

the review

March / April 2023

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW MAJORITY IN LANSING

>> p. 20

Police and Fire Protection
Act Change

>> p. 10

Proposal 2

>> p. 14

Workforce Attainable
Housing

>> p. 27



Features

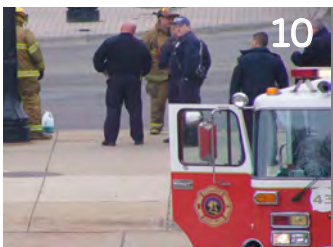
6
Election Results Bring Change to Lansing and Opportunity to Build on Recent Success

By John LaMacchia



10
New Tool for Funding Police and Fire Operations

By Kristin Bricker Kolb



14
Proposal 2 Ushers in Expanded Voting Rights

By Randy Hannan

18
CapCon 2023 is Open for Registration

20 COVER STORY
What to Expect from the New Majority in Lansing

By Kamryn Johnson

24
Michigan's Solid Waste Policy Modernized

By Danielle Beard and Herasanna Richards

27
New Legislation Gives Communities More Tools to Add Workforce Attainable Housing

By Josh Hovey



Columns

- 5. Executive Director's Message**
- 30. Membership**
- 33. Legal Spotlight**
- 34. Municipal Finance**
- 36. Northern Field Report**
- 39. Municipal Q&A**



COVER

Democrats now hold the offices of Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. In the Legislature, Dems have slim majorities in both chambers. This shift in power and constitutional amendments could have a profound impact on the work in Lansing and the future of our state.

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the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 96, Number 2

We love where you live.

The Michigan Municipal League is dedicated to making Michigan's communities better by thoughtfully innovating programs, energetically connecting ideas and people, actively serving members with resources and services, and passionately inspiring positive change for Michigan's greatest centers of potential: its communities.

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Legislative Horizon

Feel the ground shaking beneath your feet? That's the sound of change. And it's coming to your neighborhood in 2023.

For as long as I can remember, the League has been fighting hard for the funding and policies our municipalities need to become healthier, wealthier, and more resilient and inclusive places to live and work. Now, those efforts are paying off with two years' worth of legislative successes bringing billions of dollars in funding to everything from infrastructure to economic development, and new tools to tackle some of our greatest challenges in keeping our communities safe, healthy, and sustainable.

That means a groundswell of positive change is now within our grasp. It's up to us to take advantage of it.

The forces of change will be felt from inside the Legislature too. Besides a political shift across the aisle, nearly half the lawmakers in the House are new this year (54 of 110), and nearly a third are Millennials, with a few even younger Gen Z'ers. That could mean a lot of youthful energy focused on issues that disproportionately affect them, such as attainable housing.

For many of us, meeting the growing demand for attainable housing has been a tough nut to crack. Soaring real estate prices, lack of current housing stock, and increased demand were already putting home ownership out of reach for many first-time buyers. Add to that the pandemic's stifling effect on construction and rising interest rates, and it looked like a near-hopeless roadblock to building a resilient future.

But the package of housing bills recently signed into Michigan law could be a game-changer. There are initiatives to incentivize development through housing tax credits and expanded programs for municipalities and nonprofits to develop and rehab residential housing. You'll read all about these elsewhere in this issue, and the League is eager to help you learn how to use these new tools and resources to support local growth and economic development.

On a related front, we also managed to hold strong again in the ongoing battle to protect local control over short-term rentals, another factor in the availability and cost of workforce rental housing. It's an important issue, so rest assured we're not losing sight of it.

But growing our housing also means growing our need for police and fire coverage. That's why the League is celebrating another big legislative success: over the last four terms, we've worked tirelessly to remove the population cap on municipalities that want to utilize PA 33 for public safety funding, and we finally won. That disincentive for growth discriminated against cities and villages (townships had no cap) and blocked many of our members from using this common mechanism to provide critical services. The change ensures that future Census counts won't jeopardize anyone's funding for public safety and provides a tool for larger municipalities to seek additional revenue for these services when needed.

And while we're talking about sustainable growth, check out our overview of the package of bills that are revamping solid waste laws. As our communities grow, so do our needs for effective waste management and recycling. We'll explain all about the new changes, and why it's so important each of you has a seat at the table in the county/regional planning process.

But even while we're celebrating our victories, that doesn't mean it's time for our legislative team to sit back and rest on its laurels. Quite the opposite, in fact. Important bills were left on the table at year's end, such as shifting the cost of the disabled veteran property tax credit from locals to the state, and covering local revenue that will be lost with the newly expanded small taxpayer exemption. These are right-minded efforts that help our small businesses and veterans, but they rightfully belong on the state's plate, not yours.

Change also means there'll be plenty of new issues coming up too. That's why it's vital that you join us for our Capital Conference April 18-19 in Lansing. CapCon will give you the inside track on the education, tools, and resources you'll need for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

As Socrates said, "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new."

So, let's get to work building the future. Together.



Daniel P. Gilmartin
League Executive Director and CEO
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ELECTION RESULTS BRING CHANGE TO LANSING AND OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD ON RECENT SUCCESS

By John LaMacchia

The election in November of 2022 ushered in change in Lansing like we haven't seen in 40 years. Democrats now hold the offices of Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. In the Legislature, Dems have slim majorities in both chambers. Additionally, voters supported three constitutional amendments regarding women's rights, voting rights, and term limits. Coupled together, the shift in power and these constitutional changes could have a profound impact on the work in Lansing and the future of our state.

While our advocacy efforts are currently looking to the future, it is important to recognize that 2022 included significant legislative wins that invested billions of dollars into communities, infrastructure, and housing. At the same time, the erosion of local control around short-term rentals and aggregate mining were prevented.

These successes are not the result of one years' worth of work, but a culmination of having an engaged and active membership, strategic partnerships and education campaigns, and thoughtful coalition building. Ultimately, this work helped to shape historic levels of investment, including a \$4.7 billion budget supplemental that passed in March of 2022 that was primarily dedicated to leveraging American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds with resources at the local level to amplify the impact and create shared prosperity. Other highlights of this investment include:

Water Infrastructure:

- Allocated \$1.77 billion to improve wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, replace lead service lines, and address emerging contaminants



Betsy Richardson, Capital Office Coordinator

Started at MML: 2018

Betsy is responsible for assisting in the day-to-day operation of the Lansing office.

Fun Fact: I once received an award for rock climbing. Ok, so maybe the award was given to me because I made it halfway up the climbing route, panicked and had to come back down—but it still counts!

Bio: I am one of four siblings, and the only girl. I recently got married and live in East Lansing with my husband Mike. My favorite tv show is *The Office*—to the point that I had the theme song played at my wedding ceremony. My husband and I love traveling and trying new types of food whenever possible.

Favorite Big Ten school: Michigan State University, of course!

Housing:

- Allocated \$50 million to the Housing and Community Development Fund within the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to expand access to affordable housing
- Allocated \$50 million to the Housing and Community Development Fund within Michigan State Housing Development Authority to create a Missing Middle Housing Gap program
- Allocated \$50 million to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to incentivize energy efficiency and health improvements for single or multi-family properties

Broadband:

- Allocated \$250 million in funding to the Michigan Statewide Broadband Service Grant Program to be used to provide competitive broadband infrastructure grants for the provision of broadband service in unserved areas

Parks and Recreation:

- Allocated \$200 million for local parks recreation and trail infrastructure grants, including \$65 million for the Spark Grant program to be used for local parks and recreation improvements

Census:

- Allocated \$46 million to be used to make hold harmless payments to cities, villages, and townships that experienced a decline in population according to the 2020 census



Jennifer Rigterink, Assistant Director of State & Federal Affairs

Started at MML: 2016

Issue Areas: economic development, zoning, and land use

Fun Fact: You spend a third of your life sleeping (so your mattress choice is very important!).

