

The Beacon

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February 2025

Gov. re-files Municipal Empowerment

By John Ouellette

Gov. Maura Healey on Jan. 31 filed a multifaceted package of reforms and local options aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations.

The governor said the Municipal Empowerment legislation — very similar to a bill she filed last year — is intended to help local governments reduce long-term fiscal pressures, attract a talented workforce, provide high-quality services, and streamline operations. The governor announced her plan to file the bill a week earlier during the MMA's [Connect 351](#) conference.

Efficiency measures carried over from the previous bill would permanently enable the existing local flexibilities for remote and hybrid public meetings, reform procurement rules, and establish enforcement mechanisms to expedite the removal of doubled-up utility poles, among other provisions. Several new



Gov. Maura Healey, left, and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll discuss their plans to re-file Municipal Empowerment legislation during their appearance at Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 24.

provide the best local services that meet the unique needs of their communities.”

Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll, a former mayor who led a statewide listening tour last year to gather local officials' input for the package, said, “Our administration's deep, collaborative relationships with municipal leaders informed every provision in the filed Municipal Empowerment Act,” and the bill “will equip our cities and towns with the resources

and policy levers they need to continue making life better for our residents.”

As they did at the MMA conference, local officials were quick to signal their strong support for the legislation.

“Cities and towns across the Commonwealth are extremely grateful

■ **EMPOWERMENT ACT** *continued on 36*

provisions have been added to help local officials improve public health and lower costs.

“Our administration knows that city and town officials know their communities the best,” Healey said. “And that's why we want to empower them with the tools to make the choices they need to

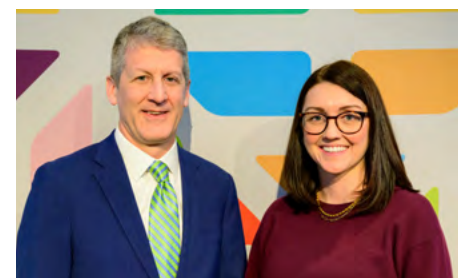
Jamie Hellen is new MMA president; Kassandra Gove is VP

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

In a year that promises both challenges and opportunities for cities and towns, the MMA's new president and vice president for 2025 pledge to continue the organization's steady leadership and strengthen the voice of cities and towns around fiscal needs and other critical municipal issues.

During the MMA's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 25 in Boston, Franklin Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, who last year served as the MMA's vice president, succeeded Waltham City Council President John McLaughlin as president of the MMA. The MMA's new vice president is Amesbury Mayor Kassandra Gove.

Hellen said it was exciting to become president during the MMA's rebranded



Franklin Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, left, and Amesbury Mayor Kassandra Gove pose for a photo after becoming MMA president and vice president, respectively, during the MMA Annual Business Meeting in Boston on Jan. 25.

and relocated annual conference, Connect 351, at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center. He said he seeks to maintain stable and consistent

■ **MMA PRESIDENT; VP** *continued on 29*

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2025 MMA Board of Directors

The MMA Board of Directors holds regular meetings, often in Boston, followed by a meeting of the Local Government Advisory Commission with the administration. Board members are chosen by: Massachusetts Mayors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, Massachusetts Select Board Association, Association of Town Finance Committees.

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Michelle Wu, Mayor, Boston

Executive Director's Report

Connect 351: A great launch for the uncertain road ahead

At Connect 351 on Jan 23 through 25, more than 1,400 of us were able to come together and collectively rally around the importance of local government and the critical services that it provides. This convening could not have happened at a better time, as we now face myriad challenges to local government, particularly from a series of executive actions from the Trump administration.

I left the conference feeling buoyed by the energy for local government that you all brought to the event, and I hope that you left with a sense of reinvigoration for public service, along with the comfort and confidence of knowing that the MMA is here to support and advocate for you and the work that you do.

For this column, I want to start with gratitude. I am so thankful to all of you, our members, who came to [Connect 351](#) from all corners of the Commonwealth to learn, network and connect. Additionally, I am filled with gratitude for the amazing staff at the MMA that worked tirelessly to make the event a success.

Further, I am grateful to our inspiring keynote speakers, the state and federal leaders who took time to speak with you about their plans and policies, our talented workshop panelists and presenters, our sponsors and Trade Show exhibitors, and the several event



By Adam
Chapdelaine

production teams who worked alongside us.

At Connect 351, you heard me and others talk about the important work that you all do at the municipal level. You also heard me talk about how the power of the MMA stems from all of you.

As you are aware, both the work that you do and our ef-

forts on your behalf were rapidly put to the test last week by a [federal executive action](#) that threatened to freeze a broad array of federal funds that support critical local government services. The action created stress and uncertainty across many sectors, but there was an acute sense of distress at the local level, as municipal services are on the front line, and any interruption of funding or services would have an immediate impact on your communities and residents.

In response to this distress, we quickly mobilized. We engaged with our partner, the National League of Cities, and connected with our federal legislative delegation and state officials. We have shared information with you as it has become available, and will continue to do so in the days and weeks ahead.

As I am writing this, there is still a high degree of uncertainty about what may happen next, but we remain engaged with a coalition of partners and remain

■ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR *continued on 33*



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

Gov. Healey files FY26 state budget proposal

By Jackie Lavender Bird

On Jan. 22, Gov. Maura Healey filed her \$61.5 billion state budget plan for fiscal 2026, in tandem with a \$1.3 billion fiscal 2025 supplemental budget bill.

The bills include investments in municipal government, but reflect a budget year with only modest revenue growth expected at the state level.

In order to make some of her proposed investments in fiscal 2026, the governor would leverage several sources of revenue, including surplus surtax revenue (also known as “Fair Share” funding) from fiscal 2024, the Student Opportunity Act Trust Fund, and anticipated surtax revenue budgeted for fiscal 2026.

Healey’s budget bill, known as House 1, would increase the main discretionary local aid account by 2.2% over fiscal 2025, while increasing Chapter 70 school aid by \$420 million, honoring the commitments made in the 2019 Student Opportunity Act. Healey proposes increasing the “minimum education aid” figure up to \$75 per pupil for fiscal 2026 — significantly above the statutory minimum of a \$30 per student increase each fiscal year. This represents the highest amount included in a governor’s budget recommendation.

The governor’s state budget proposal is the first step in a months-long process. The House and Senate Ways and Means committees are expected to host a budget hearing in the coming months on municipal and school aid for fiscal 2026, and the House is expected to debate its budget bill in April, with the Senate deliberating its own bill in May. The Legislature will work to get a final budget bill to the governor by the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1.

Unrestricted General Government Aid

Healey is proposing an increase of \$28.8 million (2.2%) in the Unrestricted General Government Aid account, which aligns with the [consensus forecast for state tax revenue growth](#) announced earlier this month.

The MMA will be working closely with lawmakers to advocate for an adequate funding level for UGGA in order to maintain essential municipal services.

Chapter 70

House 1 would continue implementation



Gov. Maura Healey announces the filing of her fiscal 2026 state budget plan at the State House on Jan. 22. (Photo courtesy Margot Murphy/Governor’s Press Office)

of the funding schedules in the Student Opportunity Act, bringing Chapter 70 school aid up to \$7.3 billion, an increase of \$420 million over fiscal 2025.

House 1 would increase the per-student minimum new aid from the statutory \$30 to \$75 for fiscal 2026. An initial examination of the proposal indicates that 233 of 318 school districts (77%) would be classified as “minimum aid” districts, and would be set to receive the increased per-student funding.

The 6% increase to Chapter 70’s total bottom line is funded through several funding sources, including general revenue, fiscal 2026 anticipated surtax revenue, and the Student Opportunity Act Trust Fund.

- [See the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s calculation of fiscal 2026 Chapter 70 aid and net school spending requirements for individual cities, towns and regional school districts based on House 1](#) (including preliminary fiscal 2026 charter school assessments and reimbursements)

Charter schools

House 1 would fund charter school reimbursements at \$179 million, intended to meet the state’s statutory obligation to mitigate Chapter 70 losses to charter schools as outlined in the Student Opportunity Act.

While the proposed budget meets the state’s obligation, the MMA continues to highlight the serious flaws in the overall charter school finance system.

Special education

House 1 would fund the Special Education Circuit Breaker program at \$682 million,

with \$532 million provided in House 1 and \$150 million provided in a fiscal 2025 supplemental budget proposal. According to the administration, this represents full funding of out-of-district transportation cost reimbursements, which are provided for in the Student Opportunity Act.

Rural school aid

House 1 would level-fund Rural School Aid for eligible towns and regional school districts at \$16 million. The grant program helps districts facing the challenge of declining enrollment to identify ways to form regional school districts or regionalize certain school services to create efficiencies.

The MMA will continue to advocate to bring this account closer to the \$60 million recommended by the Commission on the Fiscal Health of Rural School Districts in its 2022 report, [“A Sustainable Future for Rural Schools.”](#)

School transportation

By leveraging fiscal 2026 surtax funds, House 1 would increase funding for regional transportation reimbursements from \$99.4 million in the current fiscal year to \$116 million. The administration says its proposal would reimburse districts for approximately 95% of local costs.

Reimbursements for the transportation of out-of-district vocational students would be fully funded at \$6.2 million, marking a significant change to this chronically underfunded account.

While House 1 would level-fund reimbursements for the transportation of homeless students under the federal McKinney-Vento Act, at \$28.6 million for fiscal 2026, the administration noted that this account could see additional funding through the [recently requested Emergency Assistance supplemental budget](#). The impact of this funding level would vary from community to community, depending on the number of homeless families that are sheltered in local hotels and motels.

PILOT

House 1 would fund payments-in-lieu-of-taxes at \$54.5 million, an increase of \$1.5 million. This amount is intended to ensure that no municipality sees a decrease in its overall PILOT payments due to recent valuation changes.

■ **FY26 BUDGET** *continued on 22*

Second judge orders halt to federal funding freeze

By John Ouellette

States and municipalities are at least temporarily protected from a broad freeze of federal funding after a U.S. District Court judge in Rhode Island found in favor of 22 states and the District of Columbia in a legal action to block the freeze.

Under the judge's restraining order, issued late on Jan. 31, the Trump administration cannot "pause, freeze, impede, block, cancel, or terminate" taxpayer money already allocated by Congress.

The [13-page order](#) from Judge John McConnell does not specify an expiration date but says it is in effect "until this Court rules on the States' forthcoming motion for a preliminary injunction, which the States shall file expeditiously."

The Trump administration set off a frenzy late on Jan. 27 when it issued [Memorandum M-25-13](#) ordering federal agencies to identify and "complete a comprehensive analysis" of all federal financial assistance "programs, projects, and activities" to ensure they are "consistent with the President's policies and requirements."

The directive from the Office of Management and Budget would affect \$3 trillion in loan, grant and financial assistance programs from the federal government nationwide, including funds for state and local governments, such as Community Development Block Grants, school meals, and health, education, public safety and climate programs.

A follow-up ["Q&A" document](#) provided hours later by the OMB said the temporary halt in funding was not "across-the-board" and would not affect direct benefit programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, funds for small businesses and farmers, Pell grants, Head Start, and rental assistance.

Within 24 hours, a [U.S. District Court judge issued an administrative stay to temporarily halt the freeze](#), which was quickly followed by a terse, two-sentence rescission of the M-25-13 memo from the OMB.

In a statement issued moments later, however, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said, "The Executive Orders issued by the President on funding reviews remain in full force and effect and will be rigorously implemented by all agencies and departments."



U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren speaks with Massachusetts local officials over Zoom on Jan. 29 to discuss strategies for responding to the Trump administration's efforts to freeze loan, grant and financial assistance programs.

She said the OMB's rescission of M-25-13 "should effectively end the court case," but that there will be "more executive action" in the coming weeks and months "to end the egregious waste of federal funding."

In the 23-party suit in Rhode Island, Leavitt's statement was introduced as evidence that the administration intended to pursue its funding freeze regardless of the administrative stay, which resulted from a lawsuit brought by Democracy Forward and other nonprofit groups and was due to expire on Feb. 3.

Judge McConnell's order called out Leavitt's statement and required the Trump administration not to reintroduce the freeze "under any other name or title."

McConnell wrote that, "Congress has not given the Executive limitless power to broadly and indefinitely pause all funds that it has expressly directed to specific recipients and purposes, and therefore the Executive's actions violate the separation of powers."

McConnell's order doesn't block the Trump administration from continuing its review of federal expenditures, but it does prohibit them from defunding programs that fail their tests.

The White House has said it intends to defund programs that aren't in alignment with a half dozen executive orders issued by President Donald Trump since his inauguration, but the White House offered scant details on what funding could be in jeopardy.

"The use of Federal resources to advance Marxist equity, transgenderism, and

green new deal social engineering policies is a waste of taxpayer dollars that does not improve the day-to-day lives of those we serve," the OMB's M-25-13 memo stated.

The OMB memo listed the following executive orders as a basis for its action: Protecting the American People Against Invasion; Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid; Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements; Unleashing American Energy; Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing; Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government; and Enforcing the Hyde Amendment.

The M-25-13 memo gave federal agencies until Feb. 10 to submit to OMB "detailed information on any programs, projects or activities subject to this pause."

The OMB's memo triggered panic among stakeholders and programs that rely on federal funds, as well as a number of legal actions. Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell was [co-lead on the multi-state push](#) filed in Rhode Island to halt the freeze.

The judge's ruling "reaffirms that the President cannot unilaterally take away federal funding, especially resources that our kids, seniors, and economy rely on," Campbell said in a statement.

Connecticut Attorney General Peter Tong noted in a statement, however, that "these threats are evolving and far from over."

In addition to Massachusetts, Connecticut and the District of Columbia, the plaintiffs in the case were the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

The National League of Cities has published a ["Presidential Actions Summary: Impact to Local Governments"](#) identifying potential outcomes of the freeze.

The MMA and its federal and state partners are closely following this developing story, and will continue working to provide the latest details to members. ●

Healey announces \$8B transportation investment plan

By Adrienne Núñez

At an event in Worcester on Jan. 14, Gov. Maura Healey announced a plan to make historic investments in the state's roads, bridges and regional transportation systems, including a 50% increase for the Chapter 90 local road and bridge maintenance program.

She said her plan would invest \$8 billion over the next 10 years – the largest state transportation investment in more than 20 years.

The governor said her plan, announced immediately after the Transportation Funding Task Force released its [final report](#), would be filed as legislation in the coming weeks, as part of her [fiscal 2026 state budget proposal](#), an accompanying supplemental budget, and a [transportation bond bill](#).

The plan would act on many of the recommendations made by the task force, which outlined steps for stabilizing and enhancing transportation while setting the stage for ongoing discussions about how best to finance transformative investments in transportation into the future.

Healey said a key goal of her plan is to put the MBTA on a path of long-term fiscal stability. The plan also dedicates a significant investment to the Commonwealth Transportation Fund, which would help to expand the state's bonding capacity and increase the state's ability to address capital needs in a variety of projects.

The proposed investments would be made possible using revenue from the surtax on personal annual incomes over \$1 million (also known as the Fair Share amendment), in addition to "other existing resources."

Healey said her plan "represents smart, forward-thinking fiscal management, and it will have an impact on people in all regions of our state." She added that the proposal will "deliver better roads, less traffic, safer bridges and a transit system that works in every region."

The governor said her multi-year transportation bond bill would increase the funding to cities and towns through the [Chapter 90 program](#) to \$300 million per year for five years. This program would be supplemented with \$25 million for a

Winter Resilience Assistance Program for municipalities and a set-aside for culverts, small bridge repairs and improvements at safety and congestion hot spots.

MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine applauded the plan's historic investments in local transportation infrastructure, an issue that has long been a priority for the association.

"The governor's plan is a game-changer for transportation infrastructure in Massachusetts and will make a significant impact in each and every city and town in Massachusetts," he said. "The MMA and local leaders deeply appreciate the hard work of the task force and the administration to arrive at this creative and comprehensive plan."

Additional investments

Through the fiscal 2026 state budget, the administration's plan would:

- More than double support for the MBTA's operating budget, to \$687 million in fiscal 2026, and immediately address the agency's budget shortfall.
- Dedicate \$765 million in Fair Share resources to the Commonwealth Transportation Fund, building on the administration's strategy to maximize Fair Share revenue through borrowing to yield \$5 billion over the next 10 years for capital investment bonds in rail, roads, bridges, regional transit authorities and culverts.
- Invest \$110 million in regional transit authorities, including \$66 million for formula-based transit improvements, \$30 million for Fare Free service, and \$10 million to facilitate interconnectivity between RTAs.
- Provide \$55 million for MassDOT operations, including workforce investments and enhanced capital project delivery

The governor said her surplus Fair Share supplemental budget would propose to invest \$857 million of the \$1.3 billion surplus in transportation initiatives, including:

- \$400 million to address workforce



While visiting Worcester on Jan. 14, Gov. Maura Healey announces a plan to invest \$8 billion over the next 10 years in the state's roads, bridges and regional transportation systems.

and safety initiatives identified as necessary by the Federal Transit Authority

- \$300 million to replenish MBTA reserves
- \$25 million for the Winter Resilience Assistance Program
- \$25 million for RTA workforce recruitment and retention
- \$10 million for microtransit

The governor said her plan will result in a 50-50 split of Fair Share resources dedicated to transportation and to education since voters approved the surtax in November 2022, which was a key Transportation Funding Task Force recommendation. In fiscal 2024, the state collected \$2.46 billion from the Fair Share surtax, nearly \$1.5 billion above what had been budgeted.

Transportation Funding Task Force

The [Transportation Funding Task Force](#), created by executive order last January, spent the past year reviewing current and projected revenue sources, comparing those sources to benchmarks and trends in peer and neighboring states, and exploring financing approaches and alternative pricing mechanisms.

The Task Force, which included Gardner Mayor Michael Nicholson representing the MMA, developed a framework focused first on stabilizing the transportation system's finances and addressing critical infrastructure repair needs.

Additional recommendations looked at how to enhance and transform the system. The 118-page report includes

■ TRANSPORTATION *continued on 26*

1,400 local leaders gather for Connect 351

By Meredith Gabrilksa

Engagement, inspiration and dedication carried through as themes of the MMA's Connect 351 conference on Jan. 23-25 in Boston, where roughly 1,400 municipal officials from across the state gathered for compelling speakers, timely workshops, countless networking opportunities, and a bustling Trade Show.

[Connect 351](#), a rebranding of the MMA's Annual Meeting & Trade Show, included many of the familiar sessions and networking experiences that attendees have come to expect, but in a new location and with expanded programming.

Convening at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center in Boston's Seaport District, the event kicked off on Thursday afternoon, Jan. 23, with the Trade Show and two new sessions: "speed coaching" offered a team of seasoned town managers, and a [Women Leading Government conversation](#) between Needham Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick and Opal Mauldin-Jones, the city manager of Lancaster, Texas.

"We all can be mentors and we can all be mentees," Mauldin-Jones said. "We all have something to give and we all have something to receive."

[Note: The [MMA website](#) and this issue of The Beacon feature full coverage of Connect 351 events and speakers.]

Friday keynote speaker [Suneel Gupta](#), a bestselling author, scholar and CEO, discussed the habits of extraordinary leaders and the vital importance of the management of personal energy. Following Gupta were [Gov. Maura Healey](#) and [Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll](#), who [had announcements](#) about Chapter 90 funding, their reboot of the Municipal Empowerment Act, and the opening of the Community One Stop for Growth portal.

The conference was the second as MMA executive director for Adam Chapdelaine, a veteran of local government who attended many MMA conferences as a member.

"We firmly believe that local government is foundational to democracy, and that all of you have been entrusted, by the residents in your cities and towns, with ensuring public safety, public health and delivering a broad array of services that establish the basis of the

quality of life in your communities," he told members. "The MMA is laser focused on helping you reach your goals and achieve success in your communities."

At the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Luncheon, Health and Human Services Secretary [Kate Walsh](#) discussed her career in health care and offered insight into the impacts of the caretaking role on women.

The MMA presented [six legislative awards](#) during the Friday dinner.

On Saturday, Jan. 25, Lt. Gov. Driscoll returned to address the MMA's Annual Business Meeting, followed by video messages from [U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey](#), who discussed the delegation's efforts to win funding for Massachusetts communities. Members then approved [four policy resolutions](#).

Also during the business meeting, Franklin Town Administrator Jamie Hellen [was elected president of the MMA](#), and Amesbury Mayor Cassandra Gove was elected vice president.

