

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Join NHMA & NLC for a Federal Action Conference Call

The National League of Cities (NLC) will host a conference call for New Hampshire towns and cities next week to share the latest federal updates and insights, and to hear questions and challenges from local officials on the local impact of COVID-19. NLC will use this information to advocate better for New Hampshire municipalities in Washington. This is one of a series of calls NLC is holding with all the states. Following the individual state calls, NLC will host regional calls.

The New Hampshire call is scheduled for **Wednesday, April 29th, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.** The tentative agenda can be found on our [website](#).

FEMA Public Assistance Application Briefings

The New Hampshire Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) will conduct a series of briefings beginning today to advise state agencies, local governments, and non-profit organizations about the application process for reimbursement of costs incurred due to emergency protective measures taken in response to COVID-19. This reimbursement program is through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance Program. Registration information for the briefings is listed below.

A [Public Assistance FAQ](#) and explanation of [Eligible Applicants](#) provide additional information, including the types of COVID-19 costs that are eligible for reimbursement under this program. Currently, the Public Assistance Program has a 75% federal cost share, in which the applicant is responsible for 25% of its eligible costs. Typically, federal funds cannot be matched with other federal funds. HSEM has requested approval of 100% federal cost share, which is under review by FEMA and the president

The briefing will discuss application procedures, administrative requirements, funding, and program eligibility criteria for the FEMA Public Assistance Program for the COVID-19 disaster. It is **imperative** that a staff person, such as the emergency management director and/or finance

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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS CONTACT INFORMATION

Margaret M.L. Byrnes,
Executive Director

Cordell A. Johnston,
Government Affairs Counsel

Barbara T. Reid,
Government Finance Advisor

Natch Greyes,
Municipal Services Counsel

Timothy W. Fortier,
Communications Coordinator



25 Triangle Park Drive
Concord NH 03301
Tel: 603.224.7447
EM: governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org
Website: www.nhmunicipal.org

director of your municipality, attend one of these briefings to apply for federal assistance and facilitate the application process. Please try to attend a session that best represents your organization. If you are unable to do so, please choose a session that fits your schedule.

Pre-registration is required for all applicant briefings. **Click the registration link below of your preferred time to register.** Once registered, you will be sent a confirmation email with a link to an online webinar. Please be sure to check your junk mail for this confirmation.

Friday 4/24	Saturday 4/25	Sunday 4/26	Monday 4/27	Tuesday 4/28
9:00 AM State Govt. Register for this session	10:00 AM Municipal/County Govt. Register for this session	N/A	10:00 AM Non-Healthcare Private Non-Profits, Education, Other Register for this session	10:00 AM Private Non-Profit Healthcare Register for this session
12:00 PM (Noon) Municipal/County Govt. Register for this session	2:00 PM Non-Healthcare Private Non-Profits, Education, Other Register for this session	N/A	2:00 PM Private Non-Profit Healthcare Register for this session	2:00 PM State Govt. Register for this session
N/A	N/A	N/A	5:30 PM Municipal/County Govt. Register for this session	N/A

Recordings of these briefings will be made available online on the [HSEM Resource Center: Public Assistance \(PA\) Grant Program Page](#). If you have any questions and/or you are unable to make a briefing, please contact your assigned HSEM field representative (local governments) or the HSEM Public Assistance Staff at NHPA@dos.nh.gov (all other applicants).

NHMA COVID-19 Financial Impact Survey and Presentation

Last week NHMA launched a COVID-19 Financial Impact Survey to our members in anticipation of our presentation to the Legislative Advisory Board of the Governor’s Office of Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) on Friday, April 17. Despite the short response time (less than 48 hours), 127 municipalities (54% of our membership) responded to the survey, providing a great deal of information relative to COVID-19 expenses, lost revenues, and overall budget impacts. Thank you to every municipality that responded! Your participation in the survey enabled us to not only portray the pandemic’s financial impact on cities and towns across the state to date, but also raise concerns about future financial ramifications, the extent of which may not be quantifiable for months to come.

The [COVID-19 Financial Impact Survey Results](#) include a narrative summary, a fact sheet, and several graphs.

The audio recording of NHMA’s presentation last Friday, along with presentations by Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig, Nashua Mayor Jim Donchess, and Auburn Town Administrator Bill Herman, is available under

the meeting minutes on the [GOFERR website](#): *Audio of the Bipartisan GOFERR Legislative Advisory Board Meeting 4/17/20.*

Advocating for a Stronger Municipal Voice

In addition to the GOFERR Legislative Advisory Board, Governor Sununu has created two other entities with advisory responsibilities relative to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first is the [Stakeholder Advisory Board](#). This board is tasked with “developing recommendations for the allocation and expenditure of CARES Act emergency relief funds, or other Federal COVID-19 relief and recovery funds received by the state.” The [initial appointments](#) were made on April 15. [Additional appointments](#) were made this week. Just one municipal employee has been appointed to represent the state’s 234 towns and cities on the board.

