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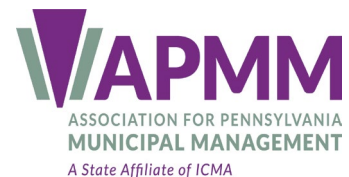
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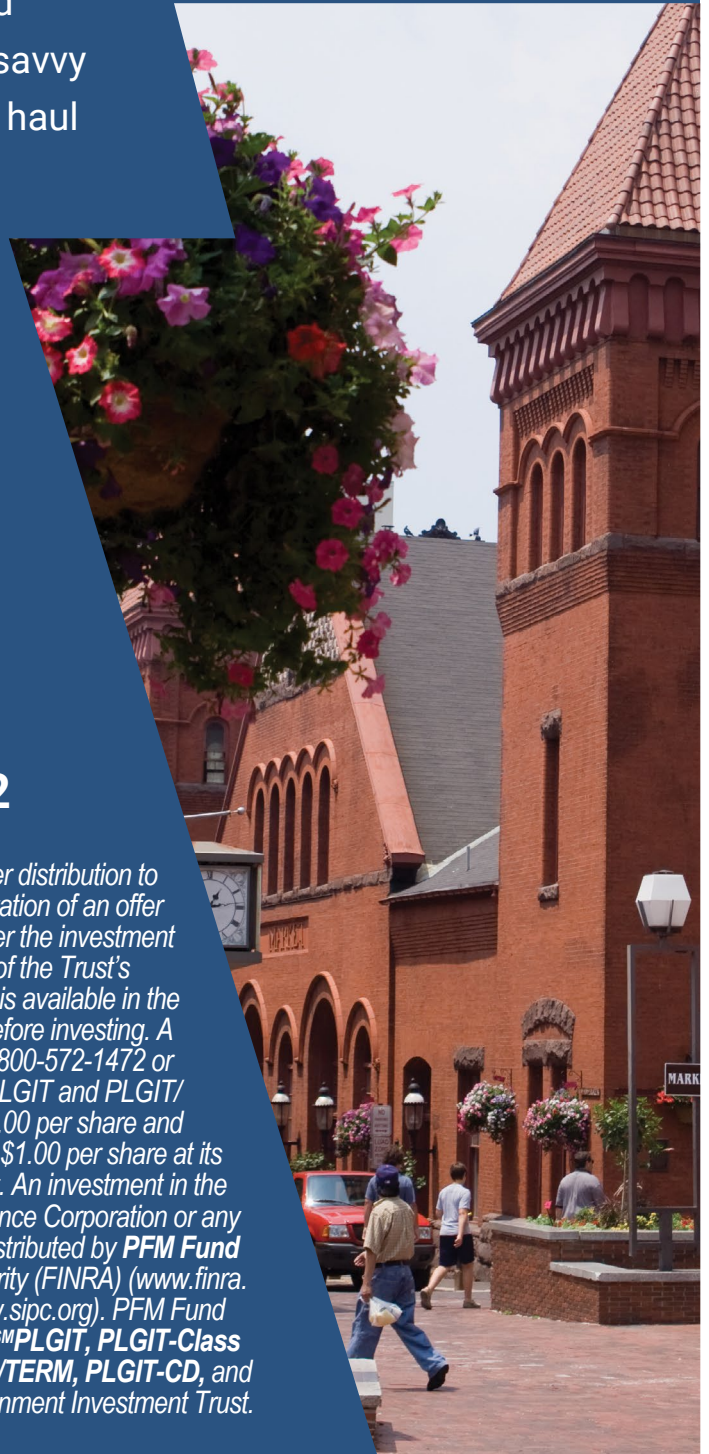
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The Pennsylvania Municipal League strengthens and empowers effective local government through advocacy, education, and support for our members.

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.

The *Municipal Reporter* is a publication of the Pennsylvania Municipal League, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners and the Association for Pennsylvania Municipal Management. It is published six times a year on a bimonthly basis. Opinions expressed by

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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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APRIL 2025 | CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EDITION

3 Association Officers and League Staff	28 ... League's 125th Anniversary Articles
6 League President's Message	38 ... League News
7 League Executive Director's Message	45...PSATC President's Message
8 Calendar of Events	46 ... APMM President's Message
9 Inside The League	48 ... Legislative Status Report – State
10 ... Business Leaders Network	51 ... Legislative Status Report – Federal
13 ... Civic Engagement Articles	54 ... Public Finance

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The League President's Message



DEREK SLAUGHTER
MAYOR
CITY OF WILLIAMSPORT



As mayor, I believe civic engagement is the cornerstone of a thriving, vibrant, and forward-moving community. When residents actively participate in local government—whether by voting, attending town hall meetings, serving on advisory boards, or simply voicing their concerns—they help shape the future of our city. Civic engagement fosters trust, transparency, and accountability, and it ensures that the decisions we make as leaders reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of the people we serve.

Civic engagement is also vitally important among young people. The energy, creativity, and fresh perspectives that our youth bring to the table are essential to shaping a future that works for everyone. When young residents get involved, they not only help drive positive change today, but they also build the habits of lifelong citizenship. Their voices matter, and their participation helps to create the policies and priorities of our city that reflect the hopes and concerns of the next generation. I encourage all young people to stay informed, stay active, and know that this city needs their leadership now more than ever.

It is my hope that every citizen stays involved and becomes part of the change they wish to see—because our cities are strongest when we work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek Slaughter". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Derek Slaughter
Mayor, City of Williamsport

The League Executive Director's Message

Often seen as the “First American,” Benjamin Franklin set the standard for civic engagement.

According to Brian Raftery, “Through hard work, thrift, intelligence and skill, he became a prosperous printer and one of Philadelphia’s leading citizens. As a civic activist, Franklin played a central role in the establishment of a fire department, a postal service, a hospital, a library and an academy that eventually became the University of Pennsylvania.

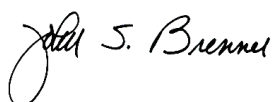
He was, for example, industrious, self-educated, frugal and optimistic. He tried to live in a manner consistent with the virtues necessary for an individual to achieve success while contributing to the advancement of society and the well-being of his fellow citizens.”

The “well-being of his fellow citizens” really sums up why so many good people get involved in local government. In this social media age, maybe a little more focus on Old Ben’s perspective and less on how many are following each of us on X or other platforms is a good idea. Looking up from our phones to have real conversations with others would be a great start.

Your League is working to help foster positive and productive civic engagement. The John A. Garner Jr. Civic Engagement Scholarships are opportunities for high school seniors to reflect on local government in our commonwealth and how they can be engaged in their community. The deadline is fast-approaching—May 12. Thanks to the generosity of Yvonne Garner in honor of her late husband, these scholarships are available. Jack Garner was our League Executive Director for nearly three decades. His mentorship of staff and numerous local officials had a profound impact. Let’s honor Jack and help promote the scholarships during this 125th Anniversary.

Please visit [this link](#) to learn more. Municipal leaders should help reach out to high school seniors, guidance counselors and teachers in your community. Please encourage students to apply. Let’s all take Franklin’s advice and get engaged and stay engaged!

Sincerely,



John S. Brenner



JOHN BRENNER



Executive Director's Video Report





Mark Your Calendar



Member Appreciation Tour of the District Meetings

Northwest - May 5

Makers Warehouse
St. Marys

Southwest #1 - May 7

Shooters Pittsburgh, Wexford
McCandless

Southwest #2 - May 7

Palace Theater
Greensburg

2025 Annual APMM Conference

May 19 - 21

Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square
Lancaster

2025 Municipal Leadership Summit

October 1 - 4

Bayfront Convention Center
Erie



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Inside The League



ABE AMORÓS
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -
OPERATIONS – CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

During the past several months, The League has been extremely busy as we continue working on events to commemorate our 125th Anniversary. Our Communications team has been in overdrive preparing and planning for our District Meetings that will coincide with our celebrations. We prepared special media/press packets for the district meetings and hope to highlight issues and people of interest to the news media.

Featured topics include Modern Speed Detection for Local Police, Affordable Housing, and Funding Sources for Cities and Towns. We also hope to eventually include a list of future story ideas including University-Municipal Relations, Public Health Collaborations, Public Safety, Community & Economic Development ideas, and Environmental and Natural Resources issues.

Throughout this year, we will be asking members to complete a brief survey about our communication with you. This survey asks about our methods of communicating, our emails, our website, and our social media, as well as our publications and their content. We encourage you to complete the survey and help us to improve our resources and our outreach to you.

In addition, we are in the process of making some organizational improvements to our pml.org website. Watch for new features, including a new blog and an interactive discussion forum.

Our 2025 publications schedule is well underway for the Municipal Reporter, League Link, Business Leaders Network Update, and Legislative Locator. For those of you who have contributed articles—thank you! We encourage the rest of you to share your stories and experiences with us.

The League has also made considerable progress in improving our understanding and utilization of key technological systems, including Microsoft Teams, Planner, SharePoint, and our newly implemented Protech CRM. As our team and staff become more proficient in leveraging these tools, we are noticing improvements in productivity, collaboration, and overall operational efficiency. Additionally, we have begun conducting security testing and implementing staff training programs to strengthen our cybersecurity posture and ensure best practices are followed across the organization. These enhancements are allowing us to streamline workflows, improve communication, and optimize member services, reinforcing our commitment to continuous innovation and digital transformation.

The League continues working with Search for Common Ground to address political violence in Pennsylvania with partners in the faith-based community, agriculture, business, nonprofits, and government. Our next meeting is scheduled for April in State College where The League will be represented.

We have also begun the process of interviewing for the position of Strategic Development Manager and hope to make an announcement very soon.

Lastly, The League continues to provide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Training to any member municipality that wishes to receive it. Recently, Ferguson Township held two separate sessions for employees who found it eye-opening and useful. Special thanks to Centrice Martin, Township Manager and Molly Steele-Schrimp, Human Resources Director, for their wonderful accommodation.

From Inside The League,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Abe Amorós".

Abe Amorós



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A Reflection on Civic Engagement

BY ABE AMORÓS, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - OPERATIONS & CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER, THE LEAGUE

We all know that preserving democracy is a cornerstone of our nation's success and can take several forms. It cannot transpire without individual action. It is not something that should be taken for granted, either, in the way of assuming that others will naturally take the lead on matters that impact all of us.

We all have a responsibility to make our communities better and contribute to the public good that benefits everyone. We must also be respectful of different opinions, ask pointed and detailed questions of our elected and appointed officials, and look for ways to find creative solutions to our collective problems.

As local officials, we understand that the greatest impact on our respective communities exists at our level. While federal and state legislators work in tandem with local officials on certain matters, local officials have greater control over what happens in our neighborhoods, parks, streets, cities, towns, boroughs, and townships. Every single decision-maker started at the beginning by getting civically engaged. Individuals either showed up at a meeting to listen, speak or took measures

to run for office while touting their ideas for making their communities better.

It was either a city council meeting, a town hall event in a borough or a forum held in a public building that piqued their interest. For me, it was an overwhelming desire to make budgetary decisions that positively impacted people, especially those that felt marginalized or completely ignored. Having been a council member in the City of York at the age of 23, I realized how fragile our system of government can be. It requires a commitment to learning about processes, what our neighbors care about and how local governments function in the way of public safety, public works, economic development, community development and all administrative functions that make government work. From collecting revenue from permits to reading and understanding zoning ordinances, local government officials control more than you think.

The beauty of civic engagement is that everyone has an opportunity to participate, regardless of experience. Anyone willing to dedicate time to understanding and promoting

local government can make a significant impact. Remember, every elected and appointed official began with an interest in being part of the process. We all have different talents and skills that can be used for our local municipalities.

Anyone wanting to get civically engaged has multiple avenues to do so: attending meetings, requesting time with local officials in their offices and reading news about their respective communities. Not only is it rewarding to embark in civic engagement, but it also has a multiplier effect that gets others interested in what you're doing.

As President John F. Kennedy once said: "One person can make a difference, and everyone should try." ▣



From Town Halls to Tweets: The Evolution of Civic Engagement

BY SUSAN SCHRACK WOOD, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, THE LEAGUE

Civic Engagement is a broad term that can be thought of in many different ways. Civic engagement is “the active participation of individuals in the life of their community to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community’s future.” Civic engagement has different faces depending upon the ways in which we want to improve our community. Many times, the first thing that comes to mind is the political arena as people are encouraged to do their civic duty by running for public office or voting so that they have a say in who becomes their elected leaders. Sometimes civic engagement is advocacy and activism to campaign for social or environmental causes or coming together as a community to discuss important challenges and find solutions. Civic engagement can also be as simple as volunteering for organizations that help the community.

The face of civic engagement has transformed significantly over the last 125 years of The League’s existence. These changes have been driven by shifts in technology, political structures, societal values, and the evolution and transformation of public communication.