Bio: I'm a Michigan State University graduate with a bachelor's degree in urban and regional planning. I live in DeWitt with my husband and two children. My husband and I own a small business. On the weekend you'll usually find me out of town at a kid's sporting event (volleyball/soccer).

Favorite Big Ten school: Michigan State University. Go Green!



John LaMacchia, Director of State & Federal Affairs

Started at MML: 2013

Issue Areas: transportation, infrastructure, and finance

Fun Fact: There are few things I enjoy more than sitting on my deck with a cold beverage listening to the Detroit Tigers on the radio.

Bio: I grew up in the Lansing area, attended Michigan State University, and reside in DeWitt with my wife and three children. I am an avid sports fan, extremely competitive, love spending time with my family, wish I played more golf, and am a connoisseur of smoked meats and cheeses. The past few years, I have worked hard at recreating my grandma's meatball recipe, perfecting my homemade spaghetti sauce, and becoming an amateur pit boss.

Favorite Big Ten school: Michigan State University. Go White!

Shortly after investing billions of dollars in communities across Michigan, the Legislature doubled down and passed a state budget in June of 2022 that included significant resources for League priorities. These results are a direct reflection of the hard work and dedication of our members to consistently talk about the importance of funding our communities. This work and commitment to educating legislators on municipal finance and the importance of investing in great places was evident as municipalities saw one of the largest increases in revenue sharing in the last two decades, resulting in a 6 percent increase totaling \$16 million.

Additionally, the Legislature dedicated \$750 million to help address one of the biggest strains on local government budgets, unfunded pension liability. These funds will ensure every municipal pension system in this state will be at least 60 percent funded.

Other key highlights of the budget include:

- Resources to create an Office of Rural Development to support economic development, workforce development, affordable housing, infrastructure, education, and high-speed internet access in rural communities;
- Additional funding for lead line replacements, environmental remediation, and blight elimination;
- Support for the Michigan Reconnect (tuition assistance) and Going Pro (job training) programs to address work force issues; and
- Over \$31 million in new funding for local roads in cities and villages.

Lame duck and the end of the legislative session gave us one final opportunity to protect and advance the needs of local government. In our continued effort to prioritize local



Herasanna Richards, Legislative Associate

Started at MML: 2019

Issue Areas: energy, environment, and public safety

Fun Fact: Definitely the first and only "Herasanna" you have ever met. My name is a portmanteau created from my parents' names. I can also play the clarinet.

Bio: I'm a Michigan transplant by way of Tennessee. I love travel and cool hospitality experiences! I'm happiest exploring new places, fun hotels, and unique restaurants with my (new) husband. #justmarried. I come from a huge, tight-knit family with Caribbean roots. I love spending time with them and celebrating our Virgin Islands culture! My favorite TV shows are period dramas, especially with political themes. My Saturday happy place is watching the latest season of *The Crown* while Wikisurfing for accuracy.

Favorite Big Ten school: My alma mater, Michigan State University!



Dave Hodgkins, Legislative Associate

Started at MML: 2023

Issue Areas: elections, labor issues, and parks and recreation

Fun Fact: My family has a pet gecko named Echo!

Bio: I'm from Ionia but lived in the Lansing area for 12 years after attending Central Michigan University. Recently, my family moved to Mt. Pleasant where we love to stay active through sports and getting out into the community.


Favorite Big Ten school: Not Ohio State.

control, League staff was able to work in conjunction with the advocacy of our members, and once again successfully held off legislation that would have eroded the ability for municipalities to reasonably regulate short-term rentals.

Building upon that, a coalition of organizations that included the League, completed an eight-year journey to pass legislation targeted at improving waste management, increasing recycling rates, accommodating for new forms of materials management, and prioritizing local input within the planning process. Finally, on an issue that is impacting communities across Michigan, the Legislature acted on a package of bills and expanded programs to allow local units of government to work with developers, builders, and nonprofits to rehabilitate and expand workforce housing in their area.

As 2023 begins, and the new legislative session kicks off, there is a tremendous opportunity to build on the success of 2022. The League will continue to focus on issues that improve our communities, address structural issues within our municipal finance system, and protect local decision making so municipalities can create specific solutions to meet their individual needs.

As legislators begin their work crafting policy and setting budget priorities, the League will continue to be a strong and consistent voice for local government. We will advocate for a bold vision that capitalizes on the economic value of thriving communities, advances equity, and builds community wealth. Working in partnership with leaders in Lansing, steps can be taken to modernize the systemic and structural constraints on local government, while simultaneously creating policy that supports a holistic and inclusive approach to expanding housing, business, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Now is not the time to rest on the success of the last year, rather, we once again need to rise to the occasion, lift our collective voice, and maximize the moment! 

John LaMacchia is the director of state & federal affairs for the League. You may contact him at 517.908.0303 or jlamacchia@mml.org.

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AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC ACT 33 PROVIDE A

NEW TOOL FOR FUNDING POLICE AND FIRE OPERATIONS

By Kristin Bricker Kolb

Under the state law authorizing townships to provide police and fire protection within their boundaries and defray the cost of same by specially assessing benefited properties, any city with a population over 15,500 is now able to create a special assessment district (SAD) to fund police and fire protection, if the question of raising money by special assessment and the amount of such assessment to be levied is approved by a majority of the electors in the special assessment district. Public Act 228 of 2022 was signed into law by Governor Gretchen Whitmer on December 13, 2022 and will take effect on March 29, 2023.

Public Act 228 amends Public Act 33 of 1951, found at MCL 41.801 et seq., known as the Police and Fire Protection Act, and while Act 33 is found under Chapter 41 of the Michigan Compiled Laws which applies generally to townships, Section 10 clarifies that the Act applies to townships, incorporated villages, and “qualified” cities.

Leaders from the City of Harper Woods' testify in support of HB 4281 from Rep. Garza to express how the 2020 Census impacted the city's ability to provide public safety services with PA 33.



Prior to the adoption of Act 228, the Act defined “qualified city” as one of the following: (1) a city with a population less than 15,500; (2) a city with a population between 15,500 and 70,000 and in a county with a population less than 180,000 if the special assessment district is approved by a majority of the electors within the special assessment district; or (3) a city located in a county with a population of more than 1,500,000 and the city contained an airport (other than a military airport) that saw 10,000,000 or more passengers board an aircraft in any 12-month period and the SAD was approved by a majority of the electors in the special assessment district. Because of the strict population limits in the definition of “qualified city” under the Act, there were very few cities that were able to utilize the special assessment process to fund police and fire protection.

Broadening “Qualified Cities” Definition

Public Act 228 revised the definition of qualified city to remove the population cap under (2), above, and removed (3) in its entirety. As amended, the Act now defines “qualified city” as (1) a city with a population less than 15,500; or (2) a city with a population in excess of 15,500 if the question of raising money by special assessment and the amount of the assessment to be levied annually is approved by a majority of electors in the special assessment district. In other words, every city in the state of Michigan now has the option to utilize the special assessment process to fund police and fire protection within their limits.

Submission to Voters

Any incorporated village and cities with a population under 15,500 are not required to seek voter approval prior to creating a special assessment district to fund police and/or fire protection, but they may do so, subject to the procedural requirements of the Act. Cities with a population in excess of 15,500 are required to submit the question of creation of a special assessment district and the amount of the assessment to electors. Whether required to be approved by the voters or not, assessments collected under Act 33 may be used for vehicles, apparatus, equipment, and housing, as well as the salaries and benefits of personnel. If necessary, bonds may be issued in anticipation of collection of these special assessments.

