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NEWS from the Association of Cities and Towns

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Big Week for MML in Annapolis!

MML was very busy last week in Annapolis. With a total of 20 bill hearings, two League priority bills on the House floor, and a hearing in the Senate on one of the League's priority bills, MML's membership and staff were hard at work promoting the needs of Maryland's 157 cities and towns. Highway User Revenues (HURs) were very much in the spotlight. HB 807, MML's priority legislation to partially restore municipal transportation monies, was amended and passed in the House on Thursday morning. MML's priority legislation, to protect personal information provided to local governments, HB 677, also passed the House on Thursday morning.

A special thank you goes out to our House bill sponsors, Delegates Pam Beidle, Carl Anderton, and Joseline Pena-Melnyk for all their hard work on these two bills. The League would also like to thank other House members, including House Speaker Mike Busch, House Environment and Transportation Chair Kumar Barve, House Appropriations Chair Maggie McIntosh, and Vice Chair Tawanna Gaines for all their support and hard work to pass the HUR restoration legislation in the House. HB 807, as amended, will provide municipalities with approximately \$38 million in funding for five years beginning in FY 2020. A municipal supplemental grant of \$20.4 million is included in the FY 19 State budget, which when added to the municipal base formula amount of \$7.4 million, will provide approximately \$27.8 million in FY 2019 for municipal transportation needs.

MML Members Flood Annapolis for Senate Hearing

For the second time in as many weeks, MML members flocked to Annapolis to support the passage of SB 516, legislation introduced in the Senate to restore municipal Highway User Revenues (HURs). Close to 100 municipal officials attended a hearing in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee last Wednesday, where a panel consisting of MML President New Market Councilman Jake Romanell, MML Legislative Committee Vice Chair Greenbelt Mayor Emmett Jordan, Capitol Heights Mayor Marnitta King, Frostburg Mayor Bob Flanigan, and MML Executive Director Scott Hancock shared with the members of the Senate Committee examples of the significant need to restore this critical transportation funding for municipalities.

MML would like to sincerely thank the members of our panel, and the many municipal officials who took time out of their busy schedules to travel to Annapolis, in some cases twice in as many weeks. Senate Budget and Taxation Committee Chair Edward Kasemeyer allowed all municipal officials in the audience to share their name and the city or town they represent. Their presence was noted and will definitely make a difference as we now work to encourage the passage of the legislation in the Senate so we can #FixLocalRoads and #RestoreHURs in 2018.

Land Use Bills Heard in House

Two bills of note were heard in the House Environment and Transportation Committee last week. Legal representatives from the City of Rockville, two developers, and MML staff member Candace Donoho testified in opposition to HB 1390, legislation introduced that would make changes to the components of a development rights and responsibilities agreements (DRRA). Every member of the MML panel discussed concerns related to the timing stipulations, bonding provisions, and local planning commission requirements in the bill during the hearing.

MML and the Maryland Association of Counties testified that a portion of the bill addressing “enhanced public benefits” could possibly be left in the bill with some additional language to ensure that there are other public benefits available to a local government when negotiating a DRRA in addition to those listed in the bill. MML anticipates that more work will be done on the bill, which is now being considered by the House Land Use and Ethics Subcommittee.

A second bill that would require including a new element in a local comprehensive master plan was also heard last week in the House Environment & Transportation Committee. The legislation, HB 1651, would require that an affordable housing element, including an assessment of “gentrification” be included in every comprehensive master plan. The bill also lists these same items as options when applying or renewing a Sustainable Communities designation under the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). MML did not oppose the optional inclusion of this language in the DHCD program but did oppose the requirement for a new element in a local comprehensive master plan. MML will continue to work with the bill sponsor and members of the Committee to amend the bill.

Tax Sale Modification Legislation Proposed in House and Senate

Although municipalities do not hold their own tax sales, they often send properties to a county tax sale to dispose of blighted or foreclosed properties and to resolve lien issues. MML participated in a Tax Sale Work Group that met during the 2017 interim and produced a number of recommendations to improve Maryland’s current tax sale process. The report produced by the Task Force can be found by clicking on: [Tax Sale Final Report](#).

MML’s legislative committee voted to support or support with amendments the following bills introduced to implement several of the recommendations found in the report: SB 222/HB 78 – Foreclosed Property Registry – Notice to Local Governments; SB 954/HB 1246 – Property Tax – In Rem Foreclosure and Sale – Vacant and Abandoned Property; SB 709/HB 923 – Water and Sewer Service; and SB 951/HB 1112 – Tax Sales – Vacant and Abandoned Property. Some of the above-listed bills are moving through the legislative process, while others were just heard last week in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee.

To check the status of all bills being tracked by MML, please click on [MML Bill Tracking System](#), click on the individual bill number, and click on “History” to determine the current status of a specific bill. Questions should be directed to any member of the League’s legislative team.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment Adding Environmental Rights Contains More Than It Seems

Senate Bill 873 ([Link](#)) would make the right to clean air, healthy environment, and drinkable water constitutional rights in Maryland. While this intent may have merit, the bill is stricken with other provisions that are problematic, particularly as it pertains to who has standing to bring a lawsuit for a violation of these proposed rights. Standing in Maryland has been carefully crafted over the years through case law and statute. This bill would greatly expand the universe of potential plaintiffs who could claim standing and therefore litigate against a local government. MML opposed the bill in public hearing last week, primarily against the substantial alteration to the standing provision.