Early 20th Century: Traditional Forms of Engagement

When The League first formed in the early 1900s, civic engagement was a face-to-face interaction in events like town meetings, rallies, and political gatherings. Voting was the most direct and widely recognized form of participation, though

access to the ballot was not universal. Many groups, including women and African Americans, faced legal barriers to voting, which led to grassroots movements demanding suffrage and civil rights.

Newspapers were a key source for informing the public and shaping political discourse. Civic organizations,

including labor unions and local advocacy groups, provided a platform for people to demand economic and social change against corruption. Workers’ rights and government transparency were the primary concerns of that time period.

The town’s men began forming and joining civic groups such as the Kiwanis Club, The Lions Club, The American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mid-20th Century: Power to the People

These civic groups grew and strengthened and were a major force for social interaction and community engagement. Particularly after World War II, the United States saw a surge in community participation as



returning veterans and a growing middle class were able to contribute to supporting and growing their communities. People were highly engaged in local and national issues. Radio and television developed into communication giants, and the media fueled the idea that the people have power. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s highlighted the power of collective action, as activists used peaceful protests, marches, and sit-ins to demand equal rights.

During this period, television played a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and increasing political awareness. The televised presidential debates, beginning with John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960, demonstrated the growing influence of media in shaping civic engagement. The Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal in the 1970s also fueled public



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT...

activism, leading to protests and demands for greater government accountability.

Late 20th Century: The Arrival of The Internet

The arrival of the Internet and the World Wide Web produced a dramatic change for the world. As urbanization increased, and work-life balance shifted, digital communication contributed to a gradual decline in traditional civic group membership. Email, online forums, and websites provided new ways for communicating with people. This constant communication ability also meant longer work hours with less dedicated free time at home, meaning less time and energy for civic engagement in the community. The rise of cable news networks and 24-hour news cycles further increased access to political information. This made it easier for citizens to stay informed and engaged, but the expanded news hours also blurred the lines between traditional news and agenda-driven commentary, making it easier for people to be influenced and potentially misled by political party powers. Voter participation fluctuated during this period, with some elections witnessing declining turnout due to disillusionment with political institutions.



21st Century: Social Media and Digital Activism

The 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented transformation in civic engagement due to social

media and digital technology. Platforms like Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram have enabled rapid dissemination of information and the organization of large-scale movements. Hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo have galvanized global discussions on social justice issues, demonstrating the power of digital activism. Where civic and community groups once had to meet in person, more and more organization and mobilization began to take place digitally. The ability to choose specified and tailored information sources intensified any political divides that already existed, and the “distance” of social media communication allowed for less civility in civil and community discussions.

The traditional civic organizations such as the Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, and Rotary, which played so significant a role in community engagement, focusing on philanthropy, public service, and networking,

have faced serious challenges. Moving operations and communications online means that membership has declined, particularly among younger generations who prefer more flexible and digitally driven forms of engagement.

To adapt, many of these groups have integrated digital tools, social media outreach, and virtual meetings to attract new members. Some have also expanded their missions to include more contemporary social justice initiatives, climate action, and local community development efforts. Online petitions, crowdfunding for political causes, and virtual town halls have made it easier for people to participate in civic life without being physically present. However, challenges such as misinformation, political polarization, and the digital divide have also emerged, complicating the landscape of civic engagement.

According to a 2021 Pew Research Center report, 69% of Americans reported engaging in at least one form of civic activity, such as

contacting elected officials, volunteering, or attending community meetings. Additionally, volunteer rates in the U.S. have remained strong, with about 30% of adults participating in community service annually. Young people, in particular, have embraced digital activism, with over 60% of millennials and Gen Z individuals using social media to promote civic causes or sign online petitions.



Over the past 125 years, civic engagement has evolved from in-person gatherings and print media to digital activism and social media movements. While new technologies have made participation more accessible and widespread, they have also introduced new challenges, including misinformation and political polarization. The future of civic engagement will likely continue to be shaped by technological advancements, policy changes, and societal shifts. Regardless of the medium, the fundamental goal remains the same: empowering individuals to actively participate in shaping their communities and governments. □





Crafting for a Cause: The League Yarn Society's Support of Downtown Daily Bread

BY HOLLI HUGENDUBLER, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, THE LEAGUE

In early 2024, a small group of League employees decided to turn their love of knitting and crocheting into something bigger: a way to help the community. Our mission? To create handmade projects for those in need, specifically for the clients of Downtown Daily Bread, our local homeless shelter.



Downtown Daily Bread is more than just a shelter—it provides a lifeline to those experiencing homelessness, offering not only a place to stay but also services like mental health counseling, medical care, and resources to help individuals rebuild their lives. Of course, their main goal is to give clients the tools to escape homelessness, one step at a time.



The idea for the Yarn Society was sparked by Melinda Schmitz from our Training department and Holli Hugendubler from Communications, both passionate about knitting and crocheting.

They saw an opportunity to combine their love for the craft with a chance to give back to the community.

Since then, our group has produced around 30 items for the shelter and has grown to 8-10 members, with many learning to knit and crochet from one another, now having a lifelong hobby they never thought they would pick up.

Our yarn group has been meeting every other week at lunchtime for over a year now to work on our projects, plan new ideas, teach each other new techniques and bond over our shared love of fiber

arts! In the beginning of our endeavor, we were gifted funds to buy a large stash of yarn, which has been the foundation of our creative efforts. Not only are we creating hats, scarves, mittens, and [soap sacks](#) for those in need, but we're also weaving a strong bond among our coworkers — a bond that's built on creativity, compassion, and, of course, yarn!

This continues to be an enjoyable and rewarding adventure for all of us. In addition to helping our community members,

we are also sharing a hobby with like-minded colleagues creating a tight “knit” (ha-



ha, no pun intended) friendship with our fellow coworkers. As we continue this rewarding journey, we're reminded that small acts of kindness, whether through crafting, volunteering, or simply sharing a hobby, can help make a big difference in someone's life. Happy crafting! □





Civic Engagement: Helping Your Residents Help Your Community

BY PAUL N. LALLEY, ESQ. SHAREHOLDER, CAMPBELL DURRANT, P.C.

As a father of two teenage daughters, I face the same challenge as parents all over the country: how do I get them to put down their smart phones and actually talk with their mom and me about what happened in school, what's going on with their friends, etc.? This may sound like yet another rant about how social media makes us less social, but it's not. I like doomscrolling just as much as the next person and don't want to give up my smart phone either.

Rather, what I want is to engage with them. To know what is going on in their lives; to talk about difficult issues with them and to offer advice -- even at the risk of being accused of "dadsplaining." Because parenting is a collaborative process and the more you interact with your children, the stronger your bond with them will be.

So how does this relate to the concept of civic engagement? Being an elected official does not make you a parent to your community, but it does make you a guardian of the public welfare and responsible for helping the residents of your community deal with the issues entrusted to local government. And just like the act of engaging with your children strengthens the parent-child bond, the bond between local government and the community is strengthened when there is robust engagement between local leaders and their residents.

It is, of course, important that local government leaders provide opportunities to their residents for civic engagement. I don't mean just the ones that are

mandated by law, such as allowing public comment during public board meetings under the Sunshine Law. That is an important form of civic engagement, but the concept is both broader and deeper than the discourse that occurs at official meetings.

Rather, civic engagement extends to service opportunities provided to your community that further the mission of local government. Some of these opportunities have formal legal status where members of your local community can serve in important roles that carry out significant governmental functions but that do not require a person to run for elected office. Serving on a zoning hearing board or a local civil service commission are examples of this. Other opportunities include serving on local advisory boards that study specific issues and then make recommendations to the elected officials on policy that affects those issues. Examples of this include serving on a parks and recreation advisory board or a local tax study commission. These are all categories of service that help local government address the needs of the community.

The question that local government officials should ask is how do we recruit individuals to serve in these roles? Advertising these opportunities through public web postings and social media outreach should certainly be part of that process so that your residents know about these roles and how they can apply for them.

But the process should start even earlier by engaging your residents in a less formal way that may help you identify those who have the capacity and ability to serve. Providing workshops or information sessions on how your municipal government works is a great way to engage your residents and foster interest in how they can serve. I know of one township that provides a seminar for local residents where the heads of different departments explain how the codes enforcement





CIVIC ENGAGEMENT...

process works, how the tax collection process works, and how the police department functions. Participants in the seminar program receive a certificate when they complete the course and, I'm sure, a better appreciation of how dedicated their local government employees are to their welfare. People who are willing to learn how their local government works are likely to see how important it is to support it by serving in the critical volunteer roles on committees and boards.

Creating these service opportunities fosters civic engagement in ways that doesn't just help you fill those volunteer roles. It can also help you gain allies in your community when there are issues that affect your local government that are being addressed at the state or federal level. The residents who elected you to local government also elected your state and federal representatives; they can be a powerful voice in support of your efforts to get state or federal assistance to your community. The more that they understand

the issues facing your local government through the outreach and volunteer opportunities that you provide, the better are your chances of successfully calling on those individuals to help your community should you need to call on state or federal resources.

So perhaps you can convince your community to put down their smart phones and social media and engage face-to-face with their local government. It is worth the effort, and you'll find that bonds between your residents and their local government will be the stronger for it. □



Taking steps to prevent labor and employment issues is a far better strategy than trying to mitigate them after the fact. We partner with municipalities in every corner of the Commonwealth, helping them address potential risks and create work environments where people and public service can thrive. We'd like to do the same for you.



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Governing an Older Industrial City

BY MAYOR MICHAEL LOMBARDO, CITY OF PITTSTON, LEAGUE PAST PRESIDENT

Given the present political climate, the idea of civic engagement is more important than ever before. As municipal officials we have a responsibility to set an example and have a tremendous opportunity because our actions, policies and legislation, have immediate measurable impacts. I think we can all agree, whether we are democrats, independents, republicans or not quite sure (like I am most days), local government is where “the rubber meets the road” and good government is about effective leadership and solving problems. One of the things that I enjoy most about The League is that every time we gather; whether a board meeting, training or the annual summit, I come away energized and full of new ideas and these ideas don’t possess a label of political party, they represent positive policy and action/s for my constituents. Over the past several years, The League has afforded me the opportunity to meet many of you and I am always inspired. More recently, I have been afforded the opportunity to become engaged with the National League of Cities (NLC) by serving on several committees. Meeting elected officials and municipal leaders from all over the country has resulted in the same conclusions. The content of the discussions is always rooted in the issues at hand and not the politics of party. In fact, at NLC’s Congressional City Conference this past March, I had the opportunity to participate as a member of NLC’s Housing Comeback Advisory Group and subsequently participate in the opening general session as part of a main stage discussion with Mayor Mark Shepherd, City of Clearfield, UT and Mayor Alyia Gaskins City of Alexandria, VA and was moderated by Councilman Kevin Kramer, Louisville, KY. The session focused on the present challenges in housing. Over the past several years the availability of housing has become a significant issue almost everywhere across the country. For the first time, the challenges of housing span the continuum from homelessness to market rate housing with pressures in each area pushing down through the continuum.

These challenges have been the genesis of solutions and work plans at all levels of government and by regional and national housing non-profits. Our League populated a housing task force to collect data and generate solutions. Similarly, the NLC partnered with the American Planning Association (APA) to examine housing challenges and develop solutions to address nationwide housing shortages, which impact housing affordability, diminish the quality of life of individuals and families and inhibit economic growth in communities. The result of this work was the Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook. Governor Shapiro signed an executive order in September of 2024 providing for the creation of a Housing Action Plan for Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) in collaboration with other agencies/entities. The objective of the Housing Action Plan is to develop goals, objectives, and recommendations to the Governor on “strategies to increase and preserve the housing supply across the Commonwealth.”

Here at Home

As part of the City’s ongoing comprehensive plan, neighborhood stabilization was identified as a major priority and as a result, in 2014 initiated an extensive examination of neighborhoods and housing. After a year of research; both historical and on the field surveys, the first draft of the Neighborhood Housing





CIVIC ENGAGEMENT...

Initiative (NHI) was generated. The goal of the NHI was to identify existing conditions and develop a plan and implementation strategy designed to: reduce the number of code deficient, vacant and abandoned houses in the City of Pittston's neighborhoods; create a complimentary regulatory environment that allows the leveraging of resources and to improve the overall appearance of the neighborhoods creating: attractive, livable, safe and desired housing. What we found was the City of Pittston, like many older industrial communities, had significant challenges in its neighborhoods. The following factors were identified as contributing to the neighborhood decline:

1. Population loss.
2. Older housing stock (67% of housing built before 1939).
3. Aging infrastructure.
4. Narrow lot size.
5. Street crowding (Over 80% of housing units do not include driveways).
6. Vacant houses.
7. Abandoned houses.
8. Dysfunctional Park System (constructed in the age of "neighborhood parks").
9. Land locked. The city has little to no vacant land for new housing development.
10. Foreclosures.
11. Property Tax (city, school district and county).
12. Lack of housing options for various demographic groups (senior housing; lofts, modern apartments).
13. Number of rentals versus owner occupied units increasing. Estimated over 65% housing is rental.
14. Weak building code and ordinances.
15. Weak enforcement of existing laws, building codes and ordinances.
16. Deficient and disparate housing plan.
17. Current economic conditions.