Hearings and Notices

If bonds are not issued by the city, the procedural requirements for hearing and notice regarding the creation and amount of a special assessment for police and/or fire protection services are governed by Section 1 of the Act. A public hearing must be held prior to the creation of the SAD, and public notice of such hearing must be given in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, as well as publication of the notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the city not less than five days before the date of the hearing. At the hearing, the legislative body shall, by resolution, determine to create the SAD, the boundaries of the SAD, the amount of the special assessment levy, and finally, shall direct the spreading of the assessment levy on the taxable value of all lands and premises within the SAD.

There is no limit on the term of an SAD if bonds are not issued. After creation of the special assessment district under Section 1 of the Act, an annual determination of the amount to be assessed must be made by the city or village council or commission, and a public hearing held on the estimated amount to be assessed within the district and on the distribution of the levy.

Bonds

If the city determines to issue bonds in anticipation of the collection of special assessments, the creation of the SAD is required to conform “as near as practicable” to the procedural requirements of the Public Improvements Act, Act 188 of 1954, found at MCL 41.721 et seq. Unlike the general authority granted to cities in the Home Rule City Act to create an SAD, subject to the notice requirements set forth in the general property tax act, the Public Improvements Act sets out in great detail the process for creating an SAD for a public improvement.



“... assessments collected under Act 33 may be used for vehicles, apparatus, equipment, and housing, as well as the salaries and benefits of personnel.”

Special Assessment Process

Under the Public Improvements Act, separate public hearings are required to consider and approve (1) the question of creating the special assessment, including the tentative boundaries of the SAD; (2) the final boundaries and term of the SAD and the estimated cost; and finally (3) to hear objections to and confirm the assessment roll. Notice for each of the public hearings is required to be sent by first class mail to each property owner of record within the proposed district and is also required to be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the city at least twice, with the first such notice being published at least 10 days prior to each public hearing. In addition, five separate resolutions are required to be adopted by the legislative body as part of the process to create the SAD:


1. The first resolution declares the intent of the municipality to proceed with the creation of the SAD and tentatively establish the boundaries of the SAD;
2. The second resolution confirms the boundaries of the SAD and directs the preparation of a cost estimate;
3. The third resolution schedules a public hearing on the cost estimate;
4. The fourth resolution approves the cost estimate and directs the preparation of the assessment roll; and
5. The fifth and final resolution confirms the assessment roll.

An SAD created under this process is limited by the Act to a term of 15 years.

Regardless of whether the special assessment is required to be submitted to the electors or not, the special assessment levied under the Act must be spread on the taxable valuable property assessed based on the special benefit provided to the property assessed. Properties exempt from ad valorem real property taxes are exempt from special assessments under the Act.

Special Assessment Levy Uses

The amendments to the Act provide an additional tool for all cities and villages to help cover the increasing costs of operating and maintaining police and fire operations in their communities, including capital and personnel costs, in furtherance of the health, safety, and welfare of the residents.

Consult your municipal legal counsel for more specific details on how you can proceed with establishing a special assessment district to fund police and fire protection. 

Kristin Bricker Kolb is an associate with Rosati, Schultz, Joppich, and Amtsbuechler. You may contact her at 248.489.4100 or kkolb@rsjalaw.com.



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PROPOSAL 2

USHERS IN EXPANDED VOTING RIGHTS

By Randy Hannan



At last November's general election, state voters overwhelmingly approved Proposal 2, which embedded a host of voting rights and requirements—some old and some new—in the Michigan Constitution. Organizers of the “Promote the Vote” petition drive collected more than 660,000 signatures to place the measure on the statewide ballot, which then passed with 60 percent of the vote.

The approval of Proposal 2 comes just a few years after Michigan voters approved 2018's Proposal 3, another citizen-led initiative that enshrined in the state constitution a series of voting rights such as same-day registration and no-reason absentee voting.

Identification at the Polling Place

With the passage of Proposal 2, several existing provisions of Michigan's election law are now codified in the state constitution, including the right of voters to verify their identity at the polling place with a photo ID or a signed affidavit. This provision effectively precludes the Legislature from enacting more stringent identification requirements for voting in Michigan.

Absentee Ballot Applications

Many clerks (not to mention political parties, advocacy organizations, and candidates) routinely send absentee ballot applications to voters in advance of every election. Under the constitutional amendment, a voter need only submit a single application to their local clerk to vote by absentee ballot in all future elections. The practical effect of this change is that clerks will be able to send actual absentee ballots to all voters who submit the one-time application.

Amending the state constitution was just the first step toward implementing many of these enhanced voting rights and procedures. According to Lansing City Clerk Chris Swope, enabling legislation will be required to clarify some of the new provisions. In addition, Swope says the state Legislature will need to appropriate money to pay for several new mandates, including a state-funded absentee ballot drop box for every 15,000 voters in every jurisdiction across the state, plus postage costs associated with clerks mailing out absentee ballot applications and ballots, and for voters returning their applications and ballots through the mail.

According to a 2022 analysis by the nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency (HFA), the state will need to spend more than \$2 million and local jurisdictions will spend another million to meet the constitutional drop box requirement. Postage for an estimated six million absentee ballots is expected to cost the state nearly \$5 million for each statewide election.



Early Voting

From a policy standpoint, the most significant change—and the one most likely to present challenges for clerks around the state—is the mandatory early voting period. Michigan now joins 23 other states and the District of Columbia in adopting early voting. For the first time in state history, all Michigan jurisdictions will be required to offer early voting for a minimum of nine days in advance of statewide or federal elections.

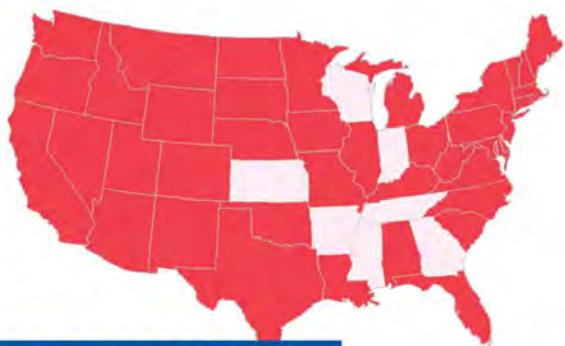
“While it is likely to ease congestion at election day voting precincts, especially on and around college campuses that experienced massive voting lines in the 2022 general election, early voting is certain to create new financial burdens for local communities,” Swope said. “Nothing in the constitutional amendment requires the state to underwrite any of the costs of implementing early voting, so local clerks and their units of government likely will be on the hook for staffing, security, equipment, and other expenses.”

The constitutional amendment also requires early voting to mirror the election precinct experience, where voters complete their ballot then feed it into the counting machine. In addition, more than six election precincts can be combined in one early voting location and multiple jurisdictions within a county can join together to offer early voting. While multijurisdictional collaboration can go a long way toward spreading the financial burden among the individual partners, Swope noted that how these arrangements will work in practice remains to be seen.

The new constitutional requirements also specify that only election officials are authorized to conduct election audits, which precludes the sort of independent election audits pursued by several organizations in the 2020 election cycle.


And, after past controversies over private funding to support the administration of public elections, the new constitutional language makes clear that private entities are authorized to make donations to support election administration so long as the donations are publicly disclosed and that the source of the donation is not a “foreign source.”

PROMOTE  VOTE



**MI's voter ID law
is in line with those
of 42 other states.**

According to Lansing's Swope, city, township, and county clerks across the state already have started asking questions about implementation of the new constitutional mandates and offering suggestions for actions the Michigan Legislature should take to clarify issues related to the early voting process, how much the state will actually pay local units for "state-funded" absentee ballot drop boxes and postage, and related matters.

The League will continue to follow these issues and report on significant proposals to enact enabling legislation and appropriations concerning the voting rights constitutional amendment. 

