

MMA Annual Meeting and Trade Show 2019

Selectmen Jon Freedman, Mike Hickey, Rick Jennett and Sue Salamoff attended the MMA Annual Meeting and Trade Show 2019 - Strong Communities for a Strong Commonwealth January 18, and 19, 2019.

We attended a wide range of workshops and listened to a number of speakers from local, state, federal government and the professional community that were beneficial to enhancing a Selectman's ability to provide leadership in our town.

My colleagues and I heard presentations on A Selectmen's Guide to School Finance, Governor Charlie Baker on his priorities which include tackling climate change, reforming the school aid formula, and the collaborative Compact with Cities and Towns. We also heard remarks from Lt. Governor Karen Polito on the state budget and United States Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey spoke about economic and environmental issues and their impact on Massachusetts. Senate President Karen Spilka was the keynote speaker at the annual luncheon for Women Elected Officials of Massachusetts. She spoke about recently passed pay equity legislation that ensures equal pay for equal work, pay transparency, fairness in hiring as well as the importance of increased education opportunities and increased access to mental health care.

The trade show offered the opportunity to learn about the latest data analysis and collection systems, new equipment, consulting services, legal services, educational opportunities and state services.

Mr. Freedman, Mr. Hickey, Mr. Jennett and I had the opportunity to attend a myriad of workshops. A few are summarized below and the others are listed.

1. #Me Too in Town Hall: Creating a Safe, Respectful Workplace

Discussed Selectmen's role in creating a respectful work environment in Town Hall, the steps to create a safe work place including trainings for staff and elected officials. Consider the areas of ethics, social media, sexual harassment, abusive conduct, etc. Provided example Anti-Discrimination and Harrassment Policy.

2. Using Zoning to Encourage Aging in Place and 3. Respect Your Elders: Tips on a Building Age Friendly Communities

Noting In 2015, the state 65 and older population was 18% , is expected to be 27% by 2030. Cities and towns face challenges in crafting zoning, land-use policies and innovative aging housing practices that meet the needs of older adults. Some Innovative housing initiatives to increase housing affordability includes: Additional housing units, compact living, intergenerational homeshare, housing with public assets.

2018 MA received the designation of Age-Friendly State from AARP, one of three state in the U.S.

Among the Values and Goals of Age-Friendly status is to encourage the adoption of age-friendly policies and practices in all sectors. Through the Age-Friendly framework established by the World Health Organization and AARP, Massachusetts is committed to ensuring that our cities and towns are great places to grow up and grow old together.

I propose that Natick seek Age-Friendly status in Massachusetts and ask the Council on Aging Department and Council on Aging Board to take the lead to advise the Board of Selectmen on the steps that are needed to become a certified Age Friendly community.

4. Charters Adoption and Amendment

Addressed not only process for Charter adoption and amendments discussed the differences between Town Manager and Town Administrator forms of government in Massachusetts.

Practical issues for a review of governance. Questions:

What's working and what's not?

Review operational issues- who has what responsibilities?

Are there proper checks and balances?

Who is responsible to who?

Who can make policies?

Who makes personnel decisions?

Who is appointed and who is elected?

5. Assessors Actions That Make A Difference

Cities and Towns rely on property taxes to support municipal and school budgets and capital projects.

Beyond ensuring property values are fair and tax bills are accurate, assessors manage exemptions and abatements and impact municipal finance decisions.

Financial Planning /Budget Forecasting, Tax Revenue Projections

Valuation, Negotiations for Solar Pilots

Update and manage coordinates (Loc ID's) in our system for E911

Publish City Maps for GIS and other Spatial Data Projects

Accurately Maintain Valuation, Ownership, and Building Data for Use in 3rd Party

Software like MLS, The WarrenGroup, Zillow, and Realtor.com

Schedule Aerial Photography

6. Proactive and Practical Steps to Reducing Municipal Cyber Risk
7. Making Social Media Work for You
8. Shining A Light on the Public Records Law
9. Facilities Management Best Practices Can Help Your Bottom Line
10. Recognizing and Responding to Opioid Issues in the Municipal Workforce and Your Community
11. Public Right-of-Way Access: A Changing Regulatory Field
12. Boosting Engagement in Municipal Boards and Committees
13. Growing Pains: Municipal Best Practices for the Marijuana Industry
14. Attracting and Keeping Visitors Downtown

Susan G. Salamoff, Vice Chair
Natick Board of Selectmen