As a result of these findings, the city developed a long-range work plan that included the following action steps:

1. Inventory and Evaluation

- a. Develop a standardized rating and categorization system.
- b. Baseline data collection.
- c. Legal review of applicable laws, codes and ordinances.
- d. Staff re-alignment.
- e. Establish a multidisciplinary Neighborhood Action Team (Operations Manager, Code Enforcement Officer, Police Department, Fire Department, Health Officer, OCD Executive Director).

2. Hold a Housing Summit

- a. Local Elected Officials: mayor & city council, school board representative, county council representation. OCD Executive Director, Operations Manager, Code Enforcement Officer.
- b. State Level Officials: Senator, State Representative.
- c. Federal Officials: Senator, Congressman.
- d. County Agencies: Luzerne OCD, Habitat for Humanity
- e. State Agencies: DCED, PHFA
- f. Local Banks & Realtors, Federal Home Loan Bank Representative.
- g. Developers and Contractors
- h. Other Housing Experts (Larry Segal, Larry Newman, etc.)
- i. Chamber of Commerce.
- j. Authorities: Redevelopment, Parking and Housing.

3. Public Presentation

4. Implementation/Action Plan

- Mitigation

The City and its related agencies (Office of Community Development, Redevelopment Authority, Lincoln Heights Corp, Greater Pittston Revitalization Corp, Parking Authority, Housing Authority)

- a. Redirect staff and increase code enforcement.
- b. Develop a property data base to track problem properties.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT...

- c. Acquire tax sale and foreclosed properties.
- d. Inventory public assets located in neighborhoods (i.e., parks, signs, right of ways, easements, streets, etc.) assess conditions and develop asset specific remedial strategies.
- e. Utilize publicly owned properties for demonstration projects (i.e., narrow lot development).
- Prevention
 - a. Tougher legislation and code enforcement.
 - b. Moratorium on conversions from single family to multi-family.
 - c. Municipal grants: LERTA, TAX Rebates, Homestead Exemption Law, NAP
 - d. External Grants (NSP, Homes...) focused on code improvement issues such as electrical, Plumbing, weatherization and environmental abatement.
 - e. Grants- HOME REPAIRS- create a self-funded grant program aimed at providing incentives for property owners to make aesthetic improvements (to include sidewalks and trees).

Utilize revenue sharing from properties that received governmental investments, utilize revenue capture (permits and fines to be designated to the Neighborhood Housing Fund). Upon compliance status, all city tax revenue will be placed in the fund for a 3 year period.

- f. City must take care of municipal issues (i.e., old out dated signs, damaged or missing street signs and weed control on municipal property).
- g. Public Input Portal- create a user-friendly site that allows residents to provide information regarding housing issues within their respective neighborhood. This site would also provide updated information regarding the progress on problematic properties.
- h. Acquire tax sale and foreclosed properties.
- i. Investigate the development of a “tax rebate”. Amount related to dollars invested in a property.
- Redevelopment
 - a. Property Relay- the process by which an authority of the city transfers a property to a developer

under an approved developer’s agreement to include level of renovation, use and minimal rent/ sale price. The transfer for a nominal base fee (lower than the appraised value) or the Authority can waive the fee based on commitments outlined in the Developer’s Agreement.

- b. Create subordinated low interest loans.
- c. Develop and identify grant funds.
- d. Consider tax break programs.
- e. Facilitate new construction of single-family homes, condominium, loft and high-end rental units.

I have always asserted that what gets measured gets done and as a result have emphasized the need for evaluation and data collection. After almost a decade of implementation of the Neighborhood Housing initiative, the City of Pittston has observed the following outcomes: reduction in blight, reduced code enforcement issues, increased permits, abatement of hazardous and environmental conditions, conservation of neighborhoods, reduction of crime in all categories, increased community pride, increased business growth, reduction of vacant properties, property tax reduction through the Homestead Exclusion Act, increased home ownership, increased private investments in the downtown and neighborhoods, investment grade credit rating, increased earned income tax receipts, a 12% growth in age demographic 25-35 and no property tax increase for 16 years. These results signify effectiveness of the process. I believe all of these results signal a bright future for the city and reinforce the value of purposeful leadership and the value of developing a plan and working together for the good of the community: public engagement

Finally, I will close with a comment I made during my panel discussion. We need to stop worrying about who we are fighting against and remember who we are fighting for. Together, through civic engagement we can solve many of the municipal challenges we face, including improving availability of housing supply across the continuum. □



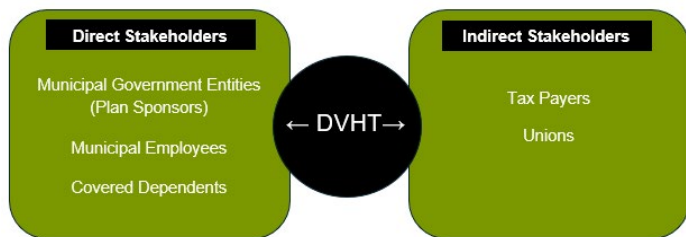


The Delaware Valley Health Trust: A Model of Civic Engagement in Health Care

SUBMITTED BY DELAWARE VALLEY TRUSTS

Civic engagement is defined by engagement in activities which improve one's community or address wider social issues. As a non-profit, health pool formed and operated by its public entity members, The Delaware Valley Health Trust (DVHT) embodies a purpose-driven commitment to community and the ability to drive innovative improvement through municipal cooperation for the common good.

Formed in 1999 *by local government, for local government*, DVHT has delivered unparalleled results for its direct (165 municipal entities and over 25,000 members) and indirect stakeholders.



In creating an alternative to commercial carriers and the broker-driven health insurance market, DVHT members opt-out of the traditional insurance market and make a commitment to the other participating public entities in the pooling of risk thereby creating an alternative model for health benefits. This shared commitment fosters a sense of mutual purpose and creates opportunities for savings and improved member health and wellbeing.

A spirit of civic commitment and responsibility drives the DVHT model which is governed by a seven-member board of municipal managers and has generated millions of dollars in cost savings and unparalleled premium stability by eliminating the profit and unnecessary expenses included in most municipal health insurance plans.

The “force multiplier” of non-profit pooling is then reinvesting those “efficiency savings” into premium stabilization programs, employee wellness and health promotion. Through a combination of active promotion and incentives, DVHT has been able to achieve a remarkable rate of health screenings.

Historically medicine has been reactive in treating patients after they have experienced some type of symptoms. The DVHT model is attempting to be more proactive in screening and prevention accruing lower costs, better outcomes and healthier members.

Consider the case of a healthy 52-year-old woman with no symptoms or family history of cancer. The member had not had a mammogram in the past as she felt she was not at risk. The member learned about the DVHT screening incentives and thought it would be an easy way to earn some money.

She was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. Her provider stated that this particular type of cancer is rarely found as early as hers and is usually diagnosed after it has spread, and symptoms start to appear.

Due to this early detection, the member did not need ongoing aggressive treatment and has been in remission for almost 7 years. She has since changed the way she takes care of her body and focuses on wellness as she continues her journey through health. The member reached out to the DVHT Wellness Team with the following testimonial: “I can honestly say that your incentive program is what got me to go for regular checkups and although my weight and blood work were all great and I don’t have a family history of breast cancer, your incentive program is how and why it was found so early.”



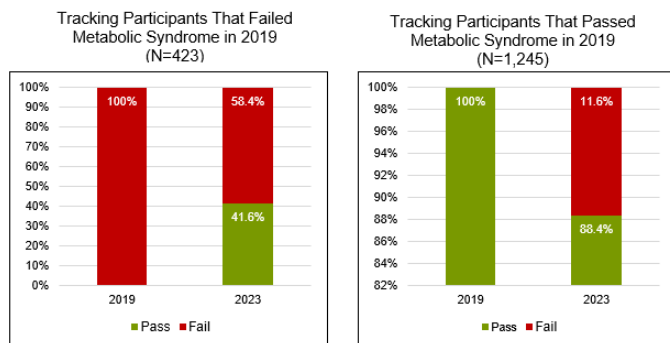
DVHT Screening Rates 2021 – 2023 vs. National Benchmark

HEIDIS-based medical preventative:				
Screenings	2021	2022	2023	Benchmark
Breast Cancer	72.1%	75.7%	77.9%	71.0%
Cervical Cancer	73.9%	77.2%	77.3%	69.8%
Colorectal Cancer	61.8%	64.4%	63.5%	55.1%

Higher screening rates results in earlier detection and coaching opportunities which thereby translate into opportunities to close gaps in care, manage chronic disease and support behavior change with the goal of a healthier employee population.

Biometric Screening Cohort Risk Analysis

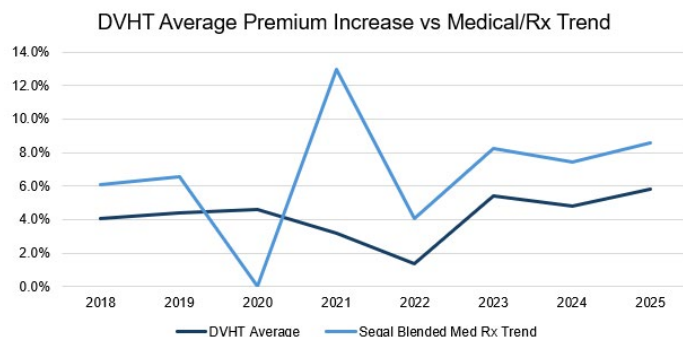
(Delaware Valley Health trust Metabolic Syndrome Risk 2019 vs 2023)



Reducing Risk – Of the 423 participants that were at risk for Metabolic Syndrome in 2019, 176 are no longer at risk for Metabolic Syndrome in 2023.

Keeping Healthy People Healthy – Of the 1,245 participants that were not at risk for Metabolic Syndrome in 2019, 144 are now at risk for Metabolic Syndrome.

These results are just part of a wider and more robust wellness program which has succeeded in bending the health insurance cost curve for DVHT members over the past two decades.



The Delaware Valley Health Trust was formed in response to rapidly rising and volatile health insurance premiums. In creating a non-profit, member-centric alternative to the existing options, DVHT has lowered costs and improved member health through a commitment to shared risk and civic responsibility. □





Sustainability

BY BAILEY ROCCO, SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR, THE LEAGUE



As the Sustainability Coordinator at the Pennsylvania Municipal League, I had the privilege of attending the Sustainable States Network Annual Conference in College Park, Maryland, from March 25-27. This national gathering brought together representatives from sustainability programs in 17 states, fostering collaboration among state-level initiatives, nonprofit organizations, university-based programs, and federal agencies. The primary goal of the conference was to share resources, discuss the best practices, and explore ways to support municipalities in their sustainability efforts. A key focus was on how state-level programs, such as the Sustainable Pennsylvania certification, can empower local governments to enhance sustainability while fostering civic engagement.

The Sustainable Pennsylvania certification program provides municipalities with strategies, resources, and formal recognition for advancing sustainability. It promotes best practices in economic development, environmental stewardship, and social equity while fostering public participation through transparency. Each certified municipality receives a profile page to showcase achievements, encouraging collaboration among communities. Official recognition by Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) further enhances its impact by allowing municipalities to indicate their certification status when applying for state funding.

One of the key themes of the conference was the importance of assisting local governments in building both sustainability and resilience. Participants emphasized the need to create spaces for productive dialogue between municipal officials and to cultivate partnerships that empower communities. Civic engagement plays a crucial role in these efforts, as sustainability is most effective when residents are informed, involved, and actively participating in decision-making processes. Encouraging public discourse, strengthening local partnerships, and ensuring transparency are vital components in fostering a culture of sustainability within municipalities.

A particular focus was placed on engaging small and rural municipalities, highlighting those issues such as climate resilience, clean drinking water, and economic growth are shared priorities that transcend political and geographic boundaries. The conference emphasized that sustainable solutions must be inclusive and accessible to communities of all sizes. By increasing civic engagement at the local level, municipalities can build stronger networks of collaboration, ensuring that sustainability initiatives align with community needs and priorities.

Looking ahead to 2025, one of my primary objectives is to enhance the accessibility of the Sustainable Pennsylvania application process. Many smaller municipalities operate with limited staff who take on multiple roles, making it essential that the certification process is straightforward and manageable. Streamlining the application and providing additional guidance and support will help ensure that more municipalities, regardless of their size or resources, can participate and benefit from the program. Additionally, fostering civic engagement throughout this process will empower residents to take an active role in shaping their communities' sustainable futures.

