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Municipal Reporter



INFRASTRUCTURE EDITION



Values

Local Governance

We believe that local authority and autonomy are central to effective municipal government and we are fully committed to their protection, preservation and advancement.

Non-Partisan

We welcome and respect the perspectives of all elected and appointed officials without regard to their political affiliation.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We value the diversity of our members and the people they serve, and are dedicated to ensuring equal respect, recognition, fairness, and access to opportunity for everyone.

Leadership

We understand that highly-competent current and future local leaders are vital and we proactively support their ongoing development.

Service

We listen to our members and ensure that their priorities, needs and satisfaction drive what we do.

Collaboration

We work to enhance all municipalities through alliances with public entities, organizations, businesses and educational institutions.

Innovation

We embrace the need to find and develop new ideas and solutions to help local governments increase their adaptability, effectiveness and impact.

Fiscal Integrity

We believe that accountability, transparency and the responsible management of resources are essential for both our association and local government.



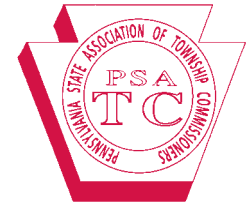
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Municipal Reporter



Pennsylvania Municipal League



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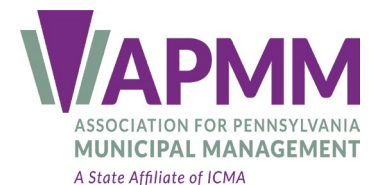
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The Pennsylvania Municipal League
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Harrisburg, PA 17101



PML.org

Our Mission

To strengthen, empower and advocate for effective local government.

The League is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization established in 1900 as an advocate for Pennsylvania's 3rd class cities. Today, The League represents participating Pennsylvania cities, boroughs, townships and home rule communities that all share The League's municipal policy interests. Our Board of Directors oversees the administration of a wide array of municipal services including legislative advocacy (on both the state and federal levels), publications designed to educate and inform, education and training certification programs, membership research and inquiries, programs, and group insurance trusts.

We are continually monitoring the needs of our members and are committed to providing the Commonwealth's municipalities with cost-effective programs and services required to meet the distinct needs of their communities.

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expressed by authors and advertisers are not necessarily those of the officers, members and staff of The League. Original articles on subjects of interest to municipal officials are welcome, but subject to review by editorial staff. The publisher has the right to reject unsuitable advertising.

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COVER



Cover photo: Pittsburgh

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THE PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE PROVIDES SUPPORT THROUGH ITS MANY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

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NETWORKS

- Home Rule Network (HRN)

Members of these programs and services also receive newsletters and/or special publications designed to keep them up to date on the latest developments pertaining to these topics. For information on any of the above services, please contact us at 800-922-8063 or 717-236-9469 or visit www.pml.org.

*League members receive PELRAS membership at no additional cost as a benefit of membership in The League.

Mark Your Calendar

U•COMP Virtual Board of Trustees' Meeting

March 3

41st Annual PELRAS Conference

March 15-17

Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, State College

League Board of Directors Meeting

March 23-24

The Graduate Hotel, State College

NLC Congressional City Conference

March 24-28

Washington, D.C.

League Northcentral District Meeting

April 18

Hyatt Place State College

League Northwest District Meeting

April 19

Maker's Warehouse, St. Marys

League Southwest District Meeting

April 20

Westinghouse Lodge, Forest Hills

PSATC Executive Committee Meeting and Capitol Legislative Breakfast

April 24-25

Hilton Harrisburg

League Northeast District Meeting

April 26

Pittston Memorial Library, Cosgrove Room

League Southeast District Meeting

April 27

Residence Inn, Bala Cynwyd

League Southcentral District Meeting

May 2

Gettysburg Hotel

PennPRIME Board of Trustees Virtual Subcommittee and Board of Trustees' Meetings

May 19

APMM 2023 Annual Conference

May 22-24

Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh

The League President's Message



MICHAEL LOMBARDO
MAYOR
CITY OF PITTSTON



As we progress through the first quarter of 2023, there is much work to be accomplished. We will continue to be guided by The League's mission to strengthen, empower and advocate for effective local government in an inclusive, non-partisan manner as we initiate the goals outlined in our ENVISION 2032 Forum. Our legislative priorities for this year are based in three categories, Public Safety, Municipal Finance, Community Development and Infrastructure.

Membership in The League provides a forum for many important discussions. At this point in time, with the availability of historic levels of funding, infrastructure is an important topic. Investments in your municipality's infrastructure represents an investment in the future. Whether it's roads, utilities or technology, infrastructure investments ensure public safety and create opportunities for private investments in your communities. I strongly recommend that each of you conduct an infrastructure assessment in your municipality. This exercise will assist you in determining future projects, identifying aligning state and federal funding opportunities, and most importantly modernizing and protecting valuable municipal investments. The League's leadership and technical staff remain available to assist you in this endeavor and connect you with other municipalities that have completed similar projects.

There undoubtedly will be challenges this year as we continue to work our way through the residual effects of the pandemic and the possibility of some challenging economic months, but, I am certain that, with continued collaboration and open communication we can successfully meet each challenge. As local elected officials, we need to demonstrate that good leadership is most important and ultimately has nothing to do with politics or political party. Let's be the example as we build our communities from the ground up and strengthen our Commonwealth.

I continue to challenge each of you to actively engage and respectfully ask that each of you commit to bringing one new member to The League. I look forward to seeing many of you at the regional meetings, forums, trainings and Municipal Leadership Summit. Together, we can grow our influence and impact.

Finally, I look forward to continue working with League Executive Director John Brenner and the entire talented staff of our Pennsylvania Municipal League.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Michael A. Lombardo". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Michael A. Lombardo
Mayor, City of Pittston

The League Executive Director's Message

Last year during our ENVISION 2032 initiative, municipal leaders across our commonwealth who overwhelmingly responded to our survey identified infrastructure as the number one issue for local government by a staggering two-thirds margin (66 percent.)

Just over 80 percent reported that major infrastructure projects are underway or being planned in their communities. As American Rescue Plan Act dollars are allocated and severe weather increases, municipal leaders are concerned that a perfect storm of aging infrastructure needs will become more critical. A long-term approach of funding resources is necessary for local leaders to move their communities forward. Our [ENVISION section](#) of The League website offers great examples of positive intergovernmental cooperation including the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority and the Southwestern PA Connected initiative.

ENVISION highlights the long-term solution of “an infrastructure development program for municipalities that combines the fiscal resources of state and federal programs, general fund appropriations, and state bond authority, and features low or no interest loans.” The report also recommends “statewide funding that encourages joint efforts by stakeholders, including municipal partnerships, to more effectively upgrade systems and make optimal use of available funds.”

This issue of the Municipal Reporter offers resources, solutions and key partners to help you plan and implement infrastructure improvements in your community. Your League is prepared to champion real solutions and your innovative ideas to help rebuild vital infrastructure as we go forward. Infrastructure is the building block for community and economic development in all of our municipalities – cities, boroughs and townships. It’s also the perfect issue for our new Governor and the new session of the General Assembly to roll up their sleeves and do their part to help put the tools and resources in place for you to plan, build and rebuild in your community.

Yours In Service,



John S. Brenner



JOHN BRENNER





Pennsylvania Municipal
League

Civility Campaign

Today, civility in government is more crucial than ever.

The Pennsylvania Municipal League is proud to present an initiative aimed at fostering civility in the delivery of public services whether they be in an office setting, a public meeting or any contact with a member of the public. The Civility Campaign begins with elected and appointed officials signing the following pledge:

“As a public servant, I hereby pledge to work daily to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others – even during disagreements – building bridges to foster relationships and respecting different viewpoints, while finding solutions for the betterment of my municipality.”

Let’s work together to find solutions, critique constructively and foster greater understanding in our municipalities. Taxpayers and residents deserve no less in our communities.

[Complete Civility Pledge Online](#)

[Download Civility Pledge PDF](#)

Inside The League



ABE AMORÓS
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -
OPERATIONS

Happy New Year to all of you!

With the new administration taking effect on Tuesday, January 17, The League is excited about 2023 and looks forward to providing its members with more resources and training opportunities.

For starters, The League is working on creating a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging program that will assist local officials with not only the basics of this exciting training but also how it will impact the delivery of services for all of our residents.

As many of you also know, The League hired Josh Linsenbach as Director of Information and Technology last August. Since then, he has been extraordinarily diligent in addressing The League's technological needs and has successfully interfaced with all departments to enhance our ability to communicate better internally. We are currently in the process of adopting the Microsoft 365 platform that will not only allow our employees to do more but also provide a seamless transition from our previous arrangement.

We are also excited about our upcoming PELRAS conference starting on March 15 at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College which has already confirmed excellent workshops and training sessions. Our staff is enthused about the number of participants, as we have reached our maximum capacity.

On January 3, we also welcomed Rachel Washic as our new Office Coordinator who has already begun digging into a multitude of tasks that not only benefit The League, but our members as well. She will report directly to Josh and also collaborates regularly with Susan Helms, our Director of Finance and Administration.