The second is the [Re-opening Task Force](#); the [current membership](#) includes state legislators and numerous industry representatives. However, there are no municipal representatives currently on the Task Force.

As NHMA explained in its presentation to the GOFERR Legislative Advisory Board, municipalities have experienced and will continue to experience severe financial impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Municipalities also play an integral role in the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Therefore, advice and input from municipal government are critical in determining how to allocate the CARES Act stimulus money and the safest route for re-opening the state. We are grateful for the action the governor has taken to support municipal government thus far, and we urge him to continue to do so by including more municipal representation on the Stakeholder Advisory Board and appointing municipal representatives to the Re-opening Task Force.

Guidance on Allowable Uses of Coronavirus Relief Fund

On Wednesday, the United States Treasury issued [guidance](#) on the allowable uses of money provided to states from the Coronavirus Relief Fund. This guidance pertains specifically to the \$1.25 billion the State of New Hampshire has received under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). A nonexclusive list of eligible expenses includes medical and public health expenses; payroll expenses for public safety, human services, and similar employees mitigating or responding to the pandemic; costs associated with food delivery; expenses to improve telework capabilities for public employees; paid sick and family/medical leave for public employees; care for homeless populations; and grants to small businesses. However, the guidance specifically states that revenue replacement is not a permissible use of the funds, and that the money may only be used to cover costs that were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020.

As discussed above, the Governor’s Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) is charged with the investment and oversight of COVID-19 relief and stimulus funds provided to New Hampshire by the federal government. The GOFERR’s Legislative Advisory Board and Stakeholder Advisory Board are charged with providing recommendations on relief efforts and have been alternating meetings on a daily basis. It is too soon to know the amount and type of relief municipalities may see from the state’s \$1.25 billion allocation under the CARES Act, as both advisory boards will be hearing from many constituencies regarding the financial, economic, and social impact of COVID-19.

Finally, the GOFERR provided a draft list of other [Federal Funding Opportunities Related to COVID-19](#) (in addition to the \$1.25 billion) that are available to New Hampshire. We reported on the Byrnes-Jag grants in [Legislative Bulletin #16](#), and will report on other funding opportunities as we learn more.

Still Closed—Mostly

Like much of the nation and most of the state, the legislature has now been closed for six weeks, and a full re-opening remains beyond the horizon. Only the joint Fiscal Committee met this week. The House Finance Committee will meet remotely in executive session next Thursday to act on a few bills as a first “toe in the water.” If that goes well, other committees may schedule executive sessions the following week. There will be no Senate activity next week, and no hearings are scheduled in either chamber.

Retirement Bill on the Agenda

One of the bills the House Finance Committee will take up next Thursday is **HB 1205**, the bill that would delay the 10 percent reduction in group I (employees and teachers) New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) pensions at age 65 until full Social Security eligibility age. The bill’s fiscal note states that the bill would increase the NHRS unfunded liability by approximately **\$37 million**, which would be paid for by employers through increased contribution rates over the next 20 years. Acknowledging that **HB 1205** would have a fiscal impact not only on local budgets but on the state budget, the committee’s Division I voted in March to recommend that the bill be sent to interim study. We hope the committee will follow that recommendation.

Legislative Policy Process

The organizational meeting of NHMA’s legislative policy committees, previously scheduled for April 3, has been rescheduled to **Friday, May 29, at 9:00 a.m.** As of now, we anticipate that this will be a “virtual meeting,” with all members participating by telephone or other electronic means. We will provide further information well in advance of that meeting.

This also means that meetings of the legislative policy committees will need to continue through June and possibly into July. Much depends on events beyond our control, but we will do our best to make the process as smooth and efficient as possible. Look for updates here and in our biweekly newsletter, NewsLink.

2020 NHMA UPCOMING MEMBER EVENTS	
Apr. 29	Webinar: Fostering Greener Yards: A Look at the State’s Motor Vehicle Salvage Yard Program (12:00 – 1:00 p.m. online)
May 6	Virtual Workshop: Right-to-Know Law: Meetings and Governmental Records
May 8	Virtual Workshop: A Guide to Effective Code Enforcement
Please visit www.nhmunicipal.org for the most up-to-date information regarding our upcoming training opportunities and events.	
For more information, please call NHMA’s Workshop registration line: (603) 230-3350.	