The conference featured 18 workshops and six Learning Labs across two days that explored topics ranging from diversity, equity and inclusion to federal funding, succession planning and artificial intelligence. Presentation materials from the workshops are available on the [MMA website](#).

The Trade Show featured more than 270 exhibitors, including a number of environmental consulting, financial, energy and technology firms — plus the debut of "EV Alley," an area designated for electric vehicle and charger technology and municipally oriented electric vehicles.

The Massachusetts Mayors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, Massachusetts Select Board Association, and Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association held their annual business meetings



Springfield City Councillor Jose Delgado, left, Westfield Mayor Michael McCabe, center, and Chicopee Mayor John Vieau share a moment during Connect 351 on Jan. 24 in Boston.



Municipal officials interact with exhibitors during the MMA Trade Show during Connect 351.

on Saturday, electing leadership and discussing timely topics. Housing and Liveable Communities Secretary Ed Augustus spent time with the Councillors' Association discussing the emergency shelter program and housing production and preservation.

Facilitator and podcast host [Matt Lehrman](#) energized the Saturday morning crowd by discussing how disagreement is not just natural but necessary, and asking how civic engagement leaves people feeling in their communities. Lehrman also joined the Select Board Association for its business meeting.

For the seventh year, the MMA's conference had a mobile app to help attendees make the most of their experience. The app features comprehensive information and interactive features, including the ability to access workshop materials, build a personal schedule, connect with fellow attendees, and receive important notifications and updates.

The event brought back two popular features: a Headshot Station that offered

■ **CONNECT 351** *continued on 35*

Healey, Driscoll announce Ch. 90 bill, One Stop portal

By John Ouellette

Speaking at the MMA's Connect 351 conference on Jan. 24, Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll said they would be filing a [\\$300 million per year Chapter 90 bond bill](#) that day and planned to file a new Municipal Empowerment Act the following week.

Addressing more than 1,000 local leaders from across Massachusetts just two days after filing their [state budget plan for fiscal 2026](#) and 10 days after announcing an [\\$8 billion transportation investment plan](#), Healey and Driscoll highlighted their ongoing support for cities and towns.

"We know that local communities are really the foundation of civic life, of democracy," Healey said. "As state leaders, we respect the prerogative, the leadership, the autonomy, the responsibility of our local governments and those who lead them. So, you'll always have champions in us."

The pair highlighted their proposed \$100 million increase in the Chapter 90 reimbursement program, which helps every city and town with the maintenance of local roads and bridges, as well as key elements of their budget bill, particularly the proposed \$420 million increase in Chapter 70 school aid and the increase of the "minimum education aid" figure to \$75 per student.

Healey also mentioned a budget provision that would allow cities and towns, at local option, to augment their traffic safety enforcement by using cameras — an option that has been requested by a number of local officials.

"We can't have a cop on every corner," she said, adding that the objective is "about keeping roads safe, impacting the quality of neighborhoods."

Healey reflected on major achievements of the past two years — a \$5 billion housing bond bill, a \$4 billion economic development bond bill, and \$9 billion in federal funding that flowed to the Commonwealth and its communities — while pointing out the benefits at the local level.

Driscoll announced the opening of the [Community One Stop for Growth](#) portal for fiscal 2026. The portal provides access to a dozen local grant and technical assistance programs related to housing, infrastructure and economic development,



During their joint appearance at Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 24, Gov. Maura Healey, left, and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll cover a range of topics affecting municipalities, including road and bridge funding, transportation, the state budget and their Municipal Empowerment legislation.

Healey and Driscoll said their "Municipal Empowerment Act 2.0" would resemble last year's package and would again target reforms that would increase efficiency in local government. This includes provisions to address doubled-up utility poles, to make pandemic-era provisions for remote and hybrid public meetings permanent, to provide more flexibility in procurement, and to allow new property tax exemptions.

Healey and Driscoll closed by urging local leaders to join

including MassWorks and HousingWorks.

"We were 500% oversubscribed in terms of applications and money requests [last year] — and that's a good thing," she said. "That means all of you have plans and opportunities to partner with private investment, growing a healthy economy, helping meet our housing needs in places."

Driscoll said Community One Stop has two new programs: one to help reopen vacant storefronts, and a Transformative Development Initiative for gateway cities.

Driscoll and Healey frequently mentioned their attention to smaller, rural communities, such as with "special carve outs" in Community One Stop.

them in advocating for the Municipal Empowerment Act, Chapter 90 funding, and key state budget accounts.

"I invite you not only to continue the policy formulation, but to continue now with some advocacy," Healey said, "because to make this stuff happen — how we wish we could wave a wand — there is a process. ... There will be a need for you to message and explain and tell your story about the acuity of the crises you're facing in your cities and towns. Costs have gone up for everything, and that money from the federal government, that was enjoyed a few years ago, is long gone. So it's important for everybody to understand what it is you're really confronted with." ●



Connect 351 attendees give, get career advice

Cynthia Shelton Harris, Cambridge's interim director of veterans' services, center, Middleborough Town Manager Jay McGrail, right, and Abraham Fofanah, an International City/County Management Association Management Fellow in Lexington, participate in a speed coaching event on Jan. 23 during Connect 351. The well-attended event brought together seasoned leaders and emerging professionals to give and receive career guidance.

Gov. Healey files 5-year Ch. 90 bill with 50% increase

By **Adrienne Núñez**

At the MMA's Connect 351 conference on Jan. 24, Gov. Maura Healey announced that she was filing a five-year, \$1.5 billion Chapter 90 bond bill that day that would authorize investments of \$300 million per year for local road and bridge maintenance.

The funding level would be a 50% increase for Chapter 90, which has been generally level-funded at \$200 million for the past dozen years.

The proposed bond authorization would apportion \$200 million each year using the established Chapter 90 formula, which factors in a community's road miles, population and employment, and an additional \$100 million based on road miles only. The administration said the intent is to ensure that traditional apportionments remain stable, while the additional investment favors rural communities with lower population and employment (but significant road mileage).

The Chapter 90 increase was introduced on Jan. 14 as a key component of the [governor's transportation funding plan](#). The investment would be partly enabled by a \$765 million deposit of fiscal 2026 Fair Share surtax revenue into the state's Commonwealth Transportation Fund. The governor included this transfer, which would expand the Commonwealth's bonding capacity, in her [fiscal 2026 state budget bill](#).

Along with her budget, Gov. Healey filed a \$1.3 billion fiscal 2025 supplemental budget bill that includes \$25 million for the Winter Resilience Assistance Program.



On Jan. 24, Gov. Maura Healey filed a five-year, \$1.5 billion Chapter 90 bond bill that would authorize investments of \$300 million each year for local road and bridge maintenance.

Along with her budget, Gov. Healey filed a \$1.3 billion fiscal 2025 supplemental budget bill that includes \$25 million for the Winter Resilience Assistance Program.

Intended to support communities with transportation infrastructure repairs caused by harsh winter weather, WRAP was established as a reimbursement program and apportioned based on road miles. WRAP funding may be used for the rehabilitation, reconstruction, resurfacing or preservation of local roads, sidewalks, bike lanes and other pathways, as well as road striping or painting, and the repair or replacement of traffic control devices, signage, guardrails and storm grates.

Last year's transportation bond bill authorized \$200 million for the Chapter 90 program as well as \$25 million for the [Rural Roadway Funding Program](#) that supplements Chapter 90, apportioned with a formula that favors rural communities. An additional \$46 million was appropriated to supplement Chapter 90 through the fiscal 2025 state budget.

The MMA has long advocated for a multi-year Chapter 90 authorization along with a significant funding increase. At the MMA's Annual Business Meeting last year, members approved a transportation resolution calling for at least \$350 million per year in a multi-year authorization, indexed to inflation, as well as funding for a rural roads program.

Base Chapter 90 funding has been generally level-funded at \$200 million per year since fiscal 2012, despite road construction cost increases that have significantly reduced purchasing power. The MMA's most recent statewide survey shows that cities and towns need at least \$859 million per year in Chapter 90 funding to adequately maintain 30,000 miles of local roads and hundreds of bridges.

The MMA is asking the Legislature to act on Chapter 90 funding early in the legislative session, so municipalities can access this essential funding early in the construction season.

The [Chapter 90 reimbursement program](#) was launched more than 50 years ago to help municipalities maintain the municipal roads and bridges. ●

EOHLC issues regulations for accessory dwelling units

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities has promulgated its final regulations on accessory dwelling units, which took effect upon publication in the Massachusetts Register on Jan. 31.

The regulations were required by the [\\$5.16 billion housing bond bill](#) signed by Gov. Maura Healey last August, which allows ADUs as-of-right in all single-family zones statewide.

The [new regulations](#) allow for some local restrictions on ADUs, including short-term rental restrictions, but do not allow owner-occupancy restrictions. Any municipality with an owner-occupancy

restriction will be unable to enforce it once the regulations go into effect.

The MMA testified and [submitted formal comments](#) on the EOHLC's draft regulations in January, detailing concerns about how the new law would fit in with existing municipal bylaws on ADUs and how to better regulate short-term rentals.

— **Ali DiMatteo**



New state rules regulating accessory dwelling units are now in effect.

MMA honors legislators during Connect 351

By Dave Koffman

During its [Connect 351](#) conference, the MMA recognized six legislators for their dedicated work to empower and support Massachusetts cities and towns.

At a Friday dinner reception on Jan. 24, the MMA presented Legislator of the Year Awards to Sen. Michael Rodrigues and Rep. Aaron Michlewitz.

As chairs of the Senate and House Committees on Ways and Means, respectively, Rodrigues and Michlewitz crafted a fiscal 2025 state budget with important investments in cities and towns, including increases in Unrestricted General Government Aid, direct supplemental funding for local roads and bridges, and a minimum Chapter 70 aid increase of \$104 per student — all top MMA priorities. Both legislators also finalized a sweeping economic development package, which included essential funding for municipal infrastructure as well as policy reforms in civil service, among other issues.

Rodrigues, of Westport, represents the First Bristol and Plymouth district in the Senate. Michlewitz, of Boston, represents the Third Suffolk district in the House.

Also at the Friday dinner, the MMA presented Municipal Advocate Awards to Sen. Jo Comerford, Rep. Natalie Blais, Sen. Michael Brady, and Rep. Ken Gordon.

Comerford and Blais introduced a bill to establish a permanent disaster relief fund for the Commonwealth, an initiative that was included in the fiscal 2025 state budget. The result is that funding will be more readily available to assist municipalities and residents that are impacted by extreme weather events, which are becoming more severe due to



Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, right, poses with MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine after accepting the MMA's Legislator of the Year Award during Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 24.



Sen. Michael Rodrigues, left, poses with MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine after accepting the MMA's Legislator of the Year Award during Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 24.



Sen. Michael Brady, left, and Rep. Kenneth Gordon pose with their MMA Municipal Advocate Awards during Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 24.



Sen. Jo Comerford, left, and Rep. Natalie Blais accept their MMA Municipal Advocate Awards during Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 24.

climate change.

Comerford, of Northampton, represents the Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester District in the Senate. Blais, of Deerfield, represents the First Franklin district in the House.

Over the past several years, Brady and Gordon led a comprehensive effort to examine and reform the Civil Service system in Massachusetts. Partnering with a large group of stakeholders, including the MMA, they led the effort to identify potential reforms to modernize

the Civil Service system, including reducing unnecessarily long onboarding timelines, providing needed flexibility for hiring, and using attributes outside of taking a test. Their recommendations made it into the economic development package that was signed into law in November.

Brady, of Brockton, represents the Second Plymouth and Norfolk district in the Senate. Gordon, of Bedford, represents the 21st Middlesex district in the House. ●

School districts, private sector face deadline for workforce data

By Dave Koffman

A new state law requires certain workforce data reporting by employers already subject to EEO-1 and EEO-5 requirements by the federal government.

Employers need to submit a copy of the same Equal Employment Opportunity Commission report, but via the [Secretary of State's web portal](#).

Copies of EEO-5 reports, pertaining to

elementary and secondary schools, had to be submitted by Feb. 3, while copies of municipal EEO reports (EEO-4) aren't due until 2026.

The new [law](#), commonly known as the Frances Perkins Workplace Equity Act, signed last July by Gov. Maura Healey, focuses on closing gender and racial wage gaps in the Commonwealth.

The law requires all U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reports to be collected by the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and aggregated by the state's Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Like many employers, cities and towns are subject to certain federal reporting

■ **WAGE EQUITY** *continued on 29*

EOHLC issues emergency rules for MBTA zoning

By John Ouellette

In the wake of a Supreme Judicial Court decision that upheld the MBTA Communities Act but threw out the compliance guidelines, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities on Jan. 14 issued emergency regulations to set terms for ongoing implementation of the law.

The [regulations](#), effective immediately and for 90 days, do not substantively change the law's zoning requirements and do not affect any previous determinations of compliance that have been issued by Housing and Livable Communities, but they do provide additional time for affected communities that haven't met prior deadlines to come into compliance with the law.

According to a statement, Housing and Livable Communities intends to adopt permanent regulations following a public comment period.

Ruling on a lawsuit brought last fall against the town of Milton, the [SJC on Jan. 8 upheld the 2021 state law](#), as well

as the power of the Attorney General's Office to enforce the law, but threw out the detailed guidelines that specify the terms of compliance.

The SJC found that the state agency that developed the rules failed to comply with the state's Administrative Procedures Act — specifically, that it did not file required notices and impact statements. The court said the rules are “legally ineffective” and must be “repromulgated.”

In December of 2023, a special town meeting in Milton changed the town's zoning bylaws to be in compliance with the MBTA Communities Law, but two months later a citizen petition was passed by the voters to repeal the zoning changes, bringing the town out of compliance.

The town argued that the penalties for noncompliance with the law were explicit in the law itself — being excluded from consideration for four specified grant programs — but the SJC concluded that the ineligibility for grant

funding does not preclude the Attorney General from enforcing the law.

“As the purpose of [Section] 3A is to increase housing stock,” the court wrote, “the town's proposed reading of the act would thwart the Legislature's purpose by converting a legislative mandate into a matter of fiscal choice.”

The SJC also concluded that the EOHLC's “guidelines” for compliance with the MBTA Communities law do indeed fall “within the ambit of regulations.”

The MBTA Communities Act, or Section 3A of the state's Zoning Act, requires municipalities with adjacent MBTA service to create at least one zoning district “of reasonable size” where multi-family housing is allowed “as of right.” There are 177 communities listed as MBTA Communities. As of mid-January, the EOHLC reported that 116 of the communities had already made zoning changes to be in compliance with the law. ●

Members approve 4 resolutions at Annual Business Meeting

Local leaders from across Massachusetts overwhelmingly approved [four policy resolutions](#) during the MMA's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 25 in Boston.

The resolution topics are PFAS remediation, modernization of local government, transportation needs, and the state-local fiscal partnership.

The MMA's [Annual Business Meeting](#) was part of the [Connect 351](#) conference held Jan. 23 through 25. Resolutions adopted by the membership at the meeting will help guide the advocacy work of the MMA in the year ahead.

The PFAS resolution identifies the harms that the “forever chemicals” pose for communities across Massachusetts, and establishes positions to address its contamination, fund remediation, and protect public health.

The local government modernization resolution articulates positions to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of local government services, including in the areas of local decision making, procurement, public meetings, infrastructure, and the municipal workforce.



Wakefield Town Councillor Jonathan Chines, chair of the MMA Fiscal Policy Committee, presents a resolution at the podium during the MMA Annual Business Meeting in Boston on Jan. 25. Also on stage, left to right, are Waltham City Council President John McLaughlin, the 2024 MMA president; MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine; Franklin Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, the 2025 MMA president; Amesbury Mayor Cassandra Gove, the 2025 MMA vice president; and MMA Legislative Director Dave Koffman.

The transportation resolution advocates for support of a multimodal transportation network and infrastructure in the Commonwealth.

The fiscal resolution seeks to ensure a strong partnership between cities and towns and the state in fiscal 2026. It

identifies municipal needs in areas such as unrestricted aid; education and charter school finance; capital needs such as road maintenance; municipal and school facilities; water and wastewater systems; climate resilience; and local-option flexibility for local revenues. ●

Keynote Suneel Gupta helps leaders reclaim their energy

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

As schedules tighten and pressures mount from every direction, municipal leaders can embrace habits to help them maintain their energy and serve their communities more effectively, bestselling author and entrepreneur Suneel Gupta told the [Connect 351](#) audience during the general session on Jan. 24 in Boston.

The author of two books including “Everyday Dharma” and host of the docuseries “Business Class,” Gupta shared insights from his research on success and failure, as well as energy-management strategies to help municipal officials improve their creativity, productivity and leadership skills while improving balance to their own lives.

Gupta recognized the demands that are draining the energy of municipal officials — long days, night meetings, public criticism, political uncertainty, and their own family and personal needs. At the same time, many people are depending on them to maintain their energy and keep going.

“So that’s not a lot of sleep, that’s not a lot of time, right?,” Gupta said. “But you’re trying to balance all this. ... Oftentimes, you are the first line of defense. People are coming to you.”

Local government leaders are not alone in this struggle, Gupta said. Surveys find that 70% of workers are experiencing high levels of stress and low energy. Gupta said he coaches many leaders, and about 40% of C-suite executives are considering leaving their jobs over the next year due to energy depletion and exhaustion — and that number approaches 75% in health care.

“So we are, at this moment in time, in a human energy crisis, where everywhere we look, people are running low on this energy,” he said. “And as leaders, we need to understand this. We need to understand how to lift our own energy and the energy of the people around us.”

Gupta came to this work as an entrepreneur. After a couple of unsuccessful startup attempts, he became the founding CEO of the mobile health company RISE, which partnered with then-First Lady Michelle Obama to provide low-cost health coaching to people in

need. In his Amazon series, “[Business Class](#),” he interviews entrepreneurs about the secrets to their leadership and success. He is also a visiting scholar at Harvard Medical School, where he studies and analyzes the habits of the “most extraordinary people in the world.”

In his travels, Gupta discovered that the most successful people don’t obsess over time management, but have learned how to manage their energy, developing ways to keep going, build momentum and get things done in the face of obstacles and competing pressures. Using the metaphor of a shoebox containing precious items, Gupta offered the audience tools and techniques to store in their “mental shoebox,” to help maintain resilience, and help “lift your energy and the energy of the people around you.”

High performers don’t wait for some long-off vacation to recharge, he said. Instead, they take breaks throughout the day. He cited examples like actor and filmmaker Jon Favreau, who plays the ukulele in his trailer in his spare moments, and Martha Stewart, an octogenarian who works long hours but also devotes time to gardening, playing with her pets, and horseback riding.

Gupta recommends a 55/5 model: for every 55 minutes of work, devote five minutes to focused, deliberate rest. He said these transitions are more effective than going from one meeting straight to the next.

“When we talk about well-being, when we talk about energy, it’s not something that is selfish,” he said. “It’s actually something that is selfless, because what we’re trying to do is get enough energy that we can bring to all the projects and the people that we are serving.”

To keep teams motivated and energized, Gupta said, leaders should “fall in love with the problem before falling in love with a solution.” Leaders have an opportunity to excite their teams about the problem and about participating in



Author Suneel Gupta discusses the habits people can use to elevate the energy they bring to their professional and personal lives during his keynote address on Jan. 24 at Connect 351 in Boston.

problem-solving.

He shared advice he received from a Stanford Business School instructor, who emphasized the value of curiosity in leadership.

“And what she said to me, I’ll never forget, is that we think that our job as leaders is to have the answers, but it’s not,” he said. “Our job, as leaders, is to create conditions where the best answers can be found, and the way that we do that is through open-hearted curiosity.”

Gupta advised municipal leaders to “switch the spotlight” onto other people, saying that acts of kindness and service boost energy. The best leaders go into situations focusing on what they can give, rather than what they get out of the situations.

When the work becomes a grind, Gupta said, leaders should stay connected to the larger narrative of why the work matters, instead of getting mired in details.

“So it’s not just about starting with why; it’s about sticking with why,” he said. “And the way that we can do this, oftentimes, is ... reminding ourselves of the stories of the people that we are serving.” ●

Matt Lehrman urges ‘courageous conversations’

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

In order to foster civility and community engagement, municipal leaders must help people feel included and heard, rediscover core community values, have “courageous conversations,” and hold space for disagreement.