We look forward to working with you this year and welcome further collaboration in order to provide your municipality with as many resources as possible to better serve your constituents. Stay Warm!

From Inside The League,

Abe Amorós

Abe Amorós

Q&A with League Leader Joe Fleming Manager City of Saint Marys Director-at-Large



Q: Joe, thank you for your service as manager of the City of Saint Marys. How did you get involved in local government?

It's somewhat of a funny story because my involvement in local government was simply by chance and curiosity. Being born and raised in Saint Marys, I have always had an interest in government at all levels from reading the newspapers to watching the news on TV. I have always enjoyed people, either by talking with them or servicing them in previous employments, but I never grew up saying that I am going to be the city manager of Saint Marys. I would have never dreamed of it. In the fall of 2018, I was raking the front yard with my wife, Amanda, and thinking about how I could be more involved with the community. I was becoming involved with local Little League Softball by serving on their board and coaching my daughter's youth team but wanted to do more. Of course, I was busy working in sales at one of our local powder metal manufacturers, which I enjoyed talking with customers and outreaching whenever possible. So, while raking with my wife, I stated to her that I was going to run for city council. My wife's reaction was typical since we have a family with three beautiful daughters and knowing how busy life is already by giving me the "oh no" look. It took some convincing, but she obviously knows what kind of person I am. One who is willing to help anyone. After winning the city council seat for Saint Marys in the fall of 2019, I was off and running as a new city councilperson. It gave me such pride to be one of the voices for my community. Not only for myself, but my wife gained as much interest in city government as I did. Big win-win! So, before every monthly council meeting, the TV was setup so the family could watch it and when I would finally get home after the meeting, we would discuss reactions and how everything went from an honest public eye. I believe it was late summer or even fall of 2020, my wife stated to me after one of our monthly meetings

This Q&A feature section of the Municipal Reporter highlights an individual local leader who has been involved and engaged with their community and The League.



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something I will never forget. She came up to me and stated, "you know what you would be good at?" I am looking kind of puzzled at her and she stated, "city manager." I blew it off and never really thought about it stating, "we already have one." I explained to her how hard it would be to become one and it's not an elected position with no set terms. I swear out of fate, city council was pulled into executive session either the next monthly meeting or the one after at the request of the city manager to announce his resignation from the position. My reaction was of disbelief and my thinking, at the time, was that my wife is never going to believe this. After a brief discussion at home, I didn't have to convince my wife at all to apply for the position. After an intense hiring process of multiple interviews and a ton of unknowns, I was sworn into office on May 17, 2021. One of the best days of my life as being the chief executive officer of my hometown. It might not look like much from the camera view but taking the oath of office in front of my family, who was present, will live on forever.

Q: What leadership advice do you have for other local leaders?

As per advice I would give anyone in a public leadership role, the main one is LISTEN! Now, I enjoy talking with anyone and everyone. There is nothing like a good story and I enjoy sharing them. In the public sector, especially in management, the opposite should be exercised. The community needs to be heard, staff needs to be heard and council needs to be heard. Especially when it comes to community, they are the reason we exist. Please take the time for community engagement and see how their issues or concerns are affecting them, their families and community. One would be surprised of what you can learn. I enjoy hearing the needs and wants of the people, as it provides input into the direction and vision of our city. If there is a need, there is an

opportunity for us to provide. Another point I would like to make is leadership. As local leaders, there are some authorities granted to respected position, but the people who you serve are not looking for the authority aspect of the role. They are looking for your leadership. Lead them to a better tomorrow! Lastly, have the mentality of it's not about me, but about them, the people. I am representing Saint Marys, not myself. Wherever I go and whatever I do, I am bringing the heart of Saint Marys with me. In the same regard, as a board member for The League, I bring the heart of the Pennsylvania Municipal League with me also. It's a great honor to be a part of everything which I am involved with, and I am fortunate to have the opportunities.

Q: What has been your most rewarding experience as a municipal official?

The most rewarding as a city leader is definitely the involvement with the community and beyond. Since the start of this administration, there has been a lot of change. We created change for the better. We value our interactions with the citizens and looked into how we can do better to reach all generations as a government. We modernized how we do business and how we ensure the community is receiving information, especially when marketing our community events and notifications. We have diversified our communications to best meet the needs of the residents, whether it's by local newspaper, social media, digital community calendar, our city app or our local TV channel. Another area which is rewarding to me is seeing the improvements of our area community parks. Our Parks and Recreation Department along with Community and Economic Development are giving the parks the attention they deserve and developed many activities for the area. Finally, the community participation of our local events has been amazing. For the past year, our

→

events have been growing to the largest crowds we have ever witnessed. We have countless numbers of hard-working organizations which collaborate to make these events along with our citizens such a huge success!

Q: What has been the greatest challenge in your position?

For challenges, I would have to say is time. When I say time, I mean the time it takes to get projects completed. Working in the public sector, I love seeing projects move forward and progress for betterment of the community. I am not accustomed to the time it takes to get where we need to be. It always seems like there is another hurdle or provision, even a study to get the projects moving forward. Another challenge is marketing of our wonderful city. I can't express enough how amazing Saint Marys really is. I will express more later in the article. We have a lot of great entities in our city, and we need to do more to compliment those entities.

Q: Thank you for serving on The League Board as a director-at-large. How has your involvement with The League helped you and your community?

I can't say enough thanks to The League for the opportunities being provided for our community and me. It has helped place Saint Marys back on the map as far as local government is concerned and The League enables us to have resources and services that we cannot find anywhere else. It's an honor to serve as a Director-at-Large and also on other committees which I am involved to be a voice for our community. The League does a tremendous job looking out for all municipalities across our commonwealth by working with local and state governments. They provide me

the activities of state level government along with networking with other municipalities for their best practices and resources.

Q: What advice do you have for people considering municipal government as a career?

For someone considering municipal government as a career, I will say two words, "DO IT!" I truly enjoy moving the city forward and being a part of it. It's rewarding for me to see projects and activities come to fruition. I love helping others so it's easy for me to encourage others to be involved. There will always be "ups" and "downs" with any career, but municipal management is a great profession. There are so many good things that come out of this career and to make a positive reflection on people's lives is like no other, as you will meet many wonderful people. The hardest part is taking the first step to making a difference and once you start the path, you will enjoy every step along the way. I have the best job with the ability to impact people's lives on a daily basis for a stronger and safer community into the future. I look at my position, not as a job, but as a lifestyle because it is a career with no "off" switch and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Q: As a proud municipal manager, what would you say are some of Saint Marys greatest attributes?

Saint Marys is unique in the fact that we have such a strong industrial sector by being a leader in powder metal and carbon industries. As being the 2nd largest land area city in the Commonwealth, we provide the small community feel along with the great outdoors. The people are hard-working with an unbelievable work ethic, and they play hard too. We are in the

heart of PA Wilds which gives us access to numerous recreational activities, along with our great community park system. We are so interconnected here that it feels like everyone is “family.” Smiling faces and conversation are commonplace here. With our updated fiber optic system, we can connect you to the world. There are always opportunities which await you in the City of Saint Marys. Let me not forget that we are home to Straub Brewery, one of the oldest family-run breweries in the country.

worth of road repairs for our community. Looking forward to 2023, we have in the works the State Route 120 by-pass connector project for easement of heavy truck traffic through our downtown, another major sanitary sewer replacement project for our downtown area, an amphitheater for our Downtown Event Park, creating a pedestrian walkway at Benzinger Park, replace the aging Playland at Memorial Park with a new constructed play area, and completion of our new traffic camera system throughout the downtown area. Another point is the expansion in our private sector also. Millions are being invested in the city through the expansions in our industrial sector, a newly constructed mental health facility by Dickinson Mental Health which is scheduled to start in the latter part of this year, the hardwood industry, and commercial sector. It is an exciting time for the City of Saint Marys and surrounding area. □

Q: What programs or projects has Saint Marys implemented or been working on related to this edition's topic of "Infrastructure?"

As far as infrastructure is concerned, I will provide the growing list of projects for our city. We just completed replacement and repairing almost a mile worth of sanitary sewer lines and about 3 miles’

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PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
Our mission is to **strengthen, empower and advocate** for effective local government.

#StrengthThroughEngagement

Infrastructure



This year the *Municipal Reporter* will be covering the issues of highest concern that municipal leaders identified during The League's [ENVISION 2032 initiative](#), which included a broad survey and statewide forums. We will be sharing articles and information relating to these very important topics of concern -- Infrastructure, Municipal Finance, Equity and Civic Engagement, Community Development, Sustainability, Public Health & Safety, and Economic Vitality.

This February edition covers the topic of Infrastructure.

As noted in our [ENVISION 2032 publication](#):

The topic of infrastructure is uppermost in the minds of municipal leaders across the Commonwealth. In The League's survey, aging infrastructure tops the list of future concerns for their communities, and 84% reported that they are currently engaged in major infrastructure projects.

Municipal leaders report troubling indicators that the Commonwealth is heading toward a confluence of serious challenges. They predict that increasingly severe weather events will further stress aging infrastructure, and that insufficient financial resources, including the end of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, will seriously inhibit modernization efforts. They believe avoiding this scenario will require stretching every available dollar for maximum impact, while identifying and introducing new approaches and funding sources.

