds of fireworks can be bought and sold legally. Here is a recap of the votes taken – and the thinking behind them.

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Bruce Brierley uses the plural “we” when he talks proudly about progress made in his town. But those who know him and work closely with him say Brierley himself has been behind many of the improvements.

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COVER: Butch O'Clair works on a radiator at the Maine Military Authority on the former Loring Air Force Base in Limestone (*photo by Kathryn Olmstead*).



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A Message From MMA



by Sophia Wilson, MMA President, Town Manager, Orono

Technology Moves Us Forward

In the relatively short time that I have been working in local government, the technology around us has advanced by leaps and bounds. We have much more plugged-in and tech-savvy citizens, who expect information at their fingertips that is easy to understand.

In an effort to better connect with our residents, Orono launched a new website, fields email, blasts agendas and “breaking news” and uses our cable access channel. Some communities “friend” and “tweet” as part of their communication strategies. Since becoming a Town Manager a little over a decade ago, the landscape within which I manage staff, support elected officials and communicate with the community has dramatically shifted. As a society, we are in constant motion – always connected and expected to respond. While I was trained to present thorough analyses and comprehensive reports, people now crave bullet points, graphics and sound bites.

Keeping up with technology and managing the impact that it has on municipal resources presents a host of issues. In a time when municipalities face increasing budgetary pressures, in order to effectively connect with our community, significant investment needs to be made in staff training and technology – both in hardware and software. While many of the tech advances tout efficiencies and promise vast improvements in the quality of information that we can provide, the learning curve and time needed to populate the data sources often require greater investment and frustration as time lapses between the purchase and rollout to the wider audience.

There was a time that keeping up with technology in the municipal sector was optional. Now, it is required in order to effectively operate and communicate with the community.

While the use of technology varies from community to com-

munity, no one escapes the need to adapt and become proficient with these quickly evolving tools and information management systems. They are integral components of our internal operations and external connections. There are municipalities with individual resources to assess needs, implement appropriate new technologies, and train staff to make effective use of these tools. However, I am sure there are many others – like my community – that may not have the expertise or resources to effectively implement new technologies.

In an effort to help bridge this gap, Maine Municipal Association and the Maine GIS User Group, in cooperation with the ConnectME Authority, will host the 2012 Maine Municipal Technology Conference on March 1 in Portland. (See the complete program starting on page 26) This will be a great opportunity for people at all levels of interest and skills to learn more about how using technology to provide municipal services faster, better and less expensively.

As municipal officials face the challenge of meeting the quickly evolving needs of their communities, MMA is adapting its programs and delivery methods in an effort to best support our members. Along with organizing large training events such as the Technology Conference, MMA has rolled out new online training opportunities for officials. MMA is providing citizen education material in digital formats that can easily be uploaded on municipal websites or shown via cable-access television. Like our member communities, MMA has finite resources and needs input from those we serve about the training programs and material that we provide. Working with you, MMA is poised to provide the support that our member communities need as municipal officials navigate the changing community expectations. 



Scenes from the 2011 Technology Conference.

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Limestone Authority Wants Municipal Work

By Kathryn Olmstead

Purchasing 10 new school buses in the same year seemed like a good idea for RSU 18 in central Maine in the late 1990s. But 12 years later, as all 10 vehicles begin to deteriorate simultaneously, the district faces significant costs to maintain its 45-bus fleet.

"We're in difficult budget times," said Gary Smith, superintendent of RSU 18, which encompasses Belgrade, China, Oakland, Sidney, Rome and Messalonskee High School. He explained that once the vehicles reach a certain age, "maintenance goes up precipitously."

Enter the Maine Military Authority (MMA) with a 15-year history of refurbishing military vehicles for the National Guard Bureau at the former Loring Air Force Base in Limestone.

Tim Corbett, the Authority's chief executive, and Tim McCabe, its business development director, approached RSU 18 with an invitation to participate in a pilot project to apply the skills used on military vehicles to school buses and municipal vehicles.

Established in 1997 in Limestone with an executive office in Augusta, the Maine Military Authority has refurbished more than 15,000 vehicles including armored Humvees, Howitzer tanks, five-ton trucks, graders, emergency vehicles and all types of engineering equipment. Between 150 and 200 mechanics and auto body experts work in nine buildings on the former base including two warehouses, each 120,000 square feet.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, the Authority is expanding into other fields, including the rebuilding of school buses and

municipal equipment, such as construction vehicles and fire trucks. Two buses from RSU 18 served as test vehicles to launch the project in January 2011.

"That work got us connected," said RSU 18's Smith, adding that two more buses have been refurbished since the first two were rebuilt gratis. "This program gives us another five to eight years on a vehicle, extending its life from 12 years to 16 or 18 years."

RSU 18 has initiated a replacement plan, refurbishing two buses and buying three new ones year by year over a three- to five-year period.

TAKING ADVANTAGE

"Taking advantage of the refurbishing program enables us to lower the cost of transportation long term," said Smith. "We might not save in one year, but looking at the long term, we can minimize the number of new buses we have to buy."

A new school bus costs \$84,000 to \$91,000. The body is expected to last 10-12 years while its mechanical components are expected to last 17-20 years. Maine Military Authority (MMA) seeks to correct this "fundamental disconnect" by extending the body life to match the mechanical life. The school bus refurbishment costs \$30,000 per bus and adds from seven to 10 years to the life of the vehicle.

"We can save the customer better than 50 percent on a new vehicle," said McCabe, the MMA business development director.

In addition to school buses, the Maine Military Authority has refurbished vehicles for the Maine Forest Service, the Down East Emergency Medicine Institute (DEEMI), the City of Presque Isle and the Town of

Freeport.

"They did a wonderful job," said Earl Gibson, Freeport public works director, commenting on the MMA's work on a Caterpillar D-3 bulldozer in 2007. "We have had no trouble with it and would recommend using them in the future."

Robert "Doc" Bowie, DEEMI medical director, echoed Gibson's praise in describing work on two Humvees rebuilt at the Limestone facility. The volunteer search and rescue organization was looking for parts for two vehicles acquired "in bad shape" after service in Desert Storm.

"We thought it was just going to be fixed so it would run," Bowie said of the first vehicle delivered to Limestone. "They went right down to the frame and built it up from nothing. My jaw dropped when I walked in and saw it. We were like 'Holy jumpin'."

He said MMA crews worked on the vehicle during their lunch breaks and free time providing their services at no charge in gratitude for a successful recovery effort conducted by DEEMI in Aroostook County.

Bowie said MMA crews installed features that facilitate off-road and rough-road travel on both vehicles and gave them high-visibility paint jobs that make it easy to see them from the air.

"They enabled us to do what we do better," he said, adding, "They know what they're doing."

The Maine Forest Service partnered with the Maine Military Authority to refurbish several Humvees acquired through the Federal Excess Property Program.

"It worked out very, very well," said Forest Service Sgt. Robby Gross. "They have a very structured program and a great work force. They don't

Kathryn Olmstead is a freelance writer from Caribou, Kathryn.Olmstead@umit.maine.edu.

leave (out) anything. We were able to save substantial amounts of money for the taxpayers of Maine and have vehicles equivalent to new that do the job just as well.”

He said MMA has brought five forest service vehicles up to standard and others are awaiting refurbishment.

LOOKING TO DO MORE

As the Authority looks ahead to more work with municipalities, McCabe says the procedure is the same. A team is sent to evaluate the vehicle according to set criteria. If it is accepted for refurbishing, a detailed “Scope of Work” is prepared listing everything to be done. Certain items are considered “mandatory replacement items.” Others are inspected and repaired only as necessary. Photographs are taken before and at inspection points during the refurbishment. Customers sign off on the initial scope of work and at check points prior to delivery.

McCabe foresees the greatest benefits for municipalities would be in refurbishing costly equipment like graders, scrapers and bulldozers. Acknowledging that cities and towns can extend the lives of many vehicles with careful maintenance, he said when it comes to replacing big capital items like earth-moving construction vehicles and fire trucks, MMA could rebuild the vehicles for half the cost of new ones.

An informal survey of town managers in Fort Kent, Madawaska, St. Agatha, Fort Fairfield, Caribou and Presque Isle confirmed McCabe’s observation that municipalities are well-equipped to keep vehicles running 20 years or more.

Fort Fairfield Town Manager Dan Foster said his town has not bought a new plow truck in 10 years, but instead has bought two used trucks in that time, eliminating the need to borrow money for the vehicles.

“We do (maintenance) all in-house,” he said, adding that the town has completed an OSHA-approved paint booth that enables it to do work for other municipalities.

Caribou City Manager Steve Buck explained that as city vehicles age they move from the first-line fleet of vehicles “that must work” to the second-line fleet of vehicles used intermittently.



One of two vehicle prep booths in the newly renovated coatings building where vehicles are sanded and taped prior to painting. (Photo by Kathryn Olmstead)

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Steve Burtchell works on an engine block at the Maine Military Authority in Limestone. (Photo by Kathryn Olmstead)

“We can keep vehicles 20 years because of the maintenance team,” Buck said.

Managers in Fort Kent and Madawaska also credited municipal maintenance departments with extending

the lives of town vehicles, such as plows and dump trucks. Don Guimond in Fort Kent said the town usually can find good a second-hand vehicle when a truck needs to be replaced, and the town contracts for

much of the plowing, reducing the need for a fleet of plows.

MEET WITH MANAGERS

Christina Therrien in Madawaska suggested the Maine Military Authority make a presentation to the Aroostook Managers Association, which meets quarterly. The association’s treasurer, Christy Sirois of St. Agatha, endorsed the idea, predicting an interest among members, especially for rebuilding of large construction vehicles.

McCabe predicted that as municipal budgets shrink the ability to re-use old equipment will become more important. “We have the expertise,” he said. “We’re here for the long-term.”

Back to schools, under the Bus Purchasing Program of Maine Department of Education Transportation Division, a district can apply for reimbursement from the state for between 30 and 70 percent of the refurbishing cost, which for RSU 18 (Messalonskee) represents \$13,000-\$14,000 per bus.

The Authority’s School Bus Life Extension Program (SLEP) accepts “mid-life buses” as determined not



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only by mileage and age (typically seven to 12 years old), but also by the care the vehicle has received.