These were key points offered by facilitator and podcast host Matt Lehrman in his Saturday keynote presentation during [Connect 351](#) on Jan. 25 in Boston.

In his talk, “From Conflict to Conversation,” Lehrman shared insights from his experience as cofounder and managing director of [Social Prosperity Partners](#) and from working with municipalities around the country to build consensus around contentious issues.

Walking onstage to the Beatles song “We Can Work It Out,” Lehrman told local leaders that they need to embrace courage — but not the kind that exists on a battlefield or that prompts people to stand their ground.

“The kind of courage that I care about is leaning into the idea that you can listen to someone with whom you disagree,” he said, “And instead of dismissing them, instead of calling them nasty names, to say the words, ‘Tell me more — help me understand where you’re coming from, help me understand what combination of education or life experience or divine creativity makes you see this issue in that way.’”

Since 2012, Lehrman has worked with municipal, civic and nonprofit organizations to improve public engagement, build consensus and undertake strategic planning. A year ago, he launched the “[Community Catalysts](#)” podcast, where he interviews leaders who are transforming their communities. He said communities call him to help them make difficult decisions “without everyone being at each other’s throats.”

Lehrman compared the governing process to a coffee maker, saying that residents come in with their opinions, ideas, stresses, long memories and grudges — which is OK, and part of the dynamic.

“They dump all that into this filter, this coffee pot of local governance,” Lehrman said. “What is it that they want out at the end?”



Keynote speaker Matt Lehrman explains how communities can foster civility and community engagement around difficult topics during Connect 351 on Jan. 25 in Boston.

He asked the audience to answer the question: “How should people feel about their civic engagement? ... How do they deserve to feel? How would they want to feel? This is where you get to put your empathy in place.”

Audience members texted answers that were displayed on screens onstage. While they said they want civic engagement to make their constituents feel emotions such as heard, respected, included, and excited, civic engagement actually makes people feel everything from energized and empowered to frustrated and divided. Lehrman said that duality is inherent in human society, and municipal officials must help people navigate the duality to solve community problems.

“When you took the oath of office that you were elected to or that you were appointed to, when you were hired to staff, in whatever capacity you were taking, you became the owners of the process of enabling people to join together,” he said. “Yes, there are times when you are called upon to be the decider, but most of the time you are called upon to help people join together. That is our leadership imperative.”

Lehrman urged leaders to embrace their communities’ core values. He reminded people of the value expressed in the Pledge of Allegiance, as one nation “indivisible.” He asked audience members who belong to Rotary International to recite their ethical guideline, the “[Four-Way Test](#),” and asked municipal

leaders to share their values. Newton Mayor Ruthanne Fuller recited the words from her city seal, “Liberty and Union,” and Waltham City Councillor Robert Logan recited the Boy Scout Law.

“If you want to bring people together, if you want to find agreement, we have to go back to core values,” Lehrman said. “We have to go back to understanding, what is it that brought us together in the first place?”

In bridging the gap between actions and values, Lehrman described how the City

Council in Cavalier, North Dakota, overcame its members’ reluctance to read constituent email by voting on a new set of values, ones that emphasized communication, community engagement and responsiveness.

And while it makes public officials uncomfortable, Lehrman said, “disagreement isn’t just natural, it’s necessary.”

The First Amendment guarantees freedom of speech, but doesn’t require that speech to be nice. And he said the unpleasantness reflects that “sometimes the playing field isn’t level, because people have been excluded, because they don’t trust that the system is working for them, that they’ve never gotten a chance to be heard.”

Lehrman urged leaders to go beyond the required public process, to find additional outlets to engage with residents over challenging issues — to have those “courageous conversations.”

Officials in Goodyear, Arizona, drive around a “Topics on the Move” vehicle and encourage residents to write their ideas, thoughts and concerns as graffiti on the outside of the vehicle, while photographing their comments for all to see. Lehrman also discussed helping a community transform a public outreach effort about fire protection, by minimizing presentations and maximizing conversation.

Even as the nation is increasingly divided, Lehrman urged local leaders to “keep your community indivisible.” ●

WEMO speaker discusses public service challenges

By Meredith Gabrilka

Health and Human Services Secretary Kate Walsh reflected on her years in health care and the importance of local and regional collaboration in the public health space during the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Luncheon on Jan. 24.

Walsh sat for an interview with Ashland Select Board Member Yolanda Greaves (who was then WEMO vice chair) during [Connect 351](#) in Boston, and began by reflecting on gender-related challenges she encountered earlier in her career.

Walsh recalled being in a meeting when the person running it requested that everyone talk again before the end of the day, but asked her — and none of the men in the room — if she could meet after 5 p.m.

“I think that’s beginning to change,” Walsh said. “Men are saying, I have family responsibilities, women are saying, I have job responsibilities, and we’re working it out.”

Walsh noted, however, that society still needs to spend more time considering the role that women, in particular, play as caregivers of elderly family members, especially in a state with a graying population.

When Greaves asked about her experience in an increasingly hostile and uncivil political climate, Walsh said one of the hardest parts of her job as secretary is understanding. When one works in a hospital, she said, people believe you are there to do the right thing. But in government, people seem to be looking for you to have done something wrong, which she said was shocking to her. She also noted “just a stunning lack of curiosity” by the public.

“If you make a decision in your role, very few people ask you why,” she said. “They just tell you what they don’t like about it.”

When faced with contentious situations, Walsh said, it’s important to have situational awareness. She’ll try to avoid getting hooked into an argument by simply stating her point of view and remaining calm — even though it can be difficult.

She told the audience of more than 300 local leaders: “You all have that added challenge of, you’re in the grocery store, you’re at church or you’re in a synagogue, or you’re — God help you — trying to go

to the gym,” Walsh said. “You’re in your sweats, and somebody has a very important thing that they need to tell you about something that you may or may not even be responsible for. Like, there’s no place to hide.”

Walsh said it has gotten easier over the course of her career to move forward from those uncomfortable moments, but developing strategies for dealing with job stressors is different for public officials in part because there is not enough time to settle into the role before they happen.

“Your tenures are short, and before you get into office, you’re running again, or the person who appointed you is running again. It’s hard to build the muscles and nerves and synapses that help you respond and take care of yourself during that.”

At Boston Medical Center, where she served for 13 years as CEO, she focused on health equity at a health center that disproportionately serves a low-income population. Administrators found that a lot of what was driving people to seek health care was connected to social factors, so they developed programs, like a prescription-based food pantry, to try to help meet those needs. When the pandemic hit, they had to dive even deeper “to systematically address inequities.”

On the lingering impacts of the pandemic, Walsh said the health and human services workforce continues to struggle, as do programs providing services to the adult population. She stressed the importance of supporting local boards of health, and said communities need to continue to collaborate.

“We really did think regionally and cross-functionally [during the pandemic],” Walsh said. “Three hundred and fifty-one cities and towns are not going to have a perfect response to a pandemic. ... All of us need to think about ways we can partner.”



Health and Human Service Secretary Kate Walsh discusses her experiences as a former hospital executive and her current role overseeing the state’s health agencies during the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Luncheon on Jan. 24 in Boston. She was interviewed by Ashland Select Board Chair Yolanda Greaves.

She called for continuing investments in the support systems that emerged during the pandemic.

“We really have to remember that health is pretty fundamental,” she said. “It’s a rare health problem that stops at the border of your town or city.”

A regional approach is vital in addressing all sorts of public health concerns that need consistent services, including those for mental health. She cited a group of small towns on Cape Cod creating a mobile location for those struggling with substance use disorder to access treatment, removing the barrier of them having to travel to Hyannis every day. She also noted groups working in the Berkshires to welcome and provide services to immigrants.

Walsh answered a number of questions from attendees about opioid abatement funds, food insecurity, support for rural communities, and how to set priorities for new local health and human services departments.

Also at the luncheon, WEMO [inducted its committee for 2025](#). ●

Texas city manager discusses motivation, mentorship

By Owen Page

Opal Mauldin-Jones, the city manager in Lancaster, Texas, discussed overcoming adversity, balancing family and career, and the value of mentorship in a conversation with Needham Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick held during Connect 351.

At a special Women Leading Government session on Jan. 23, Mauldin-Jones, the first woman city manager in Lancaster, discussed her career path and encouraged attendees to “be available” to those they can mentor.

“The best mentors I had never gave me answers,” she said. “They challenged me with the questions they asked.”

A Texas native, Mauldin-Jones attended the University of Texas, Arlington, for undergraduate and graduate education, and began her public service career working in the office of Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, who represented Texas’ 30th Congressional District until her death in 2023 at age 89.

During Mauldin-Jones’ first semester of college, she wrote a paper on Johnson and had an opportunity to visit her office and meet her. That meeting led to an internship offer and, ultimately, a full-time job offer, conditional upon Mauldin-Jones maintaining good grades.

She later met with Lancaster city staff, who encouraged her to apply for an assistant city manager position. When she wasn’t hired, she applied for and got a community relations coordinator position.

“I’m not sure what a traditional path is,” Mauldin-Jones said of her public service career. “I don’t know if anybody would say I came to this job from a traditional path.”

On the topics of balancing work with family obligations, and not being sure that you’re ready to take the next step in your career, Mauldin-Jones said confidence is critical to moving up while finding balance.

“I wasn’t ready to be an assistant city manager,” Mauldin-Jones said. “I had no clue what an assistant city manager does. When I applied, I told [the city manager], ‘One day, I want your job. I literally want to be the city manager.’”



Opal Mauldin-Jones, right, discusses her experiences as the city manager of Lancaster, Texas, during a Women Leading Government session at Connect 351 on Jan. 23 in Boston. She was interviewed by Needham Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick.

“Every time there was any project, it didn’t matter what it was, I said, ‘I’ll do it,’” she continued.

Mauldin-Jones added that she had a support system that could help her to manage her personal commitments. She said her children would often be in her office while she attended city council meetings, and her council understood from the start that, “When you get me, you get the family.”

She emphasized communication with staff and city officials as well as family, to make expectations clear from the get-go.

“It’s really important that one communicates,” she said. “The right community will accept those conditions and support you.”

Mauldin-Jones, who’s held her job since 2011, said she values professional development, an item that she told the city council is untouchable in the budget.

“With limited resources and abilities to provide services, one thing you can never touch is our professional development,” she said. “That’s where you get new ideas, that’s where you can get creative.”

The city hosts a one-day professional development conference for staff called Lancaster University. The city shuts down for a day, typically the Friday before a school vacation, and hosts meals,

keynote speakers, breakout sessions, workshops, and an exhibit hall featuring municipal vendors.

“If you’re not learning, you’re not growing, and if you’re not growing, you’re dying,” Mauldin-Jones said. “My council has belief in that, they support it, and it allows us to continue to invest at every level of our organization.”

During a question and answer session, Mauldin-Jones discussed developing a workforce that reflects the community, and highlighted a city-wide “blind” hiring program that strips out all identifying information to remove unconscious bias from the hiring process.

She also discussed building a workplace culture.

“You have to have the ability to laugh and find joy in service,” she said, adding that Lancaster hosts recreational and cultural events for employees to help them get to know each other outside of work.

“If you never get to fellowship together as an organization, and you never get that time to get to know each other outside of the task that we’re doing, it’s very difficult to build a relationship,” she said.

Women Leading Government also hosts an [annual conference in March](#) and other meetings throughout the year. ●

Senators focus on federal funding, local impacts

By Owen Page

Urgency, local impact and commitment were the themes of messages from U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey during the MMA's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 25 at Connect 351.

The senators spoke to local leaders via recorded videos, as both were held up in Washington for confirmation hearings and votes for presidential appointees.

Both senators thanked municipal officials for their partnership in working for Massachusetts residents, while underscoring the importance of local government in light of recent executive orders coming from the Trump administration.

"People see you solving problems every day in their neighborhoods," Warren said. "Now, more than ever, people across the Commonwealth are counting on their mayors and municipal leaders to deliver for them."

Warren applauded the efforts of local and state officials in Massachusetts, pointing to more than \$100 billion in federal funds awarded to the state in the last four years.

"Those are investments that will be felt for decades," she said.

She promised that the state's federal delegation will "keep fighting tooth and nail for those dollars that were pledged for important projects across our state." Warren emphasized investments in housing, infrastructure, and "the kinds of changes that make our communities even better places to live."

She asked local leaders to "be by my side" in efforts to fight for Massachusetts families.

"We know that even when public trust in the federal government is low," she said, "people still trust their local officials. ... Your work, serving our people, shaping our democracy at the local level, is as important now as it has ever been," said Warren.

Markey discussed legislative victories such as the Social Security Fairness Act, which restores benefits for public employees, including 130,000 employees in Massachusetts.

"We delivered for them because they deliver for us," he said.



U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren, left, and Ed Markey, address MMA members via video during the MMA's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 25 at Connect 351. The senators typically attend the MMA conference in person, but had to stay in Washington for confirmation hearings and votes for presidential appointees.

"We know that even when public trust in the federal government is low, people still trust their local officials. ... Your work, serving our people, shaping our democracy at the local level, is as important now as it has ever been."
- U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren

He also discussed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act — "the largest transportation bill in a generation, and the largest climate bill in history" — adding that the laws are funding more than 1,300 projects within Massachusetts. Markey listed \$1.1 billion for drinking water protection and infrastructure, \$2.4 billion to fund the MBTA, and \$146 million for west-east passenger rail in Massachusetts.

"And of course," he said, "it means \$1.7 billion in federal funding to fully replace the Sagamore Bridge. The Sagamore

Bridge will sag no more."

A staunch climate advocate, Markey also discussed the \$156 million in funding for Solar for All, "which could cut energy costs by 20% for 31,000 low-income households in the Commonwealth," as well as expansion of residential and municipal tax credits to promote renewal energy investment. This expansion, he said, features tax rebates for clean energy projects like heat pumps, fleet electrification, and energy storage systems.

"If you dream it, and if you design it, these laws can help all 351 [Massachusetts] cities and towns to deliver it," said Markey.

He also pledged to defend critical federal funding programs for Massachusetts.

"SNAP, Medicaid, Medicare, reimbursements, and the Affordable Care Act aren't just budget lines," he said. "They are the lifelines for our local communities."

Markey said that Massachusetts "will weather the [President Donald] Trump storm once again," adding that, "No one manages a storm better than town and city administrators with a snow removal budget."

"Your effort is what helps us see a better tomorrow for everyone," he said. "We are not just served by the government, we are the government, and you bring the light." ●

Administration opens Community One Stop for Growth

By John Ouellette

At the MMA's Connect 351 conference on Jan. 24, Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll announced the launch of the fiscal 2026 application for Community One Stop for Growth, an application portal that provides access for municipalities and organizations to 12 state economic development grant programs.

Programs in the One Stop offer direct funding and support to housing and economic development projects related to placemaking, planning and zoning, site preparation, building construction, and infrastructure.

Healey said Community One Stop grants "spur economic growth, boost housing production, add jobs, and revitalize downtowns across Massachusetts."

Driscoll said Community One Stop "supports the economic development goals of cities and towns while empowering them to pursue their vision for growth."

Community One Stop offers a streamlined process for communities, organizations, and developers to access a range of economic development grants and technical assistance across multiple agencies. One Stop grant programs are administered by the Executive Office of Economic Development, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, and the quasi-public MassDevelopment agency.

Municipalities and organizations wishing to apply for funding through Community One Stop may begin by participating in an optional Expression of Interest process that runs through March 26. During this time, applicants may receive guidance on priority projects from EOED staff before submitting

a full application.

Applicants may begin working on their applications now in the portal. The EOED will accept full application submissions from May 5 through June 4, with awards announced in the fall.

Grant programs accessible through Community One Stop include the MassWorks Infrastructure Program, the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, the Rural Development Fund, the Housing Choice Grant Program, the Community Planning Grant Program, the HousingWorks Infrastructure Program, the Underutilized Properties Program, the Site Readiness Program, the Brownfields Redevelopment Fund, and the Real Estate Services Technical Assistance.

This year, Community One Stop is adding two existing state economic development programs to the portal: the Vacant Storefront Program and the Transformative Development Initiative Equity Investment Program.

The Vacant Storefront Program, administered by the EOED, offers municipalities access to up to \$50,000 of refundable tax credits they can use to incentivize businesses to occupy vacant storefronts in downtown and commercial areas.

The TDI Equity Investment Program, administered by MassDevelopment, provides grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$250,000 to revive commercial spaces in and around designated TDI Districts in Gateway Cities.

The EOED's Urban Agenda Program will not be offered through Community One Stop this year, but will be offered through a new online portal opening



The Community One Stop for Growth application portal is now open for fiscal 2026.

this spring. The administration said the change will allow for greater flexibility and benefits for prospective grantees.

In another change, the Collaborative Workspaces Program will be paused for the fiscal 2026 One Stop application round; applicants are encouraged to apply to the Underutilized Properties Program instead, when applicable.

Since its launch in 2021, Community One Stop has given nearly 1,200 awards totaling more than \$564 million in grant funds to 284 communities, including \$170 million to Gateway Cities and \$133 million to rural and small towns. Of the projects awarded to date, 30% are located in a rural or small town, 47% are located in a Housing Choice Community, 54% are located in an MBTA Community, and 32% are located in a Gateway City.

For more information and application details, visit www.mass.gov/onestop. ●

CCC begins to consider social consumption comments

The Cannabis Control Commission has drafted preliminary regulations around social consumption licensing.

The regulations would create three different on-site consumption license types:

- Supplemental, for existing marijuana establishments
- Hospitality, for a new or existing

non-cannabis businesses

- Event organizer, for temporary consumption events

The draft is a beginning step in the regulations process, and a final draft will be voted on before the formal process begins for promulgating regulations.

[See the CCC update for more information and a link to the draft regulations.](#)

The CCC solicited initial comments earlier this month, and the [MMA collaborated with the Massachusetts Municipal Lawyers Association to submit comments](#).

The CCC will allow for an additional comment period once its formal process begins later this year.

- Ali DiMatteo

Gov. Healey proposes changes to right-to-shelter law

Gov. Maura Healey on Jan. 15 proposed significant changes to the state's right-to-shelter law, including the imposition of a statutory residency requirement for families and strengthening criminal background checks.

The governor submitted the recommendations [in a letter](#) to legislative leaders urging them to include the changes in a [supplemental budget bill](#) she filed on Jan. 6.

In light of her evaluation of the right-to-shelter law and regulations, the "operational burdens" on the state's emergency shelter system, and a lack of federal support or action, the governor said the proposed changes "are appropriate and needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the state shelter system in a way that aligns with the original intent of the law."

She added that the changes will ensure the safety of the system, support cities and towns in addressing the needs of unhoused families in their communities, and lead to a more fiscally sustainable shelter system.

Proposed changes

Healey's suggested changes would



Gov. Maura Healey has proposed changes to the state's right-to-shelter law.

require all applicants to disclose criminal convictions in Massachusetts or elsewhere, and would codify the current state policy of conducting a CORI check prior to shelter placement.

Anyone seeking emergency assistance shelter would be required to show an intent to remain in Massachusetts, either through independent documentary verification or through three months of physical presence in the state.

Shelter applicants would be required to verify their identity, residency and status with documentation prior to placement.

In order to be eligible, those seeking

shelter due to several types of no-fault eviction would be required to demonstrate that the eviction occurred in Massachusetts.

Healey's proposal would require all family members to show they are U.S. citizens or lawfully present in the U.S., with the "rare exception" for those households that include a child who is a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident.

Healey said the state's 40-year-old right-to-shelter law was intended to provide housing for families in need, specifically pregnant women and children experiencing homelessness. But over the past three years, thousands of families have been arriving in Massachusetts from other states and other countries, due in part to the promise of shelter.

Over the past year, the administration has taken a [series of steps to manage the size and cost of the system](#), including setting a cap of 7,500 families and implementing length-of-stay requirements. The governor recently announced that the administration will phase out the use of hotels and motels as shelters by the end of 2025. ●

Supplemental budget bill seeks funds for shelter system

Gov. Maura Healey filed a supplemental budget bill on Jan. 6 to provide funding for the state's emergency assistance shelter system.

The bill ([H. 51](#)) would allocate \$425 million from the state's transitional escrow fund for the shelter system, some of which would provide relief to school districts impacted by increased student enrollment and provide additional assistance for communities hosting

unhoused families and family shelter sites.

In a [letter accompanying the bill](#), the governor said, "The current system, as operating, is unsustainable."