Municipal leaders agree that longer-term thinking must guide decision-making and that we must avoid the temporary or short-term fixes that have plagued our communities for decades. Policies and practices moving forward must protect flexibility and local discretion so that municipal governments can decide how to marshal and deploy their resources in ways that best suit their communities.

Municipal leaders generally agree that we must leverage federal and state opportunities to address infrastructure needs. They also agree that we can't go it alone. Nearly 80% of respondents to the survey reported they are already working to increase coordination and partnerships with neighboring municipalities and regional governments and shared that they anticipate doing more in the future.

We strongly urge the Commonwealth to make infrastructure an immediate and sustained priority for the state. In doing so, state government leaders need to understand that municipalities take on immense expenses to address critical infrastructure needs. These costs are significantly higher than municipalities' operating budgets and require new funding streams, such as having the ability to generate local funding or access low interest loans.

We also encourage the Commonwealth to review and streamline its local project permitting processes across its agencies to achieve more efficient and timely reviews and permitting of local infrastructure projects.



*Charting the Future for
Pennsylvania's Municipalities*

Longtime Customer's Coverage Pays Off with \$4,000 Repair

BY HOMESERVE, SERVICE LINE WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ed V. was accustomed to receiving frequent phone calls from his mother Dolores. After all, she's 90 years young and living by herself in her Kulpmont, Pennsylvania home of over 50 years. But on one early February day, Dolores called her son because she noticed water backing up in her house. After Ed remembered that his mom had a HomeServe policy, he gave us a call. That very same day, a local HomeServe network contractor, American Rooter, came out and ran a snake down the sewer pipe. They felt a block unclog, so problem solved, right? Unfortunately, wrong.

Five weeks later in late March, the issue began happening again – water was backing up into Dolores' home. HomeServe sent American Rooter out again, but this time, after running a camera down the pipe, they discovered a crack in the sewer line. The compromised section would have to be replaced.

Luckily for Dolores, she has been a HomeServe customer since 2006. And while she has been fortunate to never have needed a repair until this year, HomeServe was there when she needed us most. When all was said and done, the job to diagnose and repair the sewer line saved her just over \$4,000.

"When my mother called me that morning and told me that water was backing up again I thought, what in the world are we going to do?" said Ed. "But as soon as we got off the phone with HomeServe, it felt like the weight of the world was off of our shoulders. We were confident we'd be taken care of – and we were."



Dolores first learned of HomeServe's partnership with Aqua Pennsylvania all those years ago through a mailing on a water line policy she received at her home. Ed remembers his parents' logic was, why not take out some coverage? The home was old, and

they felt like it was only a matter of time before they could run into a problem with their water line. In the years that followed, they added sewer line and interior plumbing coverage as well. Miraculously, the home had time on its side and avoided any problems until this year. But when the issue did arise, it was clearly a major one. The unexpected \$4,000 cost would have been a huge blow to Dolores and her family, and far outweighs the \$380 she has spent in monthly payments for the HomeServe sewer line policy that saved the day.

"HomeServe honestly made us confident that we were going to be taken care of starting from the first call. Because of them, we felt like our situation wasn't the end of the world – and for many, a cost like that could be," said Ed, Dolores' son. "It really feels good knowing now that HomeServe works exactly the way it should. If anybody reading this is considering signing up for a policy – they should look at our story and know it's the right choice for any homeowner. They really saved us."

□



Bethlehem's Urban Greenway Brings Vibrancy and Supports Sustainability

Decades of Investment and Partnerships Contribute to South Bethlehem Greenway's Continued Success

**BY LAURA COLLINS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
CITY OF BETHLEHEM**

The City of Bethlehem is a community of 75,000 people situated in the center of the Lehigh Valley that is known for its colonial Moravian history, former global industrial prominence, modern economic revitalization, and awesome cultural vibrancy and diversity.

Many ambitious, city-led redevelopment projects have been key to Bethlehem's economic and cultural growth and success in recent years. Bethlehem has been able to reclaim industrial remnants of the former Bethlehem Steel Corporation to create revitalized and reimagined spaces for people who live, work and visit our pulsating city. One of the most transformative such infrastructure projects we have undertaken, which also reflects our commitment to sustainability, is the development of a nearly three-mile-long urban greenway.

With the investment of significant time and resources by multiple administrations and councils, and with the support of stakeholders locally and at all levels of government, miles of formerly abandoned rail line running through the center of the urban south side of our city have been transformed from eye sore and nuisance to lively public open space and multi-use trail — the South Bethlehem Greenway.

The multi-phased South Bethlehem Greenway development has been a centerpiece of Bethlehem's success



in revitalizing the South Side, and it serves as a great example of our ongoing work to achieve the goals set out in our Climate Action Plan to fight climate change. Planning for this project began in 2005 during an eight-month-long study that produced the South Bethlehem Greenway Master Plan. Negotiations with the owner of the abandoned rail line, Norfolk Southern, began around that time as well. Since then, the phases of the South Bethlehem Greenway have been under constant development as the path has taken shape. New development and connections continue to be made today.

The greenway has evolved beautifully to become today the "spine" running through Bethlehem's South Side. It traverses the heart of the commercial and

arts districts, along dense urban neighborhoods, and adjacent to Lehigh University, the ArtsQuest SteelStacks campus, and the Wind Creek Casino. It is a continuous open space with pedestrian and bicycle paths that connect recreation, health and wellness; arts and cultural experiences; educational opportunities; community resources and services; residences; and retail, restaurant, and other commercial offerings.

On a weekend afternoon, where once was a dirty old out-of-use rail line, you will now see families taking a leisurely bike ride and children on playground equipment. You may walk alongside tourists on the Southside Arts District Urban Arts Trail as they observe rotating artwork displayed on easels installed on the Greenway. Members of local non-profit organizations like Afros in Nature may be out caring for a community garden. Neighborhood teens will undoubtedly be skating and doing bike tricks up the street at the Bethlehem Skateplaza. And if you are lucky, you may visit on one





of the many weekends throughout the year when a cocktail trail or music festival is happening along the Greenway, which can include live music acts, local vendors, interactive educational experiences, and exciting culinary and drink choices. It cannot be overstated how much life now exists where 20 years ago there was nothing more than some hazardous abandoned train tracks and overgrown weeds.

But there is still more we are doing to maximize the community and environmental benefits of this transformative infrastructure project. In addition to enhancing interface with local businesses by supporting the offering of trail-side drinking and dining options at cafes, restaurants, and breweries abutting the Greenway, we are also progressing through the final phases of infrastructure development, connecting the South Bethlehem Greenway to the further reaches of the city and beyond.

[We have just completed Phase 5](#) with the continued funding support from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural

Resources. This phase connects the main trail south through Lehigh Valley Industrial Park land and around state route 412 to the Southside Little League ball fields. With this connection, kids in the residential neighborhoods on the South Side can get on the trail and go to the baseball fields and they do not have to drive, or walk or bike on the high-traffic streets.

Now, we are moving on to the last phase of the South Bethlehem Greenway development. Congresswoman Susan Wild helped us secure \$2.7 million last year in Community Project Funding to support the acquisition and trail construction of .9 more miles of the former abandoned rail line to close the trail gap between the southern end of the Greenway and the Saucon Rail Trail.

Closing the trail gap is identified as a top priority in the 2016 plan, Beth Connects: A Trail Study for the Bethlehem Area, and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's 2013 Trail Report. It would allow a 13.7-mile connection between regional population centers – Bethlehem, Hellertown, Coopersburg, and Quakertown – and would create an opportunity for the ultimate connection between Wilkes-Barre

to Philadelphia via the D&L Trail, Perkiomen Trail, and Schuylkill River Trail.

We know that investing in a regional network of trails promotes tourism, economic development, healthy living, recreation, alternative transportation options and sustainability. That is part of the reason we undertook this project decades ago. And today, we are even more in-tune with the opportunities a complete trail connection presents and the environmental threats it helps fight off. Without needing a car, bicyclists and pedestrians can access the entirety of the South Bethlehem Greenway and the vibrant South Bethlehem and its many attractions whenever they want. People can commute to and from job centers on a daily basis. Families can spend weekends active and outdoors. And kids living in dense urban neighborhoods can access ball fields and greenspace.

Developing the South Bethlehem Greenway as we have over the past 20 years and connecting the trail gap today allows and encourages a more limited-car lifestyle and a smartly developed, walkable community that is welcoming to all. This is the type of community we work every day to nurture here in Bethlehem. □



Closing the Digital Divide in Pennsylvania

BY BRANDON CARSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PENNSYLVANIA BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Every Pennsylvanian should have access to reliable, high-speed internet service, yet some individuals and households still lack the connection they need. In 2021, the Pennsylvania General Assembly created the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (the Authority) to administer state and federal funding and to serve as a single point of contact for broadband efforts in the Commonwealth. The Authority is committed to closing the digital divide that exists across the state.