By strengthening support systems for municipalities and promoting sustainability as a unifying goal, we can work toward a future where every Pennsylvania community has the tools, resources, and civic participation necessary to thrive.

As we approach Earth Day, now is the perfect time for municipalities and residents alike to take action in building a more sustainable future. Whether it's pursuing Sustainable Pennsylvania certification, engaging in local sustainability initiatives, or fostering public dialogue on environmental and economic resilience, every effort counts. I encourage municipal leaders to explore how Sustainable Pennsylvania can serve as a tool for progress and invite community members to get involved—whether by attending local meetings, advocating for sustainable policies, or participating in Earth Day events. Together, we can create stronger, more resilient communities for generations to come. □



Bucks County Customer Saves Over \$7K in Sewer Line Repair

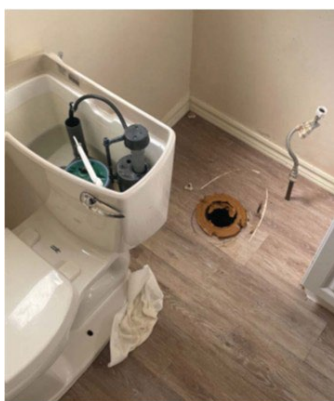


BY ASHLEY SHIWARSKI, SR. DIRECTOR, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES SERVICE LINE WARRANTY PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY HOMESERVE

The National League of Cities (NLC) Service Line Warranty Program by HomeServe not only educates homeowners about their service line responsibilities and provides financial protection against unexpected repairs but also strengthens communities. By partnering with local contractors, the program supports the local economy, creates jobs, and generates funds that can be reinvested into neighborhood programs. These efforts foster civic engagement by encouraging residents to take an active role in maintaining and improving their communities.

Through our partnership with Bucks County, Pennsylvania, David G. received a major sewer line repair that was covered in full—saving him over \$7,000.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



David G. had been dealing with a frustrating, recurring issue: multiple toilets in his home were repeatedly backing up, despite his family's caution in what they flushed. In the spirit of community cooperation, his neighbors stepped in to help, snaking his sewer line whenever needed to provide temporary relief. Their willingness to assist exemplifies how strong

neighborhoods rely on mutual aid, whether through informal support or more structured civic initiatives.

However, when the issue became persistent, David realized a long-term solution was necessary. Fortunately, he had enrolled in a sewer line repair plan through the NLC Service Line Warranty Program just months before. He called HomeServe for professional assistance.

"In the past, I worked with other home repair plan companies and had a very poor experience, so I was wary at first," David shared. "It was always such a hassle to file a claim that I ended up paying out of pocket to avoid the trouble altogether. Thankfully, my experience with HomeServe couldn't have been more different."

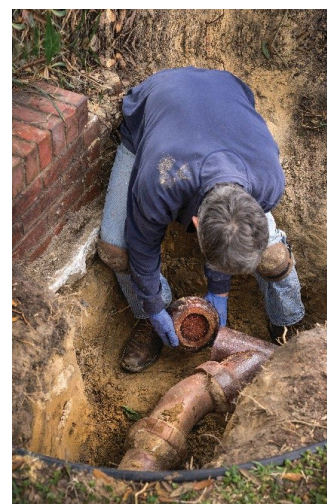
Strengthening Local Businesses and Communities

HomeServe dispatched F.K.R. Plumbing and Heating, a trusted local contractor, to assess the situation. Using

advanced camera inspection, they discovered that a dip in the 40-year-old piping—caused by foundation shifts over time—was responsible for the repeated blockages.

The repair not only provided David with peace of mind but also underscored the importance of investing in local infrastructure and resources. The NLC Service Line Warranty Program plays a key role in supporting communities by:

- **Providing homeowners with reliable repair solutions**, helping them avoid unexpected financial strain.
- **Keeping work local** by partnering with trusted contractors who know the area and its unique infrastructure challenges.
- **Generating funding for community initiatives**, allowing cities and towns to reinvest in programs that benefit residents.



When all was said and done, about six feet of David's sewer line was replaced, saving his family over \$7,700. But for him, the financial savings were only part of the value

"HomeServe took 100% of the stress out of this situation for me; the service was phenomenal. I will be a customer for life."

Investing in Community Well-Being

David's story highlights how the NLC Service Line Warranty Program extends beyond individual repairs—it strengthens communities by fostering local economic growth, encouraging civic participation, and reinforcing the power of neighborly support. Whether through structured partnerships or simple acts of kindness, programs like this help ensure that communities remain resilient, connected, and engaged.

Through these efforts, we can all play a role in keeping our neighborhoods strong—one service line at a time.

<https://partnerships.homeserve.com/water-solutions/> □





How Municipalities Can Start Using AI for Civic Engagement

BY CYNTHIA PHILLIPS, FOUNDER & MANAGING PARTNER, SCIENTIA CONSULTING LLC

Local governments are constantly challenged to keep up with the growing expectations of their residents. People want quicker responses, better access to services, and a stronger voice in shaping their communities. But with limited budgets and resources, how can municipalities meet these demands without overwhelming their staff?

The answer lies in artificial intelligence (AI). Across the country, AI is helping cities and towns improve civic engagement by streamlining communication, automating service requests, and making government more accessible. While the potential is exciting, many municipalities hesitate, unsure of where to begin.

Fortunately, AI implementation doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. With a strategic approach, local governments can start small and scale up as they see results.

Let's take a look at the AI Implementation Journey:

Step 1: Identify the Biggest Engagement Gaps

Every municipality has unique challenges when it comes to civic engagement. Some may struggle with slow response times to service requests, while others may face difficulties in gathering resident feedback. AI can be applied in numerous ways, so the first step is assessing where engagement gaps exist. Common pain points include:

- Slow or inconsistent responses to resident inquiries
- Low participation in public meetings or surveys
- Inefficient service request handling (e.g., reporting potholes, waste collection issues)
- Limited accessibility for non-English speakers or residents with disabilities

Step 2: Start with AI Chatbots for Resident

Communication One of the easiest and most impactful AI implementations for civic engagement is the use of AI-powered chatbots. These virtual assistants can handle common resident inquiries, freeing up municipal staff to focus on more complex issues. Chatbots can:

- Provide real-time answers to frequently asked questions (e.g., "When is my trash pickup day?")
- Process permit applications or business registrations
- Guide residents to the correct department or online forms
- Offer multi-language support, improving accessibility

Philadelphia has already seen success with AI-driven virtual assistants, reducing call center loads while providing 24/7 support for residents. Implementing a chatbot requires minimal upfront investment and can integrate with existing municipal websites or social media platforms.

Step 3: Use AI for Smart Feedback and Community

Insights Gathering resident feedback is crucial for informed decision-making, but traditional surveys and town hall meetings often fail to engage a broad audience. AI-powered sentiment analysis tools can help municipalities collect and interpret public opinion more effectively. These tools:

- Analyze social media and community forums to gauge public sentiment on key issues
- Automate the collection and categorization of resident feedback from multiple sources
- Identify emerging concerns before they escalate into larger problems



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT...

By leveraging AI-driven insights, municipalities can proactively address community concerns and adjust policies accordingly, rather than waiting for formal complaints or protests.

Step 4: Automate Service Requests and Issue Reporting

AI can significantly improve how municipalities handle service requests. Instead of relying on residents to manually report issues like potholes or broken streetlights, AI-powered image recognition and predictive analytics can detect problems automatically. Some cities use AI-equipped drones or smart sensors to:

- Identify and prioritize road maintenance needs
- Monitor public spaces for cleanliness or infrastructure issues
- Optimize waste collection routes based on real-time data

For example, in Pittsburgh, AI is being used to improve traffic signal timing and road maintenance, reducing congestion and repair costs. Implementing similar AI-driven service request systems can help municipalities allocate resources more efficiently and enhance resident satisfaction.

Step 5: Secure Funding and Partnerships

A common concern among municipalities is the cost of AI implementation. However, AI solutions don't always require large upfront investments. Many federal

and state grants support smart city initiatives, and partnerships with universities or private technology firms can help local governments pilot AI projects at a lower cost. Additionally, software-as-a-service (SaaS) AI tools allow municipalities to adopt AI solutions with minimal infrastructure changes.

Step 6: Train Staff and Educate the Public

AI adoption isn't just about technology—it requires people to understand and trust the system. Municipal employees need training on how to manage and oversee AI tools, while residents must be informed about how AI is being used to serve them.

Regular town halls, informational campaigns, and online resources can help build trust and encourage public participation in AI-driven initiatives.

The Future of AI in Civic Engagement

AI offers municipalities an opportunity to improve civic engagement like never before. By starting with simple, impactful applications—such as AI chatbots, automated service requests, and smart feedback systems—local governments can enhance transparency, efficiency, and resident satisfaction.

The question for Pennsylvania municipalities isn't whether they should use AI for civic engagement—it's how quickly they're willing to start. The tools are available, the benefits are clear, and the future is waiting. Are you ready to lead the way? ☐

2025 Civic Engagement Scholarships

APPLYING FOR ONE OF OUR SCHOLARSHIPS IS EASY. JUST WRITE AN ESSAY DISCUSSING...



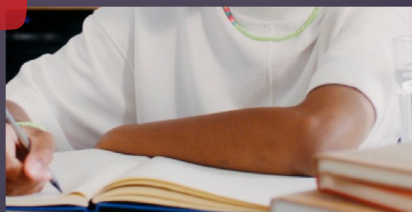
The challenges in your community. What are some issues that make life more difficult for people living there?



What you think would be some good opportunities for fixing those problems?



How do you think people could help?



The League's 125th Anniversary . . .



Pennsylvania Municipal
League

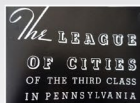


Celebrating Strengthening Communities

This year is a big milestone for The League!
We are celebrating 125 years of strengthening communities
and we have exciting events planned so stay tuned...

1900

The League of Cities of the Third Class



October 1899, ten city mayors met and decided to form a League of Cities of the Third Class and Mayor Geise of York invited the group to hold its first meeting in York that following year.

First annual convention of The League was held in May of 1900.

1940

League office was set up at City Hall in Harrisburg.



1992

Relocation of The League's office to its current location, one block from the Capitol.



Renamed to the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities.

1955

The League of Cities of the Third Class becomes the Pennsylvania League of Cities.



2018-Present



Pennsylvania Municipal League

Rebranded The League with a new logo.

#StrengthThroughEngagement

Updated The League Mission, Vision and Values.

2012

Renamed to the Pennsylvania Municipal League.



Pennsylvania Municipal League

Celebrating Strengthening Communities



Through the Years

1900-2025

The League's 125th Anniversary . . .

Banking on the Community: Wells Fargo Becomes Presenting Sponsor of The League's 125th Anniversary

Bank teams up with The League to pursue its mission of strengthening and empowering effective local government

SUBMITTED BY WELLS FARGO

For more than a century, the Pennsylvania Municipal League has served as an advocate for residents of the Commonwealth. It has provided cost-effective programs and services required to meet the distinct needs of their communities. Its mission is to strengthen and empower effective local government through advocacy, education, and support. Plans for the future focus on goals around community development and economic vitality, among other community needs. That's why Wells Fargo is thrilled to be the presenting sponsor of The League's 125th Anniversary.

Like The League, Wells Fargo's history in Pennsylvania is rich. Its banking heritage traces back to The Bank of North America, the nation's first commercial bank, founded in Philadelphia in 1781. Wells Fargo & Co. was founded in 1852 and soon after opened an office in the Keystone State. By the 1910s, after a series of mergers,

more than a hundred communities in Pennsylvania had a Wells Fargo office. From these express offices, customers could move money and more across Wells Fargo's international express network. The company's legacy was solidified more than a century ago and it continues to be one of the premier banks in Pennsylvania to this day.

Becoming the presenting sponsor of The League's 125th Anniversary is about more than putting a name on a banner; it's about helping to strengthen communities and provide cost-effective programs and services for the people of Pennsylvania. Whether it's through housing affordability, financial literacy initiatives, or enhanced community outreach, Wells Fargo supports The League and its mission.

Wells Fargo is The Bank of Doing. As part of its commitment to the community, the company recently reintroduced NeighborhoodLIFT to the City of Philadelphia with a \$5 million donation to HomeFree-USA to help families buy their first home. Once a down payment assistance program, NeighborhoodLIFT has been redesigned to address more of the barriers facing first-time homeowners. The program offers up to \$15,000 in broad homebuyer assistance in collaboration with the City of Philadelphia and several local nonprofit organizations.

Eligible homebuyers will have the option to use the funds for downpayment assistance, or toward paying down debt, lowering their interest rate and monthly payments, or towards closing costs. This effort is



Wells Fargo office in Erie, PA 1910s. Credit: Wells Fargo Corporate Archives.