The governor's letter highlights several policy changes in her bill, including a commitment to phase out the use of hotels and motels for emergency shelter by the end of 2025, as recommended by the Special Commission on Emergency

Assistance.

A week later, on Jan. 15, the governor filed a letter with legislative leaders asking them to include, in the supplemental budget bill, [proposed changes to the right-to-shelter law](#) that are intended to reduce the strain on the shelter system.

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

- Jackie Lavender Bird

ATFC to hold regional meetings on March 27

The Association of Town Finance Committees will hold two free regional meetings on the evening of March 27.

A meeting at the [Reading Public Library](#) will focus on the finance committee's role in Town Meeting and how to create efficiencies. How does the finance committee make its budget presentation to town meeting? How can your committee improve communication with residents,

during Town Meeting and throughout the year?

Capital planning will be the focus of a meeting at the [Hadley Senior Center](#), covering the basics of developing and implementing a successful capital plan.

Both meetings will begin at 5 p.m. with light refreshments and networking. The program will begin at 5:30 p.m. and conclude at 7 p.m.

All finance committee and capital planning committee members are invited to these meetings. Online registration will be available in mid-February at [www.mma.org](#). There is no charge to attend, but registration is required.

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

Lt. Gov. urges participation in 250th celebration

By John Ouellette

At Connect 351, Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll urged local leaders to become involved in the statewide celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution.

“That’s a big point of pride in Massachusetts,” she told hundreds of local officials during the general session on Saturday, Jan. 25. “You know, we were the troublemakers that threw the tea in the harbor.

“We want to make sure we’re having a big celebration. We’re going to talk a lot about that. ... I’d encourage you to get a little bit more involved.”

Last September, state and local officials, legislators, and representatives from the Massachusetts arts, culture, and tourism industry gathered at the State House to launch the statewide [Massachusetts 250](#) campaign, which will highlight the state’s history and amplify untold stories of the Revolution through hundreds of cultural and community

events over the course of 2025 and 2026.

At that time, the administration announced [\\$1.5 million in grants](#) to 37 organizations through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism to support the development of projects that promote Massachusetts’ Revolutionary War history.

“We want to make sure we tell these revolutionary tales in every community across the Commonwealth, not just in the places that all of us read about in our history books,” Driscoll said at the MMA conference. “So we’re relying on you to help us tell those stories. ... We will help promote it. We will help market it.

“We want to make sure ... that people really recognize that Massachusetts



— this place that is known for a lot of things — really did spark the revolution that created this country. ... This is also a great way to bring visitors to your community, get those hotels filled, restaurants filled.”

Also at Connect 351, members of the administration held a special session to talk with local leaders about opportunities to participate in the 250th celebration.

The Massachusetts 250 creative campaign will collaborate with municipalities, community groups, businesses, and local organizations. Library programs, Revolutionary Weekends, and signature events will highlight the untold stories of Native Americans, women, and people of color who played crucial roles in shaping America and Massachusetts. The creative campaign will include billboards in Times Square in New York City and other out-of-state markets, as well as digital and social media ads. ●

MSBA accepting Statements of Interest for consideration in 2025

On Jan. 13, the Massachusetts School Building Authority began accepting Statements of Interest for consideration in 2025.

Submitting an SOI is the critical first step in the MSBA’s program for school building construction, addition, and/or renovation or repair grants. It allows districts to inform the MSBA about deficiencies that may exist in a local school facility and how those deficiencies inhibit the delivery of the district’s educational program.

March 21 is the SOI closing date for districts submitting for consideration under the Accelerated Repair Program, which is intended for roofs, windows/doors, and heat pump conversions in existing school facilities.

April 11 is the SOI closing date for districts submitting for consideration under the Core Program, which is intended for new construction, additions, and/or renovation projects. For more information, see the [Core Program SOI Overview](#) on the MSBA website.

The MSBA encourages all interested districts to submit an SOI to the MSBA, but the ARP is not appropriate for all potential projects. With each ARP



Massachusetts School Building Authority is accepting Statements of Interest until March 21 for its Accelerated Repair Program, and until April 11 for its Core Program.

project, the MSBA intends to prolong the longevity of the existing building and improve the environment of the school.

See the [ARP SOI Overview](#) on the MSBA website to view the changes to the ARP in 2025 and determine if submitting an SOI for a potential ARP project is appropriate.

Beginning this year, the ARP will have a biennial SOI opening (every two years). To facilitate schools moving toward

Massachusetts’ goal for net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, the MSBA is introducing heat pump conversion projects to ARP in 2025. The MSBA will continue to open the Statement of Interest System annually for consideration in the Core Program.

The MSBA has made changes to its SOI template for the 2025 filing period.

If the district submitted a Core Program or ARP SOI in 2024 and intends to use the pre-populate option to update this year’s SOI, changes to the SOI template may

impact responses to certain questions.

Supporting material is required when selecting Statutory Priorities 1 and 3. Districts may also decide to provide supplemental material. In both cases, the information must be electronically uploaded to the SOI system as a condition of submitting an SOI this year. Hard copies will no longer be accepted. ●

Law allows video monitoring for school bus safety

By Adrienne Núñez

Gov. Maura Healey has signed a bill, passed by the Legislature on Dec. 31, that gives communities the option to use video monitoring systems for school bus traffic violations.

The law, signed on Jan. 10, allows cities and towns to use cameras on school buses to record motor vehicles that fail to stop for a school bus.

The law is intended to improve compliance with school bus safety laws and better protect students who ride buses. Such legislation was a priority for the MMA and was included in the MMA's Legislative Package for 2025-26.

School bus "stop-arm" video enforcement has gained support after recent studies showed evidence of numerous violations. In May 2024, [Peabody Public Schools released data](#) documenting 3,412 incidents of vehicles failing to stop for school buses between September 2023 and May 2024 — or roughly 2.3 illegal passes per day.

The law defines a school bus violation detection monitoring system as a camera system that detects a motor vehicle overtaking or passing a school bus when the bus is stopped and displaying front and rear alternating flashing red signal lamps while picking up or dropping off students.



On Jan. 10, Gov. Maura Healey signed a bill allowing communities to use video for monitoring school bus traffic violations.

Buses equipped with such devices will be required to display signage indicating their use.

The system would record video and produce still images of the rear of a motor vehicle, with the license plate — with violations determined by at least one recording of the vehicle immediately before the violation and while illegally passing the stopped school bus.

Recordings and photographs would be reviewed by local law enforcement officers or their approved technicians

to determine whether a violation occurred. If it is determined that a violation occurred, the officer would issue a citation to the vehicle's registered owner.

Any penalty for a violation would not be considered a criminal conviction and would not be considered a moving violation, but it would be noted on the registered owner's or operator's driving record.

Recordings that do not identify violations must be destroyed after 30 days. All recordings that identify a violation must be destroyed

within one year of final disposition of proceedings related to enforcement of the violation.

The governor also signed a bill to allow automated enforcement of bus lane violations for MBTA and regional transit authority buses using designated bus lanes.

The pair of laws reflect heightened awareness of various traffic safety considerations and an increase in state and federal initiatives to reduce fatalities and injuries on roadways. ●

Budget writers announce revenue growth forecast of 2.2%

By Jackie Lavender Bird

On Jan. 9, the state's budget writers announced that state tax collections, excluding the income tax surcharge, are expected to grow by 2.2% in fiscal 2026 over the fiscal 2025 benchmark.

Administration and Finance Secretary Matthew Gorzkowicz, Senate Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues and House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz announced a consensus state tax revenue forecast of \$43.6 billion for the fiscal year that will begin on July 1. That figure includes a projected \$2.1 billion in fiscal 2026 from a surtax on personal incomes over \$1 million. As surtax revenue can only be spent on education and transportation programs, it is not factored into the percentage of overall growth for the consensus revenue forecast.



Senate Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues, left, House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz, center, and House Ways and Means Vice Chair Ann-Margaret Ferrante listen to testimony during the annual consensus revenue hearing on Dec. 2 at the State House.

The Healey-Driscoll administration and the House and Senate will use the consensus revenue estimate to build their respective fiscal 2026 state budget

recommendations. Gov. Maura Healey [filed her fiscal 2026 budget proposal](#) on Jan. 22.

With modest projected growth in state tax collections, it is not yet clear what the forecast will mean for local aid accounts.

Under state law, the three budget officials convene every year to establish a joint revenue forecast, and their estimate must be announced by Jan. 15. Part of the process is a public hearing, which was held on Dec. 2,

where budget writers hear testimony on the tax revenue outlook from the Department of Revenue, the Office of the State Treasurer, and independent, local economists. ●

MMA Webinars

Fire mutual aid

An MMA webinar on Jan. 16 discussed the importance of fire department mutual aid in Massachusetts.

The Department of Fire Services, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts provided an overview of mutual aid efforts and how they help to mitigate wildfires and other disasters, as well as their legal framework.

Peter Burke and Michael Kelleher, past and current presidents of the Fire Chiefs Association, respectively, reviewed when mutual aid is used and what it looks like. Burke discussed three case studies: a 2018 natural gas explosion in the Merrimack Valley, extreme flooding in North Attleborough in 2023, and a 2023 fire at Brockton Hospital.

Dave Celino, chief fire warden with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, discussed factors that influenced this past fall's wildfires around the state, citing drought, above-average temperatures, multi-day wind events, consistently low dew points, and seasonal leaf drop.

"Massachusetts is no stranger to wildfire events," Celino added.

Celino recommended thinking strategically about how a situation can be managed before it happens.

Glenn Rooney, general counsel for the Department of Fire Services, shared a [Reference Guide](#) on mutual aid in Massachusetts, prepared by the Office of General Counsel, which covers legal considerations.

'Inspiring Climate Action' finale

The MMA hosted the seventh and final session of its "Inspiring Climate Action" webinar series on Jan. 29, with a session reviewing programs facilitated by the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience.

Aladdine Joroff, deputy climate chief and director of mitigation and community resilience in the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience, gave updates on the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, which is required as part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program.

Jonathan Schrag, deputy climate chief and director of investment for decarbonization and resilience, discussed an ongoing financing study and some existing federal tax credit programs relevant to renewable energy and decarbonization projects.

Schrag said municipalities face three real challenges when accessing the Clean Energy Tax Credits, funded by the Inflation Reduction Act: filing the tax credits, planning and designing the projects, and financing the tax credits upfront. He said he anticipates the direct pay tax credits to be the largest source of new federal funding for clean energy in the next couple of years.

MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine moderated 30 minutes of questions and answers, which addressed inquiries about funding opportunities for communities to hire climate staff, ensuring competitive grant programs are accessible to all communities, and working with new energy managers.



Fire officials discuss the importance of fire department mutual aid in Massachusetts during a recent MMA webinar. Speakers included, clockwise from top left, Peter Burke, past president of the Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts; Dave Celino, chief fire warden with the Department of Conservation and Recreation; Glenn Rooney, Department of Fire Services general counsel; and Michael Kelleher, current president of the Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts.

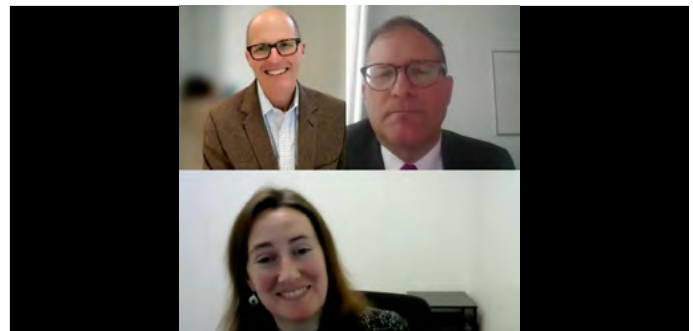
Date: Jan. 16

Length: 75 minutes

[VIEW WEBINAR ↗](#)

State Fire Marshal Jon Davine moderated 10 minutes of questions and answers, which addressed how mutual aid is tracked to ensure it is statistically reciprocated, when to send a fire truck and/or an ambulance to medical calls, and if forest management has an impact on the proliferation of forest wildfires.

— *Kristianna Lapierre*



State officials discuss programs facilitated by the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience during an "Inspiring Climate Action" webinar. Participants included, clockwise from top left, MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine; Jonathan Schrag, deputy climate chief and director of investment for decarbonization and resilience; and Aladdine Joroff, deputy climate chief and director of mitigation and community resilience in the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience.

Date: Jan. 29

Length: 75 minutes

[VIEW WEBINAR ↗](#)

The "Inspiring Climate Action" webinar series explored how climate change is affecting municipalities and addressed how municipal officials and staff can take action.

— *Kristianna Lapierre*

MMA Webinars

Transportation grants

An MMA webinar on Jan. 13 reviewed transportation grants and resources available to Massachusetts communities through the Department of Transportation and MassTrails.

Kristen Rebelo, MassDOT's community grants administrator, began by introducing her agency's [Grant Central](#) portal, which launched in April 2024.

She said the portal "was our effort to streamline the process of grant management and make it easier for communities to obtain and manage their MassDOT funds through the Highway Division." Municipalities can access the following programs: Chapter 90, Complete Streets, Local Bottleneck Reduction, Municipal Pavement, Municipal Small Bridges, and Shared Streets and Spaces.

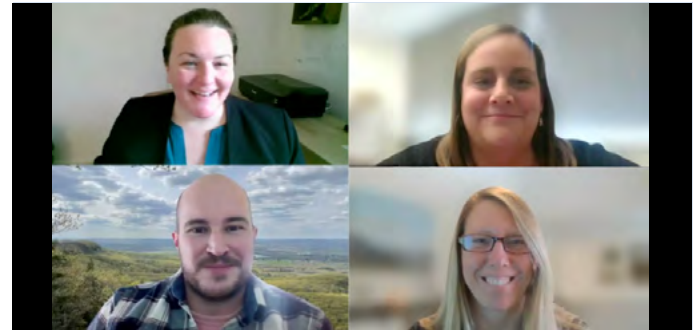
Rebelo also discussed MassDOT's Safe Routes to School program, an initiative that organizes events to promote safe biking, walking, and rolling to schools.

Amanda Lewis, director of MassTrails at the Department of Conservation and Recreation, discussed MassTrails and its grant program application. She said MassTrails seeks projects that are equitable, accessible, efficient and safe.

MassTrails Grant Program Manager Eli Velluti-Fry gave examples of eligible grant projects, including trail assessments, the design and creation of trail maps or brochures, and the rental or purchase of trail construction and maintenance equipment.

More than 250 communities have received funding through the MassTrails grant program.

MMA Legislative Analyst Adrienne Núñez moderated 30 minutes of questions and answers, which addressed Complete Streets Program requirements, applications covering more than one of



Panelists review transportation grants and resources that are available to Massachusetts communities through the Department of Transportation and MassTrails during a recent MMA webinar. Speakers included, clockwise from top left, MMA Legislative Analyst Adrienne Núñez; MassDOT Community Grants Administrator Kristen Rebelo; Amanda Lewis, director of MassTrails at the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and MassTrails Grant Program Manager Eli Velluti-Fry.

Date: Dec. 13

Length: 75 minutes

[VIEW WEBINAR](#) ↗

the main focus areas, and if applying for one grant excludes a community from applying to others.

– *Kristianna Lapierre*

Webinar Topic Submission Form launched

The MMA invites members to submit topic ideas for webinars or offer their expertise to present on a topic. Visit the [webinars form](#) on our website.

MMA to host webinar on citizen academies on Feb. 13

The MMA will host a webinar on Feb. 13 covering strategies to help municipal leaders launch and run a citizens academy.

Citizen academies are educational programs designed to help residents gain a better understanding of the daily operations of local government. The programs can foster greater community involvement, encourage participation in local boards and commissions, and strengthen relationships and understanding between residents and government.

Pittsfield Administrative Services Director Catherine VanBramer, Danvers Assistant Town Manager and Communications Director Jen Breaker, and Barnstable Town Manager Mark Ells will share insights from their successful experiences running academies in their



Catherine VanBramer



Jen Breaker



Mark Ells

communities.

The panelists will walk attendees through the steps for launching a citizens academy, sharing best practices and lessons learned. They will cover how their community decided on program length, departments involved, format, and

other important considerations.

[Online registration is available](#) for the 75-minute webinar, which will begin at noon. Only MMA members may register. MMA members include elected officials and municipal employees from

MMA member communities across the state. Media members are not permitted to attend.

For more information, contact MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre at klapierre@mma.org. ●

2025 MMA Board of Directors installed

The 2025 MMA Board of Directors was installed during the association's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 25.

The voting directors are elected by the following MMA organizations: Massachusetts Mayors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, Massachusetts Select Board Association, and Association of Town Finance Committees.

The immediate past president of the MMA is an ex-officio member.

The board members for 2025 are:

Appointed directors

MMA President: Jamie Hellen* Town Administrator, Franklin

MMA Vice President: Cassandra Gove* Mayor, Amesbury

Mayors' Association President: Michael Nicholson* Mayor, Gardner

Mayors' Association First Vice President: Josh Garcia* Mayor, Holyoke

Mayors' Association Second Vice President: Michelle Wu Mayor, Boston

Councillors' Association President: Brendan Sweeney* Councillor, Beverly

Councillors' Association First Vice President: Lisa Feltner* Councillor, Watertown

MMA Immediate Past President and Councillors' Association Second Vice President: John McLaughlin Councillor, Waltham

Management Association President: John Mangiaratti* Town Manager, Acton



MMA President and Franklin Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, right, with MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine, gathers with other members of the MMA Board of Directors on Jan. 25 at the MMA Annual Business Meeting in Boston.

Management Association First Vice President: Denise Casey* Deputy Town Manager, North Andover

Management Association Second Vice President: Kevin Mizikar Town Manager, Shrewsbury

Select Board Association President: Debra Roberts* Select Board, Stoughton

Select Board Association First Vice President: Jennifer Glass* Select Board, Lincoln

Select Board Association Second Vice President: Jill Hai Select Board, Lexington

Finance Committees President: Melinda Tarsi-Goldfien* Industrial and Development Committee, Mansfield

Finance Committees First Vice President: Kevin Sullivan* Finance Committee, Hanson

MMA Executive Director: Adam Chapdelaine* (ex-officio, non-voting)

Elected directors

Paul Bockelman, Town Manager, Amherst

Colleen Bradley-McArthur, Councillor, Waltham

Peter Cusolito, Select Board Member, Leicester

Denise Demboski, Town Administrator, Stow

Yolanda Greaves, Select Board Member, Ashland

Christine Hoyt, Select Board Member, Adams

Carole Julius, Select Board Member, East Bridgewater

Afroz Khan, Councillor, Newburyport

Andrea Llamas, Town Administrator, Northfield

Breanna Lungo-Koehn, Mayor, Medford

Mike McCabe, Mayor, Westfield

Michael Ossing, Councillor, Marlborough

Ryan Pereria, Councillor, New Bedford

Kiana Pierre-Louis, Select Board Member, Sharon

Israel Rivera, Councillor, Holyoke

Sam Squailia, Mayor, Fitchburg

Liz Sullivan, Town Administrator, Dennis

Robert Sullivan, Mayor, Brockton

* Denotes Executive Committee member

FY26 BUDGET

Continued from page 3

Road and bridge funding

House 1 reflects the governor's [recent announcement of major investments in transportation](#) statewide. To that end, House 1 would dedicate \$765 million of fiscal 2026 surtax funding toward the

state's Commonwealth Transportation Fund, to increase bonding capacity by \$5 billion.

Using this new bonding capacity, the governor announced that she would seek a five-year, [\\$1.5 billion investment in the Chapter 90 program](#) for local road and bridge maintenance — an annual increase of \$100 million.

The fiscal 2025 supplemental budget bill also includes \$25 million for the Winter Resilience Assistance Program.

Cherry Sheets

The Division of Local Services has posted [preliminary Cherry Sheets](#) for municipalities and regional school districts based on the governor's House 1 proposal. ●

Applications open for MMA-Suffolk Certificate program

By Kate Evarts

The MMA and Suffolk University will hold a Zoom information session on March 12 about upcoming offerings of the Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program.

To register for the session, visit www.mma.org or [click here](#). The one-hour session will begin at 10 a.m.

The graduate-level academic program provides a solid grounding in municipal management, and covers topics such as human resources management, budgeting and financial management, and strategic leadership.