A team inspects vehicles and those accepted are disassembled, rebuilt and repainted, with primary focus on body and frame. Additional options include the power train (engine, transmission, etc.) and equipment such as handicapped seating and lifts, security equipment and child restraints.

The Authority has completed a transition into two newly renovated buildings that improve the efficiency of rebuilding vehicles. Stripped down bodies and frames acquire all the parts they need as they move through the production building.

Body and frame are “mated” together before moving into the adjacent coatings building equipped with new vehicle prep sanding stations, a huge blast booth and a 120-foot long paint booth with bake capability that reduces the time a vehicle has to cure after a paint job to one hour.

“It isn’t maintenance; it’s more detailed,” Lennie Goff, RSU 18 transportation director, said of the work provided by MMA. “They lift the body off the frame and expose the whole frame.”

He said maintenance generally focuses on mechanics, not body work, and cannot be compared to refurbishing.

“We are not competing with local maintenance facilities,” said McCabe. “We bring the vehicle back to as close to new as you can get.” 



A bus for RSU 18 looks like it's ready to go. (Photo by Kathryn Olmstead)



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The sale runs from Feb 1, 2012 to April 28, 2012 with orders and payment due by May 4, 2012.

Deliveries will be during the week of **May 21, 2012**.

Early bird orders will be accepted by **April 6, 2012** for delivery the week of April 20, 2012.

Sign up today – participation forms available at mrra.net

Dazzling Array: Dealing With Fireworks

By Douglas Rooks

As of Jan. 1, consumer fireworks have been legal to possess in all parts of Maine. As of March 1, Mainers should also be able to buy fireworks in-state.

As for use, well, it depends on where you are when you use them.

When the Legislature voted last year to legalize more types of fireworks, it allowed towns and cities to regulate or prohibit their sale and use. Those provisions of the law have led to a flurry of local ordinances, and there undoubtedly will be more as communities gauge how fireworks are actually used – and misused, in the view of some.

As of mid-January, at least 25 municipalities comprising more than 300,000 people have banned sales or use – usually both. Another seven, with about 50,000 people, had enacted ordinances that permit and regulate fireworks. Many more are still considering options and smaller towns are viewed as being less likely to create separate ordinances. Where there is no local regulation, state law applies.

Until this year, New Hampshire was the only New England state where most fireworks were legal for consumer use. That puts New England in a minority. Nationally, more than 40 states permit some kind of fireworks, though the particular types involved vary considerably. Sparklers, for instance, are rarely regulated, even though they ignite at high temperatures and can cause serious burns, particularly to children.

Rep. Douglas Damon (R-Bangor), now serving his first term, sponsored the fireworks bill that was enacted on the final day of the session, June 29,

and signed into law by Gov. Paul LePage a week later.

Damon said he did so in part because he believes that making fireworks legal can improve safety, since so many people use fireworks regardless of their legal status. He said he earlier approached the State Fire Marshal with a request that the office prepare a public service announcement on safe use of fireworks, only to be told it would be inappropriate, since their use wasn't legal. Now, he expects the fire marshal will provide more information, including a brochure stores must distribute to all qualified buyers.

CREATING RETAIL JOBS

"It do see it as a jobs bill," Damon said. "It will increase retail sales and provide tax revenue." He noted that his own community, Bangor, was one of the first municipalities to ban fireworks.

"That's OK," he said. "They're exercising local control, which is just what should happen."

The use and sale of fireworks was an area where the Legislature's new Republican majority made a clear difference last session, as previous attempts to legalize fireworks failed. The Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee favored the bill 8-5, with one Democrat joining majority Republicans. The bill passed the House, 76-61, and the Senate, 20-12. In the Senate, two Democrats voted yes and two Republicans opposed the bill; in the House there were half a dozen crossover votes.

At the bill's public hearing, Dan Billings, the governor's legal counsel and chief adviser, delivered testimony in favor of the bill, a sure sign it had the governor's support.

Rep. Anna Blodgett (D-Augusta)

was on the other side of the committee vote and, after it was clear the measure would be approved, she worked to amend it. One amendment would have created a quarter-mile setback from neighboring residences but that wasn't adopted. She believes fireworks are dangerous, a conviction dating from her days as the capital city's parks and recreation director.

"We'd have to wet down the roofs of buildings when they did the Fourth of July show," she said.

But she doesn't see much chance of a future legislature repealing the law. "It's in the local arena now," she said. "That's where it will be decided."

Municipal governments have had long and sometimes contentious hearings and debates about fireworks over the past six months. Often, public safety officials have had a prominent voice, particularly when they objected to local use.

STRONG OPPOSITION

Rockland Fire Chief Charles Jordan strongly opposes consumer fireworks and his argument carried the day with the city council, unanimously. Jordan doesn't think much of the argument that making fireworks use legal will improve safety.

"Let's make dangerous stuff legal so we can regulate it?" he said. "I just don't buy it. I'm just not sure that it's true."

Jordan acknowledges that he's sometimes known around town as "the nanny" because of his advocacy for an ordinance that mandates sprinklers in all new residential construction. "My feeling is that if it improves public safety at a reasonable cost, it's worth doing," he said.

Had he been in the Legislature, he would have opposed the bill, Jordan

Douglas Rooks is a freelance writer from West Gardiner and regular contributor to the Townsman, drooms@tds.net

said. "I think they were trying to make it irresistible," he said. "You know, fireworks (are) as American as mom, apple pie and Chevrolet. It fits right in."

Jordan's position is shared by Roger Audette, Augusta's fire chief, who said, "There's an inherent risk to fireworks. They can start fires and cause injuries."

Audette recalls two serious structure fires in the city's built-up residential areas caused by illegal fireworks in the 1990s. "With all our hills and surrounding woods, you just can't use these things safely," he said. The city council banned fireworks by a 5-2 vote.

In Topsham, public safety officials haven't been as vocal, said Town Manager Cornell Knight. The selectmen had been considering a moratorium, but they paused after reading comments commissioned via an online poll, which found residents evenly divided on both sale and use.

As a result, action was deferred to the May town meeting, where an ordinance will be presented that would permit, but regulate, the sale of fireworks. Under Topsham's zoning ordinance, the most likely location for a store would be in the mall area.

"Public Safety was mostly concerned that we required annual local inspections," Knight said. Use by consumers didn't come up, he said.

Hallowell originally considered a ban, but then found some councilors in favor of at least limited use, said City Manager Mike Starn. The compromise was a 300-foot setback from neighboring residences, which will effectively push use – by permit only – "over the hill," toward the Maine Turnpike and the more rural parts of town. Sales are prohibited.

At the State Fire Marshal's office, Richard Taylor is in charge of compiling local ordinances – a list he acknowledged is currently incomplete due to reporting delays – and overseeing regulations for retail stores. Under the law, retailers must occupy detached, free-standing buildings at least 300 feet apart from adjoining structures.

The potential for fire and explosion was what led Winthrop's town council to ban sales, though the town will permit use.

2,500 TYPES

Maine's law in some respects re-

sembles New Hampshire's but it is different in focusing on prohibited items rather than those permitted, Taylor said. "We discovered nearly 2,500 different types of fireworks," he said. "It made more sense to spell out what we won't allow."

So far, the three prohibited categories are: missile-type rockets; helicopters and aerial spinners; and, skyrockets and bottle rockets.

Some local ordinances include non-fireworks items. In Rockland, the council decided to ban use of "lan-

terns," small illuminated balloons that include a lighted flame, according to City Attorney Kevin Beal. "Those present an obvious fire hazard, so we included them in the ban," he said.

Taylor of the State Fire Marshal's office hasn't approved any licenses yet, but they are coming, as confirmed by Steve Marson, president of Central Maine Pyrotechnics, based in Hallowell.

Marson's commercial display business puts on 225 shows a year in four states – Maine, New Hampshire, Ver-

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mont and Massachusetts – and he sees a significant market for direct-to-consumer sales.

Marson expects to open the state's first fireworks store around March 1 at a former car dealership in Manchester, just over the town line from Augusta. He also set his sights on opening in April in Winslow, where the town council first voted for a moratorium on sales, by a vote of 4-3, then reversed itself.

An intervening election removed a moratorium supporter and installed a councilor who supported fireworks sales, explained Town Manager Mike Heavener. The council now plans to adopt regulations for stores, but it may not apply to Hallowell Pyrotechnics' pending application. "They may be grandfathered," Heavener said.

Marson has targeted four other locations for stores: Topsham, Edgecomb, Presque Isle and Brewer. He is considering a store in Lubec that could serve the Calias/Machias area.

"Basically, we're looking at the top three-fifths of the state, geographically, with 450,000 people," Marson said. He expects that national companies with stores in New Hampshire will branch out into southern Maine.

Concerning safety, Marson said things are a lot different than many people remember from decades ago. The federal Consumer Product Safety Commission began regulating fireworks in 1989 and the American Federal Standards Laboratory has set up shop in China, where 85 percent of fireworks used in the U.S. are manufactured. Most of the rest come from Italy.

"A lot of the stuff people used to fire off – cherry bombs, M-80s – are now illegal under federal law," he said. "If you see any of those things, you know they're home-made" – and dangerous.

Marson said fireworks can be used safely by people who are 21 and over, as the law requires, and who are not impaired by drugs or alcohol, another requirement. In any municipality where he sets up shop, "We'll have demonstrations for the fire department and the public about how to do it safely."

MANY APPROACHES

Some towns and cities came to a quick decision about fireworks; others did not. The apparently split public opinion in Topsham slowed down



Steve Marson talks fireworks at the 2011 MMA Convention. (Photo by Jeff Pouland)

action, and in Kittery, a move for a moratorium has failed so far, 4-3, with strong opinions on both sides.

Lewiston, so far the largest city not to have banned fireworks, saw its council vote to do so, but a municipal election prevented a second and final vote. Still, it seems likely Lewiston will eventually act, since the original vote was 5-2.

In Gorham, one of the largest southern Maine towns not to ban fireworks, the council is still pondering

what to do. Said Town Manager David Cole: "The council was interested in what was going on in other communities around us."

Gorham largely lacks the dense housing stock that led fire chiefs in Portland, South Portland, Augusta and other cities to recommend bans. The town "is considering regulations," Cole said. "We might ban them, but not necessarily."

Neighboring Westbrook had no such hesitation. The council there

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voted to allow sales by permit, though some councilors suggested they might revisit the issue if Westbrook remains one of the few Cumberland County municipalities to permit sales. "My concern is that we don't have a firework alley," Council President Brendan Rielly told the American Journal newspaper.