Randy Hannan is the senior communications strategist at communications firm Martin Waymire. You may contact him at 517.485.6600 or rhannan@martinwaymire.com. Prior to joining Martin Waymire, Randy worked in the Lansing Mayor's Office for 12 years serving a wide range of roles including communications director, chief of staff, and deputy mayor.



63

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2020 - Canceled Due to COVID
2019 - Bay City
2018 - Fraser
2017 - Hudsonville
2016 - Beaverton
2015 - Westland
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WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THE NEW MAJORITY IN LANSING

By Kamryn Johnson



Three months after the fact, the historic takeaways from the 2022 election cycle are still being talked about. Democrats won the trifecta of state political power—control of the House, Senate, and the governor's office—for the first time in nearly 40 years. Victories by Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Attorney General Dana Nessel completed the Democratic sweep of statewide executive offices.

Then, at the start of the new legislative session, state lawmakers chose a woman as Senate Majority Leader and a Black man as Speaker of the House. Both are historic firsts. Adding to the partisan sea change, coalition-led petition drives were successful in cementing reproductive rights and expanded voting rights in the Michigan Constitution.

All told, the 2022 election cycle swept Democrats into power and sent the Republicans back to the drawing board for 2024. For at least the next two years, legislative Democrats will have the opportunity to implement significant parts of their policy agenda, albeit with the narrowest of margins in both the House and Senate.

These changes come on the heels of significant shifts to how elections in Michigan are run. Voters in 2018 first approved a new law that required an independent redistricting commission—not lawmakers—to redraw legislative districts every 10 years. The 2022 election was the first to see the impact of that law at work.

“Tonight is four decades in the making,” said then-Senate Minority Leader Jim Ananich to the *Michigan Daily* on election night. “We have our first real shot at the majority since 1984. Because of you, and all of you, we have fair maps. Because of you, we were able to out-work, out-knock on doors, out-phone call, and most importantly, for the first time ever, out-raise Republican candidates.”

While Michigan Democrats are optimistic for what this new legislative session holds, they need only look to the painful lesson learned by President Biden and congressional Democrats when their slim majority in the U.S. Senate was all but voided by a pair of frequent defectors—Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona—who gained tremendous leverage in legislative negotiations over



Governor Gretchen Whitmer



Attorney General Dana Nessel



Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson



Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks



Speaker of the House Joe Tate



the President's agenda. It remains to be seen if a similar dynamic will play out in the Michigan Legislature.

Republicans seem to have learned that same lesson as they cautioned their colleagues on the opposite side of the aisle against overreaching.

New Republican House Leader Rep. Matt Hall told *Bridge Michigan* that Democrats will be in for a rough ride if they try to jam their priorities through the Legislature without bipartisan support: "If they come right out and start doing their partisan wish list...they're going to unite the Republicans against that really fast, and it's going to make it harder for them to do their job. If they start moving down the road of some of these extreme policies, they're going to have a very hard two years, and they're going to lose the majority."

There already has been a flurry of bill introductions to start off the new session, with Gov. Whitmer and legislative Democrats signaling that they will move forward with reinstating tax exemptions for retirement income as well as expanding the tax credit for lower-wage workers. They also aim to codify LGBTQ anti-discrimination protections in the state civil rights act and repeal Michigan's century-old, near-total ban on abortion.

The issues do not stop there, however, as lawmakers will face matters of how to spend a multibillion-dollar surplus, and whether to significantly change K-12 funding policies, boost renewable energy requirements, and fund a year-old economic development incentives account.




Michigan Municipal League State and Federal Affairs Director John LaMacchia notes that securing funding priorities was a key success for advancing the League's policy goals and that his team would be looking to build upon that success this year.

"Our work with the Coalition for a Strong and Prosperous Michigan (CSPM) helped to align a large and broad-based group of organizations on investing the state's federal stimulus dollars on key priorities like infrastructure, housing, broadband expansion, and more," said LaMacchia. "The coalition was able to achieve many of its funding goals last year, and we will continue to work diligently with our CSPM colleagues to identify areas of common interest so that we can advance a proactive policy agenda on behalf of our members."

How bills move through each chamber also is expected to change under Democratic control compared to past legislative sessions. Senate Appropriations Chair Sarah Anthony explained to *Gongwer News Service* that she plans to give subcommittee chairs a more active role compared to what lawmakers described as a centralized, top-down approach to policymaking in previous years.

"We want to ensure that this is an inclusive process, and that it's pretty transparent, but also working under the auspices of trying to get the budget done in June, so that folks have a predictability on the local level," Anthony said to *Gongwer*. "These won't be symbolic hearings; this will be working subcommittees that I think are going to be deputized to do a lot more."

Of course, it is still the early days of the 2023-2024 legislative session and there will be many tests ahead. The team at the League will be closely monitoring activity inside the State Capitol as issues develop. 

Kamryn Johnson is an assistant communications strategist at communications firm Martin Waymire. You may contact him at 517.485.6600 or kjohnson@martinwaymire.com.



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MICHIGAN'S SOLID WASTE POLICY MODERNIZED

By Danielle Beard and Herasanna Richards



In the final hours of the 2021-2022 legislative session, Michigan's long antiquated 30-year-old solid waste policy was revised as the Michigan Senate passed an eight-bill package known as Part 115 legislative package. The League and many other organizations collaborated for nearly eight years to modernize Michigan's solid waste laws and improve municipal recycling rates, strengthen the market for recycled materials, and modernize outdated regulations to meet the needs of a drastically evolved waste and recycling industry.

This effort culminated in House Bills 4454-4461. House Natural Resources and Recreation Chairman Gary Howell alongside fellow bill sponsors championed the legislation through the House of Representatives with strong support. Once in the Senate, the bills remained stationed in Senate Regulatory Reform until a pivot during lame duck session where the package was back in play. Successfully, the Part 115 package was one of the final items of legislation taken up by the Michigan Senate, which was then signed by Governor Whitmer on December 22, 2022.

What does this mean for the next steps? Beginning March 29, 2023, municipalities will have a much larger role in materials management planning at the county and regional level. Continue reading to understand what Part 115 means for League members, what funding is available to create and implement materials management plans, and how to make sure local needs are well represented.

The Basics

Part 115 requires all counties to complete “county materials management plans” in collaboration with *all* the municipalities within them. Significant local control has been preserved in the materials management planning process. County materials management plans will need to be approved by 2/3 of local units within the county. Host communities will also need to approve solid waste facilities before one can be built in any municipality.

Through the Renew Michigan Fund, created by the Legislature in 2018, counties will also be granted \$60,000 annually for planning, implementation, and maintenance. During the first three years of the planning cycle, counties will receive an additional \$0.50 per capita for up to 600,000 population to facilitate planning and implementation of the approved plan.

HB 4454 in the Part 115 package also defined benchmark recycling standards, setting minimal levels of recycling service provision in communities by population:

- 90 percent of single-family households in municipalities over 5,000 must receive curbside recycling service for one or more materials by 2028.
- Counties with populations less than 100,000 must host one drop-off recycling site per 10,000 residents.
- Counties with populations over 100,000 must host at least 1 drop-off for every 50,000 residents.

Additional information on benchmark recycling standards and more can be found at www.michigan.gov/swra.

Building a Circular Economy through Recycling

Recovered recycled materials are in demand among major industries in Michigan, including the auto industry. And any industry looks for reliability and consistency in its raw materials streams. Michigan’s current recycling rate is at just over 19 percent, which doesn’t create the volume needed for manufacturers that rely on a consistent stream of quality recycled materials. This rate trails behind the national average of 34 percent and Michigan ranks last among the Great Lakes states. One of the main goals of these laws is to create a greater policy incentive to recycle, as the current

policy environment, including very low ‘tipping fees’ (what trash haulers pay to dump waste at landfills), creates a greater incentive to simply landfill waste materials.