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NeighborhoodLIFT Philadelphia launch event, 2025. Credit: Wells Fargo

expected to help an estimated 260 eligible first-time homebuyers in Philadelphia.

“Making homeownership more affordable will help hard-working people create generational wealth and strengthen Philadelphia neighborhoods,” says Darlene Goins, head of Philanthropy and Community Impact at Wells Fargo. “NeighborhoodLIFT has helped thousands of people across the country purchase their first home and, alongside Mayor Parker and our nonprofit leaders, we look forward to helping more Philadelphia residents achieve the dream of homeownership.”

This comes on the heels of Wells Fargo Home Lending expanding its \$10,000 Homebuyer Access grant program to underserved borrowers in Pittsburgh. These grants are available to homebuyers who earn a combined 120% or less of the area median income in the county where the subject property is located. This grant had previously been available to Philadelphia residents and remains available to this day. Initiatives such as these are designed to put the community first and help make a difference in society.

The League has long been a well-respected organization, supporting more than 150 municipalities across Pennsylvania. Wells Fargo is proud to sponsor The League's 125th Anniversary, as we continue to do more for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. □



Presenting Sponsor

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From the Archives... 1940s

Issues of primary concern to Pennsylvania cities included juvenile delinquency, post-war planning & public works, and public health.

Juvenile Delinquency

1943 - Connellsville put into place a curfew ordinance requiring boys and girls under 18 to be off the city streets unless accompanied by an adult. The city's fire whistle will sound at 9 p.m. each night and parents will be held responsible for children breaking curfew.

1944 - Cities around the state including Altoona, Scranton, Harrisburg, Allentown, Butler, and Erie held meetings on juvenile delinquency increasing at an "alarming rate."

1946 - Erie had the highest paid police chief of PA's third-class cities with a yearly salary of \$3,780.00

Post-War Planning

1943 - Allentown had a tin can salvage drive by school students and collected 248.6 tons of salvage leading to 5 tons of pure tin to contribute to the war effort. The salvage campaign saved taxpayers \$3,500 in the form of rubbish removal. (photo)

Altoona city council is considering the possibility of allowing residents to pick berries on the city watershed lands "due to the general food situation at present."

1944 - Post-war Planning Institutes for local officials were held in Harrisburg and Philadelphia to teach planning strategies to municipalities help them develop public works programs. Finding new revenue sources was a prime concern. Suggestions included parking fees, sewer rental and garbage collection fees.

Garbage was defined as decomposable food wastes and rubbish was generally considered dry items such as paper, glass, and other non-natural materials. Harrisburg was listed as a "superior" model of trash disposal.

"(the incinerator) ...is operated by 2 men and they burn what papers and rubbish is hauled there by city trucks as well as private and store trucks. Wages and repairs for the year... amounted to \$4,000. Garbage is not burned but fed to pigs by a contractor for \$37,398.00 a year."

Pigs were commonly used for garbage disposal in many Pennsylvania municipalities.

PA had 23,000 parking meters in 84 municipalities, bringing in \$1,099,000 in fees (not including violation fines.) Pittsburgh had the highest receipts with \$66,858.

Public Health

1943 - "Chester has been commended by the Federal Bureau of Health on the fact that the venereal (sic) disease rate is less than 2% of the population due to a determined effort by police to get rid of prostitution. Mayor Ralph Swarts declared all forms of organized vice in Chester have been banished."

1945 - It is estimated that municipalities spent an average of \$1 per person for public health services. A new Restaurant License Law was put into effect in 1945. Each public eating and drinking place must be inspected and licensed by either state or local public health authorities. Prior to this law, a 1927 law provided penalties for the use of unclean dishes, common napkins, towels, and drinking glasses, and focused primarily on the health of the food service employees as a protection for customers. Employees were required to be examined and certified by a "reputable registered doctor of medicine" that they were free from all communicable and contagious diseases. The list included: trachoma, active tuberculosis, gonorrhea, external cancer, syphilis, barber's itch, and typhoid. Certifications were valid for 6 months. Dr. William D. Schrack, of the State Health Department, declared the medical examinations to be perfunctory and cheap, costing only a few dollars. Schrack testified that a complete medical examination to certify a person free from communicable disease would cost more like \$60 and would still not provide assurance that the person would remain disease free after their certificate appointment. The new law provided for periodic, unannounced, inspections of restaurant sanitation and upkeep, as well as safe handling and food storage practices. □



Tin Can Drive - The League archives

The League's 125th Anniversary . . .

A History of Easton

BY SUSAN SCHRACK WOOD, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, THE LEAGUE



Centre Square, Easton, present day

Easton is located in Northampton County and is a success story in civic engagement and downtown revitalization. When the city found itself facing the usual urban challenges of economic decline and urban decay, city leaders and community organizations initiated urban renewal projects with a goal of revitalizing the downtown. How to tackle this mammoth task? Make the city more pleasant place to live and work. Mayor Sal Panto summed it up in his 2025 State of the City address, "All the things you do to build a city ultimately boil down to whether city people want to live there or not."

Over the years, the State Theatre was revitalized and reopened to host live performances, Lafayette College's expansion into the downtown area brought youthful energy and economic activity to stimulate cultural and artistic celebrations. The Crayola Factory draws families, the Simon Silk Mill was transformed into a mixed-use space with apartments and commercial spaces, and the community created the Sigal Museum to showcase its rich history. Tourism through the theatres, festivals, Lafayette College, and parks brings at least 350,000 visitors annually.

As one of our founding members, Easton has had a long history with The League. We found this fun article on Easton's history in our archives, written as it was preparing to host The League's Annual Convention in 1952.

EASTON—1952 League of Cities Convention City

The Easton City Officials Welcome "The League" to their Historic and Modern City.

Easton, your 1952 convention city, is the county seat of Northampton County. Situated on the eastern boundary of the state at the junction of the Delaware and Lehigh rivers, the city and its adjoining area are rich in early American history. The site for the city was selected in 1735 by Thomas Penn, a son of William Penn, but the town was not officially erected until March 11, 1952... therefore celebrating the 200th Anniversary of their founding. At the request of Thomas Penn, the new town as named Easton and the new county Northampton, for the reason that he had married the daughter of Lord Pomfret whose country seat Easton-Neston was located in Northamptonshire, England. The site for the new town was long called by the Indians "Lechauwitank" meaning the place at the "forks." For this reason, historians for many years have referred to Easton as being located at the "Forks of the Delaware."

Troubles, growing out of land purchases with the Indians seriously impeded the growth of the infant town for

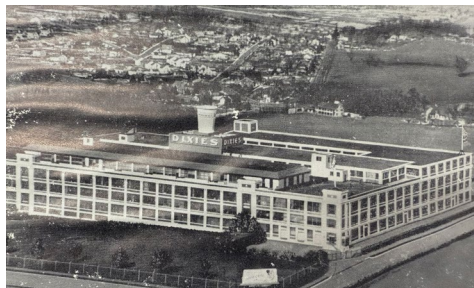


Centre Square, Easton, 1952

some time after its founding. Easton was the scene of many conferences with the Indians looking toward the adjustment of their grievances. The cessation of Indian hostilities was closely followed by the causes leading up to the American Revolution. The proprietaries, following their usual pattern in laying out Pennsylvania cities, provided Easton with a public square, in the center of which to build a courthouse for the county. The annual rental for this ground is one red rose. The old courthouse bell, cast by the Moravians in 1768, now hangs in the tower of our present courthouse and continues to perform its duty of summoning the just and the unjust on the days that court is in session.

The League's 125th Anniversary . . .

Easton is justly proud of the fact that in every war in which our nation was engaged, she furnished men and women who readily offered their services in the cause of freedom. Many of them paid the supreme sacrifice.



Dixie Cup Factory

Easton is the home of Lafayette College, founded in 1826, which is one of the pioneer institutions of learning. It offers

degrees in both the sciences and the liberal arts. Well organized public and parochial schools offer, in addition to academic subjects, courses in commercial and vocational training. Some sixty churches, which include practically every denomination, administer to the spiritual welfare of the citizens of the area. Not the least of these is the First Reformed Church on Third Street north of the square. Erected prior to the Revolutionary War, it was used for the holding of Indian Treaties and as a hospital during the Revolutionary War. It has been renovated recently and should be visited by all who are interested in early American history.

The city maintains an up-to-date sewage treatment plan and a municipally operated water works and collects ashes, garbage, and rubbish each week. A fully paid fire department was established in the city in 1879 and has been operated ever since that date. The city park and playground system contain approximately 240 acres.

The city operates an all-year-round recreation program. The good swimming water of the Delaware River, the nearby lakes and trout streams, and the small game which abounds in the hills and forests of the adjacent countryside make Easton a worthwhile community for those interested in recreation and sports. The Pocono Mountains, a short distance to the north of the city, provide winter and summer sports and the city can be truly designated as the gateway to the Poconos. The New Jersey seashore, a short distance to the east of the



Trout Street and Fishermen

city, is famed as a summer recreational area.

The city operates under a Zoning Ordinance, A Shade Tree Commission, and a City Planning Commission, and during the past several years it has been busily engaged in planning and redevelopment work, both for the city and for its surrounding region. Easton, a fairly average American city, with many special advantages has grown from a frontier village in 1752 with a population of approximately 40 persons to its present population according to the 1950 census of 35,632 and serves a trading area with a population of approximately 83,000. The area is richly blessed by nature, since it is located in the heart of large farmlands with an abundance of natural resources including cement rock, limestone, slate, sand, gravel, and iron ore, and it is near to the anthracite region.

An important industrial center, it is 70 miles west of New York City and 56 miles north of Philadelphia. Located at the crossroads of US Routs 22 and 611, it is easily accessible to the New York and Philadelphia markets. The area is served by five railroads and seven interstate bus lines, as well as five local bus companies



Hotel Easton - site of 1952 Convention

and is excellently served by air through the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Airport, a field certified to United, Transworld, and Colonial air lines. Easton has a reputation of being a good convention city and during the third week in October will put on its best "bib and tucker" when The League of Cities of the Third Class holds its 53rd Annual Convention in the city.

The Easton city officials are happy to have the opportunity of entertaining The League and are actively engaged in working out a program that should be pleasing and interesting to all who attend. Any suggestion you might have to help make your stay in Easton a more enjoyable one will be welcomed by the committee on arrangements.

It is our hope that you will give the citizens of Easton an opportunity to extend to you a most hearty welcome by planning now to be their guest in October. □



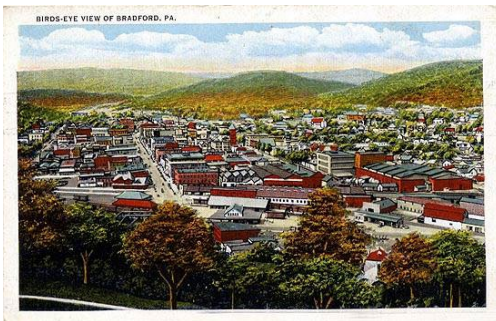
Refining Bradford's Boomtown: A Legacy of Oil and Redevelopment

BY SUSAN SCHRACK WOOD, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, THE LEAGUE

Nestled in the heart of what is known locally as the Tuna Valley in northern Pennsylvania, Bradford has long served as a

microcosm of American ingenuity and resilience. Over the decades, this city has experienced its share of highs and lows—from its explosive oil boom to the challenges of post-industrial transformation—each phase marked by projects and milestones that have helped define its unique character.

Arguably the most defining milestone in Bradford's history was the discovery of oil in the region during the mid-to-late 1800s. This breakthrough transformed Bradford into a boomtown and it was all about the oil. The drilling of the first wells not only catapulted the local economy into a period of rapid expansion but also attracted significant investment, population growth, and the construction of the Bradford and Foster Brook Railway, one of the first monorails in America. Bradford became a model of infrastructure: Railroads were constructed to connect the oil fields to larger



markets, pipelines were laid to transport this newfound resource, and local industries began to thrive. Zippo lighters made its home in Bradford, and in the 1930s, the famous Piper Cub airplane was developed and produced in Bradford. This airplane was used extensively in World War II. These projects served as both milestones and catalysts for long-term economic development, swelling the population to 19,000.

The prosperity brought by the oil boom spurred the creation of enduring public institutions. Community centers, schools, and public libraries were built during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reflecting the



optimism of the era. These projects not only improved quality of life but also reinforced a strong sense of community pride. Over time, many of these historical buildings became symbols of Bradford's rich legacy, later serving as focal points in preservation and revitalization efforts.

Refining Bradford: Revitalization

Like most cities that thrived in a bygone era of oil, coal, or steel, Bradford found itself in need of some change. Recent projects have focused on preserving historical landmarks while modernizing downtown areas to



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attract new business and tourism. Initiatives to promote heritage tourism are a direct nod to the town's storied past—inviting visitors to explore its historical sites and learn about its contributions to America's early oil industry.