Steve Marson said that's not likely. "It's hard to find this kind of building," meeting the stand-alone and setback requirements, he said. "Believe me, I've looked."

Based on projected sales, it doesn't make sense for a dealer to build from scratch "and there aren't too many developers who want to take this kind of risk," he said.

Cumberland may have come up with the most unusual ordinance. Fireworks sales are banned in town, and so is use – for 360 days of the year. Cumberland will allow fireworks from July 3-5, on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. For July 4 and New Year's Eve, legal hours are 9 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. the next morning. On "shoulder" days, use is permitted from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Town Attorney Alyssa Tibbetts said the ordinance, devised after several

hearings, represents a compromise for residents who want to use fireworks and those who are annoyed by them. It is also a way of limiting the days the fire and police departments can

expect to respond to complaints and misuse.

"They want to see how much impact there really is," she said. "At this point, we really don't know." me

FIERY DECISIONS

Below is a partial list of municipalities that have taken formal action regarding use and sale of fireworks.

Banning Sale and Use of Fireworks

Augusta
 Auburn
 Bangor
 Bath
 Brunswick
 Cape Elizabeth
 Cumberland +
 Eliot
 Ellsworth*
 Falmouth
 Freeport

Frye Island
 Gardiner
 Hallowell**
 Hollis
 Owls Head
 Orono
 North Yarmouth
 Portland
 Rangeley
 Rockland
 South Portland
 Wells
 Winthrop**
 Yarmouth

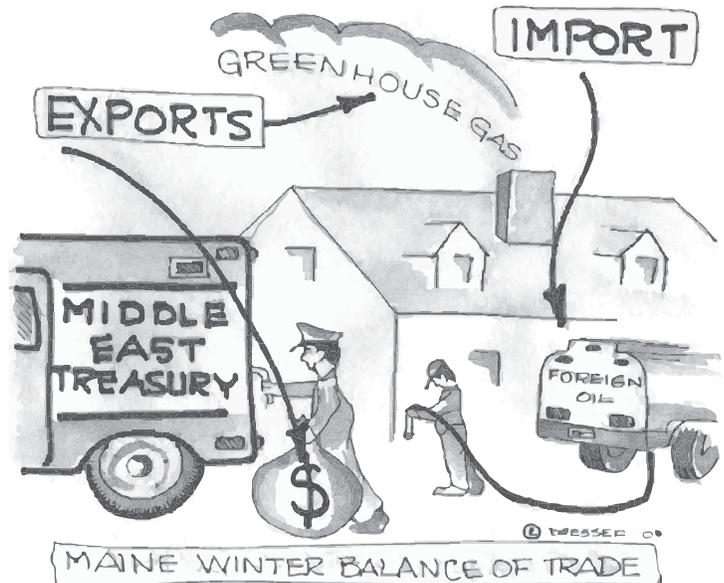
Permitting Fireworks by Ordinance

Brewer
 Fairfield
 Farmingdale
 Gray
 Holden
 Westbrook
 Wiscasset
 * Moratorium
 ** Sales only
 + Permitted July 3-5, Dec. 31, Jan. 1

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Bruce Brierley: Bringing Out The Best

By Jeff Clark

When First Selectman Bruce Brierley looks around the Searsmont municipal building, he sees 16,000 square feet of town office space, a public library, a historical museum, and multi-purpose rooms used for everything from Boy Scout meetings to municipal conferences.

The one thing he doesn't see: a single dollar of debt or tax money invested in the space.

"We built this all ourselves," he said proudly, gesturing from his chair in the selectman's office on a snowy winter morning. "There were no tax dollars involved at all. We planned this for two years before we started to build, gathering donated materials and lining up volunteer labor. The town office space was designed by the ladies who worked there, for example. They knew what they needed a lot better than some architect."

Brierley says "we" a lot. As in, "we" got a great deal on the municipal building. If you ask the others in the Searsmont town office, down at the Fraternity Village General Store or in neighboring Belmont, every finger points at him.

"That man has done amazing things for Searsmont," said Carmine A. Pecorelli, a Belmont resident who is helping to plan Searsmont's upcoming bicentennial celebration because he admires the town – and Brierley – so much.

Brierley, 75, was born and raised in East Belfast and moved to neighboring Searsmont 35 years ago. For 22 years, he operated a dairy farm in the rural Waldo County community.

"I started attending town meetings and I suppose I spoke up a few times,"

Brierley recalled with a small smile. "I just became interested in how the town was run."

A QUICK RISE

Back in 1986 he was persuaded to serve on the town Planning Board. In 1989, he was elected second selectman. He became first selectman two years later and has held the position ever since.

"Only one person has ever run against him and he didn't get any votes," said Alice Pearce, the town's administrative assistant.

"It's not like I wanted to make a huge difference at first," Brierley explained. "I wanted a voice in how our taxes were spent. I was a dairy farmer then and taxes were a big item in my budget."

He might not have set out to make a difference, but Searsmont certainly became a different place over the intervening years. When Brierley first moved to Searsmont, the town's 39.2 square miles still had a large number of working farms and a population of less than 700 people, a figure that hadn't changed much since World War II.

Today it has only two active farms, but the 2010 census put the head count at almost 1,400. Many residents now commute to jobs in Augusta, Belfast and Camden, and the changing population has both increased and shifted the demand for town services.

"We've got a lot of people here now who aren't native," Brierley noted. "A lot of good people, I might add, but they expect more services than we used to provide. That puts more demands on me and everyone else here."

He nodded out the window at the light snow falling across the parking

lot. "Used to be you didn't need to plow until you had a few inches on the road," he recalled. "That won't go now. A lot of folks work outside town and they want the roads plowed right away."

CAUGHT IN CRUNCH

Like towns all over Maine, Searsmont is caught in the crunch between declining state and federal revenue sources and rising costs.

"I hate to raise taxes on people," Brierley said. "We've got a big increase in the school budget coming up this year and we already have people in town who are barely getting by."

As for the town's share of the property tax bite, "we run a pretty tight ship here and it's getting tighter," he said.

Brierley freely admits that he has always been a penny pincher, but he credits his mentor in the selectman's



Bruce Brierley (Photo by Jeff Clark)

Jeff Clark is a freelance writer from Bath, jeffreyclark@gmail.com.

ABOUT SEARSMONT

Searsmont was settled in 1780 in a place where several Indian trails came together. The town was named for David Sears of Boston, who owned several properties in the area.

Today, Searsmont claims 1,351 residents and spreads over 40 square miles along the St. George River in central Waldo County. It remains true to its timbering heritage with two working mills, but increasingly residents are commuters who hold jobs in Belfast, Augusta and Camden.

Searsmont has a Selectmen/Town Meeting/Administrative Assistant form of government. Some residents have suggested Searsmont consider hiring a town manager for the first time.

job for teaching him about running a town government and keeping ahead of the financial curve.

"The first selectman before me was John Thorne," he explained. "He was a retired Army colonel. He was a tough one, gruff with people sometimes but an excellent teacher. I think he was a little disappointed that people didn't salute him anymore, though," Brierley added with a laugh.

Thorne showed Brierley the ropes of municipal government and, despite his military demeanor, how to deal

with often contrary and occasionally complaining residents. He also taught Brierley about budgets "and being better with figures than I was."

Because of Thorne's influence, "we still don't borrow any money here," Brierley said. "We pay as we go. We don't have any debt. If we want to buy something, we set up a capital account and save for it."

That was the philosophy behind the extraordinary and entirely local effort to build the municipal building.

'WE CAN DO IT'

"All the materials were donated. A lot of townspeople worked on it and when it was finished we didn't owe a penny on it," Brierley said. "This town has always had the attitude that we can do it ourselves."

He points out that when an architectural firm presented the plans for the new fire station, they said it would cost \$125,000. "We got it done ourselves for \$25,000," he said. "We knew we could do it. There was no question."

Town officials have encouraged volunteerism through the years by establishing committees and task forces to accomplish various goals, from the Memorial Day parade committee to the library board.

"People care about the town and get involved," said Pearce. "The town motto is 'Aim High' and that's because of this man here. He's a leader."

Brierley brushes off the praise. "I think people here are a little unusual," he said. "Everybody seems to pull together."

With two freshmen selectmen on the board these days, Brierley has been passing on the mentoring ex-



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LESSONS LEARNED

- Pay your own way. Searsmont doesn't borrow to finance capital projects and major purchases. Instead it relies on saving in capital accounts.
- Treat people the way you would want them to treat you.
- Don't hesitate to ask for volunteers. The Searsmont municipal building and its fire station were built entirely with volunteer labor.
- Listen to the people around you. They probably know more than you do.

ample that Col. Thorne set for him.

"I try to explain the how and the why of things," he said. "Each selectman has different duties, overseeing roads or the transfer station or the general assistance program. That way we all gain experience in various areas."

He also passes on lessons he has learned in almost 30 years of public service. "Keep your finger on the money. Listen to the people around you in the town office; they know things you can't possibly know. Treat people the way you want to be treated – you can't go far wrong with that one."

In a way, Brierley doesn't envy new selectmen who are just coming into

their roles.

LEGAL DETAILS

"The job is a lot harder than it used to be," he said. "You used to be able to make a decision and not worry about the legal end of it. Now you have to worry if someone is going to sue you for something you did or said. It used to be that a handshake was a good enough deal for a lot of things. Now you need contracts and lawyers and all sorts of procedures. I'll admit I've had to bend a lot in recent years, sometimes reluctantly."

Brierley works at his desk at the town office four days a week, a schedule possible only because he is otherwise

retired. He allows that he will likely run for one more three-year term after his current term ends this year. Then he will sit back and watch others do the job.

"It makes me a little nervous about the future, to be honest," said Town Clerk Kathy Hoey. "He's here every morning and he has an enormous amount of institutional knowledge that no one else has."

With Brierley's departure on the horizon and the business of town government growing daily, Searsmont is considering hiring a town manager sometime in the near future. Brierley and his town office crew would like the post to be held by someone local, if and when the time comes, to preserve the connection.

"I'd rather have someone who lives here, rather than someone who comes in from away and sees us as a stepping stone to someplace else," Brierley explained.

Looking back at his time in Searsmont's town government, Brierley declines to admit he had much influence by himself.