If the state were to reach its 45 percent goal, it could lead to an incredible number of jobs and economic growth. According to a December 2019 report commissioned by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Michigan could see the creation of 138,000 jobs, \$9 billion in total annual labor income, and \$33.8 billion in economic output. Additionally, the state could also see a reduction of 7 million metric ton equivalent of carbon dioxide in greenhouse gas emissions. That’s the equivalent of the energy consumed by 20 percent of Michigan’s households. And with the clock ticking to meet major greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goals outlined by the MI Healthy Climate Plan, the state will

need to find ways to cut emissions in every corner of the economy.



Benefits and Considerations for Municipalities

Population density and economies of scale are often needed for recycling and composting services. While residents and businesses have identified these as wants and needs in some communities, they may have been out of reach without regional collaboration. Ann Arbor, for example, has the population density to offer a year-round curbside composting service—the gold-standard of composting services. County- and regional-level planning, however, could make more services available to more areas in Michigan.

To meet local needs and reap the economic and environmental benefits of recycling, municipalities should be careful in evaluating their local needs as they prepare to collaborate with their respective counties. “If municipalities can begin to create this vision for their communities, they can advocate for themselves in the process,” says Kerrin O’Brien, Michigan Recycling Coalition Executive Director. “Coming into the planning process prepared also means that planning can be expedited, and funding can also be allocated to implement the plan.”

Do residents and businesses want composting services? What new ordinances or service contracts might be needed to implement the intended programs and services? Communities should consider questions like these to hopefully direct more funds toward implementing local initiatives.

Municipalities should also consider additional opportunities for funding local recycling and composting initiatives through EGLE's NextCycle program (www.nextcyclemichigan.com). "Even new ideas can be explored through NextCycle—specifically intergovernmental and public private partnerships and recycling supply chain projects," says O'Brien.

"EGLE infrastructure and market development grants provide funding for development now and there are also funding and support opportunities for the transition to carts, for enhanced drop-off opportunities, and small education projects." 

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New Legislation Gives Communities More Tools to Add Workforce Attainable Housing

By Josh Hovey

It's no secret that housing has been a hot topic in Michigan and across the country. The state's aging housing stock, combined with the housing industry's struggle to recover from the Great Recession of 2008-09, has pushed home prices up across the state.

According to the Michigan Statewide Housing Plan, the average number of building permits for new construction issued between 2016 and 2020 is less than half of what it was between 1986 and 2006. As a result, existing housing—historically the main supply of housing for middle-income and low-income families—is scarce.

That scarcity is driving up prices for Michiganders across the board, but it is particularly stressful for low and middle-

income earners. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority estimates that 50 percent of rental households are "cost overburdened" and 25 percent are "severely cost overburdened."

In December of last year, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed a package of four bills into law that aim to address housing affordability by helping communities build more workforce and attainable housing.

The Attainable Housing Facilities Act and the Residential Housing Facilities Act work together to help remove obstacles to workforce and attainable housing development in the areas of land use, financing, and taxation by accomplishing the following:



- Allowing the establishment of attainable housing districts that will offer tax incentives for housing developments that target income-qualified households, including dormant properties previously used as commercial or industrial sites.
- Creating residential facility exemptions offering specific tax exemptions for income-eligible housing projects.

The other two bills in the four-bill package concerned:

- Expanding the use of PILOT—or Payment in Lieu of Taxes—pacts with local governments for projects dedicated to workforce housing opportunities on a long-term basis.
- Expanding the use of Neighborhood Enterprise Zones to offer financial incentives for the creation of workforce housing.

The bills were drafted in coordination with the Housing Michigan Coalition—a group of 60-plus organizations chaired by the Michigan Municipal League, the Home Builders Association of Michigan, the Grand Rapids Chamber, and Housing North.

Following the passage of the legislation, Dawn Crandall, executive vice president for government relations for the Home Builders Association of Michigan, told *Crains' Detroit Business* that a key feature of the housing package is that the bills provide municipalities the flexibility to leverage which tool is best for them. "The thing we like about these bills is that it's not a mandate for municipalities. Each locality really gets to set the guidelines," said Crandall.

While demand for the attainable and workforce housing tools has not been quantified, one Traverse City developer recently announced in February their intention to seek a PILOT to allow more workforce housing in one of its apartment buildings.

Brian Mullally is a principal at Innovo Development, which owns the 78-unit Breakwater apartment building in downtown Traverse City. He plans to use the PILOT to convert some of the building's largest units into smaller apartments, and the building will target workers earning 80-120 percent of the area median income, or roughly \$53,000 to \$80,000.

"This new state legislation is a major win for our community, and we are excited to work with the city to increase long-term housing for the workforce. This gives us a competitive advantage to bring more talented workers to our region who can live affordably in Traverse City," Mullally said.

While housing advocates and local government leaders note that housing affordability is a complex and multi-faceted issue, the new legislation adds more tools to the toolbox.

"Creating a healthier housing market benefits everyone," said the League's assistant director of state & federal affairs, Jennifer Rigterink. "Because when families are not cost burdened on their housing, they are able to better provide for their families and spend that extra money to improve their lives and their communities."

In addition to supporting last year's housing package, Rigterink notes that the League has pursued a multi-faceted approach to address the state's housing needs.

Through its leadership in the Coalition for a Strong and Prosperous Michigan, the League was able to successfully advocate for leveraging a portion of Michigan's American Rescue Plan Act funding toward attainable housing and community development initiatives.

The League also announced last year the Pattern Book Homes, an initiative to provide developers and communities with free building plans for duplex and quadplex homes ideal for infill development in many of the state's older neighborhoods.


"While no single bill package or initiative is going to solve all of the state's housing needs, we continue to add tools to our toolbox and work collaboratively with our leaders in Lansing and partners across the state to help meet our housing needs," said Rigterink.

For more information:

Michigan Housing Coalition

www.housingmichigan.weebly.com

Michigan Patternbook Homes

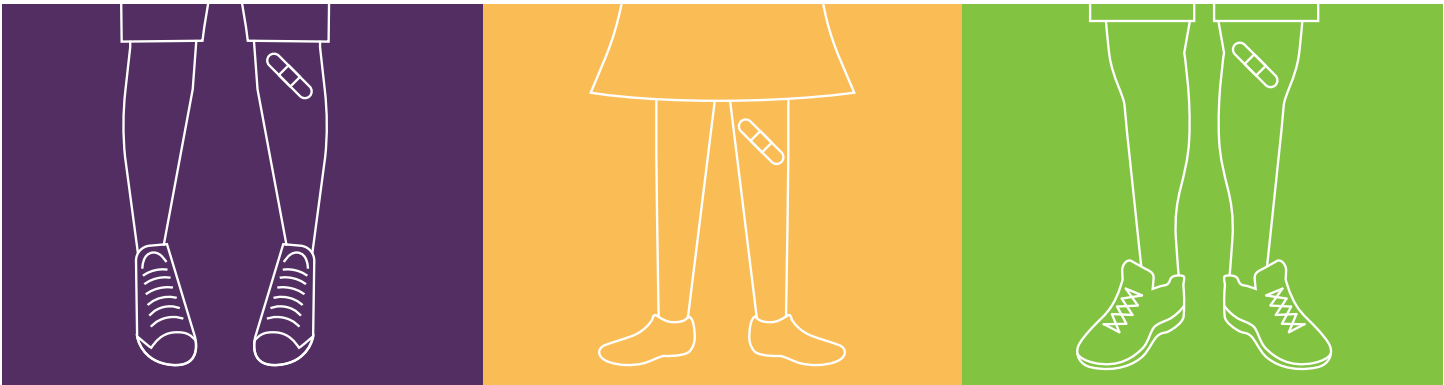
<https://mml.org/blog/2022/09/19/pattern-book-homes/> 

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2020 Press conference launching the Michigan Statewide Housing Plan Partner Advisory Council that developed Michigan's first Statewide Housing Plan (see Review July/August 2021 and May/June 2022).



