

# MMA to present 3 resolutions for business meeting

At the MMA's Annual Business Meeting on Jan. 20, members will consider a resolution on the state-local fiscal partnership, one opposing a proposed sales tax ballot question, and one on partnering with the state and federal government to mitigate the impacts of climate change. (See full text of each resolution below.)

Each resolution was drafted by an MMA policy committee during the fall and approved by the MMA Board of Directors on Nov. 14.

The proposed resolutions are as follows:

- Resolution Ensuring a Strong and Enduring Fiscal Partnership Between Cities and Towns and State Government in Fiscal 2019 and Beyond, proposed by the MMA Fiscal Policy Committee
- Resolution in Opposition to the Ballot Question that Would Reduce the Sales and Use Tax Rate, proposed by the MMA Fiscal Policy Committee
- Resolution Supporting a Local-State-Federal Partnership to Combat the Impact of Climate Change, proposed by the MMA Policy Committee on Energy and the Environment

The policy committees that drafted the resolutions welcomed member comments through Dec. 29.



MMA members listen to a presentation during the 2017 MMA Annual Business Meeting.

## Voting at the business meeting

Voting at the Annual Business Meeting is open to all municipal members of the MMA through voting delegates as defined by the MMA's bylaws.

Individuals eligible to vote at the meeting are:

- In the case of a city, its chief executive or a councillor designated in writing by the chief executive

- In the case of a town, the chair of the board of selectmen or town council, or another selectman or councillor designated in writing by the chair, or the manager designated in writing by such chair

If you will be voting on behalf of your community, visit the credentials table outside the business meeting between 9 and 10 a.m. Only one voting card will be issued per member community. ●

## Proposed resolutions for MMA Annual Business Meeting

### Proposed Resolution Ensuring a Strong and Enduring Fiscal Partnership Between Cities and Towns and State Government in Fiscal 2019 and Beyond

**Whereas**, the well-being and success of the residents and businesses of the Commonwealth depends on the fiscal health of cities and towns and the ability of local government to provide efficient and progressive public services and adequately invest in modern public infrastructure; and **Whereas**, the continuing fiscal strength of local government in Massachusetts will rely on adequate, sustainable and predictable revenues to support local services and capital programs; and

**Whereas**, cities and towns are highly reliant on the tightly capped property tax to fund local budgets, and this heavy reliance on the property tax has limited the ability of cities and towns to respond to new challenges and opportunities; and **Whereas**, the state's landmark school finance law, Chapter 70, is outdated and no longer provides an adequate minimum spending standard, and the local government share of the cost of schools and public education has grown to a 10-year high; and

**Whereas**, rapid growth in state-imposed assessments on local governments to fund charter schools has resulted in significant budget shortfalls in communities across the state, particularly where there is a large concentration of charters, and this has forced cities and towns to scale back spending and programs that serve the vast majority of students who remain in the local K-12 school system, and has also forced cutbacks in municipal services; and

**Whereas**, to avoid becoming overly reliant on the property

tax and to ensure that municipalities have the fiscal capacity to deliver the high-quality municipal and school services that are essential to support local economies and families in every corner of the Commonwealth, it is imperative that cities and towns receive an adequate share of state revenues, have an effective and fair municipal tax system, and have the tools necessary to plan for and fund long-term liabilities and make investments in people and capital;

**Therefore it is hereby resolved that the members of the Massachusetts Municipal Association support the following essential policy positions to ensure a strong partnership between cities and towns and the Commonwealth in fiscal 2019 and beyond:**

#### In the Area of Municipal and School Aid

- In fiscal 2019, unrestricted municipal aid should grow at least at the same rate as the growth in state tax collections, and be distributed without earmarks, conditions or restrictions to all cities and towns, so that local officials and residents can adequately fund public safety, public works, and all basic municipal and school services while avoiding overreliance on the property tax;
- The full share of Lottery and gaming revenue dedicated to help pay for municipal services should be used to help fund unrestricted municipal aid;
- Chapter 70 school aid revenue sharing should be increased in fiscal 2019 consistent with the Commonwealth's constitutional obligation to ensure adequate funding for all schools, including the "foundation budget" adequacy standard, as updated through the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission, the "target share" equity standard, and a reasonable amount of new minimum per student aid;

- The governor and the Legislature should review the calculation of the required local contribution under Chapter 70C including the "municipal revenue growth factor," and adopt changes to mitigate the rising reliance on the property tax to fund local schools, particularly in cities, towns and districts that educate a significant share of high-need students;