"I've always had good people around me," he said. "That has always been the key, all those good people." **mf**

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Maine Municipal Association

Building a Transparent Municipal Government

By Lee Burnett

One of motivational speaker Bob Farrell's favorite examples of customer service is the father and son team of garbage collectors who have a policy of starting the balky lawn mowers of anyone on their route who asks for help. Doing something extra for free is a mantra with Farrell, a former restaurateur who promotes customer service as a mindset for organizations of all kinds.

"We're all in the same business, the people business," Farrell said. "Our business is not what we sell or make, it's who we serve. Our job is to make customers happy."

Making customers happy is a hot topic in town and city halls across Maine these days. Improving customer service was the top concern cited in a recent survey of 600 municipal folks conducted by Maine Municipal Association. It was also the subject of an MMA workshop last year put on by Margaret Noel, MMA's Manager of Educational Services, and Andrew Gilmore, town manager in Sabattus and a public relations and development consultant.

Renewed interest in improving customer service may be a response to the general climate of distrust in government, which has strained relationships and made the jobs of municipal employees more difficult. Or at least that's what attendees of the MMA workshop told Noel.

"People don't go (to town hall) because that's what they like to do in their free time, they go because they have to go, so they're already operating at a deficit," said Noel, a former restaurant and hotel manager.

Noel's primary advice is to give

people your full attention and make sure to follow up. "No nos" include not making eye contact, engaging in personal conversations with co-workers and talking on the phone, particularly without acknowledging a waiting customer. If someone asks for something you cannot provide, find a positive way to tell them.

"You may be bound by laws and mandates but as opposed to saying, 'The law states that ... so sorry, I can't do that,' tell them, 'What I can do is...' It's all in the delivery," she said.

Many experts say a hallmark of good customer service is the follow up. If you tell a member of the public you will get back to her or him with an answer, be sure you do.

FOLLOWING UP

Every interaction with a member of the public should include a follow-up inquiry to be sure the customer was helped. The best way is to ask, "Did I provide you with the best service? Is there anything else I can do?" Follow up does not have to be staged or scripted.

Name tags send a friendly message. Even the design of space can help foster good relations. People appreciate privacy zones so they don't have to share their business with the world.

Municipalities are taking different approaches in trying to make local government more citizen-friendly. Initiatives include: Improving day-to-day interactions with the public; 311 phone lines; making the municipal budget process more transparent; improving websites; starting Facebook pages; and opening up planning processes.

There is a new move afoot to standardize budget formats. This innocuous-sounding change is the founda-

tion for performance measures, which is a significant improvement in citizen accountability.

Traditionally, it has been difficult for citizens to evaluate whether they were getting good value for their tax dollars because trying to compare one town with another was stymied by disparities in accounting systems. One town might apportion benefit costs to individual departments while another lists them under the Human Resources Department.

The City of Saco has been a leader in using a "model chart of accounts" as the foundation for "budget benchmarking" and "performance measures," a subject of an earlier Maine Townsman article. (To find that article, go to www.memun.org and use the Townsman "Article Archive Search" tool at the bottom of the first screen. Keywords: budget benchmarking.)

Municipal governments are starting to establish 24/7 call centers and a system for tracking citizen inquiries. Long employed by mail-order merchants, tracking systems allow citizens to monitor the status of their inquiry or complaint. They have not yet made their way to Maine, but Lewiston and Belfast are moving in that direction.

Both municipalities hired CivicPlus, a Kansas company, to redesign their Web sites and make them more interactive. The "Notify Me" feature allows subscribers to customize the kinds of information they receive from City Hall via text messages or news alerts. Notifications include bid postings, upcoming events, election results, job openings, agendas and a slew of other matters.

Another feature is the "Report a Concern" form. Belfast asks responders to select from a menu of 16 different kinds of concerns – such as a

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building code question, forestry issue, miscellaneous administration, street-light, and such – and invites them to write a short comment.

The coordinator of Lewiston’s upgraded website said the city’s consultants helped identify all the ways that citizens interact with their local government. Then they tried to make those interactions easier.

“We wanted to be as proactive as we can, as up-to-date and informative as we can,” explained Dottie Perham-Whittier, assistant to the city manager and community relations coordinator. “People really expect to get their news current.” Both Lewiston and Belfast have integrated Facebook pages with their Web sites.

USING THE WEB

The proliferation and improvement of municipal websites is reducing the frequency of standing in line during lunch hour to conduct some routine business, such as renewing a vehicle registration.

Many communities now make it possible to go on-line to: renew a vehicle registration; obtain an absen-

tee ballot; get a dog license, hunting license or fishing license; check the value of your neighbor’s house; read the minutes of a council meeting; even pay property taxes.

Convenience can often be improved by evaluating the organization of a Web site to minimize the number of clicks to obtain the most valuable information, said Gilmore, the Sabatut manager and consultant.

“The navigation has to be simple. You shouldn’t have to drill down seven layers,” he said.

One way to prioritize the location of information on a website is to ask clerks to record their interactions with the public whether by telephone or in person. This process is admittedly a “bit of a pain in the neck,” but should take only a week or two to complete, he said. The resulting data should inform the organization of a Web site.

“You can determine what people value,” said Gilmore. “Then, put that right on the home page.”

Starting a Facebook page can demonstrate local government’s willingness to engage in dialogue on neutral turf, although the greater transpar-

ency and scrutiny can be anxiety-inducing at first.

Ellsworth City Manager Michelle Beal said fears that a Facebook page would invite a barrage of personal attacks have proved unfounded. A perusal of the page shows that rarely do postings draw a response of any kind. One parent upset about pesticide spraying notification complained repeatedly on the city’s Facebook page but that resolved itself, Beal said.

“You do have people who get upset with you. It did worry us, but being able to get information out and have a better understanding of what we do, and the transparency, is a good thing,” she said.

Fears that employees would forsake job duties to socialize on line also were unfounded. One surprise is how quickly the page was adopted by folks who wanted to advertise or speak out.

“We had to adopt policies,” she said. “We do not allow advertising or direct links.” The City’s Facebook page has 471 fans. “We don’t have the people ‘liking’ us as we hoped.” By contrast, the Ellsworth police department’s Facebook page has 1,043 fans.



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"Their information is a lot more interesting than ours," Beal joked.

OLD-SCHOOL NEWSLETTERS

Some towns have improved relations with citizenry by picking up the local events coverage dropped by local newspapers. For more than 15 years, the Town of New Portland has published a monthly newsletter. The New Portlander is mailed at taxpayers' expense to every household and box-holder in the town of about 785 residents northwest of Waterville.

Also available on the town's Web site, the newsletter is a routine compendium of announcements, a town manager's report, meeting calendar, minutes of Board of Selectman meetings and club news. The need was created by the decline in local newspaper coverage, said Dallas Landry, the high school teacher who publishes the newsletter.

"Newspapers don't cover local news," he said. People occasionally complain about the newsletter, but "no one wants it to go away," Landry said.

Voters even approved a \$600 stipend for the position after Landry had

done it on a volunteer basis for many years. "It's on the town warrant every year and it passes overwhelmingly with no real discussion," said Dallas. "I usually get a round of applause."

Another way to make your town or city more citizen friendly is to invite more meaningful participation, said Markos Miller, a high school teacher who campaigned unsuccessfully for Portland mayor last fall on a citizen-engagement platform.

Fairly typical is the public input process the City of Portland used for many years before it awarded Community Development Block Grant funds, Markos said. Residents were asked to list what they want.

"I've gone to a lot of those meetings," he said. "It's the same people with the very same list year after year."

The process was improved by engaging citizens on a deeper level to help shape a vision and set priorities, he said. Opening up the process is sometimes criticized as time-consuming and an invitation to obstructionism, but Markos says there is a payoff in stronger political support.

"You can create some political and social capital that can be used to help move the project forward: getting something in your comp plan, creating a certain level of investment, or changing the ordinance," he said. ml



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2012 MMA & Affiliate Training Calendar

Group	Event	Location	Date/s	Group	Event	Location	Date/s
FEBRUARY				APRIL (cont'd)			
MFCA	Legislative Breakfast	Augusta-Senator Inn	2/7	MFPSC	Blaine House Symposium for First Responders	Northport-Point Lookout	4/12-13
MWWCA & MWUA	Joint Conference	Portland-Holiday Inn by the Bay	2/7	MCAPWA	Supervisory Leadership In Public Works Programs-Part I	Gorham-Municipal Office	4/17-19
MTCCA	Title 30-A Elections	Augusta-Civic Center	2/9	MWDA	Spring Seminar/Basic GA	Bangor-Hollywood Slots Hotel	4/23 & 24
MTCCA	Title 30-A Elections	Bangor-Hilton Garden Inn	2/13	MMA	Personnel Practices	Bangor-Hilton Garden Inn	4/24
MMA	Basic Municipal Budgeting	Augusta-MMA	2/14	MMA	Roles of Elected Officials & Municipal Managers	Orono-Black Bear Inn	4/25
MMA	Moderating Town Meeting	Augusta-MMA	2/15	MAAO	Bd of Assessment Review	Augusta-MMA	4/26
		Caribou-NMDC via Video	2/15	MTCCA	Vital Statistics	Bangor-Hilton Garden Inn	4/26
MWWCA	Legislative Breakfast	Augusta-Senator Inn	2/16	MAAO	Northern Maine Spring Workshop	Presque Isle-Northern Maine Community College	4/27
MMA	Grant Funding & Writing	Augusta-MMA	2/28	MWWCA	Spring Conference	Orono-Black Bear Inn	4/27
MMA	Planning/Bd of Appeals	Belfast-Hutchinson Center	2/29	MAY			
MARCH				MMA	Planning/Bd of Appeals	Caribou-Caribou Inn & Convention Center	5/8
MMA	Technology Conference	Portland-Holiday Inn by the Bay	3/1	MMA	Fair Labor Standards Act	Augusta-MMA	5/8
MTCMA	Interchange	Bangor-Hilton Garden Inn	3/2	MCAPWA	Supervisory Leadership in Public Works Programs-Part II	Gorham-Municipal Office	5/8-10
MMTCTA	Tax Liens	Bangor-Hollywood Slots Hotel	3/8	MMA	Elected Officials Workshop	Gorham-University of Southern Maine	5/15
MMTCTA	Tax Liens	Old Orchard Beach-Captain's Galley	3/14	MMTCTA	Cash Management	Freeport-Hilton Garden Inn	5/16
MWWCA	Ski Day	Carrabassett Valley-Sugarloaf	3/14	MMTCTA	Annual Conference	Freeport-Hilton Garden Inn	5/17
MBOIA	Membership Mtg/Training	Old Orchard Beach-Captain's Galley	3/15	MWDA	Advanced GA	Hampden-Town Hall	5/17
MMA	Planning/Bd of Appeals	Biddeford-North Dam Mill Events Center	3/15	MBOIA	Spring Code Conference	Sebasco Estates-Sebasco Harbor Resort	5/21-22
MMA	Elected Officials Workshop II	Scarborough-Council Chambers	3/20	MMA	Elected Officials Toolkit for Jail Reentry	Augusta-MMA	5/22
MMA	Wind Power in Maine: A Municipal Update	Farmington-Ben Franklin Center @ Franklin Memorial Hospital	3/21	MTCCA	Title 21-A	Portland-Seasons Event Center	5/23
MMA	Labor & Employment Law	Augusta-MMA	3/22	MTCCA	Voter Registration	Portland-Seasons Event Center	5/24
MMA	Customer Service Excellence	Lewiston Regional Tech Center-Green Ladle	3/28	JUNE			
APRIL				MMA	Planning/Bd of Appeals	Machias-U of Maine Machias	6/5
MTCCA	New Clerks	Bangor-Hilton Garden Inn	4/2	MCAPWA	Highway Congress	Skowhegan-Skowhegan Fairgrounds	6/7
MMA	Planning/Bd of Appeals	Bridgton-Town Hall	4/3	MMA	Elected Officials Workshop	Dover-Foxcroft-American Legion Hall Post #29	6/13
MCAPWA	Annual Spring Meeting	Waterville-Elks Lodge	4/5	MBOIA	Membership Mtg/Training	Bath-Kennebec Tavern	6/21
MACA	Spring Conference	Bangor-Hollywood Slots Hotel	4/7				
MMA	Managing FOAA Requests	St. Agatha-Lakeview Restaurant	4/10				
MFCA	Membership Meeting	Northport-Point Lookout	4/11				
MMTCTA	Basic Excise Tax	Augusta-MMA	4/11				