As we enter a new year, several funding opportunities will exist for the expansion of broadband infrastructure and digital equity initiatives. The first grant programs administered by the Authority will be through the American Rescue Plan Act's Capital Projects Fund (CPF), which allocated \$279 million to Pennsylvania for reliable, affordable broadband infrastructure and other digital connectivity technology projects. While grant guidelines and applications are still under development, these competitive grant opportunities will be available in 2023:

1. \$200 million for a *Broadband Infrastructure Program* that will target locations that do not currently have access to 25/3 Mbps reliable service. Projects chosen for funding must be capable of delivering service at a minimum of 100/20 Mbps and scalable to symmetrical service and can be completed in a reasonable timeframe. The program will allow for fiber and fixed-wireless networks with a priority given to fiber projects. This program includes a line extension component, funding extensions of existing last-mile cable modem and fiber-to-the-premise broadband networks that can be constructed quickly.
2. \$45 million for a *Digital Anchor Institution Grant Program*, offering grants to community anchor institutions and units of local government for community projects to construct, acquire, or improve buildings (shared office space, recreation centers, schools, libraries, etc.) that are, or will be open

to the public and will directly enable work, education, and health monitoring at the respective facility.

3. \$20 million for a *Digital Access and Opportunity Grant Program* to support institutions equipped to distribute devices and equipment (equipment installed as part of public Wi-Fi infrastructure, such as access points, repeaters, and routers) to members of the public through short or long-term loan programs or to be made available for use in public facilities.

Moving into late 2023 and early 2024, focus will turn to a much larger allocation of federal dollars through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Below is a brief overview of the two main programs, and a description of the Authority's role:

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program: \$42.5 billion available (nationwide) for the expansion of broadband infrastructure. Pennsylvania will receive a

minimum of \$100 million through the program, which will be administered by the Authority through a competitive grant process to which local government entities, internet service providers, and other eligible entities can apply. Additional funds will be distributed to the states based on the recently announced [National Broadband Map](#) released by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). This new map provides broadband availability data at the address level and will be used to allocate the remaining funds based on the number of unserved addresses in each state.

The program's focus (in order of priority) will be on deploying broadband service to unserved locations (those without any broadband service at all or with broadband service offering speeds below 25/3 Mbps); underserved locations (those without broadband service offering speeds of 100/20 Mbps); and ensuring deployment of gigabit connections to community anchor institutions such as libraries and community centers. Eligible applicants for BEAD funding will include, but not be limited to, internet service providers, cooperatives, nonprofit organizations and local governments.

The Authority will launch a comprehensive planning process to complete its Five-Year

Action Plan (Plan), establishing the Commonwealth's goals and priorities, in coordination with local governments, and outlining a comprehensive needs assessment for the use of BEAD funding. This Plan must be completed by mid-August 2023. Plan completion is a requirement to draw down additional federal funding through the BEAD program.

Digital Equity Act Programs:

\$2.75 billion (nationally) to promote digital inclusion and aim to ensure that all communities can access and use affordable, reliable high-speed internet. The three programs under the Digital Equity Act include two state formula programs and one competitive program. Recently, a \$1.6 million State Digital Equity Planning Grant was awarded to the Authority to start a one-year planning process to develop the Commonwealth's Digital Equity Plan. This Plan is required to access funding through the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, a \$1.44 billion formula grant program for states. Pennsylvania's allocation through this program is based on the same formula and final data available through the new FCC maps and will be determined later in 2023. It will fund an annual grant program for five years in support of digital equity projects and the implementation of digital equity plans. Finally, the Digital Equity

Competitive Grant Program will fund annual grant programs for five years to implement digital equity projects. This is a \$1.25 billion grant program nationwide.

The Authority desires to work closely with local governments to fulfill the mission of fostering and creating equitable, affordable, and robust high-speed broadband internet infrastructure and services. The Authority's board, staff, and partners are keenly aware of the monumental opportunity available to the Commonwealth and recognizes the responsibility to administer and implement these grant programs in a transparent and timely manner. Please visit the [Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority webpage](#) for more information and regular updates. □

Electric Vehicle Charging in Pennsylvania: Investing in Range Confidence

BY COLTON BROWN, PENNDOT



The Electric Vehicle, or “EV,” market is growing. With lower fuel costs, lower maintenance costs and the availability of new EV models with longer travel ranges, not to mention the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with gas vehicles, makes the transition to a plug-in hybrid or all electric battery vehicle appealing. Since 2019, the number of EVs on the road in Pennsylvania alone has more than quadrupled. However, there is still range anxiety for many drivers considering an EV purchase. Pennsylvania is working to support a robust EV charging infrastructure network that is safe, fast, and reliable so interested drivers can be confident in purchasing an EV.

The federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) recognized and prioritized the need for EV charging

infrastructure and provides \$7.5 billion to help make EV charging more accessible to all Americans for local and long-distance trips. This \$7.5 billion comprises the \$5 billion National Electric Vehicle

Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program allocated to each state department of transportation and the nationwide competitive \$2.5 billion Discretionary Grant Program for Charging and Fueling Infrastructure.

The initial focus of the federal NEVI Formula program is to build direct current fast charging (DCFC) stations along designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs). Once the AFC network is “fully built out” according to Federal Highway Administration

(FHWA) criteria, then NEVI Formula Program funds may be used for EV charging infrastructure on any public road or other publicly accessible location.

To receive NEVI Formula Program funds, states had to submit a State EV Deployment Plan. [Pennsylvania's NEVI State Plan](#) was approved by the FHWA on Sept. 14, 2022.

Through the NEVI program, PennDOT will receive and



PENNSYLVANIA STATE PLAN FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE DEPLOYMENT

National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program

VERSION FOR FFY 2022-2023 (SUBMITTED JULY 21, 2022)

distribute \$171.5 million in federal funds for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure over the next five years.

The PennDOT NEVI grant program supports the Commonwealth and federal goal of expanding EV charging along the previously designated AFCs. Pennsylvania has over 1,800 miles of AFCs. Per the guidance from U.S. DOT, NEVI formula funds must first be used to "build out" designated AFCs (no more than 50 miles between stations and less than 1 mile from an exit) and meet U.S. DOT minimum standards and requirements.

Round 1 of PennDOT's NEVI Grant Program funding includes advanced appropriations of \$25.4 million for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022 and \$36.5 million for FFY 2023. Some of this amount may be used for labor & workforce training, planning, outreach, and program management as allowed by NEVI guidelines. Approximately \$56 million is anticipated to be available for applicants. The PA NEVI grant program is a reimbursement grant program and applicants are required to provide a minimum 20% match. The PA NEVI grant program will include multiple rounds of funding.

Most entities are eligible to receive Round 1 NEVI funds; however, PennDOT anticipates most applicants will be public-sector entities, incorporated nonprofit entities, and corporations or business entities registered to do business in Pennsylvania.


PennDOT has created an [interactive map](#) identifying existing NEVI-qualifying stations and has grouped interchanges based on priority through a gap analysis. An outline of the scoring criteria is also included and listed in order of priority.

In addition, PennDOT's [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) includes instructions and information on the grant program, eligibility, scoring criteria, submission process and instructions for Round 1.

All applications must be submitted electronically through PA Department of Community and Economic Development's eGrant's system at <https://www.esa.dced.state.pa.us/Login.aspx> which will open for applications on February 24. The application deadline is 5:00 PM EST on April 6, 2023.

PennDOT encourages municipalities that would like to apply in the future for community charging projects, or for the \$2.5 billion NEVI Discretionary funding program, to start developing project ideas and plans for applying – either on their own, regionally, or in coordination with PennDOT or other partners.

To enhance traveler information for the growing number of EV



Pennsylvania State
National Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI)
Formula Program

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of Transportation
Tom Wolf, Governor
Yassmin Gramian, P.E., Secretary of Transportation

Round 1 FFY 2022 – FFY 2023
January 6, 2023

drivers, the state's traveler information system – 511PA.com – now also includes EV charging station locations as an option on its traffic map using data from the U.S. Department of Energy.

For more information on NEVI funds in Pennsylvania and to review PennDOT's NEVI resources, visit the PennDOT website at www.penndot.pa.gov/EV and please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions via email to RA-PDEVCORRIDORS@pa.gov. □



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by



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New Property or New Infrastructure? Check All Your Insured Values!

BY PAUL CORNELL, DIRECTOR OF TRUSTS

Whenever you add new property or new infrastructure to your assets, it is an excellent time to review the insured value of all your properties. Use the addition of a new property or infrastructure as a trigger for an evaluation of the insured value of all your assets. This is particularly important if your insurance company has not performed a recent appraisal and/or if your insurance company doesn't annually update the value of your property.

There are a number of factors that you should consider when insuring your infrastructure/property. When calculating the value to insure, consider the recent changes in replacement costs for buildings and infrastructure. You could be one of the estimated 75% of underinsured commercial properties according to industry data.

There are three different values that are often assigned to property and infrastructure;

Market Value, Assessed Value and Replacement Value. Market Value is an estimate of what a property may be sold for in the real estate market. Assessed Value is the estimate generated by your county and is generally a percentage of the Market Value. Replacement Value is the estimate of the current cost to replace or rebuild a property or infrastructure. You should always insure for Replacement Value.

