

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

## Conference Call Today: Congresswoman Kuster & Congressman Pappas

Congresswoman Kuster, Congressman Pappas, and NHMA are hosting a conference call for local officials **this afternoon from 2:00 to 3:00 pm**. The call is an opportunity to learn about legislation and other activity on the federal level, as well as the efforts your congressional delegation is making on behalf of towns and cities in New Hampshire. There will also be an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and provide comments.

**CALL IN #: 929-205-6099\***  
**PIN: 827 8874 1547**

\*This number is limited to the first 100 participants. If you cannot get in, please call in with the below information, which will allow you to listen only:

Backup call-in #: 603-292-3381  
Password: 7860

## Sign on to Letter to Congress

Congresswoman Kuster and Congressman Pappas are planning to send this [letter to Congress](#) on behalf of towns and cities. If you would like to “sign” the letter on behalf of your town or city, please email [governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org](mailto:governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org), and include your name, municipality, and title. Please ensure you have the authority to provide this support on behalf of your municipality.

## House Committees Begin Zooming, Slowly

Following the House Finance Committee’s successful experiment with a virtual meeting yesterday (see article below), other House committees will begin doing the same. The Municipal & County Government Committee has scheduled an executive session via Zoom for next **Thursday, May 7, at 10:00 a.m.**, when it will take up two bills—[HB 1218](#), the net metering bill that that was passed once by the House and then referred to Municipal & County Government as a second committee, and [SB 79](#), which requires municipalities to report certain information regarding solid waste disposal

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and recycling to the Department of Environmental Services. Information on how to gain access to the meeting is in this week's [House calendar](#), page 4.

The plan is for other committees to begin meeting in the same manner, holding executive sessions to deal primarily with bills that are not expected to require long debate. There are still no immediate plans for hearings in the House, and still no scheduled activity in the Senate.

### Finance Committee Votes Via Zoom

On Thursday the House Finance Committee convened via Zoom to hold the first ever remote meeting of a House committee, taking action on three bills. One of the bills was [HB 1205](#), which 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 committee unanimously voted to recommend interim study on the bill so the cost implications, estimated at \$37 million over 20 years, may be considered as part of the biennial budget during next year's legislative session.

### Committee on Election Support Begins Work

The Select Committee on 2020 Emergency Election Support held its organizational meeting yesterday. This is the six-person committee that was appointed to advise the state on the use of \$3.2 million in CARES Act money that has been granted to the state "to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, domestically or internationally, for the 2020 Federal election cycle."

As the deputy secretary of state explained at the meeting, this money will be targeted primarily to municipalities, because that is where most of the costs to ensure safe elections this fall will be incurred. There are, of course, limits on how the funds can be spent, and the state must file a report with the federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC) within 20 days after each of the primary election and the general election that "includes a full accounting of the state's uses of the payment and an explanation of how such uses allowed the state to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus."

According to a guidance document provided by the EAC, examples of allowable costs include:

- **Voting Processes:** Costs associated with higher levels of absentee voting and voting by mail and to ensure accessibility by all populations.
- **Equipment:** Acquisition of additional voting equipment, including high speed or central count tabulators, hardware and software, secure ballot boxes.
- **Staffing:** Additional poll workers, election office staff diverted to pandemic response, temporary staff.
- **Security and Training:** Security for additional absentee or mail drop-boxes, pre- and postelection cleaning of polling places, staff and poll worker training on prevention processes.
- **Communications:** Notifying the public of changes in registration, ballot request options, precautions or voting procedures.
- **Supplies:** Additional laptops, mobile IT equipment, cleaning, masks.

As this was an organizational meeting, the committee did not make any decisions or discuss any subjects in detail, but began identifying issues and potential resources. Among others, it was suggested that the committee should receive testimony from city and town clerks, moderators, other local officials, and NHMA.

The chairman emphasized that the committee has no authority to change any election laws; it is limited to making recommendations to work within the existing laws. He stated that any changes to the law would need to be made by the legislature, or perhaps by emergency orders issued by the governor.