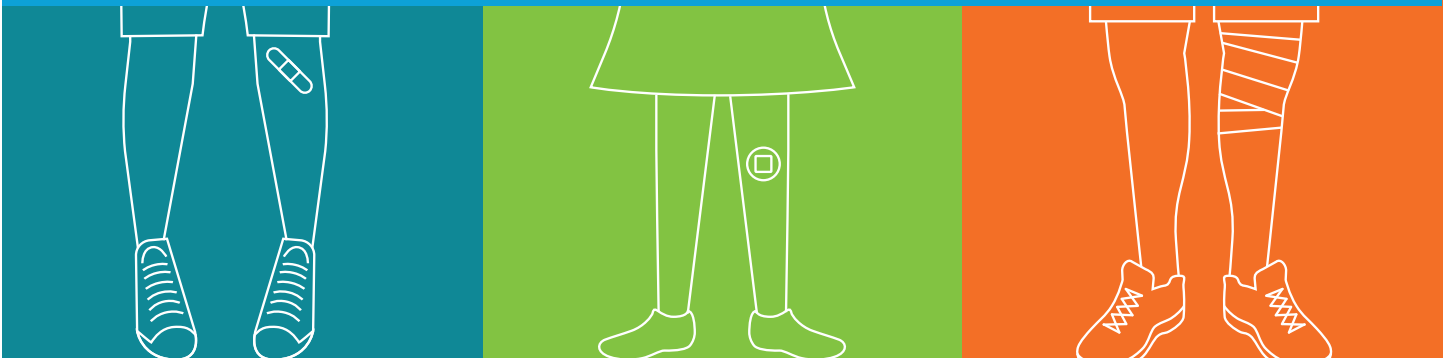
Governor Whitmer signed the housing package of bills in December, 2022.



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League Training Helps Elected Officials Lead Community Growth

By Margaret Mooney

For many local leaders, the desire to run for office comes from a love of their community and a drive to help it grow. But when the ballots are counted and newly elected officials take office, a feeling of “now what?” can take hold. That’s where the Michigan Municipal League’s Newly Elected Officials (NEO) training program comes in. By attending NEO training, first-time elected officials can learn core topics and basic functions to help them in their new role as a public official. The program can also provide a refresher for seasoned officials looking to sharpen their skills as they continue serving their communities. Topics covered in NEO training include: an introduction to League services, an overview of basic local government, roles and responsibilities of elected officials, the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), municipal finance, and a panel discussion with MML Elected Officials Academy (EOA) ambassadors.

Attendee Commentaries

To highlight their work, several recent NEO participants share what inspired them to run for their current position and how they hope to serve their communities while in office:

Springfield Councilmember Tracey Cummings explains that her new role has provided her with leadership opportunities to further serve her city. She adds that she “wants to see [her] community grow” and that “being a part of something that can help make change and improve the community” is what motivates her to be involved. Cummings is also looking forward to serving on the committee for an upcoming grant program that will award mini grants for community events. She is excited and proud that she was asked to be a part of this “wonderful opportunity.”

Springfield Councilmember Tracey Cummings taking her oath of office.





The Village of Pentwater council.

Vicksburg Trustee Wendy Pheils “grew up and intends to grow old in [her] community.” She says that with “[her] youngest graduating high school this year, [she] is at a point in [her] life where [she] is fortunate to be able to be more involved in the things that affect [her] family and community.” Pheils has been a member of the Village of Vicksburg’s Parks and Recreation Board for two years and plans to continue the work [they] have done. She explains that Vicksburg has “some amazing parks and trail areas and the board is actively working to bring more awareness of [them] to the community.” Last summer, they held their first “Movie Night in the Park” series and are “excited to continue that series in 2023 and explore other events to encourage families and community members to take advantage of these wonderful spaces.”


Pentwater Trustee Kathy O’Connor explains that “the village is currently considering rezoning, cityhood, and short-term rental management” and her desire to “ensure the voice of non-business residents is represented” inspired her to run for office. O’Connor’s involvement with Pentwater’s feasibility study for cityhood began before she was elected and will continue until a recommendation to the village council is made. Regarding this project, she adds that “what makes [it] so interesting is the community perspective and education. The facts and finances associated with the transition to a city form of government are almost secondary to the success of managing transparent communication and sensitivity to local culture.”

St. Johns Mayor Roberta Cocco also has a long history of service and understands the importance of community culture. In her new role, she is “looking forward to building trust by working to improve and deepen understanding with both city staff and residents.” She adds that “creating systems for open

communication will help ensure that people feel heard and that their talents, connections, and creativity are maximized.”

These participants also share what they found most valuable about attending NEO training. This includes comments about the EOA panel discussion, OMA information, and the municipal finance material presented by experts from Plante Moran. Wendy Pheils notes that “the thing that resonated with [her] was the sincere support from everyone in the training, both from the trainers and trainees!” She appreciates “the willingness of everyone to collaborate, teach, inspire, and share the knowledge they have acquired to help ensure newly elected officials like [her] are successful.”

An OMA presentation by Michigan Municipal League General Counsel Chris Johnson was particularly helpful to Kathy O’Connor. She reports that “the information was extremely helpful, as [she] had heard it referred to so often but never fully understood until Chris Johnson provided the background and ramifications.” She goes on to say that “armed with this information, [she] will be able to be compliant with the OMA and not put [her] village at risk.” In addition, O’Connor expresses that she “fully appreciated the panel at the end of the session. The shared experiences, observations, and advice from the panelists were “both eye-opening and reassuring,” she adds. For Roberta Cocco, “understanding how government is structured and how the various roles are meant to cooperate and work together was insightful” and “hearing from local representatives on the panel deepened the meaning of the topics in practical ways.” The opportunity to learn “insights into the various funds, how to plan for the year, and what to incorporate in long-term planning” from Plante Moran representatives was also “particularly helpful,” Cocco says.

To further the education of elected officials, the League hosts Elected Officials Academy Core and Advanced Weekenders. Offered in February and May, these courses reinforce essential material from the NEO trainings and help elected officials deepen their understanding of municipal issues. The Advanced Weekenders feature a rotating schedule of topics and are designed for those who have already attended the Core Weekender. More information can be found online at mml.org. 

Margaret Mooney is a membership associate for the League. You may contact her at 734.669.6924 or mmooney@mml.org.

The City of St. Johns celebrates a check.



The Village of Vicksburg started "Movie Night in the Park" last summer.



Upcoming In-Person and Virtual League Trainings

League educational events provide up-to-date information on major issues and concerns relating to local government.

Check out upcoming events below which can also be found on the League's event calendar. mml.org/education-events/league-calendar/

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• Lansing—Tuesday & Wednesday, April 18-19, 2023

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• Lansing—Tuesday, April 18, 2023

ELECTED OFFICIALS ACADEMY CORE & ADVANCED WEEKENDERS

• Bay City—Friday & Saturday, May 19-20, 2023

Upcoming 2023 League Trainings—Save the Dates!

Court of Appeals Examines City Charter to Determine Roles of Council and Mayor in Budget Process

Facts: The Warren City Mayor submitted a recommended budget for fiscal year 2021-2022 to the Warren City Council for approval. The proposed budget included line items for the city's Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The council adopted a general appropriations resolution that included revisions to the proposed DDA projects. The mayor vetoed the resolution stating that the council did not have the authority to "propose and adopt its own budget" but could only "act upon the budget proposed by the mayor." The council overrode the veto, but the mayor nevertheless instructed staff to fund the DDA projects as originally proposed.