The brand new construction you may have just completed will have replacement costs higher than what you just spent. Replacement Values have increased significantly in recent years. The cost of construction has increased more than 28% over the past five years, driven by the cost of structural components, particularly steel and lumber, as well as other supply chain issues. Add to this value, the increased costs of labor, the engineering/architectural services, the

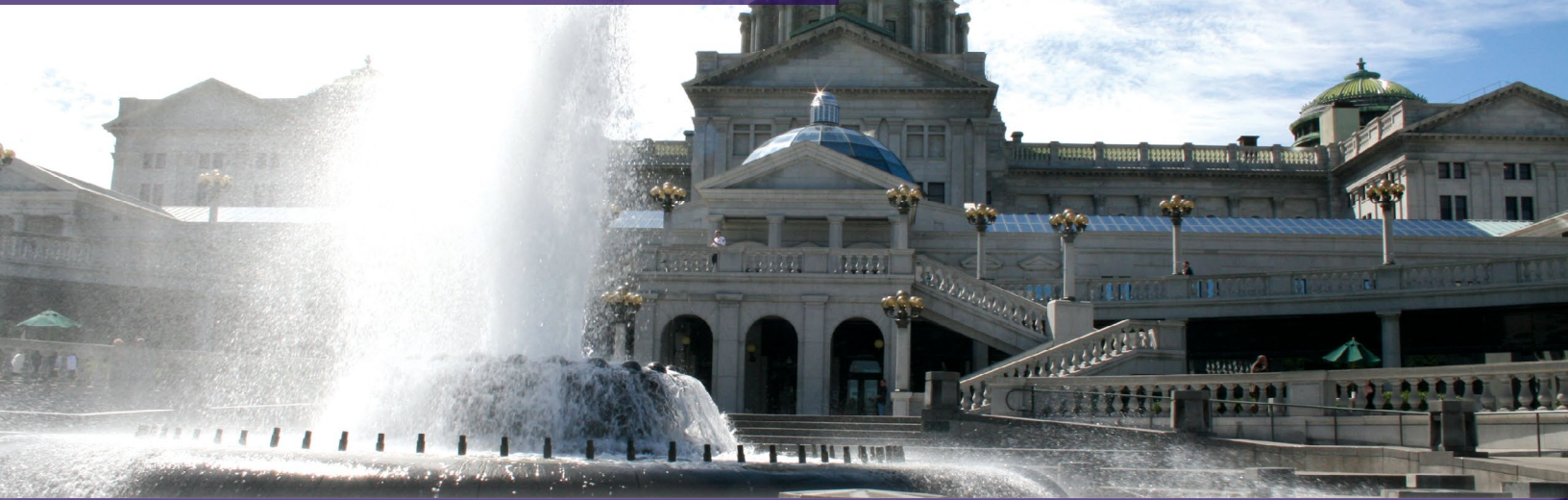
permitting process and even the debris removal when you are calculating the replacement cost.

Finally, this would also be a good time to evaluate your insurance coverage of the contents of each property to make sure that the coverage for the contents would not fall short of covering replacement.

Talk to your agent or carrier to confirm that your insurance will fully cover any loss you may endure.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me and please stay safe.
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Legislative Status Report STATE



PREPARED BY AMY STURGES, LEAGUE DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – ADVOCACY – asturges@pml.org

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All legislation can be found on the General Assembly's website:

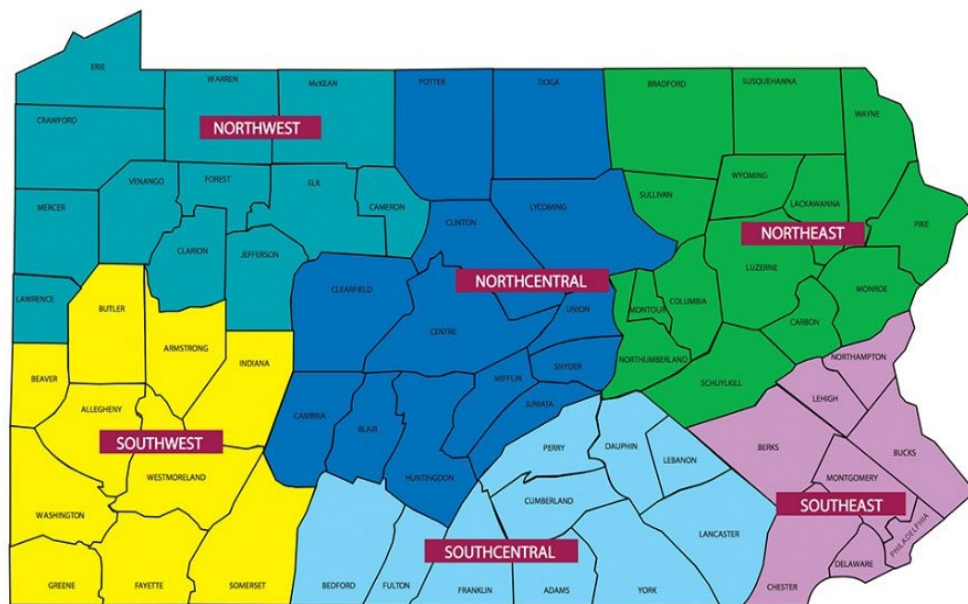
legis.state.pa.us

Legislative Update

The League's Spring District Meetings and Resolutions Process

As a member driven organization, it is important we hear from you to accurately represent your municipality's needs before the General Assembly.

Each spring, League members receive the opportunity to submit policy suggestions through resolutions, shaping The League's policy agenda. Simply propose a policy resolution or policy idea agreed upon by a consensus of your governing body



during your district meeting. The [2023 District Meetings](#) will be held in person throughout April and May. Resolutions adopted at the district level will go to the Municipal Leadership Summit for consideration by the Resolutions Committee and full League membership. This is a very important process because it sets the future policy positions of The League.

View The League's [2022 adopted resolutions](#) as a sample of resolutions and ideas to prepare for this year's Spring district meetings. Please contact Kaitlin Errickson, Governmental Affairs Manager, at kerrickson@pml.org if you have any questions.

Cosponsor Memos Affecting Local Government

Public Notice Modernization

Representative Jason Ortity and Mike Schlossberg have announced intention to reintroduce legislation, formerly House Bill 955, modernizing public notice requirements by permitting either print or electronic advertisements.

Municipal Police Pension Buyback

Senator Mike Regan has announced intention to reintroduce legislation, formerly Senate Bill 669, permitting full-time municipal police officers to buy back up to five years of previous full or part-time police service for pension benefit purposes.

Fire and EMS Public Authorities

Senators Lisa Baker and Tim Kearney have announced intention to reintroduce legislation, formerly Senate Bill 698, by splitting it into two separate bills: the first would

provide counties or groups of municipalities with the option to create EMS public safety authorities; the second would do the same, but for fire public safety authorities.

Local Use of Radar

Senator Greg Rothman has announced intention to reintroduce legislation, formerly House Bill 606, authorizing municipal police officers to use radar for speed enforcement.

Legislation Affecting Local Government

Freezing the Automatic Gas Tax Increase

Passed the Senate, January 11, 2023

[Senate Bill 35](#) (PN 13), introduced by Senator Wayne Langerholc, would amend Title 75 (Vehicles) freezing the automatic gas tax increase. Act 89 of 2013 requires an automatic gas tax increase when the wholesale price of gasoline is over \$3. Current law sets the average wholesale price on taxable fuels such as gasoline and diesel at a minimum of \$2.99 per gallon. Due to the required automatic gas increase, Pennsylvania's gas tax increased by 3 cents for a total of 61 cents a gallon and its diesel tax increased by 4 cents for a total of 78 cents a gallon on January 1, 2023.

This bill would amend the definition of "average wholesale price" by permanently setting the average wholesale price at \$2.99 per gallon, just under the \$3 threshold that would trigger an automatic increase. This would freeze all future gas and diesel tax rates while also reversing the 2023 rate increase.

PA Construction Code Exemptions for Home Improvements

Senate Labor and Industry Committee, January 12, 2023

[Senate Bill 80](#) (PN 30), introduced by Senator Michele Brooks, would amend the PA Construction Code Act providing additional home improvement exemptions, including: decks that are no more than 30 inches above the ground; attached accessory structures covering an entranceway that are no more than a story high and 200 square feet (ex. mud room); and patio covers no more than 12 feet high.

County Demolition and Rehabilitation Fund

Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee, January 19, 2023

[Senate Bill 149](#) (PN 123), introduced by Senator Jim Brewster, would amend the Real Estate Tax Sale Law to allow counties, by ordinance, to establish a County Demolition and Rehabilitation Fund.

This bill would allow the tax claim bureau conducting the sale of the property or sheriff in a mortgage foreclosure to collect a fee no greater than \$250 from the buyer, in addition to the purchase price, at the time of sale as condition of conveying title to the property. A county's ordinance would establish its fee, and the fee would be deposited into the County's Demolition and Rehabilitation Fund.