The committee was told to plan to do significant work in May, because the candidate filing deadline is in early June, and the secretary of state's office will begin preparing absentee ballots for the primary soon after that. The chairman suggested that the committee will need to meet two or three times a week. The next meeting was not immediately scheduled, but presumably it will be early next week. Notice will be posted on the [secretary of state's website](#). Meetings are being held via Zoom and are open to the public. There is also a [separate page for the Select Committee](#), where you can find additional information about this funding.

We have been hearing many suggestions from moderators about measures that should be taken to keep voters and election workers safe this fall; we know the City and Town Clerks Association is also very much engaged in this issue. If you have suggestions that this committee should consider, please send them to us at [governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org](mailto:governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org).

## **FEMA Funding for COVID-19 Costs**

This week the New Hampshire Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) completed a series of Applicant Briefings explaining the process and eligible COVID-19 costs available for reimbursement under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) program. The [slide presentation](#) and recording of the briefing are available on the HSEM [Resource Center COVID-19](#) webpage, along with additional information regarding the application process. Currently, the FEMA reimbursement is 75% of the eligible costs, with the required 25% local match needing to come from non-federal sources (local appropriations, volunteer time, donations, etc.). However, we understand that 100% FEMA funding has been requested and is still under federal review.

## **CARES Act Funding**

As we have urged in previous *Bulletins*, and HSEM emphasized in its FEMA applicant briefings, municipalities should track all costs being incurred in response to COVID-19, whether those costs are eligible for FEMA reimbursement or not. We provided the Governor's Office of Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) with a list of COVID-19-related municipal costs that may not be eligible for FEMA reimbursement but which the state could reimburse from the \$1.25 billion it has already received from the CARES Act. This includes welfare costs, interest charged on tax anticipation notes, costs associated with teleworking (computers, phones, software, etc.), wages and benefits required to be paid under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act for non-first responders, and other costs municipalities have incurred and will incur in response to COVID-19.

Both the GOFERR Legislative Advisory Board and the Stakeholder Advisory Board continue holding meetings to hear from business, industry, non-profit, and government sectors regarding the impact from COVID-19. We anticipate those boards will begin formulating recommendations for the governor in the

next few weeks. Information regarding upcoming meetings of those boards, audio recordings of previous meetings, and copies of presentations are available on the [GOFERR website](#).

Finally, the Legislative Budget Assistant (LBA) has prepared a list of COVID-19 funding allocations to New Hampshire public and private entities as of April 24, 2020. The [Federal COVID-19 Funds – NH Allocations](#) is available on the [LBA COVID-19 Information](#) webpage

### CDBG Funding Available

The New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) has been awarded \$5.4 million under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). CDFFA also has approximately \$4 million remaining in the fiscal year 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. To ensure that resources are quickly deployed and meet the unique response needs to COVID-19, the CARES Act has already provided flexibility on some CDBG requirements, and CDFFA is seeking further flexibility and expediency from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The CDFFA is assessing the needs of municipalities, nonprofits, and businesses to ensure the response is aligned with current needs. Municipalities are encouraged to email the CDFFA at [comments@nhcdfa.org](mailto:comments@nhcdfa.org) with comments regarding community needs. To provide specific feedback on the prioritization of CDBG-CV funds, a public hearing will be held at **10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 5, 2020**, on a web-based platform. Copies of the draft plans and additional information about how to join the public hearing will be available on the New Hampshire Housing Authority website at [www.nhhfa.org](http://www.nhhfa.org). Additional information about CDBG priority investment areas, funding opportunities, and upcoming grant writing workshops is available in the [April 24 letter from CDFFA](#).

<b>2020 NHMA UPCOMING MEMBER EVENTS</b>	
May 6	<b><i>Virtual Workshop:</i></b> Right-to-Know Law: Meetings and Governmental Records
May 8	<b><i>Virtual Workshop:</i></b> A Guide to Effective Code Enforcement
May 13	<b><i>Webinar:</i></b> The Workings of a Planning Board (12:00 – 1:00 online)
May 19	<b><i>Virtual Workshop:</i></b> 2020 Local Officials
May 20	<b><i>Webinar:</i></b> What is Community Power and How Does Community Power Work? (12:00 – 1:00 online)
May 27	<b><i>Webinar:</i></b> Trails for People and Wildlife (12:00 – 1:00 online)
Please visit <a href="http://www.nhmunicipal.org">www.nhmunicipal.org</a> 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.	