The program is held over the course of 25 Fridays from September through May. The 2025-2026 certificate programs will be hosted in Barnstable and Winchester; the program is held in person (40%) and on Zoom (60%).

The certificate program application became available on the [MMA website](#) on Feb. 1, and the deadline to apply is April 30. This is a competitive application process; applicants will be notified of their status by mid-May.

Municipal Fellowship

The MMA and Suffolk University will also hold a Zoom information session about their Municipal Fellowship Program on Feb. 6 at 10 a.m. To register, visit www.mma.org or [click here](#).

Municipal professionals interested in pursuing a [Master of Public Administration](#) degree at Suffolk University are encouraged to apply for the fellowship program, which offers a scholarship of up to \$28,000, while the recipient's municipality commits to continuing their salary and



Students from the MMA-Suffolk winter 2025 Municipal HR Seminar gather online on Jan. 31 for their orientation. There are 26 students in this third session of the HR seminar.

position while they attend the program part-time.

Fellowship applicants must be accepted for admission to Suffolk's Master of Public Administration program and must receive the support of the chief municipal official in their municipality. Additional consideration will be given to graduates of the MMA-Suffolk Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program.

Those interested in the Municipal Fellowship should check off, on [Suffolk's application](#), that they are a municipal employee interested in the fellowship, and apply to Suffolk by May 1. The fellowship

selection committee will interview qualified applicants and award up to two fellowships in June.

More information

The MMA has partnered with Suffolk University since 2011 to offer programs designed exclusively for municipal employees to help them further their professional careers.

For more information on any of the MMA-Suffolk programs, visit www.mma.org/suffolk or contact Katie McCue at 617-426-7272, ext. 111, or kmccue@mma.org, or Kate Evarts at 617-426-7272, ext. 172, or kevarts@mma.org.

Management Association to hold half-day boot camp on Feb. 27

The Massachusetts Municipal Management Association will hold a Finance 101 "boot camp" on Feb. 27 at Grand View Farm in Burlington.

The free event will focus on finance for those new to the management profession, with substantive presentations as well as an opportunity for attendees to network.

The session leaders — Concord Town Manager Kerry Lafleur and Medfield Assistant Town Administrator Frank Gervasio — will discuss the basics of



Kerry Lafleur



Frank Gervasio

budget development and the roles and

responsibilities of those engaged in the budget process.

The meeting will run from 9 a.m. to noon. Lunch will be provided.

[Online registration is available on www.mma.org](http://www.mma.org).

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

MMHR presents Skop Award to Molly Fitzpatrick

By Anneke Craig

Westwood Deputy Town Administrator Molly Fitzpatrick received the 2024 Emil Skop Award during a Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources-sponsored workshop held at Connect 351 on Jan. 24 in Boston.

The Skop Award is given each year in recognition of outstanding contributions made to the field of municipal human resources management.

Emil Skop was one of the founding members of the Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association (renamed MMHR in 2019) and served as its first executive secretary. Before “networking” became a recognizable term, Skop recognized the value of sharing information and experiences with other human resources and labor relations professionals, and was recognized for his tireless efforts in this area.

Keeping with MMHR tradition, the previous year’s Skop awardee, Danvers Assistant Town Manager Jen Breaker,



Westwood Deputy Town Administrator Molly Fitzpatrick, second from right, poses with her 2024 Emil Skop Award during a Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources-sponsored workshop at Connect 351 on Jan. 24 in Boston. Joining her, left to right, are North Andover Deputy Town Manager Denise Casey, Danvers Assistant Town Manager Jen Breaker, and Southborough Assistant Town Administrator Vanessa Hale.

gave a speech celebrating Fitzpatrick’s achievements.

“The individual receiving this year’s award is a trailblazer in local

government HR,” Breaker said. “She is always willing to help her HR colleagues, talking through issues and empathizing with a hard day ... And she does this while being one of the most upbeat, fun, and compassionate municipal leaders I know.”

Breaker also highlighted Fitzpatrick’s respected track record in collective bargaining and trust-building during the negotiation process; innovative approaches to employee recruitment, retention and recognition; and mentorship and networking work in support of fellow MMHR members.

“I am honored to announce that this year’s Skop Award winner is my friend, and your amazing colleague, Molly Fitzpatrick,” she said. ●

Select board members discuss stress, mental health

By Anneke Craig

During the Massachusetts Select Board Association’s Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 25 at Connect 351, Matt Lehrman, co-founder of Social Prosperity Partners, discussed mental health and stress management for public officials.

Lehrman, who was also the Saturday keynote speaker at Connect 351, led an interactive conversation on recognizing and managing the personal stress of civic leadership in order to foster healthier leaders, promote inclusive and resilient communities, and create the conditions for more effective governance.

“This is something to be intentional about,” he said. “This is something to reflect on in your life, and with a loved one.”

Lehrman invited attendees to assess their stress levels as elected municipal officials, and examine the primary causes. Participants identified personal examples of both “episodic” stress (stress caused by limited or infrequent but extreme circumstances) and “latent” stress (stress caused by constant, uncomfortable circumstances).



Belchertown Select Board Vice Chair Lesa Lessard Pearson speaks during the Massachusetts Select Board Association’s Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 25 in Boston.

Citing a study on the decreased life expectancy of municipal law enforcement officers post-retirement, Lehrman said high stress levels affect the mental and physical health of public servants, and their ability to lead effectively.

“Surges and dumps of adrenaline ... it takes a physical toll on your body,” he said. “It affects your relationships and

how you deal with stress.”

Lehrman said stress management is also important for elected officials in order to build and maintain strong relationships with their communities. He identified misinformation, distrust and dysfunction as the “community costs” of stress and “unproductive conflict.” Productive conflict, however, is a healthy component of community-building.

“This theme keeps resurfacing,” he said. “Effective leaders take care of their personal mental health and wellness. ... It’s something we must bring to our work.”

The MSA business meeting included remarks from MSA President and Stoughton Select Board Member Debra Roberts, a report from the MSA Nominating Committee, and a vote on the [2025 MSA officers and district representatives](#). ●

MMA presents municipal website awards

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

Five communities from across the state were recognized as winners of the MMA's annual [municipal website awards](#) during the [Connect 351](#) conference in Boston on Jan. 24.

The awards recognize excellence in customer service, functionality, convenience and government transparency delivered by a municipal website in Massachusetts.

Awards are given in five population categories:

More than 35,000: Watertown — www.watertown-ma.gov

25,001 to 35,000: North Andover — www.northandoverma.gov

12,001 to 25,000: Belchertown — www.belchertown.org

5,001 to 12,000: Littleton — www.littletonma.org

Under 5,000: Sherborn — www.sherbornma.org

Municipal websites are evaluated using the following criteria:

- Clear branding as the official municipal government site, with local government address and hours prominently listed
- Intuitive navigation tools and organization of material
- Robust search function
- Current and timely information
- Availability of public records
- Mobile-friendly or mobile-responsive design
- Resources for residents such as the ability to apply for licenses and permits, pay bills, order documents and make suggestions
- Tools to promote economic development (e.g., ability to obtain licenses and permits or view list of developable land and vacant sites)
- Information about departments (e.g., key personnel, contact information,

office hours, and department mission or purpose)

- Use of social media and tools for online community engagement
- Visual appeal and overall experience

Previous winners are not eligible to re-enter the contest unless their website has undergone a significant redesign.

This year's contest judges were Wendy Foxmyn, a retired town administrator in Deerfield who served as the chief administrative officer, assistant chief administrative officer, and interim town administrator in more than a dozen western Massachusetts communities; and Tricia Vinchesi, a retired regional director at the International City/County Management Association, former president of the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, a founding member of Women Leading Government, and a former town administrator in Scituate, South Hadley, Whately and Longmeadow. ●

MMA announces town report winners

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

Andover, Auburn, Lee and Avon took the top prizes in their respective categories in the MMA's Annual [Town Report Contest](#).

The award winners were recognized during the [Connect 351](#) conference in Boston on Jan. 24.

The following communities received awards:



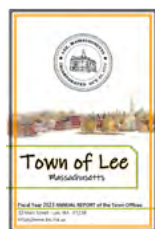
Category 1 (population above 30,000)

- 1st place: Andover
2nd place: Shrewsbury
3rd place: Arlington and Falmouth (tie)



Category 2 (population of 15,001-30,000)

- 1st place: Auburn
2nd place: Westwood
3rd place: Foxborough



Category 3 (population of 5,000-15,000)

- 1st place: Lee
2nd place: Westminster
3rd place: Tyngsborough



Category 4 (population below 5,000)

- 1st place: Avon
2nd place: Leyden
3rd place: Phillipston

Judging criteria include visual appeal, arrangement of material,

layout and cover design, presentation of statistics and data, summary of the year's achievements, evidence of local planning for the future, and the report's usefulness.

State law ([Ch. 40, Sect. 49](#)) requires towns to prepare and publish an annual town report before their annual town

meeting. The reports typically include financial information, highlights of the previous calendar year, reports from major boards, committees and key officials (including the select board), election results, and town meeting information.

Serving as judges for the MMA contest this year were Bill Keegan, a retired town manager in Foxborough who also served in Dedham, Seekonk and Shrewsbury, and Carl Valente, a retired town manager who served in Lexington, Weston and Needham. ●

U.S. Rep. Clark to keynote WEMO Conference in March

House Minority Whip Katherine Clark, the highest-ranking woman in the U.S. Congress, will be the keynote speaker at the Women Elected Municipal Officials Leadership Conference on March 21 in Wrentham.

For the past dozen years, Clark has represented Massachusetts' 5th Congressional District, including Revere, Winthrop and other communities just north of Boston as well as portions of the MetroWest region. She was elected House Minority Whip in 2022.

Clark previously served as a Massachusetts state senator and



Rep. Katherine Clark

representative, and as a member of the Melrose School Committee. A former general counsel for the Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services, Clark has been a leading advocate for policies supporting women and families

throughout her career.

The WEMO Leadership Conference will

be held at Lake Pearl, 299 Creek St. in Wrentham, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

All women elected municipal officials in Massachusetts are considered members of WEMO and are invited to attend. More information, as well as an agenda and registration link, will be emailed to WEMO members and made available at www.mma.org in the coming weeks.

Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig at acraig@mma.org

MSA to host webinar with Moderators Association on Feb. 25

On Feb. 25, the Massachusetts Select Board Association will hold an interactive webinar with the Massachusetts Moderators Association: "An Insider's Look at Town Meeting."

Veteran town moderators Mark DiSalvo, Carmin Reiss, Alan Foulds and John Arnold will discuss both open and representative town meetings.

The conversation will cover:

- Building strong relationships between select boards and moderators
- How to manage discord at (and before) town meeting
- Increasing resident engagement and



Mark DiSalvo



Carmen Reiss



Alan Foulds

new and seasoned MSA members are welcome to attend for a timely discussion before town meeting season begins.

The webinar will run from noon to 1:15 p.m. and will be moderated by Lincoln Select

Board Member Jennifer Glass, the MSA's District 2 representative.

Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig at acraig@mma.org

- participation
 - Using technology in town meetings
- Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in an interactive open dialogue moderated by DiSalvo. Both

TRANSPORTATION

Continued from page 5

detailed recommendations to support this framework, as well as a collection of data and analysis the Task Force undertook throughout the year.

Key task force recommendations include:

- Allocating half of Fair Share revenues to transportation over time
- Expanding capital capacity for transportation by dedicating a significant portion of Fair Share revenue to the Commonwealth Transportation Fund

- Using Fair Share to stabilize public transportation agency operations
- Maintaining predictable and stable funding for investments in Regional Transit Authorities and microtransit providers
- Reviewing revenue and funding opportunities for local governments
- Continuing to aggressively pursue federal funds
- Deploying the recently enacted state matching funds pool to compete for federal funding and reduce transportation debt
- Working with other states and cities to advocate for federal reauthorization, including support for transit, rail, highway, and other transportation priorities
- Increasing investment in the Chapter 90 program by at least 50% to improve local transportation infrastructure conditions
- Creating a strategy for culvert and small bridge infrastructure resilience

MMA group and affiliated organization officers for 2025

At their annual business meetings held during Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 25, member groups representing the state's mayors, councillors, town managers and administrators, and select board members elected their officers for 2025.

Women Elected Municipal Officials named its 2025 Steering Committee at its annual Leadership Luncheon on Jan. 24. Other groups closely affiliated with the MMA selected their leadership in the summer or fall of 2024.

Massachusetts Mayors' Association



Michael Nicholson

President: Michael Nicholson, Gardner
 First vice president: Josh Garcia, Holyoke
 Second vice president: Michelle Wu, Boston
 District 1: Mike McCabe, Westfield
 District 2: Sam Squailia, Fitchburg

District 3: Kassandra Gove, Amesbury
 District 4: Breanna Lungo-Koehn, Medford
 District 5: Robert Sullivan, Brockton

Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association



Brendan Sweeney

President: Brendan Sweeney, Beverly
 First vice president: Lisa Feltner, Watertown
 Second vice president: John McLaughlin, Waltham
 District 1: Israel Rivera, Holyoke
 District 2: Michael Ossing, Marlborough
 District 3: Afroz Khan,

Newburyport
 District 4: Ryan Pereria, New Bedford
 District 5: Colleen Bradley-McArthur, Waltham

Massachusetts Municipal Management Association



John Mangiaratti

President: John Mangiaratti, town manager, Acton
 First vice president: Denise Casey, deputy town manager, North Andover
 Second vice president: Kevin Mizikar, town manager, Shrewsbury
 Secretary/treasurer: Jim Boudreau, town administra-

tor, Scituate
 District 1: Andrea Llamas, town administrator, Northfield
 District 2: Jamie Hellen, town administrator,

Franklin
 District 3: Denise Dembkoski, town administrator, Stow
 District 4: Paul Bockelman, town manager, Amherst
 District 5: Liz Sullivan, town administrator, Dennis

At-large representatives:
 Lisa Green, town administrator, Hanson
 Heather Harper, assistant town manager, Sandwich
 Andrew Flanagan, town manager, Andover
 Peter Lombardi, town manager, Brewster

Massachusetts Select Board Association



Debra Roberts

President: Debra Roberts, Stoughton
 First vice president: Jennifer Glass, Lincoln
 Second vice president: Jill Hai, Lexington
 Secretary: Anita Mecklenburg, Norfolk
 District 1: Christine Hoyt, Adams

District 2: Yolanda Greaves, Ashland
 District 3: Kiana Pierre-Louis, Sharon
 District 4: Carole Julius, East Bridgewater
 District 5: Peter Cusolito, Leicester

Association of Town Finance Committees



Melinda Tarsi-Goldfien

President: Melinda Tarsi-Goldfien, Mansfield
 First vice president: Kevin Sullivan, Hanson
 Second vice president: Mary McBride, Billerica
 Treasurer: Al Tosti, Arlington
 Directors:
 Dana DeCosta, Harwich
 Jonathan Harris, Weston
 William Stuart, Rockland

Kaitlin Morin, Webster
 James Walters, Halifax

Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources Association



Vanessa Hale

Chair: Vanessa Hale, assistant town administrator, Southborough
 Vice chair: Dolores Hamilton, human resources director, Wellesley
 Treasurer: Molly Fitzpatrick, assistant town administrator/human

resources director, Westwood
 Secretary: Jen Breaker, assistant town manager and communications director, Danvers
 Past presidents: Denise Casey,

deputy town manager, North Andover
 Mary Beth Bernard, retired

Directors:
 Karen Bratt, human resources director, Franklin
 Marie Buckner, human resources director, Sandwich
 Stephanie Duggan, assistant town administrator/human resources director, Maynard

Gregory Enos, assistant town administrator/human resources director, Wrentham
 Joanne Faust, human resources director, Burlington
 Caitlyn Julius, assistant human resources director, Springfield
 Michelle Pizzi O'Brien, human resources director, Newton
 Michael Taylor, human resources director, Pittsfield

Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts



Denise Dembkoski

Chair: Denise Dembkoski, town administrator, Stow
 Vice chair: Ryan McLane, town administrator, Carlisle
 Secretary/Treasurer: Paul McLatchy III, town administrator, Ashfield

Women Elected Municipal Officials



Lisa Kouchakdjian

Chair: Lisa Kouchakdjian, Select Board member, Sudbury
 First vice chair: Hannah Belcher, councillor, Winthrop
 Directors: Gina-Louise Sciarra, mayor, Northampton; Lynn Griesemer, councillor, Amherst; Elizabeth Dionne, Select Board member, Belmont; Karen Gately Herrick, Select Board member, Reading

Massachusetts Municipal Communicators



Sean Dugan

Chair: Sean Dugan, assistant town administrator, Easton
 Vice Chair: Jeremy Warnick, director of media relations and content strategy, Cambridge

MIIA presents safety, risk management, wellness awards

By Jennifer Ranz

During its Annual Business Meeting at Connect 351 in Boston on Jan. 25, MIIA presented awards to member communities to recognize their commitment to safety, risk management, and employee wellness.

Safety Leadership

Shawn Comeau, public works code enforcer for the city of Leominster, was awarded the second annual MIIA Safety Leadership Award, which recognizes an individual dedicated to high safety standards and who exemplifies a commitment to protecting people and property.

As a skilled and dedicated safety professional, Comeau has elevated Leominster's safety efforts from compliance to a broader leadership strategy. This is reflected in his recent accomplishments, which include helping the city conduct a 500-year flood recovery process, working to keep Leominster's employees healthy and injury-free, and developing a robust safety program for the local Department of Public Works.



Hadley Select Board Chair Molly Keegan, second from right, poses with Hadley's risk management award during the MIIA Annual Business Meeting in Boston on Jan. 25. Standing with her, left to right, are MIIA Chair and Chelmsford Town Manager Paul Cohen; Lin Chabra, MIIA's senior manager of risk management; and MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine.

Comeau also participates in Leominster's Safety Committee meetings, works collaboratively across city departments, and is currently leading the development of a city-wide Safety and Health Program. He met or exceeded all award criteria, including demonstrating concern for protecting people

and property, dedication to high safety standards, continuous improvement of worker health and safety, and exemplary leadership, partnership and collaboration.

Risk Management

MIIA's Risk Management program recognized the following members for their commitment to safety and renewed compliance with U.S. Occupational Health and Safety Administration standards.

Brewster: The town of Brewster has demonstrated a consistent and proactive focus

on risk management. The leadership holds quarterly safety meetings where departments collaborate to identify key loss areas and trends and then develops preventative safety programs and training to address them. In response

■ MIIA continued on 35

Multiple factors contribute to rising health care costs

By Jennifer Ranz

Health care costs are rising sharply, creating challenges for employers, including municipalities.

A convergence of factors is driving the trend, and experts predict that cost increases will continue well into the next decade.

One key factor is increased utilization. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for health care services has soared, particularly for [mental health care](#), with usage levels far exceeding those seen a few years ago. At the same time, prescriptions and [elective surgeries](#) are on the rise, contributing to the overall surge in health care spending.

Adding to the pressure, the costs of

delivering care are climbing. Labor shortages have hit health care providers hard, with an [estimated 20% of nurses](#) leaving the profession. This has driven up personnel costs, with most health care systems (particularly larger ones) requesting significant rate increases year-over-year. The unexpected increase in [GLP-1 drugs](#) being used for weight loss — a high-cost treatment for this condition — has added billions in unanticipated expenses to the system.

Further, low Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates mean private health care systems must offset these shortfalls, leading to higher costs for insurance plans. A [recent Rand Corp. study](#) showed that private health care

costs are now more than two-and-a-half times those of Medicare and Medicaid.

"While insurance carriers are actively negotiating to keep rate increases manageable, this upward trajectory looks likely to continue," said Chris Bailey, director of MIIA's Health Benefits Trust.

Municipal employers are advised to be prepared budget-wise, as health care costs are [projected to rise](#) through at least 2032.

For more information on how these changes may impact your municipality's insurance plan coverage and costs, contact your municipal health insurance provider. ●

MMA PRESIDENT; VP

Continued from page 1

leadership throughout 2025, which will likely involve significant change at the global, national and state levels. He expressed confidence that local leaders will navigate challenges to have a successful and productive year.

Hellen said the biggest challenge for municipalities this year will be maintaining fiscal solvency. Local governments will struggle to balance budgets without making significant cuts “due to a perfect storm of factors”: a scarcity of federal funds, increasing demands for public services, added federal and state mandates, and the “sky-high” cost of living and continued cost pressures in almost every area of local government.