The fund would be used exclusively by the county, or upon approval by county commissioners, a not-for-profit or for-profit corporation that has a contract with the county or a taxing district, redevelopment authority, land bank or other


government entity for the demolition or rehabilitation of blighted property located in the county. The fee would not apply to a property sold for delinquent real property taxes to a nonprofit entity, land bank, or government entity.

Right to Know Law Commercial Requests
Senate State Government Committee, January 19, 2023

[Senate Bill 210](#) (PN 84) introduced by Senator Michele Brooks, would amend the Right to Know Law requiring a requestor to certify in writing whether the request is for a commercial purpose. A municipality or other agency that responds to a commercial request may charge the requester additional fees for search, retrieval, review, redaction and duplication of records. The additional fees would be calculated based on the hourly

wage of the lowest paid employee of the municipality or agency that is capable of obtaining the requested information. Prior to fulfilling the request, the municipality or agency shall provide the requester with the estimated cost to grant the request. A municipality or agency may enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding or other agreement providing for an alternative fee arrangement.

The bill would permit an exception for attorneys on behalf of a client on the grounds that records are not used for selling, reselling, or solicitation by either party. An exception would also apply to requests from entities with certificates of authority or licenses from the Insurance Department, along with contractors, vendors, licensees, service providers or other affiliates of the entity, with the condition that the records are only used for insurance purposes. □



Pennsylvania Municipal League

On our website, we have an ARPA Investment Tracking Form and ask that you please fill it out so we can share the great ways you are using your ARPA dollars with all members.

Thank you!

House and Senate Session Days 2023	
House	Senate
March 1, 6-8	March 1, 6-8
April 24-26	April 24-26
May 1-3, 22-24	May 1-3, 8-10

*reminder - session dates are subject to change



Legislative Locator

Be sure to read the electronic Legislative Locator, produced bimonthly on the opposite months of the Municipal Reporter, for updates on legislation.



Legislative Status Report FEDERAL



Now Open: Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program

BY KELLY AVES, CAROLYN BERNDT, PEYTON SILER JONES WITH NLC

The [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant](#) (EECBG) is designed to assist states, local governments and Tribes in planning and implementing programs and policies to reduce energy use, reduce fossil fuel emissions and improve energy efficiency. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law directed \$550 million to the EECBG program. Learn more about [eligible uses](#) for EECBG funds, [state-local partnership opportunities](#) and [project ideas](#).

Understand your Funding Pathway

There are three pathways for local governments to access EECBG funding: formula grants, state ap-

plications and a competitive grant through the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). If your community has a population at or above 35,000, or if you are among the 10 most populous cities in your state, you are eligible for a direct formula allocation from DOE. Eligible cities are listed [here](#). **If your community is eligible for direct payments through EECBG, you must follow the steps below to access the funds.**

The second pathway of distributing funds is through your state. States receive a formula allocation and are required to pass 60% of their funding to smaller communities that are not eligible for direct allocations. The process

and timeline for these state funds will vary and likely won't be available until mid-2023.

Finally, a portion of the total funding is set aside for competitive grants for communities that do not meet the population threshold for DOE formula funding. DOE will likely open the competitive grant application later this year and specifically encourages regional consortium applications.

Accessing Direct Formula Funds

To receive direct payments through EECBG, eligible communities must apply. This process includes completing a pre-award

information sheet and an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy.

Traditional Grant Opportunity

- Confirm your city's unique federal identifier.
- The previous federal DUNS number ended in 2022 when the federal government changed to the Unique Entity ID (UEI). The Unique Entity ID is a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to cities, towns and villages by [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov). If your city, town or village is already registered with SAM.gov, a UEI number has already been assigned and is [viewable](https://sam.gov) at SAM.gov. If your municipality does not have a UEI number yet, U.S. agencies are encouraging entities to apply for one at least four weeks prior to applying for a federal grant. Entities that need a UEI can do so at SAM.gov.
- Register in [FedConnect](https://fedconnect.gov) to acknowledge receipt of your awarded allocation.
- Complete your [Pre-Award Information Sheet](#) and return it to eecbg@hq.doe.gov by April 28, 2023.
- Submit your full application to DOE by January 31, 2024. All applications require an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy, and DOE has developed a [template](#) to guide your submission. If your community has a current energy or climate action plan, that

document can serve as a basis for the Strategy document that must be submitted.

Unique Grant Opportunity: Voucher

A new EECBG program feature is the ability to exchange your formula grant allocation for a voucher for either technical assistance or an equipment rebate.

DOE recognizes applying for and managing a traditional federal grant can be difficult for some communities or may not be worth it for grants of less than \$250,000. DOE strongly encourages local governments to consider the voucher option if your community has limited or no experience managing federal grant awards or has limited internal staff or local capacity to manage an EECBG Program formula grant over multiple years.

A streamlined application process is outlined in the [application instructions](#) for local governments that want to take the voucher or rebate option. DOE will release more information on vouchers and rebates in the coming months. Those opting for vouchers or rebates must still complete the [Pre-Award Information Sheet](#) and return it to eecbg@hq.doe.gov by April 28, 2023, and must submit a Strategy document with their full application.

Accessing Indirect Funding

If your community is not directly eligible, stay in contact and be informed of your state's plans for EECBG—it is under their discretion how to distribute funds. State plans are due to DOE by July 31, 2023, which should include how they plan to distribute 60% of allocated funds to local government. For the competitive grant application, keep an eye on DOE's [EECBG portal](#) and the [State and Community Energy Programs site](#).

Additional Resources

DOE heard a lot of feedback, including from NLC, about how having specific project examples and “off-the-shelf” projects would be helpful for local governments, especially small communities. To meet this need, DOE is developing a list of “blueprints” of high-impact projects and programs based on proven practices that you can choose to follow in putting together your application in different project areas, such as EV charging and energy efficiency.

DOE is also working to develop a technical assistance program for the application process focusing especially on helping communities develop the Energy Efficiency Conservation Strategy document required for all formula allocations. More information on technical assistance should have been or will be released by DOE soon.

□

Public Finance

What Does Inflation Mean to a Municipality?

And how could it impact a local government's planned construction?

BY JAMIE SCHLESINGER, MANAGING DIRECTOR, PFM FINANCIAL ADVISORS LLC

As PFM representatives have met and spoken with managers of municipalities over the last year, one of the topics that regularly arises is how current economic realities had affected municipal construction projects in 2022 – and were likely to affect projects in 2023 and beyond.

One of the key “pain points” for construction projects was the impact of inflation, and the variety of ways in which it influenced a local government’s approach to them.

Even though the term inflation has been part of the current public conversation more than any other time in the last 40 years, the term itself can still be a mystery: what is inflation, and why is it such a concern for local governments’ projects now? In this article, we will offer a brief overview of what municipalities might consider when approaching a construction project in a high-inflation environment.

Defining Inflation

Inflation is a loss of purchasing power over time, meaning the dollar will not go as far tomorrow as it did today. It is typically expressed as the annual change in prices for a collection of goods and services.

In the United States, there are two main measurements of inflation. One is the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures the cost of things consumers buy directly, excluding fuel and food. The other, the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) index, measures things people consume, but also takes into account things those consumers do not pay for directly, such as health care.

Under typical circumstances, higher inflation can be the result of an economy in which people are spending at a higher rate than usual due to a surplus of cash or credit. If consumers are in a buying mood, businesses may raise prices because they lack

adequate supply. Or, companies may choose to charge more because they realize they can do so without losing customers.

Why is inflation such a hot topic right now?

Fortunately, the most recent topic of discussion concerns the apparent cooling of inflation’s upward trend. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the inflation rate fell in December 2022, to 6.5% on an annual basis, according to the CPI, down from 7.1% in November 2022 and a 9.1% peak in June 2022.

Significantly, the monthly inflation reading was negative – declining by 0.1% – meaning average prices did fall for American consumers, due in large part to a drop in fuel prices.

Even so, the annual inflation rate remains at its highest since the early 1980s. Here’s why:

On the one hand, the spread of COVID-19 and its variants caused factories to shut down and backed up shipping and transportation of goods, resulting in fewer products being delivered and greater delays in those products that are available.

At the same time, consumers, who collectively built up larger savings thanks to months of being unable to leave their homes to spend, and repeated government stimulus checks, started to purchase goods and services at much higher levels, and continued to buy even in the face of fewer goods and rising prices. Those same consumers are also dealing with increases in rent, fuel and home prices.

Add to this the element of the global disruption caused by the war between Russia and Ukraine, which has made some materials like steel, crude oil and rubber more scarce, boosting prices higher still.

What could the impact of inflation be on a local government's construction projects?

Inflation drives up nearly every element of a construction project, from materials to labor to fuel and other resources, and in an environment where prices can rise quickly without much warning, projecting costs and sticking to a construction budget can be difficult. Some of the most common challenges can include:

Increase in construction material prices

Construction material costs constitute as much as 60% of the overall cost of a project. Current inflation trends have pushed

prices higher — sometimes rapidly higher — for materials like steel, soft wood, plastic, copper, gypsum and others.