- Full funding of the Commonwealth's obligations and commitments, as provided by state law, to reimburse cities and towns for the transitional costs of a student leaving the local school district to attend a charter school should be included in the fiscal 2019 budget;

- Full funding of the Commonwealth's obligations and commitments to the Special Education Circuit Breaker Program, as provided by state law, should be appropriated;

- Full funding of the Commonwealth's obligations and commitments to the program for payments in lieu of taxes for state-owned land, as provided by state law, should be included in the fiscal 2019 budget;

- Full funding of the Commonwealth's obligations and commitments to reimburse the costs of regional school transportation, regular school transportation, out-of-district vocational education and the transportation of homeless students under the McKinney-Vento unfunded mandate should be included in the fiscal 2019 budget;

- Full funding of the Commonwealth's obligations and commitments to Chapter 40S "smart growth" reimbursements, regional and municipal libraries, anti-gang grants, innovation and regionalization grants, and other effective municipal and school aid programs should be included in the fiscal 2019 budget; and

#### In the Area of Timely Notice of Local Aid for Good Planning and Implementation

- To ensure orderly and efficient financial planning at the local level and implementation of balanced and adequate local operating and capital budgets, the governor and the Legislature should reach early agreement on unrestricted municipal aid and Chapter 70 school aid and local contribution amounts so that a consensus local aid resolution can be approved and reliable Cherry Sheets can be released by March 1; and

#### **In the Area of Local Taxing Authority and Other Revenues**

- Cities and towns should be granted new local-option flexibility to adopt local taxes and other revenues to help pay for municipal and school services and the construction and maintenance of local capital projects;
- The state should enact legislation to close loopholes and allow for the equitable collection of the room occupancy excise in the case of seasonal rentals and in transactions involving internet resellers, and also close the telecommunications equipment tax loophole;
- Legislation should be enacted to provide cities and towns with local-option authority to develop local rules for payments-in-lieu-of-taxes by owners of tax-exempt property; and

#### **In the Area of Long-Term Liabilities and Sustainability**

- The governor and the Legislature should undertake a comprehensive reform of the laws and practices governing post-employment benefits for public employees, with an immediate focus on Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liabilities related to health insurance for retired public employees in order to help cities and towns manage current costs and ensure fiscal sustainability over the long term; and

#### **In the Area of Capital Budgeting**

- The governor and the Legislature should work together early in 2018 to ensure enactment of a multi-year transportation bond bill that provides at least \$300 million annually for local road projects, including notice of allocations for fiscal 2019 by April 1, 2018, and include adequate allocations for the Complete Streets and small municipal bridges programs;
  - The governor should include in the fiscal 2019 capital plan funding for the MassWorks program to help pay for local economic development projects, including housing, development and road safety programs;
  - The governor and the Legislature should support the financing of road, rail and transit projects across the Commonwealth that are critical to economic development and public safety and convenience, and should explore new and alternative ways to finance projects;
  - The governor and the Legislature should continue to make the installation of high-speed internet access in unserved and underserved cities and towns a high priority; and
- It is further resolved** that a copy of this resolution shall be provided to the governor and members of the General Court of the Commonwealth.

### **Proposed Resolution in Opposition to the Ballot Question that Would Reduce the Sales and Use Tax Rate**

**Whereas**, at the current rate of 6.25 percent, the state's sales and use tax provided the Commonwealth with \$6.2 billion in tax collections in fiscal 2017, nearly one-quarter of all tax collections received by state government, and is expected to increase to \$6.5 billion in fiscal 2018; and

**Whereas**, a fixed portion of the sales tax is dedicated to help fund essential school building projects through the Massachusetts School Building Authority, and core public transportation services and projects through the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Commonwealth Transportation Fund; and

**Whereas**, the majority of sales and use tax revenues are deposited in the state's General Fund, and are necessary to fund municipal and school aid programs in the state budget, including Unrestricted General Government Aid and Chapter 70 education aid; and

**Whereas**, the proposed ballot question would decrease the sales and use tax rate from 6.25 percent to 5 percent and force a reduction in state tax revenues by an estimated \$1.25 billion, thereby reducing funds available to support critical programs needed to support cities and towns and strong communities, including unrestricted municipal aid, K-12 public education, school building projects, public transportation, and much more;

**Therefore it is hereby resolved** that the members of the Massachusetts Municipal Association oppose the ballot question that would reduce the sales and use tax rate to 5 percent; and  
**It is further resolved** that a copy of this resolution shall be provided to the governor and members of the General Court of the Commonwealth.