“I think it will be very important for the entire MMA membership to make sure their voices are heard on Beacon Hill relative to supporting significant increases in [Unrestricted General Government Aid], Chapter 70 and Chapter 90 to ensure cities and towns can perform the basics for our citizens,” Hellen said. “Every city and town *has* a unique fiscal challenge, but every one of us has a fiscal challenge, which relies heavily on state aid to solve.”

Hellen, who also serves as the District 2 representative for the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, has been Franklin’s town administrator since 2019, after serving as the deputy administrator for more than three years. Previously, he was operations assistant to the town manager in Hopkinton, the municipal services coordinator at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council,

and a staff member for several legislators and at the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Growing up in a family dedicated to municipal service, he began his public service career as a teenage lifeguard.

Hellen said he wants municipal leaders to have confidence in their role in the state’s success, and articulate their needs and the value they provide to Massachusetts.

“Cities and towns are the foundation and the front lines of public service delivery in our state,” he said.

Gove, the mayor of Amesbury since January 2020, said she’s “grateful for the chance to lead among an organization of leaders” and to advance their work in a meaningful way.

“I’ve benefited tremendously from the MMA, and the network it provides with extensive experience and resources available in its membership, staff and programs,” Gove said. “I also recognize the role of the organization in supporting the relationship between local officials and state leaders, and the opportunity we have to strengthen that relationship with power in numbers.”

Gove is also serving as the District 3 representative for the Massachusetts Mayors’ Association. Before becoming mayor, she spent five years working at the Amesbury Chamber of Commerce, ultimately becoming its executive director. She has also been a real estate agent, and has worked as an assistant director for programs serving students and alumni at Boston University and Clark University.

“I’m a fifth generation Amesbury native, the youngest and first female to be entrusted with the duty of leading our city,” Gove said. “I ran for office to make a difference and solve problems that matter. I enjoy the complexity of our everyday work.”

When they’re not working on behalf of local government, Hellen and Gove both enjoy recharging outdoors. Hellen spends time hiking, traveling, gardening and “continuing the seemingly never-ending house restoration.” Gove swims outdoors year-round and enjoys cold-water plunging, a vestige from the pandemic, and exploring the heights of New England.

“When not conquering a mountain of emails, I have found time to hike all the 48 New Hampshire 4,000 footers and Maine’s tallest peak, Mount Katahdin,” Gove said. “This summer, I’ll be working toward the remainder of the Maine 4,000-footers.”

Gove also plans to spend the next year listening to and learning from MMA board members and officials around the state. Hellen said he learned a great deal as the MMA’s vice president, and it gave him hope for the state’s prospects, even while facing challenges.

“My biggest takeaway was how incredibly bright the future of our state is, due to the many elected and appointed leaders I had the opportunity to meet this past year,” Hellen said. “This has reaffirmed my belief that we are the greatest state in the country, and the future for our Commonwealth remains as bright as ever.” ●

WAGE EQUITY

Continued from page 9

requirements, and municipalities with 100 or more employees must file reports with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. These biennial filings (EEO-4 reports) cover workforce demographic data, including data by race, ethnicity, sex, job category, and salary band.

The wage equity law creates a process for the state to compile and analyze the aggregated EEOC report data. It also seeks to avoid any administrative burden on local officials by simply requiring the submission of any existing EEOC report to the secretary of state.

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development has compiled a [comprehensive FAQ page](#) to help employers navigate the reporting process.

The Frances Perkins Workplace Equity Act also requires Massachusetts employers with 25 or more employees to disclose reasonable wage or salary ranges when hiring for a position — something that is already a common practice across local government. The requirements for salary ranges on job postings will go into effect on Oct. 29, 2025. ●

Three communities recognized with Innovation Awards

By Jennifer Kavanaugh

This month's Mass Innovations column showcases the winners of the MMA's annual [Kenneth Pickard Innovation Award](#).

The awards went to projects that:

- Created a volunteer program to coach residents on clean energy solutions
- Launched a town hall text app to inform and engage residents
- Established a regional public health partnership for four communities

The winners were announced on Jan. 24 during the Connect 351 conference in Boston. This year's awards were judged by Andy Hogeland, a former Williamstown Select Board member, and Jim Malloy, who recently retired as the town manager in Lexington.

The award is named in honor of Kenneth Pickard, the executive secretary of the Massachusetts League of Cities and Towns from 1969 to 1973.

Acton's coaches help people adopt clean energy upgrades

As the town of Acton pursues its climate goals, a community-focused program has embraced a new spin on an old adage: Clean energy begins at home.

In February 2023, Acton launched a [Clean Energy Coaching program](#) to help residents and building owners navigate the complex world of energy upgrades, from installing heat pumps and solar panels to buying electric vehicles. Trained volunteer coaches from the community provide free consultations and educate people about clean energy options, with support from Adobe, an energy management and consulting service.

"This program reflects Acton's commitment to speed the transition to a clean energy future," said Andrea Becerra, Acton's sustainability director. "With support from our dedicated volunteers, the program empowers residents and building owners with the tools, knowledge and support they need to make informed decisions about clean energy upgrades."



Andrea Becerra, Acton's sustainability director, appears in a recent local television ad promoting the town's Clean Energy Coaching program.

The coaching program has grown out of Acton's overall efforts to address the climate crisis. In 2020, Town Meeting declared a climate emergency, calling for net-zero emissions by as soon as 2030. Two years later, the town's Climate Action Plan established a set of targets to address both municipal and community-wide emissions emanating from transportation and buildings.

"When we studied where the emissions in Acton were coming from, almost 40% of the emissions were coming from buildings," said Jim Snyder-Grant, an Acton Select Board member and one of the program's coaches, on a [June 2023 episode](#) of the "Acton in Focus" cable show. "So we needed to understand — how can we work with our 8,000 buildings and their owners to help each of them understand what each of them can do to reduce their fossil fuel use? And that's where the idea of the energy coaches came in."

For many, the prospect of switching to more sustainable energy options can be daunting — understanding the technology, evaluating companies, and managing the costs, among other challenges. Select Board Member David Martin, also a volunteer coach, created a [virtual tour of his all-electric home](#) to show the changes he had made.

"Many people in town are interested in making their houses net-zero or carbon-free, but it's very difficult to know where to start," Martin said on "Acton in Focus."

The program has 13 volunteer clean

energy coaches from the community, which adds a level of trust and legitimacy to the program. The coaches help residents and building owners through home visits, phone calls and emails. Acton also has three clean energy advocates to promote the program and ensure its momentum.

Now starting its third year, the program has shown results: As of this past fall, the program had received 211 requests for guidance, and three-quarters of those surveyed reported taking steps toward a clean-energy upgrade or purchase after participating in the program.

The program has proven to be cost-efficient as well. In fiscal 2023, Acton spent \$6,500 for startup costs and the first round of coach training. Another \$2,300 was spent in fiscal 2024 for training, website maintenance and outreach materials. And about \$2,100 in the current fiscal year for website maintenance and outreach materials. The town used a combination of budgeted funds and money from the American Rescue Plan Act, according to Town Manager John Mangiaratti.

The town has also undertaken a robust effort to promote the coaching program, officials said, through social media posts, digital newsletters, in-person events, media interviews, flyers, direct mail, a street banner, and commercials. The town recently produced a [humorous ad](#) for local television, comparing the program to the coaching of a college football game at the "University of Clean Energy."

"We're proud of the success we've seen and the momentum we're continuing to build in Acton," Becerra said. "And we are excited to see how the program will continue to grow and stay innovative in response to the community's needs."

For more information about Acton's Clean Energy Coaching Program, please contact Town Manager John Mangiaratti at jmangiaratti@acton-ma.gov.

Town launches Andover Insider Town Hall text line

Andover's efforts to keep the public

■ INNOVATIONS *continued on 31*

Mass Innovations

INNOVATIONS

Continued from page 30

informed include a town hall text line that has fostered a two-way dialogue with residents and built greater trust and transparency around municipal operations.

A year ago, the town launched Andover Insider, a free subscription service that allows the town to text residents with updates about town meetings, initiatives and news, and to solicit the public's feedback on issues. Residents can also text questions and comments to the town manager's office, and receive responses.

Town officials say they view the text line as a way to provide easier access to information and encourage engagement.

"It's been very well received," said Town Manager Andrew Flanagan. "And it's provided us with a whole new array of options to engage the public, whether in real time about something that's happening, or in a more planned and intentional way around town initiatives, like an upcoming Town Meeting."

While Andover has other tools for communicating with residents, officials were looking for a method that wasn't "clunky." The town wanted to "meet people where they are," and found them on their phones.

"There are a lot of residents in Andover and in any town that don't have that kind of time to dedicate to participating in a conversation," said Communications Director Phillip Geoffroy. "But there are hundreds of people, if not more, who are willing to weigh in on a topic by quickly firing off a text message."

Andover developed the service over a two-month period, collaborating with the company Subtext, which typically works with media companies like the New York Times and the Washington Post. The town pays the \$7,800 annual subscription fee out of its operating budget.

The town will send out a varying number of texts weekly, depending on the activity level at Town Hall, with added communications during budget season. Geoffroy generally manages the text responses, with help from other



Andover Insider, the town's text line, keeps residents informed and solicits their feedback about a variety of topics, including budgets and Town Meeting, the MBTA Communities Act, the creation of a new town seal, and the arrival of "Miss Moosachusetts," a life-size yellow cow sculpture that graces downtown.

employees during high-volume periods.

Geoffroy said the town reviews analytics and pays attention to the topics that keep residents particularly engaged, and to commentary on social media, to determine which communications are working, while working to avoid overwhelming text subscribers with unwanted updates. The town also monitors the number of people unsubscribing.

The feedback Andover receives from its text service and other communications tools provides valuable input on a wide range of issues affecting the town, and helps officials fine-tune their communications strategy, Geoffroy said.

Andover Insider has nearly 2,000 subscribers, surpassing the town's early subscription goals, and has lost only about 20 subscribers along the way, Geoffroy said.

Andover used the text line to solicit input on a draft redesign of the town seal, receiving nearly 100 responses before winning Town Meeting approval. It has also used the service to seek residents' proposals for participatory budgeting priorities, generate questions for a pre-Town Meeting forum, and build consensus around the town's obligations for the MBTA Communities Act. Officials are also using texting to help residents navigate the transition to automated trash and recycling services later this year.

The town has also had some fun with Andover Insider, having used it to promote a new public art installation

downtown: a life-size yellow cow bearing Andover's name. A town text invited people to check out the bovine, Flanagan said, "and before you know it, people were there getting their pictures taken with it."

Flanagan said he can't necessarily credit Andover Insider with its successful run of Town Meeting votes and public decision-making processes, but "it certainly hasn't hurt."

"I would say tying it directly to an outcome, you know, is far from scientific," Flanagan said. "But what we know is we're increasing the number of people who are informed, who are making the decisions."

For more information about Andover Insider, contact Phillip Geoffroy at Phillip.Geoffroy@andoverma.us.

Southborough joins 3 towns in health partnership

Over the past few years, a partnership involving Southborough, Boylston, Northborough and Westborough has expanded the public health outreach of the four towns, allowing them to provide more services to a more diverse range of populations.

In 2021, the towns formed the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health to share nursing, health inspection and epidemiology resources. Working with a Public Health Excellence Grant from the Department of Public Health, the towns sought to improve compliance with public health regulations and standards, expand existing services and create new programs, and improve community outreach.

Based in Northborough, the public health partnership has helped small towns facing limited staffing, resources and ability to do community outreach, said Chelsea Malinowski, chair of the Southborough Board of Health.

Before Southborough joined the group in 2021, she said, the town of about 10,000 residents struggled to meet the varied requirements of a municipal health department, a workload that includes septic and soil testing, restaurant and school cafeteria inspections,

■ INNOVATIONS continued on 32

Mass Innovations

INNOVATIONS

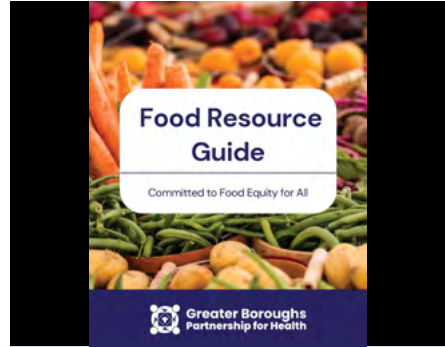
Continued from page 31

and vaccinations and infectious disease control — not to mention other aspects of protecting a community's physical and mental health.

"So that's why we were excited about it, because it gave us some stability, even though [the program] didn't live in our town," Malinowski said. "It didn't really matter to us where we were getting those supports from. We just knew we needed the support."

The grant funding the partnership is expected to be renewed every three years over a 12-year period, and the partnership has been receiving about \$300,000 each year so far. The funds cover two nursing positions, a health inspector and an epidemiologist for the collaboration, though each town is still expected to maintain its own staffing. An eight-member advisory board, consisting of a primary and secondary member from each town, meets every other month.

"These resources have been pivotal



The Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health has expanded its public health reach in four towns, with efforts including the publication of a Food Resource Guide.

in improving environmental health inspections, infectious disease investigations, and community health data," said Isabella Caruso, Northborough's health and human services director. "By working together, we've built a stronger, more effective public health infrastructure than we could have achieved independently."

So far, the towns have published a food resource guide and a guide for maternal,

child and family health; organized large-scale vaccination clinics and administered more than 16,000 doses of COVID vaccine; run a drive-through flu clinic capable of vaccinating up to 500 people in less than three hours; installed sunscreen dispensers in parks; created a home-visit program for older residents in need of additional support; and offered monthly CPR and automated external defibrillator training sessions, among other initiatives. They also offer monthly training sessions on the use of Narcan, the overdose-reversing drug.

Through all of these initiatives, the partnership has focused on enhanced public outreach, according to Southborough Health Director Taylor West.

"That's always a huge thing for me," West said. "How do we get our message out that we have access to these things, so that we can help people in all four communities?"

The partnership is working on strengthening its maternal, child and family health services, and hopes to start new programming in 2025, envisioning small group classes, groups for new mothers, support groups, breastfeeding support, infant and child CPR training, and infant care services.

"I just think it's so hard for Massachusetts towns as municipalities to sustain all these services on their own," Malinowski said. "And I think from a global perspective, or a higher level, anytime that you can save taxpayers money and have a better service, that's a win."

For more information about the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health, please contact Southborough Health Director Taylor West at twest@southboroughma.com.

This column highlights some of the innovative approaches and strategies Massachusetts municipalities are using to deliver services and solve problems. If you know of a Mass Innovation that could be featured in this column, email us at innovations@mma.org.



Trade Show heads down EV Alley

The MMA celebrates the opening of EV Alley during Connect 351 on Jan. 23 in Boston, with a ceremonial ribbon cutting featuring, left to right in the front row, Rep. Jeffrey Roy; Katelyn Leahy Barb, manager of transportation electrification at Energy New England; MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine; and MMA Legislative Director Dave Koffman. Debuting at the MMA Trade Show, EV Alley featured municipal electric vehicles including a school bus and police vehicle, and exhibitors who provide related technology and services.

Around the Commonwealth

Provincetown

Town tests new flood mitigation technology

In December, Provincetown launched a Coastal Storm Flood Protection pilot project to test new flood mitigation technology and determine the best strategies for property protection and flood management.

A key component of the initiative is a new temporary flood barrier that can be deployed on short notice — about 50 interlocking L-shaped plastic pieces that rise to waist-level. The barrier pieces snap together and can be assembled in a matter of minutes.

“As a coastal community, we’re dealing with climate change, and feeling the effects of rising sea levels and the intensity of coastal storms,” said Provincetown Assistant Town Manager Dan Riviello.

At the outermost tip of Cape Cod, Provincetown is no stranger to coastal storms and flooding, but “it’s really accelerated” in recent years, Riviello said. Recent winter storms have brought strong winds from the south-southeast, “which has made a different area of town much more vulnerable and susceptible to coastal flooding.”

“The idea is we’re not going to be able to stop floodwaters from coming over the seawalls,” Riviello said. “What we’re trying to do with these barriers in that part of the east end [of Provincetown] ... is blocking off Commercial Street in a part of the street with porous pavement and storm drains, hold it there for a couple hours past high tide ... and allow water to flow in a controlled sense and get back out to the ocean.”



Provincetown Public Works staff install a new flood barrier during a test run last December.

Even without complete water containment, the barrier can buy valuable time by slowing water movement to more vulnerable areas of Provincetown.

Town staff worked with the Select Board during the fiscal 2025 budget cycle to identify potential solutions. The Select Board proposed a \$150,000 Capital Improvement Program request to fund the project, which was approved by Town Meeting.

Riviello said town staff worked with community stakeholders to “figure out some things that we could try and truly pilot here in Provincetown that would make a difference.”

The \$150,000 expenditure covers the snap-together barrier, a metal barrier that adds height to a low coastal wall, catch basin cleaning, and an automatic sandbag filling implement that attaches to a front-end loader.

Provincetown’s Department of Public Works had the chance to test the technology during inclement weather in December. Although water never reached the barrier, staff used the experience as a dry run for future deployment.

The pilot program is part of a larger Coastal Resilience Plan that Provincetown is implementing to provide short-, medium-, and long-term solutions to guard against rising sea levels. The plan includes raising sections of streets and seawalls, replenishing dunes, building water management infrastructure, and working with homeowners to protect properties.

The plan, Riviello said, identifies “investments we need to make together to ensure Provincetown’s continued prosperity for decades to come.”

Provincetown leaders are planning to bring a \$450,000 CIP article before Town Meeting this spring related to additional flood mitigation work.

Riviello said he is particularly proud of the town’s efforts to work with property owners to mitigate flooding, which is a relatively new stance for Provincetown.

“It’s incredibly stressful for people to feel like you have to hold the ocean back yourself,” Riviello said. “We’re not going to get this perfectly right, but we are doing our best, and we are trying whatever we can ... to be present and helpful.”

— Owen Page

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Continued from page 2

committed to communicating with you as more information becomes available.

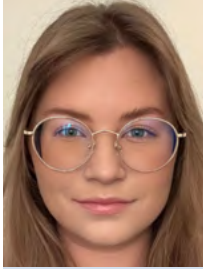
As we do this work, we also need your help. Advocating for the critical services that are supported by federal funding means that we need to be able to

communicate the real, tangible impacts of any funding freeze. To that end, we need you to keep us informed of grant meetings that are cancelled, contracts that are not renewed, and disbursement requests that are denied. Additionally, we will be working with all of you to both quantify and qualify the very real impacts that would be felt if various

federal funding sources were taken away.

As we move forward, know that we are here, working and advocating for you. Our commitment to you is this: We will keep you informed, advocate on your behalf, and ensure that the voice of cities and towns in Massachusetts is heard loud and clear. ●

People



Jessica Mooring

Jessica Mooring became the new town administrator in New Salem on Jan. 6.

Mooring previously worked for two years in Portland, Oregon, for the city's Bureau of Planning and

Sustainability, first as a community service aide, and then as an assistant planner. She has also served as a spring fellow for Communities Responding to Extreme Weather. She has a bachelor's degree in natural resources and conservation, and master's degrees in sustainability science and regional planning, all from UMass Amherst.

In New Salem, Mooring takes the place of **Kathy Neal**, who retired last month after serving in the role for three-and-half years. Neal had also served as Southbridge's town counsel earlier in her career, and served on the Sturbridge Finance Committee, and on the Sturbridge and Tantasqua school committees.



James Ryan

James Ryan became the new town administrator in West Boylston on Jan. 21.

For more than seven years, Ryan had served as the assistant town manager and human resources director in Salisbury.

Previously, he served for nearly four years as a finance and budget analyst in Wellesley, and as a budget analyst and intern in Foxborough. He has a bachelor's degree in economics and political science from UMass Lowell, and a master's degree in public administration from Suffolk University.

In West Boylston, Ryan is taking the role left vacant by **Jennifer Warren-Dyment**, who departed in October after serving for two years in the role. **Charles Blanchard** served as the

interim town administrator.



Devyn MacDonald

Devyn MacDonald joined MIIA on Jan. 6 as an intern. MacDonald is pursuing a bachelor's degree in emergency management at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and is expected to graduate in June.