Increase in cost of “secondary” construction materials

The cost of construction elements like fuel, machinery, transportation and technology rises due to inflation. For instance, the Producer Price Index from April 2022, showed an increase of more than 75% in crude petroleum prices from a year ago. Elevated energy prices also boosted the cost to rent (or buy) machinery and transport supplies and equipment.

Increase in labor costs

A shortage of skilled personnel in the construction industry increases project costs since skilled workers seek more pay due to inflation. This shortage is especially acute in today's market due in part to an aging workforce, and in part because of an exodus from the labor market during COVID-19.

All of these elements make it challenging for local government managers to develop plans, project construction budgets — and even engage in existing work.

So — what can a municipality do?

It is impossible to predict with certainty when and if inflation will rise or fall, or when prices for materials will stabilize. Even in the face of these challenges, there are still things a local government can do to help develop strategies to stay on schedule with current construction projects, and map out a route for future ones. Here are just a few:

Assemble project teams:

Gather a team of experts that includes architects, contractors, local government managers, and financial advisors to bring together knowledge of disparate elements of the construction and financial sectors. This collective expertise puts you in the best, most informed position possible to determine the viability and timing of capital projects, as well as cost saving options when it comes to the projects themselves.

Design intelligently:

Work with your architect to make design choices that optimize available materials. Consider alternative building materials to avoid difficult-to-get materials which tend to be more expensive and can prolong the construction timeline.

Flexibility:

When designing the bid package include alternatives that allow the municipality to control the final cost of the project. If bids come in over expectations, the project can be pared back without rebidding. If bids come in below expectations, it allows more “nice-to-haves” to be incorporated into the project.

Plan ahead via cash flow forecasting:

Cash flow forecasting is the process of predicting cash flows for the purposes of liquidity management and financial control. With a clear picture of its cash flow, a municipality will be able to balance the timing of expenditures with the investment of additional available funds for longer periods of time. Make the higher short term interest rates work for you.

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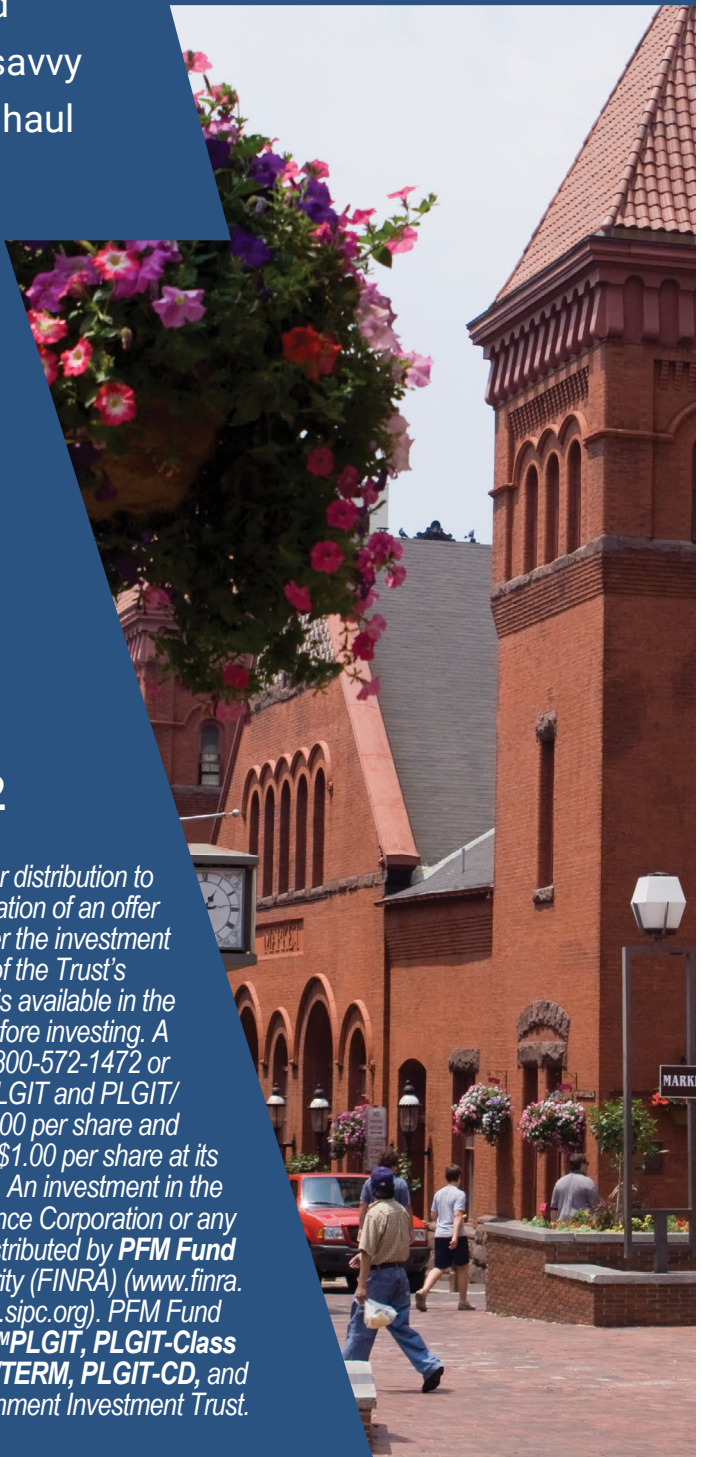
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Create a holistic financing plan:

Work with your financial advisor to develop a holistic financing plan. With higher short-term rates, there are more factors to be considered when implementing a financing plan including how much cash to use and when, how to integrate any grant funding, when to issue debt and how to structure that debt.

It's not all bad news

First, inflation may not be entirely detrimental for a local government's finances. Prices for goods bought by local governments may go up, but the ability of municipalities to buy in bulk and use resources like COSTARS (The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's cooperative purchasing program) for bids can help mitigate some price increases.

As noted above, part of the rise in inflation is due to wage growth in the labor market, which could have a positive effect on earned income tax receipts. Not noted above, but worth mentioning, is that increased housing prices, also a result of inflation, may mean increased real estate transfer tax and new houses put on the tax rolls. (Source. *CoreLogic. U.S. Home Price Insight – December 2022*)

In addition, investment rates available to municipalities have quickly moved higher in 2022 as the Fed worked to curb inflation by raising the target overnight rate, a benchmark rate from which other short-term treasury yields and bank deposit rates are derived. Since March of 2022, the Fed has raised its target overnight rate to a range of 4.25-4.5%, the highest this rate has been in 15 years.

It's tempting to make drastic changes or take unnecessary risks to try to follow a potentially outdated construction plan and hedge against the economic climate, or even shelve a project altogether. But adjusting construction planning and financing, based on the best information on hand will serve a local government well as the U.S. waits for inflationary conditions to moderate.

If you have questions about how inflation could impact potential projects, please feel free to contact us.

Jamie Schlesinger is a Managing Director with PFM Financial Advisors LLC and has advised local government on efficient ways to fund their projects for over 25 years. He can be reached at schlesingerj@pfm.com. □



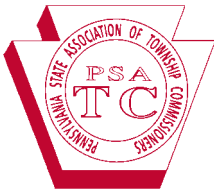
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PSATC President's Message

Greetings, Municipal Leaders:



SAM JULIANO
COMMISSIONER
NORTH VERSAILLES
TOWNSHIP



PML.org/PSATC

I hope each of you had a wonderful holiday season, and that your 2023 is off to a fantastic start. In coordination with the outstanding team at The League, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners' (PSATC) Executive Committee continues its important work. Of primary importance is the implementation of our legislative priorities.

Always remember, our work does not end at our municipal boundaries, it must reach into the halls of the state Capitol Building. On that note, please review PSATC's 2023 Legislative Priorities found in this Reporter and advocate for their implementation. The priorities include Relief from Public Notice Advertising Requirements, Local Use of Radar, Modernization of Local Revenue Options, Support for the Delivery of Volunteer Fire and EMS Services, and more. Please contact me if you have any questions. I would like to spotlight Infrastructure funding. While it is not glamorous, our roads, bridges, sanitary and water systems are in need of upgrades. It is difficult to find a news cycle that does not include mention of a major bridge or road closed due to structural deficiencies.

Likewise, regulatory agencies are requiring long overdue investments in our sanitary and water systems. These costs have forced many municipalities to sell or lease their systems. To fund aging water and sanitary infrastructure repairs and meet mandates, PSATC advocates for new funding options and local flexibility. PSATC implores the General Assembly to enable First Class Townships to implement uniform and reasonable Storm Water Management Fees as an aid in offsetting the costs of storm water improvements – many of them mandated by the state and federal governments. Currently, only Municipal Authorities and Second Class Townships have express permission to enact such a fee.

The high cost of repairing infrastructure directly results in the diversion of funds necessary for other government programs and services. The ability to hire more police officers, address ballooning pensions costs, add new parks and recreation programs, and more all are negatively impacted by the exorbitant costs of repairing roads, bridges and more.

Our friends in Washington D.C. passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act directing more than \$1 trillion dollars to the nation's highways, bridges, public transportation and water infrastructure; please avail your communities of these funds. Visit localinfrastructure.org to learn about accessing the funds. There is also information available on The League website (www.pml.org).