For more detailed descriptions, please visit the MMA website: www.memun.org. Go to the top of the page under "Marketplace@MMA" and pull down to "Training & Wksps."

2012 MMA & Affiliate Training Calendar

Group	Event	Location	Date/s	Group	Event	Location	Date/s
MMA	Roles of Elected Officials & Municipal Managers	Kennebunk-Town Hall	6/21	NOVEMBER			
MMA	New Managers	Augusta-MMA	6/26	MMA	Planning/Bds of Appeal	Bangor-Hilton Garden Inn	11/8
MMA	Elected Officials Workshop	Bar Harbor-College of the Atlantic	6/28	MMA	Grant Funding & Writing	Augusta-MMA	11/13
JULY				MMTCTA	Municipal Law for Tax Collectors	Waterville-Elks Lodge	11/15
MFCA	Membership Mtg/Luncheon	Hope-Hope Fire Station	7/12	MMA	Elected Officials Workshop	Houlton-Center for Community Health Education	11/27
MMTCTA	Payroll and 1099 Rules	Augusta-MMA	7/17	MMA	Basic Municipal Budgeting	Houlton-Center for Community Health Education	11/28
MMA	Elected Officials Workshop	Saco-Ramada Inn	7/19	DECEMBER			
MTCCA	Municipal Law	Waterville-Elks Lodge	7/19	MMA	Planning/Bds of Appeal	Augusta-MMA	12/4
MMA	Elected Officials Workshop	Augusta-MMA	7/25	MMA	Elected Official Workshop II	Augusta-MMA	12/5
AUGUST				MMA	Customer Service Excellence	Augusta-MMA	12/11
MTCCA	Vital Statistics	Augusta-MMA	8/9	MMA	Personnel Practices	Portland-Seasons Event Center	12/18
MMTCTA	"I've Got The Job-What Now?"	Augusta-MMA	8/14	MBOIA	Membership Mtg/Training	Lewiston Regional Tech Center-Green Ladle	12/20
MMA	Personnel Practices	Augusta-MMA	8/15				
MMA	Managing FOAA Requests	Brunswick-Inn at Brunswick Station	8/21				
MTCMA	NE Management Institute	Newry-Sunday River	8/22-24				
MTCCA	Records Management	Portland-Seasons Event Center	8/29				
MMA	Elected Officials Workshop	Carrabassett Valley-Sugarloaf	8/30				
SEPTEMBER							
MTCCA	Title 21-A	Augusta-MMA	9/11				
MTCCA	Voter Registration	Augusta-MMA	9/12				
MWWCA	Fall Convention	Carrabassett Valley-Sugarloaf	9/12-14				
MBOIA	Annual Meeting	Gray-Spring Meadows	9/13				
MTCCA	Annual Mtg & Networking Day	Waterville-Elks Lodge	9/18				
MAAO	Fall Conference	Sebasco Estates-Sebasco Harbor Resort	9/26-28				
OCTOBER							
MMA	76th MMA Convention	Augusta-Civic Center	10/3-4				
MMA	Local Planning Boards	Augusta-MMA	10/10				
MMA	Local Boards of Appeal	Augusta-MMA	10/16				
MMA	Elected Officials Workshop	Augusta-MMA	10/23				
MFCA	Annual Conference	TBD	10/24-26				
MMA	Labor & Employment Law	Augusta-MMA	10/30				

KEY TO GROUPS

MACA	Maine Animal Control Association
MAAO	Maine Association of Assessing Officers
MBOIA	Maine Building Officials & Inspectors Association
MCAPWA	Maine Chapter of American Public Works Association
MCDA	Maine Community Development Association
MFCA	Maine Fire Chiefs' Association
MFPSA	Maine Fire Protection Services Commission
MMA	Maine Municipal Association
MMTCTA	Maine Municipal Tax Collectors' and Treasurers' Association
MTCCA	Maine Town & City Clerks' Association
MTCMA	Maine Town, City and County Management Association
MWWCA	Maine WasteWater Control Association
MWDA	Maine Welfare Directors Association

For more detailed descriptions, please visit the MMA website: www.memun.org. Go to the top of the page under "Marketplace@MMA" and pull down to "Training & Wksps".

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March 1, 2012

**Municipal Technology
Conference | 2012**
●●● Education & Innovation

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Sponsored by:

Maine Municipal Association

Maine GIS User Group

In Cooperation with:

ConnectME Authority

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

Preliminary Timeline and Topic Sessions

8:00-8:45

Registration & Continental Breakfast

8:45 Welcoming Remarks

The Honorable Michael Brennan, Mayor, City of Portland

8:55-9:45 Keynote Address

Technology for Local Government

Delivering Government Services... Faster, Better, Cheaper This keynote address will highlight key areas where technology is helping local governments deliver services... faster, better, and cheaper. Greg McNeal, Chief Technology Officer for the State of Maine, will give examples of best practices being used by local governments in many areas of government service: finance, public safety, social services, transportation, etc. Greg will also highlight technology being provided Statewide that local governments can benefit from, such as the Broadband initiative (ConnectME Authority) and geographic information systems initiatives coordinated through the Maine GeoLibrary Board.

Presented by Greg McNeal, Chief Technology Officer, State of Maine

9:45-10:00 Break

10:00-10:45 Concurrent Sessions

Online Training Offerings from MMA

In April 2010, MMA launched its ELearning Center in cooperation with MyPlaceToLearn, Inc. and New Horizons Computer Learning Center. If you haven't checked it out yet, this is the perfect opportunity to learn firsthand about the online training program. Online learning is flexible, time efficient, cost effective and valuable! Join us for a demonstration of the program and then head to our Virtual Classroom where you can "test drive" actual courses throughout the day.

Presented by Margaret Noel, Educational Services Manager, Maine Municipal Association

Economics of Technology and How to Justify and Plan for the Long-Term

This will be a panel discussion led by Greg McNeal, the State of Maine's Chief Technology Officer, and others to be invited to share specific experiences with how technology has been a good return on investment. Greg will highlight the experiences from Maine Revenue Services. The panel will discuss how these experiences can be applied to the local government setting.

Presented by Greg McNeal, Chief Technology Officer, State of Maine

Maine's Broadband Revolution

The adoption and use of broadband is critical to Maine's rural and regional growth. How might the new changes in the federal universal service fund and state telecommunications regulations impact broadband adoption on all levels? What can infrastructure bring to the table? This session lays the foundation for discussions throughout the day.

Presented by: Phil Lindley, Executive Director, ConnectME Authority, Susan Corbett, CEO, Axiom Technologies, Tom Welch, Chairman, Maine PUC, and Fletcher Kittredge, CEO, GWI

GIS 101: Basic Concepts and Uses for Local Government

This session will present an overview of what is GIS, some basic concepts, and a high level summary of its uses in local government operations. Users should expect to come away with a broad understanding of this important technology. The concepts presented will serve as a basis for the second morning session covering specific examples of GIS usage for assessors, planners, and other local government personnel, to be presented immediately after this session.

Presented by John Cassidy, ESRI

Maine Statewide Orthoimagery 5-year Program

The need for improved planning, assessment, and response has been a heightened subject of concern for federal, state, and local agencies nationwide. As conditions in the economy increasingly impact resources, more cost-effective and efficient means of managing and maintaining your assets are essential. Statewide Orthoimagery provides one current, accurate, seamless base map to produce an interoperable mapping system used by all agencies, eliminating duplication of maintenance and collection efforts while providing improved communication between organizations. This presentation offers a brief description of the Maine Statewide Orthoimagery 5-year Program covering the scope of services, accuracy and products produced.

Presented by Bradley Fugate, Woolpert, Inc.

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-11:45 Concurrent Sessions

Liability and Security Issues Involving Personal Information – with Recommendations on Preventing Security Breaches

There are many risks and legal ramifications of not securing personal information that local governments have in their possession. Attorney Peter Lowe will discuss the liability and legal ramifications of not securing personal information on municipal computers. Victor Chakravarty from the State of Maine's Office of Information Technology will present recommendations on basic security measures that should be taken to protect personally identifiable information, and some recent case studies involving hacking attempts.