In In 2015 Bradford Mayor, Tom Riel, attended the Pennsylvania Municipal League's annual conference in Allentown. He toured the billion-dollar economic development going on at that time in the heart of downtown Allentown. It was a campaign targeting blighted buildings and at-risk portions of the city, much of it enabling private, incentivized development designed to raise the local tax base.

"That tour motivated me to find a real estate developer to target the worst area in our city's downtown right across from our public square. That block of 13 properties was terribly blighted with some of them in the county repository, some about to go to a tax sale and others assessed very low. Very little tax revenue was being generated from that block of properties."



Mayor Riel was talking about a site with about a dozen decaying structures at the corner of South Avenue and Chautauqua Place. The four-year project was the first major redevelopment initiative in Bradford in several decades and provided space for retail and apartments. "The developer was able to acquire all of the properties and level them. What resulted then was the most expensive roughly one acre of land to ever be sold in McKean County and a new \$4,000,000 beautiful building with retail space on the first floor and luxury, all-inclusive apartments upstairs."

Bradford has invested millions in its city streetscape initiatives. These projects create more accessible and attractive streets, with more than 25 residential streets getting new sidewalks, curbing, lighting, crosswalks, and paving. Included in its revitalization are plans for recreation, with improvements to its park facilities.

The transition away from traditional industries has not been without its hurdles. Bradford has faced challenges common to many post-industrial communities, including population decline and economic restructuring. Community efforts, supported by local government and grassroots organizations, have focused on urban renewal projects, educational improvements, and infrastructure upgrades. These successes have reinvigorated parts of the town and laid the groundwork for a more sustainable future.

While the town has navigated significant challenges, its story remains one of adaptation, community spirit, and enduring legacy. Today, Bradford continues to honor its past while forging a path toward a promising future, embodying the resilience that defines many small American cities. □

The League's 125th Anniversary . . .

How to Be a Better City Official

BY RICHARD G. MARDEN, ASST EXEC DIRECTOR PA LEAGUE OF CITIES, JULY 1959

These 20 tips for city officials were published in the Pennsylvania League of Cities official publication in July 1959. At the time, cities were concerned with issues such as urban renewal and how to effectively manage public relations. 66 years later, we think many of these principles still stand.

1. Don't act as a committee of one. Remember that your only real authority lies in your membership on the board or council.
2. Devote sufficient time and energy to your job. If you find that your private business, social life, or health make it impossible to carry out your obligations, step aside for someone else.
3. Don't use your official position for personal gain or to promote your own interests. Disqualify yourself if your board or council is considering a matter in which you have a personal interest.
4. Don't let honest differences of opinion degenerate into personality conflicts.
5. Visit other communities, particularly those that have the reputation of being well-run. If your city is about to undertake a special project, inspect similar projects in other cities.
6. Keep the public informed. Issue frequent news releases, accept invitations to speak before local groups, hold open meetings, issue an attractive, readable annual report.
7. Never make a promise to an individual or group unless you are absolutely certain you can carry it out.
8. Never accept gifts or favors from individuals or firms doing business with your city.
9. Represent all the people in your city, not just your friends, neighbors, or business associates.
10. Try to discover the needs of your city and work toward meeting them.
11. Don't be content to continue in the routine established by your predecessors. Try to find new and better ways of doing the job.
12. Express your honest convictions, although you are in the minority, but support majority decisions.
13. Don't be misled by the vocal demands of special interest groups. When in doubt, ask yourself; "Is this in the best interests of the whole city?"
14. Remember that there are at least two sides to each question. Listen politely, but reserve making a decision until you have all the facts.
15. Learn all you can about your job. Attend meetings of the Pennsylvania League of Cities. Discuss your problems and swap ideas with other city officials.
16. Refer all complaints to the proper department head or request that they be made in writing to your whole board or council.
17. Don't try to be an expert on all phases of city government. Seek the advice of real experts.
18. Cooperate with your school officials, other public agencies, and with all citizen groups working in the best interests of your city.
19. Work for and insist that the affairs of your city be conducted on a sound, businesslike basis.
20. Don't be content to just "hold office." Use your office to provide the kind of dedicated, creative, forceful leadership that your citizens have a right to expect.

League Leaders Through History

1900 Mayor Geise, York	1966-1967 Mayor George S. Smith, Easton	1996-1997 Mayor Joyce A. Savocchio, Erie
1901 Mayor Depinet, Erie	1967-1968 Mayor H. Gordon Payrow, Jr., Bethlehem	1997-1998 Mayor Eugene C. Pacsi, Farrell
1902-190? Mayor J.F. Laedlein, Williamsport	1968-1969 Councilmember Richard H. Biddle, New Castle	1998-1999 Mayor Edward G. Rendell, Philadelphia
1905-1907 Mayor William H. Berry, Chester	1969-1970 Mayor John L. WorriLOW, Lebanon	1999-2000 Mayor Thomas F. Goldsmith, Easton
1908-1910 Mayor Harry L. Lusk, New Castle	1970-1971 Mayor Michael Close, Pottsville	2000-2001 Council President William F. McLaughlin, Chambersburg
1911-1912 Mayor, City of Wilkes-Barre, elected Nov., 1911	1971-1972 Mayor Basil C. Scott, Sharon	2001-2002 Mayor Timothy Fulkerson, New Castle
1913-1914 Mayor F.M. Graff, Meadville	1972-1973 Mayor Peter F. Flaherty, Pittsburgh	June 02-Feb. 03 Mayor Donald T. Cunningham, Jr., Bethlehem
1914-1917 Lost information in 1972	1973-1974 Mayor Eugene J. Peters, Scranton	Feb. 2003-2004 Mayor Kirk Wilson, Carlisle
1917-1918 Mayor Miles B. Kitts, Erie	1974-1975 Mayor Louis J. Tullio, Erie	2004-2005 Councilmember Roland R. "Bud" Mertz, Greensburg
1918-1919 Mayor A.L. Richenbach, Allentown	1975-1976 Mayor Frank C. Lefevre, Butler	2005-2006 Mayor John S. Brenner, York
1919-1921 Mayor E.S. Hugentugler, York	Jan. 76-June 77 Mayor Joseph S. Daddona, Allentown	2006-2007 Mayor Christopher A. Doherty, Scranton
1921-1922 Mayor A.M. Hoagland, Williamsport	June 77-Jan. 78 Mayor Herbert Pfuhl, Johnstown	2007-2008 Mayor John D. W. Reiley, Pottsville
1922-1923 Mayor James M. Yekle, Bethlehem	Jan. 78-June 78 Mayor Richard M. Scott, Lancaster	June 08- Oct. 08 Mayor Robert Anspach, Lebanon
1923-1924 Mayor, City holding 1924 convention	1978-1980 Mayor Guy Mammolite, Franklin	Oct. 08-2010 Mayor John Callahan, Bethlehem
1924-1925 Mayor W.E. Drumheller, Sunbury	1980-1981 Mayor Michael Salvatore, Jeannette	2010-2011 Councilmember Clifford "Kip" Allen, Edinboro
1925-1926 Mayor James G. Harvey, Hazleton	1981-1982 Mayor DiAnn Stuempfle, Lock Haven	June 2011-Dec. 2011 Mayor Thomas McMahon, Reading
1926-1927 Mayor Daniel L. Hart, Wilkes-Barre	1982-1983 Mayor Richard S. Calguiri, Pittsburgh	Jan. 2012-2013 Mayor Richard Vilello, Jr., Lock Haven
1927-1951 Walter E. Greenwood, Solicitor, Coatesville	June-Dec. 83 Mayor Don Griffith, Lebanon	2013-2014 Mayor Ed Pawlowski, Allentown
1951-1953 Mayor John J. Mullen, Clairton	Jan. 84-June 85 Mayor Arthur E. Morris, Lancaster	2014-2015 Mayor Michael Nutter, Philadelphia
1953-1954 Mayor Kendig C. Bare, Lancaster	1985-1986 Mayor W. Wilson Goode, Philadelphia	2015-2016 Mayor J. Richard Gray, Lancaster
1954-1955 Mayor Edward A. DeCarbo, New Castle	July 86-March 87 Mayor Karen Miller, Reading	2016-2017 Mayor William Peduto, Pittsburgh
1955-1956 Mayor Earl E. Schaffer, Bethlehem	March 87-1988 Mayor William J. Althaus, York	2017 Mayor C. Kim Bracey, York
1956-1957 Mayor Edward A. DeCarbo, New Castle	1988-1989 Mayor Salvatore J. Panto, Jr., Easton	2017-2019 Mayor Salvatore J. Panto, Jr., Easton
1957-1958 Mayor Walter Schweppe, Butler	1989-1990 Councilmember Brian J. O'Neill, Philadelphia	2019-2020 Mayor Matthew Pacifico, Altoona
1958-1959 Councilmember Joseph S. Martin, Altoona	1990-1991 Mayor Howard T. Gierling, Oil City	2020-2021 Councilmember Derek Green, Philadelphia
1959-1960 Mayor Arthur J. Gardner, Erie	July 91-Dec. 91 Mayor Jessie Bloom, Williamsport	2021-2022 Mayor Danene Sorace, Lancaster
1960-1961 Mayor Thomas H. Levering, Williamsport	Jan. 92-June 93 Mayor Sophie Masloff, Pittsburgh	2022-2023 Mayor Michael Lombardo, Pittston
1961-1962 Mayor Joseph W. Barr, Jr., Oil City	1993-1994 Mayor Kenneth Smith, Bethlehem	2023-2024 Mayor Douglas Baker, Franklin
1962-1963 Milton Margolis, Solicitor, Uniontown	1994-1995 Mayor Joseph J. Bendel, Jr., McKeesport	
Aug-Sept 64 Mayor Jack Gross, Allentown	June 95-Dec. 95 Mayor Warren Haggerty, Reading	
1964-1966 Councilmember A.L. Hydeman, Jr., York	Jan. 96-June 96 Councilmember Brian J. O'Neill, Philadelphia	

The Ladies of the League

Adding our stories to women's history

BY CANDICE V. HEYWARD, DIRECTOR OF TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, THE LEAGUE

Passed by Congress June 4, 1919, and ratified on August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote. While this was a moment of celebration, more work had to be done. Due to voter suppression tactics against Black women and loopholes that prevented giving marginalized groups such as Native, Asian, and Spanish-speaking Americans citizenship (a requirement for voter registration), it wouldn't be until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, 200 years later and only 60 years ago, that all women would actually have the right to vote in the United States of America.

Women's History Month is more than just remembering when we received the right to vote, or the first female federal judge (Genevieve Rose Cline of Ohio, 1928), or the Equal Pay Act (1963), or the right to have your own bank account (Equal Credit Opportunity Act, 1974), or even having access to free feminine hygiene products while incarcerated (The First Step Act 2018). Women's History Month is acknowledging, respecting, celebrating, and educating oneself and others on the contributions to society that have come from amazing women who, in many instances did not receive the credit they deserved during their time or even at all. The contributions are vast and impressive, and women have not slowed down in their efforts to contribute to and thrive within this modern, yet still patriarchal, society.

The Pennsylvania Municipal League's Core Values include a strong emphasis on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. 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. In today's world, having a diverse and inclusive team (including leadership roles) is more

important than ever. When an organization lacks diversity, it can lead to a culture of "groupthink," stifle innovation, and negatively impact employee satisfaction and retention, potentially leading to a hostile work environment and reputational damage. A diverse workforce, particularly one with a strong female presence, can contribute to the creation of an inclusive and respectful organizational culture. Nonprofits with a majority-female staff often have lower levels of workplace discrimination and harassment, as they tend to prioritize equality and respect for all employees. This type of culture fosters collaboration, encourages open dialogue, and leads to stronger working relationships across all levels of the organization. When people feel valued and heard, they are more likely to contribute fully to the organization's mission.

The League is proud of its diverse staff and is honored to celebrate the "Ladies of The League"—an endearing nickname given to the fantastic team of women that make up the majority of The League's staff. When asked about his experience leading such a rich blend of talent here at The League, Executive Director John Brenner stated, "It is an absolute honor to work with so many professional, talented, and dedicated colleagues at The League. Each person offers their hard work and commitment to strengthen and empower effective local government through advocacy, education and support for our members. The numbers speak volumes:

- 80% of our League staff are women
- 83% of Managers are women
- 67% of Department Directors are women
- 67% of Deputy Executive Directors are women

League News...

Women are not only outstanding employees, in our member-driven organization, they are leaders in our key foundational areas of advocacy, membership and operations. Each is equally important to our success. Diversity is critical for our multifaceted association. Our staff must reflect the membership of our nearly 150 municipal members- elected and appointed officials. We've made great strides in recent years, and we will continue to foster a work culture and environment that welcomes, encourages and empowers women to succeed."