### **Proposed Resolution Supporting a Local-State-Federal Partnership to Combat the Effects of Climate Change**

**Whereas**, climate change presents a serious threat to the environment and to the health and public safety of our communities in Massachusetts and around the world, and is having serious impacts on the Commonwealth's neighborhoods, residents, environment and economy as extreme weather events become more frequent and municipalities experience sea level rise, coastal erosion, powerful storms, damaging flooding, extreme temperatures and related environmental impacts; and

**Whereas**, the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement commits countries to setting goals and targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions by using green energy sources to limit the rise of global temperatures, and Executive Order 569, Establishing an Integrated Climate Change Strategy for the Commonwealth, directs the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Secretary of Public Safety and Security to coordinate efforts across the Commonwealth to strengthen the resilience of our communities, prepare for the impacts of climate change, and prepare for and mitigate damage from extreme weather events; and

**Whereas**, the cities and towns of Massachusetts are national leaders as environmental stewards, embracing renewable energy technology, protecting and preserving land and natural resources, and providing safe, clean and affordable drinking water, wastewater and stormwater management systems, and an overwhelming majority of Americans support local action on climate change; and

**Whereas**, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and using clean and renewable energy can help to mitigate the effects of climate change, and municipalities have been essential in helping the Commonwealth meet its energy goals and have committed to ambitious goals to reduce energy consumption and emissions through the Green Communities program, contributing to Massachusetts' position as a nationwide leader in energy efficiency; and

**Whereas**, communities must adapt to the impacts of climate change, identify hazards and vulnerabilities, and take steps to increase preparedness and resiliency; and

**Whereas**, communities must work together with regional, state and federal partners to be prepared for climate change related disasters, invest in resilient infrastructure, and increase the use of renewable energy;

**Therefore, it is hereby resolved** that the members of the Massachusetts Municipal Association support the following essential policy positions to ensure a

**strong local, state and federal partnership to combat the effects of climate change:**

- The state should uphold its commitment to meet the emissions reduction targets of the Paris Climate Agreement and should work with local officials to develop plans for municipalities to take steps to reduce emissions in conjunction with the state's goals, and municipalities should participate in national and international coalitions with other governmental, business and environmental leaders to combat climate change; and

- The state should provide additional opportunities for municipalities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce energy consumption and increase energy efficiency through programs and grants, and the state Legislature and the governor should develop a balanced, long-term energy plan with a range of renewable energy sources to ensure a sustainable energy supply for residents, businesses and communities; and

- The state should eliminate the net metering cap on renewable projects to ensure that municipalities are not delayed in moving forward with future municipal projects, should grandfather the use of current utility rate classes for existing renewable energy systems, and should oppose any reductions in the rate of net metering credits for municipal projects and any added surcharges and fees imposed by utilities which could affect savings; and

- The state should enhance funding for the expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure while also investing in strategies for the greening of municipal fleets; and

- The state and federal governments should provide enhanced funding, grant opportunities and technical assistance to communities to enable the development and implementation of climate adaptation plans to assess vulnerabilities and work to upgrade environmental, transportation and energy infrastructure to increase resiliency; and

- The state Legislature and the governor should approve a \$1 billion water infrastructure bond bill to fund water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure improvements and grant authority to cities and towns to establish drinking water, stormwater and sewer infrastructure banks to build, repair and maintain water-related infrastructure systems, which will allow communities to upgrade infrastructure and increase resiliency; and

- Municipalities should review local planning and zoning bylaws and ordinances to make changes to increase resiliency, and the state should provide technical assistance and information sharing for communities; and

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency and Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency should work closely with communities to develop plans for extreme weather events and should provide resources and assistance to communities to ensure adequate preparation for these events; and

**It is further resolved** that a copy of this resolution shall be presented to the governor, the members of the General Court of the Commonwealth, the members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation, and the president of the United States. ●



### **DLS provides overview of state resources for councillors**

Sean Cronin, senior deputy commissioner at the Division of Local Services, discusses state-level resources available to councillors and aldermen during a training session held by the MMA on Dec. 2 in Ashland. Cronin highlighted the value of the Division of Local Services during the keynote presentation, "You've Been Elected – Now What?". The session was attended by 75 newly elected councillors and aldermen from across the state.