I enthusiastically invite you to attend our Joint Municipal Leadership Summit in Bethlehem in October. Learn not only from the speakers, but most important, from your municipal colleagues.

May we all endeavor collectively to build a stronger Commonwealth. We look forward to working with our new Governor and the General Assembly to make Pennsylvania a shining example of how municipal government should operate for its residents!

Truly yours,



Sam Juliano



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PSATC 2023 Legislative Priorities



The Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners (PSATC) is a non-partisan association representing the Commonwealth's first class townships. Over 1.5 million citizens live in first class townships throughout the Commonwealth.

Mandate Relief

Public Notice Advertising

Making public information accessible should be efficient and affordable for those seeking the information, as well as for those providing it. As printed newspapers continue to decline in number and frequency, the current mandate to exclusively use print media for advertising public notices is inefficient and wasteful.

PSATC supports use of modern methods of public notice. Whether through a publically accessible statewide depository, a municipal website or a newspaper with county circulation, the emphasis must be on increasing access to public information while saving tax dollars.

Municipal Fiscal Health

Modernization of Municipal Revenue Tools

Revenue tools authorized in the 1960's are not meeting the needs of twenty-first century municipalities. While the expense of providing necessary and expected services has risen over the last 50 years, the tools to meet those expenses have remained unchanged. This friction creates fiscal pressures leading to fiscal distress. Modern townships need modern tools and the flexibility to put those tools into action.

PSATC supports updating Act 511, The Local Tax Enabling Act, to give all municipalities a level playing field of a menu of local taxing options.

Public Safety

Local Use of Radar

Speeding in neighborhoods is a paramount public safety concern for local elected officials, as it is the number one complaint from residents. Radar is a reliable, accurate and efficient public safety tool, unlike the antiquated VASCAR and ENRADD systems currently in use by local police.

PSATC strongly supports the authorization for local police to use radar.

Delivery of Volunteer Fire and EMS Services

The delivery of the basic public safety services of volunteer fire and EMS is in crisis. As volunteer organizations struggle to survive, townships and their residents who rely on these services are at risk of ambulances that don't arrive in time and too few fire fighters available to adequately respond and protect lives and property.

PSATC supports legislation that will assist in the delivery of emergency services, including state tax credits for volunteer first responders; recruitment and retention efforts; incentives that support voluntary consolidation or coordination of services; and direct payment to EMS for services rendered.

Post-Traumatic Stress Injury for First Responders

First responders impacted by a traumatic work event should be afforded a benefit to assist them in the assessment and treatment of post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI). Whether through workers' compensation or some other means, such a benefit must be narrowly tailored, fair to the employee, and fiscally sustainable for the employer.

PSATC supports a fiscally responsible compromise in any effort to expand the provision of a PTSI benefit to first responders.

Please contact Amy Sturges, Deputy Executive Director - Advocacy at asturges@pml.org with any questions.



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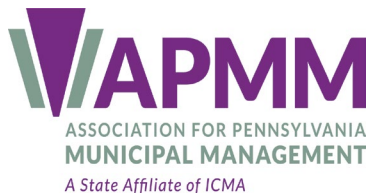
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APMM President's Message



GREGORY A. PRIMM
MANAGER
ALLEGHENY TOWNSHIP



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Fellow APMM Members and Colleagues:

Greetings to my colleagues throughout the commonwealth! I think we would all agree that even though we haven't had a bad winter, we are getting a little tired of the gray. This morning, as I walked my sidewalk, I looked down and what did I see but the bright purple bloom of my crocus in the middle of February. I initially thought how insane this little flower was brave enough to wake up this early but then I realized that it was a symbol of renewal, growth and rebirth. I also thought we, as professionals, can learn a great deal from this little flower. There it was in a sea of last year's dead flowers around it all alone, standing proud and almost saying "someone has to be the leader, it might as well be me."

How many times in your career were you standing alone leading the charge for an initiative or project and literally was the agent of renewal, growth and rebirth of something in your community? I recognized that we do what this crocus does regularly and without our leadership, our energy and our motivation, critical and essential projects in our communities would never see completion. It is because of what you do that keeps the pendulum moving. You engage people, you market the benefits, you secure funding, you are the project champion that is critical to make our communities the vibrant destination spots that they are. Even as we work tirelessly to better our surroundings there are times when we just get tired and begin to burn out but the crocus reminded me that we always have to be willing to reinvent ourselves, re-energize and focus on the great outcomes that only come from our hard work and dedication.

Look forward to the spring and make sure you register for the [APMM Annual Conference](#) to be held in Pittsburgh this year at the Omni William Penn, May 22-24. The theme of this year's conference revolves around wellness. We, as Managers, need to ensure we are taking care of ourselves physically and mentally to be the best versions of ourselves for our boards and for the employees we manage. Each session is being carefully selected and developed with that in mind hoping it helps you find the appropriate life-work balance that is most effective for your success.

As always, I couldn't do what I do without the support and encouragement of my colleagues and friends throughout the profession, so here is my thank you and I only hope that I can do the same for each of you. It never ceases to amaze me how many incredible leaders we have throughout this state and the knowledge each of you bring to the table every single day. Keep doing what you do and keep loving public service because you are meant to be doing what you are doing, and Pennsylvania thrives as a result. I cannot wait to see everyone in Pittsburgh in May!

Sincerely,

Gregory A. Primm

APMM Membership Update

New/Reinstated Members

Ms. Kristina Belcastro

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Ms. Michelle Reddick

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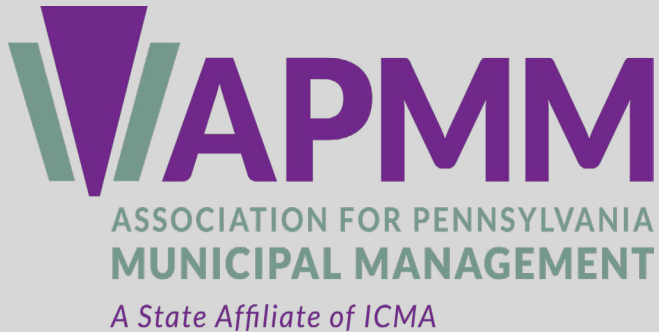
Full Member – Manager

Mr. Aaron Siko

Township Manager
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Greensburg, PA 15601
724-834-7232

asiko@hempfieldtwp.org

Full Member – Manager



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Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh

The Association for Pennsylvania Municipal Management (APMM) Conference will be held May 22 - 24 at the Omni William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh. APMM's signature annual event is attended by more than 150 professional municipal managers from across the state. This is your chance to form partnerships and build relationships with local decision makers. The conference is packed with key speakers, dynamic learning experiences, and great networking opportunities for municipal government professionals.

[Register now](#) and [check back](#) for additional information.

Details for both sponsorship and vendor registration, along with the benefits of each, can be found [here](#). You may direct any questions or concerns to Mary Costik, CMP, Meeting Manager, at (717) 579-8139, or via email at mcostik@pml.org.

Book Reviews

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This area of our *Municipal Reporter* is a place where you can find summaries of books, both recent and older, that provide insight and information to enhance your leadership development. We encourage you to share the books you have read that can help our members grow and develop as leaders.

The Johnstown Flood

AUTHOR: DAVID MCCULLOUGH

BOOK REVIEW BY: LEAGUE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN BRENNER

Sometimes before we can move forward, we must look back.

May 31, 1889, after days of heavy rainfall, the dam at the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club (members included Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick) gave way and unleashed a torrent of water 35-40 feet high which hit Johnstown at 40 miles per hour.

In his first book, celebrated author David McCullough, born in Pittsburgh, describes the human toll the man-made accident caused in Johnstown and the surrounding valley. "Ninety-nine whole families had been wiped out. Three hundred and ninety-six children aged ten years or less had been killed. Ninety-eight children lost both parents. One hundred and twenty-four women were left widows; 198 men lost their wives."

According to the Johnstown Area Heritage Association:

- 2,209 people died
- More than 750 victims were never identified and rest in the Plot of the Unknown in Grandview Cemetery
- Bodies were found as far away as Cincinnati and as late as 1911
- 1,600 homes were destroyed
- \$17 million in property damage
- Four square miles of Johnstown were destroyed
- The pile of debris at the stone bridge covered 30 acres
- The distance between the dam that failed and Johnstown was 14 miles
- Flood lines were found as high as 89 feet above river level
- The force of the flood swept several locomotives weighing 170,000 pounds as far as 4,800 feet
- \$3,742,818 was collected for Johnstown relief effort from

the United States and 18 foreign countries

- The American Red Cross, led by Clara Barton and organized in 1881, arrived in Johnstown on June 5, 1889; it was the first major peacetime disaster relief effort for the Red Cross

Each victim, the devastating damage and the facts of the tragedy matter. They matter today as we work to address decades of inaction, neglect and lack of significant and steady investment in our infrastructure - our roads, bridges, ports, and transportation, electric and broadband systems. When you read McCullough's book, you know it matters to the resilient people of Johnstown. When you visit The Johnstown Flood Museum, you know it matters to our entire state and nation. It is a stark reminder to keep working, keep investing and keep improving. □

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