Having an above-average ratio of female employees and leaders is great but it doesn't mean much if the workplace isn't welcoming, healthy or compassionate to a diverse team. The League doesn't have that issue. In fact, when asked about their experience working at the League as a woman in leadership the responses were overwhelmingly inspiring.

"Working with a group of such talented women isn't about titles or ranks—it's about recognizing each person's strengths and weaving them together. When we bring our diverse skills and perspectives into play, the result is always greater than the sum of its parts. In a small team, every contribution matters, and everyone adds something valuable. True leadership is about fostering growth—both in ourselves and in the success we create together. A key part of that success is lifting up and mentoring young women early in their careers, ensuring they have the support and guidance to thrive, while also respecting and appreciating those who have dedicated 40 or more years to this work. Their wisdom, experience, and commitment are the foundation that allows the next generation to thrive."

- Amanda Lane, Deputy Executive Director
- Membership

"As Director of Finance at The League, I really appreciate how well the women at The League work together. There's a great sense of support and collaboration, and we strive to empower each other, which makes for a positive work

environment. It's nice to be part of a team where we can rely on each other and get things done."

- Susan Helms, Director of Finance

"I'm grateful The League took a chance, 28 years ago, on a gal with a law degree who didn't want to practice law! Throughout my career, I have used my education, observed many women role models in state and local, elected and appointed positions, and developed leadership skills of my own. The League is a great place to work; and as a mom working outside the home, I always felt support when juggling work and home responsibilities. Now that I am one of the more senior members of the staff, I enjoy being a role model for our younger employees and the interns we have hosted."

- Amy Sturges, Deputy Executive Director,
Advocacy

The League is proud to celebrate Women's History Month and all that it represents. This is larger than having a staff that is 80% women. It is larger than celebrating International Women's Day (March 8). It is even larger than recognizing the current women leaders in our community – ex. Mayor Wanda Williams of Harrisburg or Mayor Rita C. Frealing of Gettysburg. This is a celebration of the women of our past, present, and future. We can't forget the women that paved the way for us to have independence, jobs, leadership roles, bank accounts, voting rights and even maternity leave. We can't forget the current women who are fighting for bodily autonomy and reproductive rights, fair pay, access to feminine hygiene products, equal representation in corporate leadership, access to education and healthcare, and safety in all aspects of our lives. We can't forget about the young girls and ladies growing up in our current society with the hopes that they will have the same rights and freedoms that were once promised. They deserve the confidence that they can be leaders, CEOs, pilots, astronauts, engineers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, athletes, and even the President of the United States. Women's rights are human rights. Women's history is world history and should never be overlooked. □





U-COMP
Unemployment Compensation Trust



Unemployment Overview...

SUBMITTED BY ELIZABETH HENRY, TRUSTS MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER

What is required. The state of Pennsylvania requires all employers to contribute a quarterly payroll tax that funds programs and benefits to unemployed individuals who meet the requirements of the Pennsylvania Unemployment Compensation (UC) Law. The taxable wage-base in Pennsylvania is \$10,000 for every employee in a calendar year. This wage-base is multiplied by a rate provided by Pennsylvania Labor and Industry (PA L&I) or in the case of members of the U-COMP Trust, by our actuary.

[Click here](#) to view the PA L&I booklet on PA Compensation Law.



Eligibility to place a claim. An individual placing a claim must have sufficient qualifying wages, a minimum of 18 credit weeks as a base-year and must meet the eligibility requirements of separation. The unemployed person must file a weekly claim which certifies eligibility to work, be able and available to accept suitable work and not refuse the work offered. Finally, they must register for employment search services offered by the Pennsylvania CareerLink*.



Eligible for benefits:

- They are unemployed through no fault of their own or due to a work stoppage resulting in a lockout
- Have filed an application for benefits
- Are unemployed for the one week waiting period after filing

- Continue to file claims for weeks of unemployment
- The individual is able and available to for suitable work
- Register and participate in reemployment services, i.e. Pennsylvania CareerLink*

Ineligible for collecting benefits:

- Volunteer Quit Work – leave work without cause
- Fail to Submit to and/or Pass a Drug or Alcohol Test – in accordance with the employer's established substance abuse policy
- Loss of Job Due to Willful Misconduct – willfully or negligently disregard the employer's interests, violate rules, or disregard of appropriate behavior
- Become Unemployed Due to Their Own Fault – non-work-related misconduct
- Strike – if the individual participates in a work stoppage
- Unable to Work or Unavailable for Work – fail, without good cause, to accept a suitable offer of work or refuse a referral to a job opportunity.
- Failure to Participate in Reemployment Services, i.e. Pennsylvania CareerLink*
- Withhold Facts or Give False Information – individuals must file their claims in a timely and proper manner
- Self-Employment – generally ineligible

League News...

- Limited Weekly Work Hours – part-time employment or working limited hours when other work is available
- Commit Fraud
- Incarceration

Let U•COMP Trust assist you ...

U•COMP was founded in 1985 as a Trust to provide group unemployment compensation coverage for public entities in Pennsylvania.



U•COMP program membership is open to all classes of municipalities and authorities. Since these employers traditionally experience lower unemployment claims, U•COMP has been able to provide low annual rates based on actuarial calculations.

U•COMP receives quarterly contributions from members of the Trust. Receives the Statements of Accounts (SOA's) from PA L&I. Pays the SOA from the contribution from the members.

U•COMP invests contribution monies that are not needed for claims with the League's trusted investment group.

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For further information on U•COMP, contact:

Elizabeth Henry
Trusts Member Services Manager
ehenry@pml.org
717-236-9469, ext. *250

Member Appreciation Tour of the District Meetings

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April 9	Reading	May 7	Town of McCandless
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Southcentral District Meeting – Carlisle



Northcentral District Meeting – Altoona



Southeast District Meeting #1 – Reading



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Southeast District Meeting #2 – Upper Darby Township





Municipal Leadership Summit

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PSATC President's Message



DENNIS ARTHUR
COMMISSIONER
TINICUM TOWNSHIP



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What is civic engagement? It is many things. When you vote, or attend your township's public meetings, or volunteer to help a cause, or serve on a township board or committee, all of these things are examples of civic engagement.

Civic engagement is getting involved in your community, participating with fellow residents or commissioners to make a difference. Maybe you've noticed an empty lot that seems to be collecting trash. Call your commissioner. Volunteer to head up a day of cleaning up. Perhaps there is a shortage of coaches for the youth sports teams. Get involved with the local recreation board to encourage more parents to help out.

Almost every person a commissioner comes in contact with has a suggestion on how something should be done, or could be done – and many suggestions might be a good idea. Get involved. Get out there. Make suggestions, but more importantly, get involved and try to make a positive difference.

Sincerely,

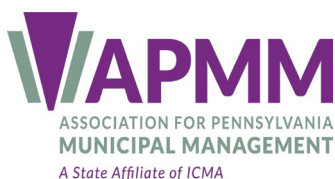
Dennis R. Arthur Sr.

Dennis Arthur

APMM President's Message



DAN SANTORO
MANAGER
CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP



APMM.net

I have been fortunate to have had a few great mentors throughout my municipal career, leaders who were well-respected in both elected and appointed positions. As I reflected on this month's theme of civic engagement, my thoughts naturally turned to the broader issue of civility in government today. To foster productive civic engagement in our communities, we must first ensure that civility remains at the core of our interactions.

While pondering this, an article written by one of my mentors, the late Dick Hadley, came to mind. Originally published in a municipal magazine in 2017, it remains as relevant today as it was then. Many will remember Dick as a prominent figure in local government and the Pennsylvania Municipal League before his unexpected passing in 2022. Dick was the longtime Chairman of the Cranberry Township Board of Supervisors, serving in that role when I was appointed Township Manager. Throughout his career, he also held positions as a Township Manager and as the Executive Director of the Allegheny League of Municipalities. He was, in every sense, a consummate local government professional.

The article that resurfaced in my mind was titled "The Irrelevance of Political Parties." In it, Dick argued that political parties provide little value at the local government level. His central point was that the decisions we make in local government, on roads, parks, public safety, sewer, water, and other essential services are not partisan. These are policy questions centered on service levels and financial stewardship, not ideological battles. While elected leaders may disagree on these issues, they are fundamentally questions of governance, not party alignment. As Dick succinctly put it, "Local governments are pragmatic, not philosophical. There is no liberal or conservative approach to fixing a broken sewer line or filling a pothole."

The article begins with an assertion we have all heard: "No level of government has more impact on daily life than local government." As elected and appointed municipal professionals, we know this to be true. Dick's message was clear: local officials must remain focused on excellence in their primary roles and avoid being distracted by external political noise. He warned against candidates who try to inject state or national political rhetoric into local elections, stating that such individuals "should be treated with suspicion; they're distracting you from what it is that local governments actually do."

This message resonates with me still today. In my community, elected officials are frequently asked to pass resolutions or proclamations on state and national issues that have no bearing on our local operations or legal authority. Their response has been steadfast: we stay in our lane, focusing on pragmatic, local governance, while leaving state and federal matters to the representatives elected to handle them.

I believe we can all agree that the lack of civility in today's world is largely a reflection of our current political climate. More than ever, we see national and state-level rhetoric infiltrating local discourse. As Dick argued, and as I firmly believe, we must resist the temptation to engage in divisive political debates that have no bearing on

how we deliver essential services to our residents. Political grandstanding does not determine how we plow the streets, fix a waterline, or ensure public safety; it only serves to distract from our mission.

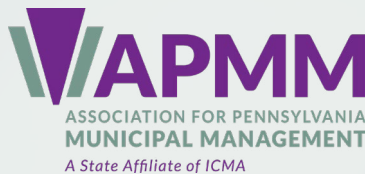
I often wonder what Dick would say about the current state of civility in government. I have no doubt that if he were writing the same article today, he would emphasize the critical need for civil discourse and a renewed commitment to engaging with one another respectfully.

On the APMM front, we are not far away from our annual conference. The program is finalized, and the conference committee, led by Chair Sara Gibson of Camp Hill Borough, has done an outstanding job curating a few days of valuable learning and networking opportunities. If you haven't already registered, I encourage you to do so. I look forward to seeing you all there!

Sincerely,



Dan Santoro



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Legislative Status Report STATE



PREPARED BY AMY STURGES, LEAGUE DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – ADVOCACY – asturges@pml.org
KAITLIN ERRICKSON, GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS MANAGER – kerrickson@pml.org

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

legis.state.pa.us

Legislative Update

The League's Call for Resolutions

As a member driven organization, it is important we hear from you to accurately represent your municipality's needs with 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](#) during our district meetings and member appreciation tour or reach out to the Governmental Affairs team with any ideas. Proposed resolutions will be considered during the Annual Municipal Leadership Summit by the resolutions committee and full League membership. This is a particularly important process because it sets the future policy priorities and positions of The League.

View The League's [2024 adopted resolutions](#) as a sample.

Please submit any resolutions or ideas to Kaitlin Errickson, Governmental Affairs Manager, at kerrickson@pml.org no later than August 1.

Cosponsor Memos

Municipal Engineer Appointment Requirements

Representative Tina Davis has announced her intention to introduce legislation requiring boroughs, first class townships, second class townships, and third class cities to appoint at least two engineers through a competitive bidding process. The purpose of the legislation is to reduce any backlog of land development applications that is delaying the review and approval process and causing the costs of review to increase.

Local Use of Radar

Representative Jill Cooper has announced her intention to introduce legislation allowing municipal police officer to use radar and LIDAR for speed enforcement.

Legislation Affecting Local Government

Second Class Township Ordinance Effective Date *Senate Local Government Committee, March 26, 2025*

House Bill 209 (PN 157), introduced by Representative Lisa Borowski, would amend the Second Class Township Code. Currently the code states ordinances become effective five days after adoption. This bill would remove that language and instead make ordinances effective immediately unless a later date is stated in the ordinance.

Authorizing Stormwater Management Fees *First Consideration in the House, April 9, 2025*

House Bills 990 (PN 1328) and 991 (PN 1329) introduced by Representative James Struzzi, would amend the borough, third class city and first class township codes authorizing municipalities to plan, manage, implement, construct, and maintain storm water facilities. Each municipality must enact an ordinance to govern and regulate stormwater management.

Municipalities would be authorized to assess reasonable and uniform fees on properties to pay for stormwater management activities. Fees would be based on the characteristics of the property receiving the benefit, and municipalities would have the ability to provide exemptions and credits for installed and maintained stormwater facilities that meet best practice standards. Fees levied by a local government may be assessed in one of the following ways:

- on all properties in a municipality;
- on all properties receiving a benefit by a specific stormwater project; and
- by establishing stormwater management districts and assessing a fee on all property owners within the designated district.

Any fees collected would only be used for the purposes authorized by these bills. The bills were amended in Committee to clarify that the use of impervious surface as a way to calculate a fee is acceptable and that properties with impervious surface benefit from a stormwater management program.