At Mass. Maritime, he is an ensign and academy staff duty officer. He has also been a platoon leader and a squad leader, and has assisted emergency management officers at the academy with various responsibilities, including tutoring first-year students and planning events. He has also interned at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, has been a substitute teacher for the Taunton Public Schools, and was a head lifeguard and swim instructor for the city of Taunton.



Joseph Botaish II

Wrentham Select Board Chair **Joseph Botaish II** died on Jan. 14, 10 days after his 60th birthday.

Botaish had been on the Select Board for the past 15 years. Born in Boston, Botaish

graduated from West Roxbury High School and earned an associate's degree from Chamberlayne Junior College. He worked as a project manager for Majestic Construction and also as a DJ. According to his obituary, he celebrated his Lebanese heritage through food and music. He leaves his wife of 35 years, **Kathleen Botaish**, and two children.

This monthly column highlights transitions, accomplishments and awards, and life events of municipal officials. To submit information for People, contact MMA Associate Editor Jennifer Kavanaugh at 800-882-1498 or jkavanaugh@mma.org.



MMA, MIIA employees honored for service

Denise Baker, left photo, a senior member program coordinator at the MMA, and Martin Jackson, the director of finance and accounting at MIIA, pose with MMA Executive Director Adam Chapdelaine after being honored last month for their longtime service to the organizations. During the Connect 351 conference, they each received the National League of Cities' John Stutz Award in recognition of 25 years of service with a state municipal league. Baker has worked for the MMA since 1999, after serving for two years as an administrative assistant with MIIA. Jackson first joined MIIA in 1996.

CONNECT 351

Continued from page 6

members free professional headshots, and a “Why I Serve” activity in the entrance hall, where attendees could take a moment to share why they chose to enter public service.

Awards were announced to recognize the best municipal websites, town reports, and innovative programs.

“The whole MMA team is thrilled with the response to this rebranded and relocated conference — not to mention the record attendance!” Chapdelaine said. “Everyone worked very hard, starting many months ago, to create an event that felt fresh and new, but retained the comfortable feeling that members look

forward to.

“The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and we appreciate the support of so many members who came to learn, network and continue their outstanding public service to their communities.”

Next year’s Connect 351 — on Jan. 22-24, 2026 — will return to the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center and the Omni Boston Hotel in Boston’s Seaport district. ●



Joyce Losick-Yang, Andover’s director of sustainability and energy, presents from the podium during the workshop “Sparking Success With Municipal Internship Programs” at Connect 351 on Jan. 24 in Boston. The other panelists were, left to right, Melanie Cutler, an educator at Andover High School; Brittney Franklin, assistant to the town administrator in Medfield; and Amanda Lima, Yarmouth’s town engineer.

MIIA

Continued from page 28

to loss-related challenges within MIIA’s property program, Brewster facilities staff worked with MIIA risk managers to install integrated sensor monitoring technology to protect valuable infrastructure from water-related losses resulting from extreme weather conditions.

Hadley: The town of Hadley maintains a strong and dedicated safety committee focused on personnel and employee safety. They maintain compliance with both Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards and OSHA guidelines, continuously update and maintain policies and procedures, and conduct risk mitigation efforts targeting property and professional liability challenges. The town of Hadley is committed to ensuring that employees receive comprehensive safety training, and has graciously served as the host for several MIIA regional training courses.

Norwood: The town of Norwood consistently and proactively focuses on risk management. All town departments work collaboratively and participate in quarterly safety meetings sponsored by

the town’s leadership, where they identify key loss areas and trends, develop preventative safety programs, and address training needs. Additionally, Norwood participates in the MIIA Rewards program, and recently leveraged funds from MIIA’s Risk Management grant initiative to upgrade its cyber risk prevention protection.

Health and Wellness

MIIA recognized several members who excelled in employee health and wellness efforts. Each winner participated in Well Aware activities and took advantage of MIIA’s many programs and resources.

Manchester-by-the-Sea: Excellence in Diversity of Programming

Manchester-by-the-Sea’s employee wellness champions, Jennifer Yaskell and Cheryl Marshall, work closely with the town’s MIIA wellness representative to develop customized programming that is driven by employee and manager input, leading to high participation rates across all departments.

Newburyport: Excellence in Employee Engagement

The city of Newburyport has fostered a productive partnership between

municipal managers and employee wellness champions — Donna Drelick, Lisa Reilly, Pam Kealey and Gail Derrivan — to structure wellness programming that aligns with employee schedules and interests. This tailored approach has greatly increased employee participation in wellness programs.

Sandwich: Excellence in Wellness

The town of Sandwich’s wellness committee, led by employee wellness champion Marie Buckner, includes active participation by representatives from each of the town’s 10 departments. In fiscal 2024, Sandwich offered 15 MIIA wellness programs, including fitness, nutrition and mindfulness.

Tyngsborough: Outstanding Wellness Champion

Brigitte Bell, human resources and benefits coordinator for the town of Tyngsborough, also serves as the town’s Wellness Champion. She works tirelessly to bring a broad spectrum of programming options to employees. In fiscal 2024, she also managed Tyngsborough’s Health Benefits Fair, and worked to secure a MIIA Well Aware grant that supports first responders. ●

EMPOWERMENT ACT

Continued from page 1

to the Healey-Driscoll administration for their very thoughtful and practical Municipal Empowerment Act,” said Franklin Town Administrator Jamie Hellen, who’s president of the MMA. “At a time when cities and towns are struggling to balance budgets and maintain the quality services that all residents rely on, this legislation would remove obstacles to efficiency, reduce regulatory burdens, help communities solve persistent problems, and help address workforce challenges. I’m particularly excited about reforms to procurement and the permanent allowances for remote or hybrid public meetings.”

Provisions

The following Municipal Empowerment Act provisions are new or updated:

- **Double poles:** Extending the statutory prohibition against double poles from 90 days to 180 days, while giving municipalities enforcement authority with penalties for utilities that fail to comply, and empowering the Department of Public Utilities and Department of Telecommunications and Cable to establish a process allowing speedier removal while giving municipalities enforcement authority with penalties for utilities that fail to comply.
- **Preventing drug overdoses:** Ensuring that anyone who administers fentanyl strips, including local public safety officials, will not be subject to criminal or civil liability.
- **Snow hauling services:** Easing procurement by aligning these services with procurement procedures for snow removal.
- **School bus service costs:** Repealing a law that limits the ability of districts to start in-house school bus services when private transportation companies are available.
- **New property tax exemptions for seniors:** Allowing cities and towns to adopt a senior means tested property tax exemption for qualifying seniors and to increase existing senior property tax exemptions.
- **Long-term benefit funding:** Establishing a new Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Commission to take a fresh look at opportunities to address unfunded liabilities from non-pension employee benefits.
- **Regional boards of assessors:** Allowing municipalities to create regional boards of assessors in order to streamline duties and reduce significant staffing challenges.
- **Post-retirement employment:** Creating additional temporary flexibilities by expanding the process for seeking exemptions to post-retirement employment rules for the next three years.
- **Procurement reforms:**
 - Clarifying that groups of cities and towns can award multiple contracts through an RFP process under Chapter 30B and purchase both supplies and services from collectively bid contracts.
 - Equalizing Chapter 30B thresholds for advertised procurements to \$100,000 for all municipal purchasing, not just schools.
 - Eliminating the requirement to publish notice of invitations for competitive bids on COMMBUYS.
- **Telecommunications and utility valuations:** Helping to address workforce challenges by centralizing, through the Department of Revenue’s Division of Local Services, the valuation of telecommunications and utility property in order to

relieve cities and towns of the cost of individually hiring experts and consultants.

- **School projects:** Updating borrowing rules to increase the bond term from 30 years to 40, to more closely reflect the life expectancy of school projects.
- **Local-option revenues:** Empowering communities to generate more local revenues for local services in order to help reduce pressure on local property taxes. At local discretion, municipalities would have authority to:
 - Increase the maximum local-option tax on hotel, motel and other lodging rentals from 6% to 7% (or from 6.5% to 7.5% in Boston).
 - Increase the local meals tax ceiling from .75% to 1%.
 - Add a new surcharge of up to 5% on motor vehicle excise bills that can be dedicated to local stabilization funds (a provision that could benefit every community in Massachusetts).

Advocacy

At Connect 351, Healey and Driscoll urged local leaders to join them in advocating for the Municipal Empowerment Act, as well as their Chapter 90 proposal and key local accounts in their state budget.

“There will be a need for you to message and explain and tell your story about the acuity of the crises you’re facing in your cities and towns,” Healey said. “Costs have gone up for everything, and that money from the federal government, that was enjoyed a few years ago, is long gone. So it’s important for everybody to understand what it is you’re really confronted with.”

Visit the [Municipal Empowerment Act web portal](#) for more information about the bill. ●

Women Leading Government to hold Annual Conference on March 6

Women Leading Government will hold its fifth Annual Conference on March 6 at Lake Pearl in Wrentham.

The full-day event is designed for women in appointed positions in local government who are interested in advancing their careers and building their

management and leadership skills.

Session topics will include self-advocacy, AI, offering constructive criticism, and a facilitated networking activity.

The cost is \$60, including lunch and a light breakfast.

Women Leading Government events are open to all staff in appointed positions in local government. Online registration is available on www.mma.org.

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

OIG advisory helps local leaders prepare for emergency

The Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General has published an advisory for state and local leaders to help them prepare for the next pandemic-level emergency.

The OIG issued the advisory on Dec. 31 to recommend practical actions that public entities should consider today in planning for tomorrow's emergency.

"It is in your best interest, as an agency leader charged with managing public funds, to take steps now to ensure that when the next crisis does occur, every award dollar is used as intended by policymakers and can be properly accounted for when the inevitable oversight and reporting is conducted.

"Working proactively now to establish effective systems to distribute, account for, and reconcile future emergency dollars will improve your ability to respond in a timely and effective manner, helping to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse of public relief funds."

The advisory covers how to design effective emergency relief programs, and how to design program monitoring and

evaluation strategies.

"While no one can predict the exact timing, we can all predict that the next emergency will present itself at some point in the future," the advisory states. The OIG "looks to partner with Massachusetts state and local government leaders to prepare for the next emergency now."

When such a crisis occurs, the advisory states, state government, municipalities, quasi-public agencies, and other public entities will be called upon to administer funds, which may require moving funds quickly, "often outside established

programs and processes, and with the need to account for and reconcile actions at some future time."

Developing a framework for an adaptable plan before the next crisis occurs is a critical step for what is "a foreseeable role that state and local governments are asked to play."

Mike Frieber, director of the OIG's Special Funding Oversight Division, gave a presentation on this topic during the MMA's Connect 351 conference on Jan. 24.

• [Download the advisory](#)



Councillors discuss housing

Housing and Livable Communities Secretary Ed Augustus talks to city and town councillors during the Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association Business Meeting on Jan. 25 in Boston. Augustus covered numerous topics, including emergency shelters, housing production and preservation.

Everything new on the MMA website, straight to your inbox.

MMA.org is the best source for the latest developments affecting Mass. cities & towns:

- State budget & local aid
- State & federal grant opportunities
- Member group meetings & webinars
- Connect 351 announcements
- And much more!



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Classified Advertisements

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Full-Time Driver/Operator/Laborer Town of West Brookfield

The town of West Brookfield Highway Department is seeking a full-time operator/driver/laborer. This position performs manual labor, operates/maintains equipment for the construction, operation/maintenance of town roads, maintains town-owned facilities. Must have current valid MA Class B CDL license w/airbrake endorsement and current motor carrier medical examiners cert. (DOT card). In accordance w/AFSCME Local 1364 Wage Scale this position is a Grade 10 - Step 2 at \$24.80/hour (40 hours/week) + overtime for snow/ice or emergencies. Visit www.wbrookfield.com for application/job description. Contact: Jim Daley at 508-867-1417, jdaley@wbrookfield.com. The town of West Brookfield is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity at all levels of the workforce. EOE

Stormwater Manager Town of Hudson

Under the general supervision of the Public Works Director, the Stormwater Manager will be responsible for completing tasks necessary to maintain the town's compliance with NPDES, MS4 and other stormwater related permits. This position will assist with a variety of project management tasks, data collection, data management and reporting in a variety of areas. May supervise lower level staff when necessary. Please see our website for details: www.townofhudson.org/home/pages/job-opportunities. Position is open until filled.

Director of Assessing City of Everett

Payrate: Up to \$120,000 annually. Hours: 35 hours/week, one late shift. Monday and Thursday: 8 a.m.-7:30 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Position: Non-union. Position summary: the Director of Assessing reports to the Chief of Finance, some of the responsibilities include but not limited to administrative, supervisory and technical work relating to the management of tax assessment and the valuation/re-evaluation of residential, industrial, commercial and personal properties. Provides financial information and analysis to the council and board. Skills and qualifications: associate's degree, bachelor's preferred; five to seven years' related experience; knowledge of computer applications for assessing functions. Email hiring@ci.everett.ma.us with resume/cover letter.

Assistant Town Administrator Town of Norfolk

The town of Norfolk is seeking an Assistant Town Administrator. Under the direction of the Town Administrator, the Assistant Town Administrator is responsible for assisting the Town Administrator with a broad set of management, procurement, and human resources issues, along with project management and other special projects, as assigned by the Town Administrator. Provides highly responsible and complex support to the Town Administrator's Office in accordance with the town bylaws, regulations, policies, and procedures, as well as with evolving best practices. Responsibilities will include procurement, grant writing, the administration and coordination of

human resources programs and systems, and all other duties as assigned. This position provides backup to the Town Administrator and may serve as the Acting Town Administrator when designated. Annual Salary: \$103,563 +/- Starting pay is based on qualifications and experience. The town offers a generous benefits package. To apply, candidates must send a resume, cover letter, and a completed town of Norfolk job application to jobs@norfolk.ma.us. Please visit norfolk.ma.us/departments/human_resources/career_opportunities.php for a full job description.

Administrative Assistant to Police Chief Town of Pepperell

The town of Pepperell seeks qualified applicants for the position of Administrative Assistant to the Police Chief, providing administrative, clerical and secretarial work and supportive services to the Chief of Police. This position assists the general public and others in person and by phone; drafts and routes correspondence for the Police Chief; prepares all firearms permits; receives and fulfills records requests; serves as a detention room matron; registers town sex offenders; serves as parking clerk/hearing officer; prepares department payroll and invoices; and similar or related work; may serve as a sexual assault investigator. For details and full job description: Administrative Assistant to Police Chief. Applications review will begin Jan. 31, 2025, and the position will remain open until filled. Submit resume and letter of interest to: Chief Todd Blain, 59 Main St., Pepperell, MA 01463 by email to Todd.Blain@pepperell.ma.us. We are an Equal Employment Opportunity ("EEO") Employer.

Shared Treasurer/Collector Towns of Pepperell and Dunstable

The towns of Pepperell and Dunstable seek a highly qualified professional to manage and supervise each town's financial assets and finance staff. This shared position provides a unique and exciting opportunity for candidates to lead the Treasurer/Collector's offices in two neighboring communities. Download complete job description here: [Shared Treasurer/Collector](#).

Application review will begin Feb. 3, and the position will remain open until filled. Submit resume and letter of interest to: Judy Palumbo, Human Resources, Town Hall, One Main St., Pepperell, MA 01463, or by email to jpalumbo@town.pepperell.ma.us. We are an Equal Employment Opportunity ("EEO") Employer.

Election Commissioner City of Revere

This position is responsible for all functions of the Revere Election Department. The Election Commissioner provides support and guidance as needed to the Election department staff, the Board of Election Commissioners, the Mayor, the members of the City Council, and the public on election related matters. This position works under the general supervision of those entities so named above with strict accordance to the Massachusetts General Laws. Interested candidates should apply online at www.revere.org/jobs. Please submit a resume, cover letter and salary requirements with your application.

Firefighter/EMT-Paramedic Town of Sudbury

The town of Sudbury is seeking highly responsible candidates for the position of Firefighter/EMT-Paramedic. Required qualifications: Massachusetts EMT-Paramedic certification, valid driver's license, non-smoker. This is a full-time career position with a starting salary of \$70,948 plus stipends, opportunity for 100% tuition reimbursement and generous (up to 15%) education incentives. To obtain the full job description and requirements, visit www.sudbury.ma.us/fire. AA/EOE

Co-Response Clinician Town of Billerica

Embedded within the police departments and co-response with law enforcement to calls involving persons in mental health or substance use crises. The clinician performs brief assessments on scene to divert from arrests, divert from emergency department

■ CLASSIFIEDS continued on 39

Classified advertising rates and information

The Beacon publishes classified ads from units of government, public agencies, and companies.

Classified advertising categories are: Employment Opportunities, Requests for Proposals, and Services. Only one job opening or RFP can be listed per ad. The MMA cannot assume responsibility for information or claims made in any advertisement.

Classified advertising rates

Classified ad rates include publication in The

Beacon and on www.mma.org, though a discount is available for those who request placement of an ad only in The Beacon or on the website.

Member rates

- \$100 for first 100 words; \$100 for each additional block of up to 100 words
- Rate for one format only (Beacon or website): \$75 for first 100 words, \$75 for each additional block of up to 100 words

Nonmember rates

- \$150 for first 100 words; \$150 for each additional block of up to 100 words
- Rate for one format only (Beacon or website): \$125 for first 100 words, \$125 for each additional block of up to 100 words

Beacon deadlines and publication dates

The Beacon is published on the first business day of each month, except in the summer, when a combined July-August issue is published in mid-July.

March Beacon

Deadline: February 25
Publication: March 3

April Beacon

Deadline: March 26
Publication: April 1

Placing an ad

You may use our convenient online form at www.mma.org/municipal-marketplace/add-listing/.

For more information, call Owen Page at the MMA at 617-426-7272, ext. 135.

Missed the Beacon deadline for an employment ad? You can still get the word out – right away.

See www.mma.org for details.

Classified Advertisements

CLASSIFIEDS

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visits, or offer resources and guidance for community members to determine appropriate recommendations for care. The clinician identifies potential opportunities for officer training to improve competencies. The clinician will be expected to conduct co-responses, on-call clinical support, outreach, follow-up, data collection. Master's degree in social work or psychology is required, see full description and apply at: www.town.billerica.ma.us. \$68,000-\$73,000 per year plus benefits.

Water/Sewer Superintendent

Town of Concord

Concord Public Works is seeking an experienced manager to supervise the operations and activities of the town's Water and Sewer systems. Concord is a progressive, customer-focused municipality, and we take pride in providing a safe and reliable water supply, as well as wastewater collection and treatment for residential, commercial and institutional users. The successful candidate must be a team player, flexible, dependable and motivated. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills required. Starting salary range: \$112,777.60-\$134,784.00, DOQ. For more information and to apply: [Town of ConcordMA- W/S Superintendent](mailto:TownofConcordMA-W/Superintendent) or call HR at 978-318-3025. EEOE

Chief Administrative Officer

Town of Phillipston

The town of Phillipston (pop.1,948) a small community whose residents are actively involved in town government to ensure its success, is seeking to fill the position of Chief Administrative Officer. The 36 hour per week position (with night meetings) works under the Selectmen to supervise daily operations. Salary range from \$60,000 to \$84,500 depending on qualifications. Full benefit package provided in accordance with the town's personnel policy (no personal contract). Please send a letter of interest and resume to Town of Phillipston Selectmen, 50 The Common, Phillipston, MA 01331 or email as one document to selectman@phillipston-ma.gov. Advertisement will run until job is filled. AA/EEO

Harbormaster

Town of Harwich

Pay Range: \$89,816.97-\$112,034.98. This position performs supervisory and administrative work managing the municipal marina, town harbors, and waterways. This position requires enforcement of applicable Massachusetts General Laws, the Harbor Management Plan, provides staff support to the Waterways Committee and other related work, as required. The incumbent will occasionally work under hazardous conditions and may be involved in water rescues and salvage operations. Bachelor's degree with specialized technical training, five years of progressively responsible experience in harbor, marina and waterways operations; extensive boating experience essential; or an equivalent combination of education and experience. To apply, please provide cover letter, town employment application and resume to the Human Resources Office, 728 Main St., Harwich, MA 02645 or via email angelique.mcgibbon@harwich-ma.gov. Applications are available on the town website or in the Administration Office. Full job description available on the town of Harwich website. <https://www.harwich-ma.gov/963/Employment-Opportunities>.