Presented by Peter D. Lowe, Partner, Brann & Isaacson, B. Victor Chakravarty, Enterprise Architect, Maine Office of Information Technology

Education's Role in Broadband Availability and Adoption

Education is the central pillar to broadband adoption and growth. Maine is building a robust outreach program from one to one beginner level assistance to the GigU powered by 37 universities and their host communities. This session will focus on new directions, applications and programs happening now, to benefit our rural and urban citizens.

Presented by Bob McIntire, Adult Education Team, Dept. of Education, Jeff Letourneau, Exec. Director, NetworkMaine, and Janet McKenney, Director of Library Development, Maine State Library, Shannon Packard, RN, MSN, Simulation Lab Coordinator, CMMC

ESRI Intro session part 2

This session will present specific examples of uses of GIS in local government. Demonstrations will cover topics such as GIS usage in land records management; planning; public works; and other examples. This session will be of interest to assessors, planners, public works employees, and other municipal employees. Users should expect to come away with an understanding of some of the specific uses of GIS in local government. The demonstrations presented will build on the concepts presented in the preceding session entitled "GIS 101: Basic Concepts and Uses for Local Government," and those attending should ensure they have attended the first session.

Presented by Mark Scott, ESRI

Maine's Strategic Broadband Plan:

An Overview In 2011, the ConnectME Authority, working with the James W. Sewall Company, completed the first comprehensive statewide broadband needs assessment and the first statewide strategic plan to increase broadband availability, reduce barriers to adoption, and increase broadband uptake. In this presentation, an overview will be given of the needs assessment's main results and the strategic plan's key recommendations.

Presented by James H. Page, PhD, CEO of James W. Sewall Company

Preliminary Timeline and Topic Sessions

10:45-12:00

Mail Merge with Word 2010

This session will describe the use and benefits of Word 2010's Mail Merge capabilities. It will lay out the basic purposes and components of a mail merge operation. The instructor will show the students how to construct a template document and discuss what kinds of sources can be used to obtain the data to be merged into the template document. Then the students will practice both the automated mechanism available in 2010 for constructing a mail merge project and how each of the components can be created separately on a manual basis if needed.

Presented by Jason Christie, Senior Instructor, New Horizons Computer Learning Centers

12:00-1:30 Luncheon & Speaker

Community Mapping Projects and GIS Implementation

This address will examine community mapping projects conducted at the University of Maine at Fort Kent and other member schools of the Maine Geospatial Education Consortium. This will be followed by a discussion of ways budget-strapped communities can complete mapping needs and begin to implement GIS.

Presented by Dave Hobbins, Professor of Forestry and Environmental Studies, University of Maine at Fort Kent

1:45-2:30 Concurrent Sessions

Tools for Transparency - How to Find Success Using Facebook

This workshop will educate participants about how to use Facebook to communicate more efficiently. Discussed will be the different capabilities between a personal page and a business page, explain how to better engage your residents and how to manage and utilize the social media site.

Presented by Greg Glynn from Nancy Marshall Communications

Economic Development and Innovation

Why is broadband critical to rural communities? What best practices exist for economic models and modeling? How is innovation being fueled through broadband? This session will discuss the public-private partnership between municipalities and providers with funding and use of broadband as a focus.

Presented by Josh Broder, President, Tilson Technology, Melinda Poore, VP of Government Relations, Time Warner Cable, Deb Neuman, Deputy Commissioner at DECD, Tom Murray, Manager of State Govt. Affairs, TDS, and Mike Reed, President, FairPoint Communications

Maine GeoLibrary Adopts Land Use Codes and Using Stakeholders to Develop a Watershed-Scale Land Use Suitability Model

Dan Walters, Geospatial Liaison for Maine, USGS, will present: The GeoLibrary has awarded grants to towns for projects that digitize or improve town's parcels maps for GIS. A land use code is part of the attribute table for each parcel. Unfortunately, Maine does not have a widely accepted standard for land use codes. The Board set up a committee to study the problem and recommend a solution. The presentation will describe the process leading to the new land use codes and provide an overview of the codes and how they can be applied.

Spencer Meyer, Ph.D. Fellow, Sustainability Solutions Initiative at University of Maine will present: The Lower Penobscot River Watershed (LPRW) is home to a significant regional interface between small, connected communities and the vast, undeveloped expanses of the forested Maine landscape. Parts of the LPRW have been identified as nationally significant areas that will likely experience further forest fragmentation in the coming years

(White and Mazza 2008). Since 2000, 77% of Maine's population growth has occurred outside of traditional town centers (Brookings 2006). The intrinsic land suitability for the often-competing land uses of development, forestry, conservation and agriculture is not well understood. This project used stakeholder-derived models for land suitability to assess areas of conflict between land uses and areas of opportunity for conservation collaborations (McCloskey et al. 2011). In this presentation we examine the development of stakeholder-driven land use models to integrate stakeholder values with empirical spatial data. Our findings include: 1) land use suitability models focused on forestry, conservation, agriculture, and development; 2) identification of areas of conflict or complementary attributes; and 3) lessons learned from co-development of the models. This project places an emphasis on developing a flexible modeling tool that: 1) may be used by scientists and planners for community and regional visioning; and 2) may be applied to other regions nationally and globally, using local expert knowledge and publicly available data.

Flood Inundation Mapping in Fort Kent and Flood Plain

Flood inundation maps developed for Fort Kent depict estimates of the areal extent and depth of flooding corresponding to selected water levels (gage heights) at two USGS stream gages in Fort Kent. Forecasted peak-gage-height information, available from the National Weather Service at these gages may be used in conjunction with these maps to show predicted areas of flood inundation. Flood inundation maps give Emergency Workers the ability to forecast the extent and timing of flood waters in the mapped area, and a Google map interface makes these maps readily available to the public during floods.

Presented by Pam Lombard, USGS Maine Water Center

Flood Plain

This session will focus on the availability of digital floodplain maps in Maine and FEMA's plans to upgrade current paper maps to digital products. It will cover using the free software such as Google Earth to view digital maps and the use of FEMA Digital data to use in association with commercial Geographic Information Systems software. It will provide an overview of FEMA mapping service center and free data access. The discussion will provide the user with a basic understanding of where to access and acquire FEMA floodplain data including web link information. At the end of the session the user should be able to determine what sources of data are best for them, what they need to access the data, how to use it and limitations of the data.

Presented by Joe Young, Maine State Planning Office

Importing Excel Data into PowerPoint 2010

This session will focus on the integration capabilities between PowerPoint 2010 and other Microsoft Office applications. Specifically, the students will learn to bring data into a PowerPoint slide show which is either currently available in an Excel workbook or can be easily or quickly created and or formatted in an Excel workbook. The students will learn how to place both data tables and charts into a PowerPoint slide. The students will also learn how once that Excel "object" is present in the slide; it can be linked back to the source workbook so that any changes or updates to the original data will automatically be reflected in the PowerPoint slide.

Presented by Jason Christie, Senior Instructor, New Horizons Computer Learning Centers

2:30-2:45 Break

2:45-3:30 Concurrent Sessions

E-mail Archiving and Records Retention

Since passage of the Freedom of Access Act (FOAA), both State and local governments have received requests from citizens and the media for information that they hold. Some of these requests have asked for specific

Preliminary Timeline and Topic Sessions

documents, and other requests have been broad-spanning, asking for a mass amount of e-mails or other electronic documents. This workshop will start with a quick overview of FOAA, using the frequently asked questions (FAQ) section of the State's website. The majority of the time will be a hands-on tutorial on how to archive e-mail using Microsoft Outlook. The tutorial will include demonstration of tips for searching those archive files for responding to FOAA requests. As a take-away for workshop attendees to share with others in their local government offices, a 9-minute video and tutorial will be previewed. Leading the workshop/ tutorial will be Eric Stout from the State of Maine's Office of Information Technology. One of Eric's duties is to be FOAA coordinator, helping State agencies in doing electronic searches in response to FOAA requests.

Presented by Eric Stout, PMP, IT Project Manager, State of Maine's Office of Information Technology

Health Information Technology

Real life experiences in implementing Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems and the exchange of health care data and results and telehealth: the advantages and challenges, and opportunities for improved efficiency and health care outcomes. The session will begin with the big picture view of Maine's Health Information Technology initiative including federal and State policies and available funding, to a local provider leveraging a ConnectME Authority grant and then to the hands on implementation of utilizing the technologies.

Presented by Dawn Gallagher, Social Service Program Manager, DHHS, Mary McCarthy, Manager of Tele-Medicine, EMMC, and Ralph Johnson, CIO, Franklin Community Health Network

NextGen 9-1-1 for Maine

This session will provide an overview of the NG 9-1-1 system that Maine will be deploying in 2013. This new technology uses GIS data to locate, route and identify appropriate responders when requests are made for emergency services. Current GIS layers will need to be reviewed, enhanced, and upgraded. The need for several new data layers have also been identified and will need to be created. MEGIS 9-1-1 staff are currently revamping the current maintenance system and new tools and processes will be deployed this winter.

Presented by Bob White, Spatial Database Manager for the Maine E-911

Virtual Maine, an Emergency Situational Awareness System

The Maine Emergency Management Agency has developed a situational awareness system called "Virtual Maine". Virtual Maine provides emergency personnel access to a wide variety of data, locations of reported events from a bridge washout, car accident, a plane crash, descriptions, personnel involved, issues that need attention, status, photographs, etc. It provides access to a variety of weather feeds. The 511 system is accessible providing information on roads and traffic. Near real time power outage data is displayed. The system will be available to county and local governments who collaborate with MEMA during emergencies.

The focus of this presentation is how the system may be used. The main software components that are used will be identified; however this is not a technical presentation on how it was built. Virtual Maine is built on two primary software products, Google Earth Enterprise and WebEOC. *Presented by Christopher Kroot, Enterprise GIS Analyst for the Maine Office of GIS*

2:45-4:00 Formulas in Excel 2010

This session will focus on the basics of how Excel uses mathematical formulas to calculate various mathematical values. The students will learn how to enter basic data and then use cell references to construct a formula to produce the desired result. It will cover the differences between relative and absolute cell references and students will learn how to use each in constructing formulas. Students will then learn how to use Excel's extensive library of Functions which are preconstructed formulas designed to make creating more complex mathematical equations faster and easier.