The mayor argued that the council's role in the budget process was limited to reviewing and then approving or disapproving the recommended budget. The mayor relied upon *Detroit City Council v Stecher*, 430 Mich 74 (1988) in which the Detroit City Council attempted to unilaterally amend the mayor's budget recommendations by transferring appropriations before submitting them to the mayor for final approval.

The council, however, argued that the facts were nearly identical to that of *Zelenko v Burton City Council*, an unpublished opinion of the Court of Appeals issued May 15, 2018, in which the Court concluded that council could amend the mayor's proposed budget. The mayor countered, arguing that *Zelenko* was wrongly decided and that the charter language was different than the Warren charter.

Issue: Did the Warren city charter permit the city council to unilaterally amend the recommended budget from the city mayor when passing a general appropriations resolution?

Answer: Yes

Trial Court: The Trial Court granted Council's motion for a preliminary injunction finding that *Zelenko* was persuasive. The *Zelenko* trial court reviewed the Burton charter and found that although it was silent on the issue of whether the council had authority to amend the mayor's proposed budget, the charter's direction to council to adopt "a budget" rather than

"the budget" suggested that the council was not limited by the budget proposed by the mayor. The Trial Court distinguished *Stecher* on the basis that the issue in *Stecher* was whether the Detroit City Council had authority to unilaterally amend a previously adopted budget in the middle of the fiscal year.

Finally, the Trial Court noted that the charter requires that money not be drawn from the treasury of the city except in accordance with an appropriation. Subsequently, the Trial Court granted declaratory judgment in the council's favor, finding that the charter did not limit the council to merely adopt or reject the mayor's budget proposal but allowed the council to alter or amend the proposed budget as long as the budget complies with local and state law.

Court of Appeals: The Court of Appeals affirmed, adopting the reasoning of the *Zelenko* court despite it being unpublished and found that the facts were nearly identical as those of the instant case. The Court held that the charter's use of "a" budget suggests that the council is not limited to only approving or disapproving the mayor's proposed budget. Further, the Court of Appeals held that the mayor had a legal duty to authorize only those expenditures that were first approved by the council. The Court held that there is no discretion in determining whether money has been appropriated or not. If the council has appropriated the money, the mayor is then authorized to spend the money.

Warren City Council v Fouts, No. 361288
(December 29, 2022)

This column highlights a recent judicial decision or Michigan Municipal League Legal Defense Fund case that impacts municipalities. The information in this column should not be considered a legal opinion or to constitute legal advice.

ARP Flex

By Rick Haglund



Local governments have been given new federal authority to spend their billions of dollars in COVID relief funds to build new roads and bridges, and aid residents hit by natural disasters—uses not generally allowed under the \$350 billion American Rescue Plan Act (ARP). City, county, and state officials had lobbied for this measure for more than a year.

“The League has been advocating for as much flexibility as possible,” said Shanna Draheim, the Michigan Municipal League’s director of policy research labs. “One of the most frequent questions we get from our members is, ‘Can we use this money for roads?’” The expanded authority was part of the \$1.7 trillion 2023 spending bill that Congress passed in December. It came after a coalition including the National League of Cities and transportation-related groups wrote Congress in September saying more flexibility in spending ARP funds “can help mitigate state budget shortfalls and allow states and localities to address ongoing infrastructure needs that may have been sidelined during the pandemic.”

Michigan local governments received \$4.4 billion in ARP funding; money designed to help them recover from financial losses incurred in the COVID-19 pandemic. Local governments were allowed to use the money for a variety of purposes, including offsetting the economic and public health costs of the pandemic, providing premium pay to essential workers, recovering revenue losses in providing government services and investing in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

But some officials argued that not every community was hit equally by the pandemic. Many local governments have ARP dollars that are no longer needed for pandemic relief but could be used in other areas where they lack financial resources. “It unlocks COVID-19 relief money that states have that they no longer need for that purpose,” bill co-sponsor Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) said on the Senate floor, according to the publication *Route Fifty*. “It allows them now more flexibility to spend it on infrastructure and disaster relief and the like.”

Crumbling roads and bridges, severe droughts, and more powerful storms that some say are a result of climate change are major problems for many state and local governments.


Experts say the broadened spending authority will mainly benefit larger municipalities. That’s because a year ago the U.S. Treasury allowed local governments receiving up to \$10 million in ARP funds to spend them on a wide variety of government services without having to prove pandemic-related revenue losses. Such spending could be “construed to include roads or disaster relief,” according to the *Associated Press*.

But smaller communities generally didn’t receive enough ARP money to spend on these new projects. “Small communities aren’t getting enough money to split up among projects,” said Tim Dempsey, vice president of Public Sector Consultants, which works with the League on ARP issues. And so many jurisdictions have already decided where to spend their money. But any greater flexibility for communities is a good thing to have.” And a “huge benefit” in what is called ARP Flex is restored technical assistance from Treasury for grantees, said Sarah Klammer, a Michigan State University local government finance and policy specialist. “Many smaller local units have low to no capacity for managing an award of this level so any increase in support is very much welcome,” she said.

Larger communities now can use the greater of \$10 million or 30 percent of their ARP funds for transportation projects. There is no limit on how much of their allocations they can spend on disaster relief. Funds can also be used for projects allowed under the federal Community Development Block Grant Program. The money also can be used to supplement other funding sources, such as the local match for federal road funding grants. That includes some projects funded by the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). “The fiscal starving we’ve seen in Michigan has left a lot of infrastructure and equipment funding, and placemaking off the table,” Draheim said. Final rules on implementing the spending were expected to be finalized by Treasury in February.

Communities must allocate ARP relief money by the end of 2024 and spend it by the end of 2026. Much of the \$4.4 billion distributed to Michigan local governments could still qualify for new spending allowed under the new guidelines. Nearly \$3.6 billion in local relief funds were unallocated in November, according to a study by MSU's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research. Just 17 percent of local ARP funds had been spent. About \$3 billion sent to the state's 64 largest communities was unallocated, while smaller local governments had yet to designate \$642 million.

Many residents would like to see at least some of that money spent on improving the state's roads. Sixty-four percent of state residents said using ARP funds for road projects was "very important" in a series of surveys conducted last year by MSU, the University of Michigan's Center for Local, State and Urban Policy, and the Michigan Municipal Treasurers Association. Fixing the roads was the top priority of those surveyed.

But whatever local governments are planning to spend their ARP dollars on, some local officials are advising their colleagues to pick up the pace. Republicans that took control of the U.S. House in January are threatening to hold up important legislation unless their Democratic colleagues in Congress agree to deep federal spending cuts. Some fear lawmakers might try to claw back unspent ARP funds to support such cuts. "I would say to you that if you can responsibly speed up the obligations, I would say you do want to consider doing it," Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan told the U.S. Conference of Mayors in January, according to Route 50. "I hope eight months from now, 10 months from now, 60 months from now, we're not in a big fight to hang on to the obligated money." 

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Village of Roscommon: Wallace Park Project

A light blue silhouette of the state of Michigan is positioned on the right side of the header. A dark teal speech bubble points to a location in the central part of the state, specifically in Roscommon County. Inside the speech bubble, the text "Village of Roscommon pop. 981" is written in white.

Village of
Roscommon
pop. 981

Wallace Park is unique in the village and surrounding area as it has been continually open as a public access point on the AuSable River since 1953. It is the only public access to the South Branch of the AuSable River in all of Roscommon County. Wallace Park is not only used for local events such as the Annual Roscommon Canoe Classic, AuSable River Festival, Rotary Duck Race, and the Michigan Firemen's Memorial Festival, but it is also frequently utilized as a "quiet area" where residents and visitors can picnic, nap, watch the ducks, or read beside the river.