Local Government Panel Opposes New Pension Mandate

MML was joined by MACo staff testifying in opposition to HB 971 last Monday, March 6. As introduced, the bill mandates that local government pension programs provide a pension equal to two-thirds of the member’s average final compensation for public safety officials injured in the line of duty. In addition to the fiscal challenges, this bill has many technical problems as well, with the effect of making it easier to claim total and catastrophic disability. Ultimately, this bill places a significant burden on many municipal pension plans and does not consider the other approaches municipalities use to take care of their injured officers.

There are currently no minimum benefit mandates on local pension plans.

MML Priority Public Information Act (PIA) Bill Passes in the House; MACo Priority PIA Bill Heard in Committee

By a vote of 132-4, MML’s priority PIA bill requiring the denial of a distribution list containing physical addresses, e-mail addresses, or telephone numbers of individuals that are used for routine or emergency notifications passed the full House of Delegates. Now that both the Senate Bill and a House Bill have passed their respective chambers, they will be heard by the opposite body. League staff will follow each bill closely.

Last Wednesday, March 7, MML staff joined the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) in support of HB 1638—the crossfile of SB 788, which was heard in February. The bill would accomplish three things: 1) explicitly require the denial of access to Social Security numbers, 2) provide a review and disclosure of body-worn camera footage recorded by police officers and other professions that may wish to utilize the technology, and 3) require the denial of a distribution list containing a physical address, e-mail address, or a telephone number of an individual that is used by a governmental entity or an elected official (the same as MML priority legislation SB 477/HB 677).

Airbnb Legislation Heard in the House

MML, MACo, and hotel industry leaders testified in support of HB 1604 on Friday, March 9,

2018. The bill would have the effect of bringing accountability to the tax collections and remittance procedures of short-term rentals and would codify local authority to regulate such lodging. Staff also reaffirmed the league's preference to limit the burden on homeowners as much as possible. There appears to be several areas of agreement between the interested parties.

The Senate version (SB 1081, sponsored by Vice-Chair John Astle) will be heard on Tuesday, March 20 in the Senate Finance Committee.

Nominations for MML Board of Directors Now Available

If you, or someone you know, are interested in running for the MML Board of Directors please consider submitting a nomination form. A brief memo is attached to the nomination form which should provide some basic information on the process ([Link](#)). If you have any questions or would like to submit a nomination form please contact Bill Jorch, billj@mdmunicipal.org or 410-295-9100.

MML Summer Conference Registration Now Open

Registration is now open for MML's summer conference, which will be held June 10-13, 2018 at the Convention Center in Ocean City. Registrations are arriving daily at MML. Pocomoke City Councilmember Diane Downing was the first person to register.

To date, officials from 20 municipalities have registered: **Bel Air, Boonsboro, Bowie, Brunswick, Charlestown, Chestertown, Cumberland, Denton, Elkton, Hampstead, Indian Head, Landover Hills, Laurel, Perryville, Pocomoke City, Rockville, Salisbury, Seat Pleasant, Taneytown, and Trappe**. Join your colleagues and register today! Complete conference details are available [on-line](#), and in the March issue of Municipal Maryland magazine. Use these links to view the preliminary conference [schedule](#) or to [register](#) on-line. By registering on-line, you will save \$50 on your registration fee. You will also save money if you **register by April 13**. Registration fees and meal tickets increase in price on April 14. Register today to be part of this training event designed especially for Maryland's city and town officials!

State Shared Revenues Handbook Updated

MML's State Shared Revenues Handbook has been updated to include the last three years of data ([Link](#)). This resource can be of assistance when developing annual municipal budgets. For additional information on the Handbook, budget preparation, or local government financing issues, please contact Jim Peck jimp@mdmunicipal.org, or Bill Jorch billj@mdmunicipal.org, 410-295-9100.

Comptroller's Office Warns of Tax "Phishing" Scams

Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot has requested that Maryland's municipal officials be made aware of various tax scams that are being reported during this tax season. Any municipal official who receives information from a resident(s) alleging a scam are urged to contact the Comptroller's office at 1-800-MD-TAXES (1-800-638-2937) or 410-260-7980 in Central Maryland or taxhelp@comp.state.md.us. More information can be found [here](#).

Save the Date: Maryland State of the Coast Conference

Find out what's happening around Maryland's shoreline. The Maryland State of the Coast conference is taking place May 21-23, 2018 in Cambridge, MD.

The conference is being hosted by the [Maryland Department of Natural Resources](#) and the [University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science](#) (UMCES).

The conference will serve as a platform for coastal partners and constituencies to exchange ideas and network. Attendees include regional, local, and state agencies; academic institutions; non-governmental organizations' and all those who help manage and protect Maryland's coastal resources. Registration is now open.

April 12 Open Meetings Act Academy Core Class

The Academy for Excellence in Local Governance (Academy) will offer special stand-alone opportunity to take the Maryland Open Meetings Act (OMA) core class on April 12, 2018 in the City of Hyattsville. This class will satisfy requirements for both Academy certification and the newly revised OMA training requirements as passed during the 2017 legislative session. You'll find additional information [here](#).

Classifieds

Classified advertisements from Maryland cities, towns, counties and other government agencies will be published in MML's *e-Bulletin* at no charge. If you would like to advertise an **employment opportunity, request for proposals, or a piece of equipment for sale** within the State of Maryland, please e-mail the ad copy, in a text only word doc, 200 words or less to [classified](#). Ads will appear for a 90-day period and can be resubmitted for posting if needed.

[Legislative Status Link](#)

[Classified Section Link](#)

[Important Dates / Deadlines](#)

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