Presented by Jason Christie, Senior Instructor, New Horizons Computer Learning Centers

3:30-3:45 Networking Opportunities/Break

3:45-4:30

GovOffice User Group

Be sure to learn about new features that GovOffice will introduce in 2012, we'll also address online payments, best practices and contemporary design solutions. We encourage all of our Maine clients (over 70) to attend this important session, our aim is to strengthen your municipal online presence. The event is also open to those considering moving their websites to GovOffice – www.govoffice.com.

Presented by Ross Heupel, Marketing Dir., GovOffice Web Solutions

Reaching Out

Community Digital Inclusion through the Maine State Library's \$1.36 million BTOP (Broadband Technology Opportunities Program)

Presented by Linda Lord, Maine State Librarian, Maine State Library

Understanding Maine's Broadband Landscape

This session provides an overview of the ConnectME Authority's ARRA Mapping and Planning projects. Methods and tools utilized for tracking and mapping the impact of broadband over time with households and industry sectors will be highlighted. The capability of technically integrating planning results into the existing mapping project should be a very powerful tool for long-term development of Maine's broadband needs.

Presented by Clarence Young, Sr. Project Manager, James W. Sewall Co. and Randy Claar, Project Manager, James W. Sewall Co.

3:45-4:00 MEGUG Scholarship/Grant Recipient Presentations

4:00-4:15 MEGUG Business Meeting

Registration: \$65.00 (MMA Members, Non-profit, Gov't Agencies, MEGUG) / \$90.00 (Business Reps)

Register online at: www.memun.org (click on the Technology Conference logo).

Questions & Cancellations: If you have any questions regarding registration, please call Educational Services at 1-800-452-8786 (Augusta area, 623-8428). Notification must be given at least 72 hours before the conference to receive a refund (minus processing fee). **All** cancellations are subject to a \$10 administrative fee for processing.



Maine citizens lost more than 200 years of firefighting experience in January when six veteran fire chiefs and other municipal fire leaders retired.

Yarmouth councilors honored **Byron "Pat" Fairbanks** for outstanding public service when he retired in late January. Fairbanks, 69, began his career as a Cumberland volunteer firefighter in high school. He worked as a Falmouth volunteer firefighter before being hired as a full-time firefighter in Portland in 1966. After retiring in 1987, he was hired as part-time Falmouth fire chief in 1996 and became a full-time chief in 2000. The council appointed Deputy Fire Chief **Michael Robitaille** acting chief while a permanent replacement for Fairbanks is recruited.

Bristol Assistant Fire Chief **Gil Jaeger**, 63, who joined the town's volunteer department in 1976 and took over supervision of the village of Round Pond station in 1987, resigned in January. His friend **Robert Ball**, captain of the same village station, also resigned. Jaeger, 63, is a former president of the Lincoln County Fire Chiefs Association, which awarded him the Bob Maxcy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011. Jaeger encouraged Ball, 55, a lobsterman and Round Pond harbormaster for nearly 20 years, to join the town's fire department in 1978. Today, **Paul Leeman** oversees three fire stations as Bristol fire chief.

Portland Fire Chief **Frederick LaMontagne** announced he will retire on April 1 after 30 years with the city. LaMontagne joined the department as a rookie firefighter and worked his way to chief in 2001. The city plans to conduct a national search for his replacement.

Monmouth volunteer Fire Chief **Andre Poulin** was expected to resign effective Feb. 9 due to time constraints with his job. Monmouth firefighters voted to promote **Dan Roy Jr.**, the assistant chief who has been training for about a year with Poulin to take over administration for the

department. The firefighters' choice must be endorsed by selectmen. Poulin, 48, served the department since 1984, the past eight years as chief. He plans to continue as a town volunteer firefighter. Roy, a Monmouth firefighter since 2004 and a former state fire marshal, also is self-employed as a private fire investigator.

Roy Woods, chief of the Caribou Fire and Ambulance Department, resigned in January after 44 years, the last 21 as chief. Woods, who started as a firefighter, later became a paramedic and paramedic instructor before being named chief. The department will be supervised under the existing chain-of-command rules until a new chief is hired. Woods is a former president of the Maine Fire Chiefs Association.

Newburgh voters elected **Claude Bolduc** as second selectman during a special town election in early January. Bolduc, who was disappointed no one else entered the race, replaces former Selectman Skip Smith, who resigned last November. Bolduc and his wife own Newburgh Associates, a firm that helps municipalities with financial issues such as accounting and assessing. Voters also reversed an earlier decision to expand the Board of Selectmen to five members from three and to return to a selectmen-manager form of government rather than a selectmen-administrative assistant model. Both policy reversals take

effect in 2013.

David Bolling has been named Newcastle town administrator to succeed **Ron Grenier**, who will retire effective March 2 after working for the selectmen for four years. Bolling, 38, is presently city manager of Oliver Springs, Tenn., -- located 30 miles from Knoxville -- where he became the city's first manager in 2006. He was expected to resign in Tennessee effective Feb. 17. Bolling won the unanimous support of both the town's search committee and selectmen.



Patti Dubois worked as town clerk from 2001 to 2004 before joining the Bangor staff. Strahan, 65, also of Winslow, had succeeded Dubois when she left to take the Bangor job.

West Bath Town Administrator **Pam Hile** accepted the position of Sagadahoc County administrator. Selectmen began a search for Hile's replacement in January. Hile replaced **Pam Corrigan**, who resigned last August. Hile has worked for West Bath for more than eight years and said the decision to change jobs was difficult. [mf](#)

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Alfred: The York County Budget Committee recommended the county spend about \$18,000 to help finance a regional food pantry and shelter. county commissioners decided funding should come from individual cities and towns, but the county budget committee felt strongly enough about the issue that members reaffirmed their recommendation in late January. Committee members identified budget items that could be delayed in favor of helping social service programs through rough economic times.

Andover: The town of 900 people received a \$146,000 federal Homeland Security grant to buy about 20 new firefighters' air packs. The local cost will be \$7,000, according to Fire Chief Ken Dixon, who wrote the grant proposal.

Augusta: The Maine Coastal Program announced in late January the award of grants to eight municipalities or regional planning commissions to improve water quality and increase shore land access to the public, among other goals. The cities of Portland and Belfast were among the eight entities to share \$291,000 in state grants, along with the towns of Topsham and Wells. Planning commissions covering the Midcoast, southern Maine, and Hancock and Lincoln counties rounded out the winners.

Columbia Falls: A Midwest energy company has joined forces with the Passamaquoddy Tribe to announce plans for a \$120 million wind farm in Washington County. The Tribe already owns about 1,000 acres of open land in the unorganized territory 10 miles from Columbia Falls. The land is adjacent to 1,000 more acres up for sale by the federal government following the closure of an Air Force radar site. Under federal law, the Tribe would get partial preference in buying the property. The wind farm would employ 50 to 100 construction workers and initially 15 to 20 permanent jobs once built, with the possibility of more jobs after the start-up.

Fort Kent: Town officials plan to draft notices to owners of abandoned or unsafe buildings, with the help of their municipal lawyer, to be sure all danger-

ous structures are razed or repaired. The code enforcement office notified 18 property owners last year and most have taken care of their properties. Those who have not will now get legal notices.

Frenchville: Air traffic at one of Maine's most remote airports increased 21 percent from 2010 to 2011. Most of the action involved flight instruction and recreational flying trips. The airport manager told the St. John Valley Times that the airport in Fort Kent has helped boost activity in Frenchville as pilots stop to refuel.

Hampden: The town police department is sponsoring a 12-week "Citizen Police Academy" to educate interested participants in how police do their work, as well as learning about police

procedures and Maine laws. Hampden officials hope to dispel some of the misconceptions about police work created by television shows and movies. The classes are open, free of charge, to anyone over the age of 18 who lives, works or owns a business in the Bangor suburb. People convicted of crimes will be barred from the program, which will include tours of the 911.

Norway: Municipal officials in Norway and Paris are talking about collaborating to streamline general assistance duties while expanding Norway's existing so-called "workfare" program to its neighbor. Under Norway's 20-year-old workfare program, general assistance recipients who do not have children and are physically able to work must perform town work in exchange for financial help. 

NEW ON THE WEB

Here are some highlights of what's been added at www.memun.org since the last edition of the *Maine Townsman*.

- **Municipal Collaboration.** MMA Legislative Advocate Kate Dufour recently completed a Municipal Collaboration Report that documents more than 550 examples of towns and cities working together to provide effective services and save money.
- **Green Downtowns.** Maine Development Foundation's Downtown Center recently received a \$50,000 grant to develop ways to provide LED lighting, trail networks and rejuvenation of historic buildings with energy efficiency in mind.
- **Transportation Certification.** The Maine Department of Transportation will offer its annual Project Certification Course starting March 27 in Waterville.

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Municipal Bulletin Board

TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE: PORTLAND

The MMA Technology Conference this year moves from Bangor to Portland, and will be held on Thursday, March 1 at Holiday Inn by the Bay. The event, co-sponsored by the Maine GIS User Group, begins with registration at 8 a.m. and concludes at 4:30 p.m. Greg McNeal, Chief Technology Officer for the State of Maine, will deliver a keynote speech on "Technology in Government" starting at 8:45 a.m.

Among the other topics to be covered: Broadband Expansion and Strategy; Tools for Government Transparency; Libraries and Technology; Flood Inundation and Flood Plain mapping; and, Liability Issues with Information Management. The ConnectME Authority is also a leading participant in this year's conference.

Cost to attend is: \$65 for MMA and MEGUG members and employees from non-profit government agencies; \$90 for businesses; and, \$35 for students who show college identification. Registration can be done through the MMA website.

MANAGERS INTERCHANGE

The 33rd Annual Statewide Manager Interchange will be held on Friday, March 2 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Bangor. The day-long event, sponsored by the Maine Town and City Management Association, begins with registration at 8 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m.

Cost to attend is \$60, if pre-registered or postmarked by Feb. 23, or \$85 after that day. There also is a \$30 first-time attendee registration offer for MTCMA new managers. Registration is available through the MMA website.

The MTCMA has blocked rooms at the Hilton Garden Inn. In making reservations, be sure to mention that you are with the MTCMA. The telephone number at the inn is: 207-262-0099.