In 1952, the park was given to the Village of Roscommon by Charles M. Ziegler for the price of \$1. In 1977, the park was named after Fredric Wallace, a former village DPW supervisor who passed away on March 2, 1977. In the following years, the village made many improvements to the already beautiful roadside park. In 1982, a pavilion was erected. In 1988, a cedar retaining wall and deck were installed. Since then, many weddings and gatherings have taken place. In 1995, the living witness tree (reference points used to locate land corners) was recognized as a Michigan historical survey point by the Michigan Society of Professional Surveyors.

Recreation Passport Grant

In 2014, the village secured a Recreation Passport Grant. Funding was awarded to 21 out of 60 projects. The required components of the project agreement were:


- fishing pier/dock;
- seawall/shoreline stabilization;
- access path (sidewalk);
- grill;
- beach; and
- picnic table.

Credit for this project goes to Allen Lowe, a former village manager. He brought the office staff together to accomplish this project. The park became a more inviting space and a go-to destination for seasonal residents. People can launch a canoe and have a wedding in the same place!

Across the River

The new village manager, Ron Alden, was concerned about what was happening on the other side of the river. A senior and rehabilitation center along M-18 had no safe walking access to the village. There was a 2-ft shoulder next to the highway with logging trucks zooming by. Visitors to the center could not safely take their loved ones for walks. Ron met with the facilities manager who was very receptive to having a safe walking path for residents and visitors.

New Developments

Mission Point Nursing & Physical Rehabilitation Center deeded the village a 30 ft easement and the village put in a 10-foot walkway. This further progressed into a plan to redevelop this side of the river and link it to Wallace Park. In the works is a bridge over the AuSable River, handicap accessible bathrooms and public kayak launch, and a gazebo. The village plans to start renovations this spring with a CDBG grant, ARP money, village contributions, and more grants (cross your fingers). 

The Village of Roscommon entered this project in the League's 2015 Community Excellence Award competition (see Ad p 17). Project updates added by Kim Cekola, Review editor.



Recreation Passport Grants Program

Program Objective: To provide funding to local units to develop new public recreation facilities or renovate existing facilities.

Criteria: Emphasizes renovations to existing facilities that have outlived their useful life expectancy. Projects require a 25-percent applicant match. Full criteria can be found in the application guidelines booklet.

Eligibility: Cities, villages, townships, and counties, or any combination thereof in which an authority is legally established to provide public recreation, or the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority or regional recreation authorities formed under the Recreational Authorities Act, 2000 PA 321, or trailway commissions formed under Part 721, Michigan Trailways Act, 1994 PA 451.

Application Process:

1. Submittal of the grant application in MiGrants
2. Evaluation by DNR staff
3. Recommendation by DNR staff to DNR Director
4. Approval by the DNR Director

Deadline: April 1 each year.

Timeline: Grant award notification is expected in December. Project agreements will be offered shortly after the award notification.

Dollar Amount Available: \$7,500 to \$150,000.

Contact: Christie Bayus, Grants Management, at 517.242.8737 or BayusC@Michigan.gov or Grants management staff.



BRIDGE BUILDERS

2023: The Year of Building Bridges

Get ready for a fourth year of Bridge Builders! The Bridge Builders Microgrants program offers small, one-time grants to people or organizations within Michigan Municipal League member communities. Applications open this spring, so start dreaming about what you could do to bring people together and celebrate what makes your community special.

Learn more at the link below or scan the QR code:
mmlfoundation.org/projects/bridge-builders-microgrants/



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MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE HANDBOOKS

These handbooks are essential reading material for both new and veteran elected and appointed officials in cities, general law, and home rule villages.

Topics covered include:

- Structure and Function of Local Government in Michigan
- Roles and Responsibilities of Municipal Officials
- How to Select and Work with Consultants
- Running Meetings
- Personnel and Human Resources Issues
- Special Assessments and User Charges
- Planning and Zoning Basics

Numerous appendices include:

- Open Meetings Act
- Freedom of Information Act
- Sample Council Rules of Procedure
- A Glossary
- Frequently Asked Questions
- A Sample Budget Ordinance



Q. I am new to local government and am not familiar with a lot of acronyms I hear. Do you have a cheat sheet of definitions?

A. Here are some common local government acronyms:

(BAN) Bond Anticipation Notes

(BID) Business Improvement District may be created to develop a more successful and profitable business climate in a defined area, and to collect revenues, levy special assessments, and issue bonds to pay for its activities

(BRA) Brownfield Redevelopment Authority may be created to clean up contaminated sites, allowing the property to revert to productive economic use

(CDBG) Community Development Block Grant

(CIP) Capital Improvements Program

(CRA) Cannabis Regulatory Agency, a department within LARA (see LARA)

(Dark Stores) Large retailers ("Big Box" stores), have convinced the Michigan Tax Tribunal to give them special treatment as it pertains to the market value of their property

(DEI) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

(DDA) Downtown Development Authority may be created to halt property value deterioration, to increase property tax valuation in the business district, to eliminate the causes of deterioration and to promote economic growth

(EDC) Economic Development Corporation may be created to alleviate and prevent conditions of unemployment and to assist industrial and commercial enterprises

(FOIA) Freedom of Information Act

(FLSA) Fair Labor Standards Act

(FMLA) Family and Medical Leave Act

(GASB) Governmental Accounting Standards Board

(GIS) Geographic Information System

(HAZMAT) Hazardous materials

(LCC) Liquor Control Commission

(LDFA) Local Development Financing Authority may be created to encourage local development, to prevent conditions of unemployment, and to promote growth

(MCL) Michigan Compiled Laws

(MPEA) Michigan Planning Enabling Act

(MZEA) Michigan Zoning Enabling Act

(NIMBY) "Not in My Back Yard," referring to placement of controversial projects such as foster care homes, prisons, nuclear waste sites, landfills, etc.

(OMA) Open Meetings Act

(OPEB) Other Post-Employment Benefits

(PA) Public Act

(PC) Planning Commission

(PPT) Personal Property Tax

(PSD) Principal Shopping District may be created to develop or redevelop a principal shopping area and to collect revenues, levy special assessments, and issue bonds

(PUD) Planned Unit Development

(QBS) Qualification-Based Selection of Consultants

(RFP) Request for Proposals

(SEV) State Equalized Value

(ZBA) Zoning Board of Appeals (in some municipalities it is called the BZA, Board of Zoning Appeals)

We are requesting information on municipal Citizen academies. Please let us know if you have one by sending an email to info@mml.org.

The League's Information Service provides member officials with answers to questions on a vast array of municipal topics. Call 800.553.2483 or email info@mml.org.

2022 COMMUNITY Excellence Award FINALIST

Centennial Commons: Reimagining a Parking Lot into a Green Gathering Space

It was the City of Royal Oak's pleasure to enthusiastically submit Centennial Commons for the Community Excellence Award. The two-acre greenspace is the heart of a public-private development consisting of four projects—a new downtown park, a new city hall, a new police station, and the Henry Ford Medical Center.

Most people, even our long-time residents, do not recall a time when a green space existed in Royal Oak's downtown. The only known photograph of a former downtown park was taken in 1938. To say the city is excited about the return of a green and vibrant gathering space is an understatement.

With input from our residents and a downtown park taskforce, landscape architects came up with a design that is compelling, creative, entertaining, and transformative. Where there was once a parking lot and functionally obsolete buildings, there are quality public gardens, lawns, playscapes, a water feature, an abundance of outdoor seating, a stage area, public art, a community table, and a modest rock-climbing wall. The clever design provides spaces for relaxation, rejuvenation, and recreation in the center of a lively downtown.

ROYAL OAK CENTENNIAL COMMONS