Town Planner

Town of Freetown

The Town Planner provides professional management, oversight, and administration of town planning and community development functions, including supervision of infrastructure, capital, and transportation projects, grant writing and implementation, and professional advice and administration to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and related boards/commissions. Bachelor's degree in planning, community development or public administration or related field required; master's degree preferred; minimum of three to five years' experience in land use or municipal planning required; two years of supervisory experience preferred; equivalent combinations of education and experience may be substituted. Salary \$65,000-\$90,000 based on experience. Send cover letter and resume to lsouza@freetownma.gov.

Paramedic

Town of Billerica

We offer competitive wages and superior benefits that include paid time off, paid continuing education, and tuition reimbursement. We have long-established relationships with the police/fire departments. All of our paramedics are proud members of our local 087 union. Our fantastic relationship with area hospitals has been built on years of professionalism and mutual respect. Come join our one-of-a-kind team for a rewarding career in our community and build your financial stability with a guaranteed municipal group four retirement pension. See complete description and how to apply at www.town.billerica.ma.us. Salary: \$1,260 - \$1,662.54 weekly / \$30/hr-\$39.54/hr.

Municipal Grounds Laborer

Town of Ashburnham

The town of Ashburnham DPW is accepting applications for a full time Municipal Grounds Laborer. Job responsibilities include but are not limited to, general maintenance of all town properties, cemetery maintenance, Funeral services, and assisting with maintenance and snow removal operations. Applicants must have a valid Class D license and the ability to obtain a medical card within the first week of starting. CDL and/or Hydraulics license is preferred but not required. Union Position pay rate \$21.45. Position open until filled. EOE. More information is available at www.ashburnham-ma.gov/Jobs.aspx?UniqueId=101&From=All&CommunityJobs=False&JobID=Municipal-Grounds-Laborer-12. Applications can be requested via email to bwoodhouse@ashburnham-ma.gov.

Harbormaster

Town of Sandwich

The town of Sandwich seeks a full-time Harbormaster to perform highly responsible managerial and supervisory work in planning, impartially and consistently enforcing rules and regulations, directing and managing the operations of the Sandwich Marina (East Boat Basin). The Harbormaster oversees and coordinates management of the Sandwich Marina's personnel, finances, operations and budgets, including site improvements as required. Position includes frequent and professional interaction with the public, town and state officials and the Army Corps of Engineers and requires strong verbal and oral communication and administrative skills. Preferred candidate will be a Commonwealth of Massachusetts certified Harbormaster. If candidate is not then they must obtain or be in the process of obtaining said certificate within two years of appointment. Candidate

ideally will possess a bachelor's degree in marine engineering, marine safety or marine transportation or other related management or business degree or field of study and a minimum of five years of progressively responsible experience in a similar management function and/or a related combination of education and experience. Starting salary range is between: \$98,000-\$105,000 commensurate with experience and includes an excellent benefits package. For more information regarding the position please contact the Sandwich Human Resources Department. Submit cover letter and resume by Feb. 14 to "Harbormaster Search", 100 Route 6A, Sandwich, MA 02563 or email to hr@sandwichmass.org. Sandwich is an AA/EEO.

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations/ Director of Finance and Operations

Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

The Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District seeks to fill the chief financial officer role as Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations or as Director of Finance and Operations. The responsibilities listed in *italic bold* are requirements for an appointment as Assistant Superintendent. The Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations/ Director of Finance and Operations is a member of the Superintendent's Executive Team with a central role in school district planning and analysis of current programs, support systems, and expenditures. This position is responsible for the administration of the business, finance, food service, facilities, technology, safety, and all transportation operations of the district. The Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations partners with the Superintendent in general organization, planning, and management of the District for the purpose of providing clear and positive direction for all programs. In the absence of the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations may assume his/her role. Compensation: \$140,000-\$180,000 based on title of the position and experience.

Regional Housing Coordinator

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

Essential Functions: Employee primarily engages in technical planning support work to advance local and regional housing initiatives and programs with a focus on assisting member municipalities develop, maintain, and administer affordable housing in compliance with M.G.L. Ch. 40B and associated regulations. The position is open until filled and applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Interested candidates should submit a cover letter and resume to jraitt@nmcog.org. Please see our full job description for Regional Housing Coordinator on our website.

Finance Director

Town of Harwich

The Finance Director shall have oversight of the town's municipal finances, including all functions of the Town Accountant. Under the administrative direction of the Town Administrator, the Finance Director will work cooperatively with the Deputy Assessor (chosen by the Board of Assessors) and the Treasurer/Collector (appointed by the Selectboard) in fulfilling daily financial requirements and all financial reporting to state and federal agencies. The town is looking for an ideal candidate who has public accounting and auditing principles, practices and procedures. Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), Governmental

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Accounting Standards Board (GASB) standards, and applicable Massachusetts General Laws, regarding finance, insurance and procurement. Methods and techniques of municipal transactions and financial activity including revenue analysis/interpretation, as well as financial planning, forecasting and auditing. Training and experience: public administration, or a closely related field, and five years of progressively responsible municipal finance work. A master's degree in public administration, accounting or finance is preferred. Please submit a resume and cover letter detailing your interest and qualifications to: kmshanley4@gmail.com. Please also include the town of Harwich application available on the Town's website: www.harwich-ma.gov/. Applications due by March 1.

Part-Time Town Administrator Town of Middlefield

Town Administrator, Middlefield, MA. Part-time, 960 hrs/yr, \$36,000-40,000. Negotiable salary, workdays, some remote hours. Opportunity for hands-on leadership in all aspects of local government and addressing community needs. Seeking practical-approach problem-solver, with good communications and public service ethic. Prefer: municipal experience, breadth of knowledge, project management, working cooperatively with varied stakeholders. Email resume and cover letter to Administrative Assistant: Middlefield.assistant@gmail.com. Position open until filled. Interviews starting in February. EOE. Middlefield (450 people, budget \$2mil) is a scenic Hampshire County Hilltown, 26 miles from Northampton, 17 miles to Lee or Pittsfield. All part-time staff, except three-person DPW. Solid financial departments. Comcast broadband. Gateway Regional administers school.

Maintenance Laborer Lexington Housing Authority

Job Summary: The Lexington Housing Authority is looking for a full-time Maintenance Laborer. Applicants must be able to perform a wide range of exterior/interior maintenance of property, including minor electrical, carpentry, painting, plumbing, grounds maintenance, snow and ice duties and custodial duties. Rotating on call duty. Opportunity for job advancement to higher classification and hourly rate. Qualifications: high school with at least one-year vocational/technical education or equivalent training/experience in the building, and maintenance trades. Experience using power and hand tools, be able to climb ladders and lift moderate to heavy items. Must be able to follow oral and written instructions, work in a professional manner with employees and residents of all ages, differing cultures, income levels and educational levels. Must pass a wellness physical, including drug/alcohol, CORI screening. Must have a valid driver's license with good driving record. Salary: salary range is \$32-37/hr, based on experience. The position includes benefits. This is a full-time, 40 hour/week position. Hours worked are 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday; on-call rotation as needed for snow removal. This position is located at the Lexington Housing Authority, 1 Countryside Village, Lexington, MA. To apply: Please submit resume and cover letter to Caileen Foley, Executive Director, by emailing cfoley@lexingtonhousing.org. The Lexington Housing Authority is an EOAA Employer. Job is open until filled.

CAREERS AT MMA/MIIA

Senior Risk Management Trainer MMA/MIIA

The Massachusetts Municipal Association and the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association are seeking a Senior Risk Management Trainer to join the MIIA Risk Management Team. This is an excellent opportunity for someone who has an interest in working with safety and risk management professionals and developing as a professional risk trainer. About MMA: The nonpartisan Massachusetts Municipal Association provides an array of services to its member cities and towns statewide, including advocacy, education and training, research and analysis, and publications and information programs. As the voice of local government in Massachusetts, the MMA works to advance the interests of all cities and towns. About MIIA: The Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association provides property, liability, workers compensation, and group health insurance to cities and towns in Massachusetts. MIIA is a nonprofit organization and a subsidiary of Massachusetts Municipal Association. About the position: The Senior Risk Management Trainer is responsible for working with the Risk Management and Programming Teams to provide members and peers with an exceptional training experience. They create, present, and revise training and all supporting materials for MIIA members and staff in a timely and consistent manner. Training: They will work with the Senior Manager of Risk Management to establish and update the vision; responsible for providing onsite and virtual training for members; create training descriptions and course flyers; facilitate online training, track member evaluations and report attendance for system update; review training requests; provide monthly training updates and annual review to management; locate and inspect training sites; responsible for following training protocols; and develop new outside training resources per quarter. Course Materials: They will analyze member loss data to determine training needs; create training materials to support high loss and topical areas; review materials to risk management team; create and update technical documentation; provide guidance for incident review/remediation; work as the liaison with the risk management team, outside consultants, and members; and perform outside inspections. They will become knowledgeable on MIIA's cyber risk management program and explore educational opportunities. Qualifications: The candidate must have a bachelor's degree in a safety related field preferably in occupational health and safety. Five years of work experience in safety or insurance related fields. Experience with adult learning principles. Ability to work in a team setting and independently. Experience in creating and implementing training curriculum. Preference for an individual who is a current OSHA outreach trainer. Work environment: Our offices are located in Boston's Government Center neighborhood. The position offers a highly competitive salary, terrific benefits, and a great collaborative work culture. Our office utilizes a hybrid-work schedule. If you are ready to devote yourself to work on behalf of our member cities and towns, then this position may be for you. How to Apply: Please send a PDF of your cover letter and resume to hr@mma.org.

SERVICES

Municipal Energy Services

Through the MMA's MunEnergy program, MMA members have access to an energy contract designed exclusively for Massachusetts cities and towns. The MunEnergy program offers access to energy experts at Constellation, a vetted municipal energy contract, and options for sustainability programs. Energy professionals at Constellation, the MMA-endorsed supplier for MunEnergy, work with municipalities to manage electricity costs for the long-term. Constellation is also on the forefront of sustainability programs and provides financial support to the MMA for its promotional and marketing efforts. To learn more, visit www.mma.org/munenergy. To be notified about MunEnergy events, send contact information for the person on your team who handles energy for your city or town to energy@mma.org.

Municipal Support Services

Capital Strategic Solutions (CSS) is a Massachusetts-based, certified woman-owned, disadvantaged business enterprise composed of municipal experts. We have hands-on experience that allows us to formulate and implement strategies tailored to the communities we serve. We specialize in public administration and municipal finance, human resources and policy development, emergency management services and public safety, public works and infrastructure operations, public relations and community engagement, project management and oversight, grant writing and administration, and onsite support services. For more information, visit www.capital-strategic-solutions.com, call 508-690-0046, or email info@capital-strategic-solutions.com.

Tax Title Legal Services

KP | Law has been providing a full range of legal services to municipal treasurers and collectors for more than 30 years. Our experienced tax title attorneys draft collection letters and payment agreements; prepare all instruments relative to tax takings and tax sales; draft pleadings for Land Court foreclosures; and provide full representation of municipalities in Land Court actions. We also provide assistance with disposition or reuse of tax parcels. The breadth of our experience, volume, use of experienced paralegals, state-of-the-art computer and informational services, and close proximity to the Land Court enables us to provide prompt, cost-effective services. For additional information, please visit www.k-plaw.com or contact Lauren Goldberg, Esq. at 617-556-0007, or toll-free at 800-548-3522, or at lgoldberg@k-plaw.com.

Town Counsel Services

KP | Law is a municipal law firm. With offices in Boston, Hyannis, Lenox, Northampton and Worcester, we serve as town counsel to more than 125 towns throughout Massachusetts, from Provincetown to Williamstown, and as special counsel to another 90. For more than 30 years, we have devoted ourselves to municipal law and have become experts in the defense of all areas of municipal trial matters. We have specialists in all areas of municipal law and maintain an environmental and land use law department that is on the cutting edge of planning, zoning and conservation. KP | Law is highly sensitive to the limited legal services budgets of Massachusetts communities and thus has

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highly competitive billing rates to give your town the best quality legal counsel in the most cost-efficient manner. There is never a need for special counsel. Our breadth and depth of experience helps keep our cost per opinion to a minimum and enables us to service our clients quickly and efficiently, and is consistent with our commitment to excellence. For additional information on the legal services that KP | Law provides, please visit www.k-plaw.com or contact Lauren Goldberg, Esq., at 617-556-0007, or toll-free at 800-548-3522, or at lgoldberg@k-plaw.com.

Municipal Accounting and Consulting Services

Our outstanding team specializes in municipal financial consulting and outsourced accounting. Since 2008, we have worked with many Massachusetts cities and towns with interim accounting, special projects, fraud risk assessments, financial forecasts, and budgeting. We also provide permanent outsourced accounting solutions, which have proven successful for many years. Please contact Eric Kinshurf at eric@erickinshurfcpa.com or visit our website erickinshurfcpa.com for further information.

Special Counsel, Public Construction and Infrastructure Services

Petrini & Associates, P.C. (P&A) is a recognized statewide leader in representing public owners in public construction and infrastructure disputes and litigation. P&A has decades of experience, having represented public owners in numerous bid protests, delay claims, differing site conditions, disputes between design professionals and project owners, and a broad variety of other construction disputes. Since its founding in 2004, P&A has represented over 40 cities, towns, school districts and water and sewer districts in public construction litigation. For further information, please visit www.petrinilaw.com or contact Christopher Petrini at cpetrini@petrinilaw.com or 508-665-4310.

Labor Counsel Services/Municipal Human Resources Specialists

Clifford and Kenny, LLP provides quality representation to cities, towns and school districts in the area of labor and employment. Attorneys John Clifford and Jaime Kenny have many years of experience in representing clients for collective bargaining and personnel-related matters including discipline and discharge of unionized employees. We have extensive experience in the area of police and fire injured-on-duty cases, and have worked extensively with municipalities and insurers to resolve costly long-term claims. We offer training in sexual harassment, social media and the "just cause analysis" to municipal managers. We also serve as appointed hearing officers on a case-by-case basis. Many of our clients take advantage of a flat monthly rate for unlimited phone calls and emails, which encourages key managers to work with counsel prior to making critical personnel decisions. Check our website at CliffordKennyLaw.com to see a complete list of our satisfied clients or call John Clifford or Jaime Kenny at 781-924-5796 for more information.

Executive Recruitment and Municipal Management

Groux-White Consulting, LLC, is a full-service municipal management consulting firm specializing

in executive recruitment, interim management, form of government studies, organizational effectiveness evaluations, strategic and financial planning and conflict resolution. Tom Groux and Rick White, One Pelham Road, Lexington, MA 02421; rickwhite58@verizon.net; 781-572-6332; www.grouxwhiteconsulting.com.

General Consultant, Recruiting and Special Studies

Municipal Resources Inc. has been providing management solutions to New England municipalities since 1989. MRI is able to provide expertise when and where it's needed. Our services include executive recruitments, assessment centers and promotional testing; public safety organizational studies; finance operations; interim staffing; internal investigations; efficiency and regionalization studies. MRI has an extensive group of experienced subject experts that are able to provide the technical and management expertise that can help communities deliver quality services and resolve complex problems with real-world solutions. Contact us at 866-501-0352 or info@mrigov.com.

Town Counsel/Legal Services

Brooks & DeRensis, P.C., is available to provide services to government entities at the state, county, city, town or regional district level. Legal services available include procurement law, contracts, eminent domain, labor relations and civil rights. Contact Paul DeRensis for all public law issues at 857-259-5200.

Town Counsel Services

Harrington Heep LLP provides Town and Special Counsel services to help build and implement local programs that serve community needs. We have the expertise you require, based on decades of real-world experience. We take the time to understand your situation. We inquire, listen, and respond. We provide options that will work for you. We are committed to the values of democracy, to preservation and enhancement of natural resources and the built environment, and to excellence and care in support of municipal objectives. We offer competitive rates, personal service, diligent attention to our clients' needs, and good humor. Please contact us at contact@harringtonheep.com or 617-489-1600.

Executive Recruiting, Management and Governance Consulting Services

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

Organizational Development and Conflict Resolution

The Mediation Group is New England's one-stop shopping for conflict resolution and organizational development. With 30-plus years of experience, our multi-disciplinary team provides individuals and organizations with support to move forward constructively and improve functionality. Our services include: facilitation, mediation, training and coaching,

leadership development, cultural competency, independent workplace investigations, stakeholder assessments, public engagement and process design. For more information, visit www.themediationgroup.org, email info@themediationgroup.org or call 617-277-9232.

Public Management Consultants

MMA Consulting Group Inc. provides consulting services to cities, towns, and other public agencies. We specialize in public safety/emergency response (police, fire, EMS) issues, the design and administration of assessment centers, structured oral panels, and recruitment of police and fire executives. For information, contact Mark Morse, President, MMA Consulting Group Inc., 101 Court St. #7, Plymouth, MA 02360; 508-746-3653; mmaginc@gmail.com.

Human Capital Solutions

MGT provides executive recruiting, comprehensive interim staffing, and human capital consulting for local governments, school districts, businesses, and nonprofits. Drawing on decades of experience working across the country, our team collaborates with your organization to understand your unique needs, culture, and goals to deliver tangible results. We tackle immediate challenges, anticipate future workplace needs, bridge talent gaps, and enhance policies to foster lasting positive transformation within your organization. Visit us at mgt.us, post to our job board at govhrjobs.com, or contact our team of experts at 847-380-3240.

Human Resources Consulting

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

Municipal Financial Management Software: Accounting, Cloud, Utility and Collections

VADAR Systems provides financial management software to more than 100 Massachusetts municipalities. Our accounting, cloud, utility and collections applications are designed exclusively for Massachusetts municipalities by Massachusetts end users. The VADAR Cloud maximizes efficiency with 24/7 secure, remote access to all your applications from any device. Our user support offers unparalleled expertise. Proudly serving Massachusetts for 20-plus years. For a free on-site demonstration, please contact us at 877-823-2700 or sales@vadarsystems.com. Learn more at www.VADARsystems.com. Locally owned and operated at 20 Main St., Suite G1, Acton, MA 01701. ●

Calendar



The Beacon

Massachusetts Municipal Association

3 Center Plaza, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108

FEBRUARY

5 Association of Town Finance Committees, board meeting, 3:30 - 5 p.m., virtual. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

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

11 MMA Board of Directors, virtual meeting, 10-11:45 a.m. Contact: MMA Executive Assistant Courtney Butler

11 Local Government Advisory Commission, virtual meeting, 1-2 p.m. Contact: MMA Executive Assistant Courtney Butler

13 MMA Webinar, citizen academies, 12-1:15 p.m. Contact: MMA Education and Training Coordinator Kristianna Lapierre

25 Massachusetts Select Board Association, webinar with Massachusetts Moderators Association, virtual, 12-1:15 p.m. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig

27 Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, mini boot camp, 10 a.m.-noon, Grand View Farm, Burlington. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

MARCH

6 Women Leading Government, conference, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Lake Pearl, Wrentham. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

12 Massachusetts Select Board Association, spring program webinar, 12-1 p.m. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig

13 Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, spring program webinar, 12-1 p.m. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig

20 Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, professional development conference, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Devens Common Center, Devens. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

21 Women Elected Municipal Officials, leadership conference, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Lake Pearl, Wrentham. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig

26 Massachusetts Mayors' Association, meeting. Contact: MMA Membership and Project Assistant Maddie Roberts

27 Association of Town Finance Committees, regional meeting, 5-7 p.m., Hadley Council on Aging, Hadley. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

27 Association of Town Finance Committees, regional meeting, 5-7 p.m., Reading Public Library, Reading. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker

APRIL

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

8 MMA Board of Directors, hybrid meeting, 10-11:45 a.m. Contact: MMA Executive Assistant Courtney Butler

8 Local Government Advisory Commission, hybrid meeting, 1-2 p.m. Contact: MMA Executive Assistant Courtney Butler

10 Massachusetts Municipal Management Association and Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, joint meeting, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Lake Pearl, Wrentham. Contact: MMA Senior Member Program Coordinator Denise Baker and MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig

16 Massachusetts Mayors' Association, meeting. Contact: MMA Membership and Project Assistant Maddie Roberts

MAY

3 Massachusetts Select Board Association, western and rural Massachusetts conference, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Delaney House, Holyoke. Contact: MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig

8 Massachusetts Municipal Human Resources, boot camp, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Cyprian Keyes Golf Club, Boylston. MMA Member Program Coordinator Anneke Craig

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

MMA contacts

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For more information, visit www.mma.org.