TAX LIEN PROCEDURES

The Maine Tax Collectors' and Treasurers' Association will sponsor one-day workshops on Tax Lien Procedures March 8 at Hollywood Slots in Bangor

and on March 14 at the Captain's Galley in Old Orchard Beach. The workshops start at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at 3:30 p.m.

The program focuses on proper procedures in the tax lien process as well as the proper completion of necessary forms. The emphasis is on the "how to" rather than the legal aspects of tax liens. Instructors are: and Gilberte Mayo, Treasurer in Lincoln; and, Stu Marckoon, Treasurer in Lamoine.

It is important that attendees have Municipal Liens Manuals and bring them to the workshop, which costs \$50 for MMTCTA members and \$60 for non-members. Municipal Liens Manuals can be purchased by calling MMA at 1-800-452-8786, ext. 2295.

ELECTED OFFICIALS WORKSHOP II: SCARBOROUGH

This new workshop for Elected Officials is designed for councilors and selectmen in larger municipalities with full-time managers. The workshop features six speakers from Maine Municipal Association. It will be held on Tuesday, March 20 from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Scarborough Town Hall. Registration begins at 4:30 p.m. The cost is \$40 for MMA members and \$80 for non-members.

Among the topics to be addressed:

Maine's Freedom of Access Act; Legislative Issues and Updates; Media Relations & Effective Communication; TIFs and Economic Development; the Council-Manager Form of Government; and, Conflicts of Interest.

WIND POWER UPDATE: FARMINGTON

MMA's first-ever Wind Power Workshop was so successful in 2011 that we're bringing it back in 2012 with new information. The workshop will provide basic education about wind power in Maine, including the size of the projects and what municipalities can – and cannot – do to regulate them. Any official who has a role in determining whether wind power is a good fit for your community should benefit from this session, which is neither pro- nor anti-wind power.

Jim Katsiaficas, an attorney with Perkins Thompson in Portland, and Brooke Barnes of Stantec are the presenters. The workshop will be held on Wednesday, March 21 at Franklin Memorial Hospital in Farmington. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. and the course will conclude at 2 p.m. A light lunch will be provided. Cost of the workshop is \$40 for MMA members and \$80 for non-members. [mfi](#)

All of the upcoming workshops can be found on the MMA website. Use the following link:
<http://www.memun.org/public/MMA/svc/training.htm>

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NOMINATION PAPERS REDUX

Based on some recent inquiries we've received, last month's note on nomination papers ("Nomination Papers are Public Records," *Maine Townsman*, "Legal Notes," January 2012) seems, for some reason, to have revived several other old canards about the subject.

One is that a voter may not sign more than one nomination paper for each office. This was formerly the law, but the law was amended years ago, in 1995, to permit voters to sign as many nomination papers as they wish for each office (see 30-A M.R.S.A. § 2528(4)(A)(2)).

Another is that a candidate must be legally qualified for an office in order to take out nomination papers for that office. To the best of our knowledge, this has never been true. The legal qualifications for office are prerequisites only to holding the office (*i.e.*, taking the oath), not to running for it (see 30-A M.R.S.A. § 2526(3)).

Still another is that a candidate may take out nomination papers only for one office, or if for more than one office, only for legally compatible offices. But in fact a candidate is entitled both to take out and to file multiple nomination papers, even if they are for legally incompatible offices. (There are good reasons, though, why a candidate should be discouraged from filing for legally incompatible offices, see "Multiple Nominations," *Maine Townsman*, "Legal Notes," February 2011.)

Finally, there is the notion that circulators of nomination papers must personally witness every signature and swear an oath to this effect. While these and related requirements do apply to nomination papers for State office (see 21-A M.R.S.A. § 354(7A)), again, as far as we know this has never been the law for municipal nomination papers, unless by municipal charter (see 30-A M.R.S.A. § 2528(4)).

For more on nomination papers and the nomination process, see Chapter 8 of MMA's *Town Meeting & Elections Manual*, available free to members at www.memun.org. (By R.P.F.)

NEW LOCAL OPTION EXCISE TAX EXEMPTION FOR ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL

With relatively little fanfare, the Legislature last year enacted a local option excise tax exemption for vehicles owned by Maine residents who are on active military duty and who are either permanently stationed outside of Maine or deployed for more than 180 days but who still wish to register their vehicles in Maine. The new law (36 M.R.S.A. § 1483-A) took effect on January 1, 2012.

Again, this exemption is strictly a local option. If a municipality wishes to "opt in," its legislative body (town meeting or town or city council) must adopt an ordinance to implement the exemption. Otherwise, no action is required (and no action means no exemption).

If a municipality adopts an implementing ordinance, the exemption is available to any eligible individual (see above) who presents certification

from his or her commander verifying eligibility.

We take no position on whether municipalities should exercise this local option, but for those that wish to consider it, a sample ordinance is available at <http://www.memun.org/members/legalnts/2012/excise.htm>.

This is not the first instance of a legislated local option in the field of taxation (where municipal home rule is otherwise preempted). Municipalities may also vote to refund excise taxes in certain limited circumstances (see "Excise Tax Refunds," *Maine Townsman*, "Legal Notes," August/September 2007); to allow seniors to "work off" up to \$750 in taxes on their homes by doing volunteer work for the municipality (see "New Tax Relief Program for Senior 'Volunteers'," *Maine Townsman*, "Legal Notes," June 2008); and to allow seniors to defer tax payments on their homes until they die or the property is transferred or no longer occupied by them (see "New Tax Deferral Program

The logo features a stylized blue house icon with the letters 'MM' inside, followed by the words 'Municipal Calendar' in a blue serif font.

ON OR BEFORE FEBRUARY 15 — Written statements, as prescribed by State Tax Assessor, of wages withheld in the previous calendar year is to be furnished each employee (36 MRSA § 5251).

— Monthly/Quarterly expenditure statement and claim for General Assistance reimbursement to be sent to Department of Human Services, General Assistance Unit, DHS #11, Augusta, ME 04333-0011 [22 MRSA §4311].

FEBRUARY 20 — Presidents' Day, the third Monday in February, is a legal holiday (4 MRSA § 1051); and shall be observed as a school holiday in the absence of any vote of the superintending school committee designating how the day shall be observed (20-A MRSA § 4802).

BEFORE TOWN MEETING — Selectmen must have a warrant posted at least 7 days before town meeting and have a constable or designated resident make return (30-A MRSA §2523). If adoption of an

ordinance is proposed, make sure of compliance with 30-A MRSA §3002. Send copy of town report to the following: MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION, State Tax Assessor, State Auditor, State Department of Transportation, and State Librarian.

— Town Meeting voter registration and voting list requirements. The registrar shall accept the registration and enrollment of voters prior to the municipal election according to the time schedule prescribed by 21-A MRSA § 122 unless changed by municipal officers.

— Copies of annual report are to be deposited in the municipal office or a convenient place of business for distribution to voters at least 3 days prior to the annual meeting (30-A MRSA § 2801)

— Check 30-A MRSA § 5823 for audits, and § 2801 for town reports.

BY MARCH 1 — Solid Waste Municipal Reporting forms are due back to the State Planning Office, 38 State House Station, Augusta Me 04333 [38 MRSA §2125(1)].



for Seniors: A Local Option,” *Maine Townsman*, “Legal Notes,” April 2010).

Note that none of these local options, including the latest, are State-reimbursed, so they all have negative local revenue impacts. This is doubtless why only a few municipalities have opted for any of them. The two property tax-related options entail extra administrative burdens and legal complications as well, so most municipalities have declined (wisely, in our opinion) to adopt them. (By R.P.F.)

NO BOARD OF APPEALS? – A READER’S SUGGESTION

Last month’s note on the difficulties of maintaining a viable board of appeals (see “No Board of Appeals?,” *Maine Townsman*, “Legal Notes,” January 2012) prompted one of our readers to offer an elegantly simple suggestion.

Steve Wentworth, Caribou’s Director of Housing & Code Enforcement, wrote to us that “Caribou had the same problem... we could not muster a sufficient number of good citizens from Caribou to volunteer for our ZBA/BOA.” The City’s solution: Delete the ordinance requirement that board members must be local residents. Steve reports that Caribou’s board now consists of five members, none of whom are Caribou residents (but all of whom happen to be certified code enforcement officers!).

It may not be possible, or even desirable, in all cases to have an appeals board consisting solely of non-residents, but Caribou’s approach does have some merit. Not only does it expand the pool of potential members, it decreases the risk that members will be disqualified on account of personal bias, which is of special concern for quasi-judicial bodies such as boards of appeals. It is also fully consistent with State law, which requires that municipal officials such as appeals board members be Maine residents, at least 18 years old, and U.S. citizens, but not residents of the municipality (see 30-A M.R.S.A. § 2526(3)).

Thanks to Caribou’s Steve Wentworth for his helpful tip. We always welcome feedback from our readers. (By R.P.F.)

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS: MARCH 1 FILING DEADLINE

Here’s a reminder to all holders (including municipal holders) of conservation easements in Maine: You must register your easement(s) with the State Planning Office between January 1st and March 1st of each year. This requirement has been in place since 2007, when we first wrote about it (see “Conservation Easements,” *Maine Townsman*, “Legal Notes,” October 2007). The annual registration fee is \$30 for all easements held by the same entity.

Easement holders can get full details and register online at <https://www.maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/spo/cer/index.pl>.

Maine law governing conservation easements, including the registration requirement and the requirement that each easement holder prepare a written monitoring report every three years, can be found at 33 M.R.S.A. §§ 476-479-C.

For more information on conservation easements generally, visit the

Maine Land Trust Network at www.mltm.org. (By R.P.F.)

MAXIMUM INTEREST RATE FOR 2012 DELINQUENT TAXES: 7%

The State Treasurer has established 7 percent as the maximum interest rate that may be set for delinquent taxes committed during calendar year 2012.

Interest does not actually accrue on unpaid taxes, however, unless a municipality, at the meeting at which it votes to raise a tax or at any subsequent meeting prior to commitment of that tax, by vote sets the rate of interest and the date or dates from and after which interest will accrue (see 36 M.R.S.A. § 505(4)). This rate then applies to all delinquent taxes committed during that year until they are paid in full, even if a different rate is set for taxes committed in a subsequent year.

For a detailed description of how to calculate interest on delinquent taxes, see pages 12-16 of MMA’s *Municipal Liens Manual*, available free of charge to members on MMA’s website at www.memun.org. (By R.P.F.)

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