Vacant and Blighted Property Registration *First Consideration in the House, April 8, 2025*

House Bill 1020 (PN 1100), introduced by Representative Tim Twardzik, would amend Title 53 (Municipalities Generally) allowing municipalities to establish, by ordinance, a vacant and blighted property registry and collect a registry fee.

A municipality that elects to pass a blighted and vacant property registry ordinance, and impose and collect a fee, shall compile and maintain a list of vacant and blighted properties. Under the legislation, a registration fee shall be imposed for each year that a vacant and blighted property is not in compliance with the municipal code. A fee schedule is provided in the legislation: the first year on the registry is a \$500 fee; the second year on the registry is a \$1,000 fee; the third and fourth year on the registry is a \$2,000 fee; the fifth through eighth years on the registry is a \$3,500 fee; and nine or more years on the registry is a \$5,000 fee. The bill lists several exemptions from the fees, such as government properties, those under active rehabilitation, and those where the property owner shows economic hardship.

A property owner that fails to comply with the registration requirements would be penalized \$25 a day for residential properties and \$50 a day for commercial properties for each day the property owner fails to pay the fee. The amount of any unpaid fee shall constitute a lien against the property.

Additionally, municipalities would need to establish a process to remove a compliant property from the registry, and an appeals process must be available to property owners. Lastly, municipalities with existing vacant and blighted property registration ordinances may continue to operate without any limitations.

Right to Know: Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence *Senate Communications and Technology Committee, March 21, 2025*

Senate Bill 431 (PN 465), introduced by Senator Tracy Pennycuik, would amend the Right to Know law allowing local governments, among other agencies, to deny certain requests. This bill would allow municipalities to deny Right to Know requests under two circumstances, if: a municipality believes downloading a document or opening a hyperlink within a request would pose a cybersecurity

threat; or a municipality reasonably suspects the request was generated using AI. A requestor may follow the existing appeals process to challenge one of these denials.

Public Notice Advertising Transparency
Senate State Government Committee, March 17, 2025

Senate Bill 451 (PN 413), introduced by Kristin Phillips-Hill, would require of the cost of each public notice submitted for publication by a local government to be included in the ad’s lower right hand corner. A newspaper may not charge additional fees for printing the cost in the advertisement.

Local Use of Radar
Senate Transportation Committee, March 26, 2025

Senate Bill 509 (PN 495), introduced by Senator Greg Rothman, would authorize the local use of radar. The bill does not include local use of LIDAR.

A municipality must adopt an ordinance to use radar and officers must complete an approved training course. Officers would be able to enforce speed using radar from a clearly marked vehicle that is visible to those driving. A minimum of four official signs warning drivers of local police radar enforcement would need to be installed along the main roads within 500 feet of municipal borders. Officers would be prohibited from using radar in the immediate area (500 feet) of a sign decreasing the posted speed.

During the first 90 days of radar enforcement, individuals pulled over for speeding would only receive a written warning. After the warning period, those in violation of a 65 MPH speed limit or higher would be fined \$42.50, and those in violation of any other speed limit would be fined \$35. Anyone exceeding a speed limit over 5 MPH would be fined an additional \$2 for each mile more than 5 MPH over the maximum speed limit. Those ticketed for speeding would be charged with a summary offense and points would not be added to their license. A municipality would not be allowed to mandate a quota for speeding citations.

Under the bill, the municipal share of revenue generated from the use of radar may not exceed 101 percent of what a municipality received in the prior year, and revenue exceeding that amount would be remitted to the Motor License Fund.

The Auditor General must conduct annual audits on municipalities that use radar. If the Auditor General finds that a municipality kept more revenue than allowed, then PennDOT shall deduct 200 percent of the amount not remitted from the respective municipality’s share of the Motor License Fund.

Lastly, this bill would allow state police to use radar while in motion. □

House and Senate Session Days 2025	
<u>House</u> May 5-7, 12-14 June 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, 23-27, 30	<u>Senate</u> May 5-7, 12-13 June 2-4, 9-11, 23-30

*reminder - session dates are subject to change

How Budget Equity Tools Advance Favorable Outcomes for All Residents

BY DIANA GOLDSMITH, SENIOR SPECIALIST FOR THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT TEAM, NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

A city's budget is often described as a reflection of the municipality's priorities. Cities across the country have responded to the inequities present in their communities by establishing budget equity tools. A budget equity tool is a process by which city departments intentionally integrate considerations of racial and economic equity into the budget development process. Incorporating these considerations ensures intentional scrutiny of how budget decisions impact different populations

Vulnerable Residents

Budget equity tools help to shift the perception of the budgeting process away from simply being a list of expenditures and instead encourage municipal staff and leadership to consider which areas will have the greatest outcomes for the city's most vulnerable residents. **Vulnerable residents** are individuals or groups who experience heightened social, economic or health-related challenges due to systemic barriers,

historical inequities or limited access to resources and opportunities. This includes people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, such as low-income populations, seniors, people with disabilities, rural residents and others disproportionately impacted by government policies and decisions.

Budget equity tools can take many different forms depending on the needs of the city and the existing budgeting process. In some instances, each city department responds to a set of in-depth questions detailing how they have applied an equity lens to their budget request which is submitted alongside the request to City Council. Ideally, a summary of the departments' responses is available on the Council's website along with an explanation of the methodology so that the public can understand how each department invests in equity. One city had great success with this format, with more than 90 percent of more than 50 departments completing a response in its first year.

Another approach is one in which not every department is required to utilize the budget equity tool. Instead, the managing department creates a criteria checklist that departments complete to determine whether their budget request needs to go through the budget equity tool process. Selected departments then complete a questionnaire assessing who benefits or is burdened by the request, how funding addresses disparities and whether there is meaningful community engagement and accountability. An evaluation team recruited by the managing department reviews the budget requests and scores them to reflect how well a department has thought about equity related to their budget request (not whether a request is inherently equitable).

Challenges

Certainly, there are challenges to instituting a budget equity tool. City departments may find it difficult to apply the tool effectively, leading to lower-quality submissions and reduced participation. Similarly, crafting a budget equity tool that works for all city departments that address different needs and audiences presents a dilemma. Many staff members see equity as an added burden or something that only benefits communities of color, rather than recognizing it as a tool that strengthens entire cities. When equity is centered in the budgeting process, resources are allocated more effectively, leading to better community outcomes, cost savings through prevention and long-term improvements that benefit everyone. A budget equity tool isn't just another requirement — it's a strategy for creating stronger, more sustainable communities. Having a continual feedback loop to train staff on utilizing the tool and then learn from users how the process can be improved is one way to combat these issues.

For municipalities considering a budget equity tool, cities should define a clear purpose and set expectations, recognizing it as both a mechanism for equitable decision-making and, in some cases, a solution to address specific issues such as unequal resource distribution, bias in budgeting, and disparities in public services. Further, cities must identify the partnerships necessary to make the tool an essential consideration for participating departments. Cities also need leadership buy-in: When the budget equity tool is seen by departments as a standard part of the budget process, they will put more time and thoughtfulness into their responses. The tool should be integrated seamlessly into existing processes rather than being seen as an additional or standalone task. Finally, cities should consider ways to codify their tool to ensure that they can, successfully and without disruption, contribute to long-term equity goals.

Equity is Not An Afterthought

Budget equity tools are meant to push city departments to think about how to integrate equity into their own budget development and execution, rather than thinking of equity as an afterthought. This increases organizational understanding of inequities, why and where they exist, and how they can be addressed through budgeting decisions. In this way, budget equity tools can have a domino effect. Beyond the budgeting process, city departments can reevaluate the distribution of resources and the ability to do it more equitably by prioritizing the needs of vulnerable communities. Operationalizing this process enables municipalities to take more deliberate steps toward advancing equitable outcomes for all residents. ▢

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Public Finance

FOUR PILLARS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVESTING, PART 2: SHORT TERM INVESTMENTS

PLGIT'S INVESTMENT ADVISER AND ADMINISTRATOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVESTING FOR A CHANGING ECONOMIC CLIMATE

BY TAMARA KEMMLER, INSTITUTIONAL SALES AND RELATIONSHIP MANAGER, PFM ASSET MANAGEMENT, A DIVISION OF U.S. BANCORP ASSET MANAGEMENT, INC.

In our most recent article, we laid out the framework of Four Pillars of Local Government Investing as recommended by PFM Asset Management (PFMAM*). We also looked carefully at the first Pillar, Having a Sound Investment Policy.

In the article about investment policy, we referenced the importance of liquidity – keeping funds available for both planned obligations of a municipality, and potential investments to take advantage of taking rates. A key practice to maintaining this liquidity is the keeping of a balance between short- and long-term investment products, which are two of the remaining Four Pillars.

In this article, we will be examining one of these: short-term investments.

Approved investments

Before discussing any type of short- or long-term investments, we should do a quick review of what and when either of those types of products are acceptable for investment.

First, per PA code and governing statutes, local governments in Pennsylvania are restricted to specific investments – many of which were outlined in last month's article. Local

governments also have their own codes and governing statutes to guide in investing.

Pennsylvania law requires a high level of security and safety for investment of public funds, charging local governments with finding investment options with the objective of optimizing returns as it focuses on the safety of principal. Local governments should research potential investments to ensure that their investment planning conforms to those restrictions.

While certain investments may be legal, they may not be appropriate for a municipality at a specific point in time. As we also mentioned in last month's article, local government managers must also carefully consider the risk and return of possible investments in relation to their respective safety and liquidity requirements.

Cash flow

In order to assess the cash balances a local government needs to maintain, that entity should engage in cash flow forecasting to distinguish between cash that should be invested in short-term instruments and cash that may not be needed for a longer period of time.

To forecast cash flows over a period of up to twelve months into the future, managers need to take into account recurring cash flows, one-time cash flows, cash reserves, and seasonal increases and decreases, all of which can be projected using previous years' data.¹

Short-term Investment Options

There is no one standard definition of "short-term," however, it is often used when referring to portfolios that have an average duration between one and three years.

These strategies seek to maintain a high average credit quality and a high level of liquidity to meet unanticipated cash needs. Another important aspect of these portfolios is their relatively low volatility compared to longer duration portfolios, which supports the portfolio's ability to responsibly meet unforeseen liquidity needs and help achieve above-average risk-adjusted returns over cycles. While these strategies may include investments in money market instruments such as Treasury bills, commercial paper and certificates of deposit, they typically invest in individual securities with durations between one and five years. They may also include Treasury notes,

¹"Cash Flow Forecasting." GFOA Resource Center.

agency debentures, corporate notes and securitized products such as asset-backed securities (ABS) and mortgage-backed securities (MBS).

A common benchmark for such a strategy might be the ICE Bank of America 1-3 year U.S. Treasury² or a similar duration Government/Credit alternative which would allow active portfolio managers to take advantage of market opportunities that arise. Taking advantage of securities that extend beyond traditional money market and short-term vehicles creates increased potential excess returns over applicable benchmarks. Additionally, interest rate risk has historically been low relative to longer-term bond funds, helping to produce strong risk-adjusted returns. In summary, these strategies look to preserve capital and increase risk-adjusted returns while maintaining a degree of liquidity.³

LGIPs

For entities with smaller amounts to invest, another option is to invest in a Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP) like PLGIT.

According to the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), local government investment pools function much like money market funds. Typically, government investment funds pool the resources of participating governments and invest in various securities as permitted under state law. By pooling their cash together, participating governments benefit in a variety of ways, including from economies of scale and professional fund management.

An LGIP can be formed either as an investment program offered by a state treasurer or by the cooperative efforts of multiple public agencies through

a joint powers authority or an intergovernmental cooperation act.

It is worth noting that the Governmental Finance Officers Association (GFOA), which advises local governments on best practices in efficient financial management, points out that not all LGIPs are the same. Some LGIPs' primary objective is to maximize returns. Others seek first to preserve principal and maintain liquidity. PLGIT's goals more closely align with the latter. PLGIT strives to achieve safety by managing a portfolio of fixed-income securities with very short maturities, which seeks to maintain a fixed net asset value (NAV), usually \$1 per share, meaning that for every dollar invested there is one dollar in assets (by market value). Only after safety and liquidity have been achieved do PLGIT funds seek to earn competitive yields.⁴

If you have any questions about short-term investment in particular, or your municipality's investment policy in general, contact your PFMAM team member for more information.

Author bio: Tamara Kemmler is an institutional sales and relationship manager with PLGIT, working primarily with investors in the western part of the Commonwealth. She can be reached at kemmlert@pfmam.com.

**PFMAM, a division of U.S. Bancorp Asset Management, Inc., services public sector clients. □*

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²Cash Flow Forecasting." GFOA Resource Center.

³See "Short Duration Strategies are Worth a Look." PFM Asset Management article. July 2021, for more information on this topic

⁴See "Local Government Investment Pools – A Review." PLGIT article. March 2021, for more information on this topic



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