

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

\$32 Million for CV-19 Municipal Relief

On Monday, Governor Sununu announced that the Governor’s Office of Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) allocated \$32 million to municipalities from the CARES Act Flex Funds to cover eligible COVID-19-related expenses incurred by municipalities from March 1, 2020, to August 31, 2020. This Municipal Relief Funding (MRF) is intended to make municipalities whole by paying for pandemic-related expenses that are not covered by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursements. The MRF is a reimbursement program, with each municipality allocated a *maximum* amount for which reimbursement requests may be filed. Again, municipalities will be reimbursed only for *non-FEMA eligible* COVID-19-related expenses *actually incurred* up to the amounts allocated.

Municipalities are required to execute a grant award document and submit reimbursement requests to GOFERR in accordance with the following schedule. If a municipality fails to submit a request by the applicable deadline, a reimbursement payment for expenses incurred during the applicable time period will not be made. The deadlines are as follows:

- By June 1, 2020, for eligible expenses incurred from March 1, 2020, to April 30, 2020;
- By July 15, 2020, for eligible expenses incurred from May 1, 2020, to June 30, 2020; and
- By September 15, 2020, for eligible expenses incurred from July 1, 2020, to August 31, 2020.

GOFERR will make every effort to issue all checks within 30 days after receipt of the request. In September, local governments will be required to estimate the additional COVID-19-related expenses they will incur through December 31. GOFERR will use this information in considering whether further relief might be needed after August 31. Any amount allocated to a municipality that exceeds its eligible expenses from March 1 to August 31 submitted for reimbursement, will, after August 31, lapse back to the state for other disbursement. This money may be accepted in accordance with the [NHMA Guidance on Acceptance and Expenditure of CARES Act Assistance by Local Governments](#), posted on the [NHMA COVID-19 Resources page](#).

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The MRF may be used for a variety of COVID-19-related expenses, including increased welfare costs, interest on tax anticipation notes, building disinfecting and modifications for social distancing, telework costs for remote municipal operations, and more. However, the money may not be:

- Expended for costs accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020;
- Used to compensate for revenue shortfalls;
- Used for FEMA-eligible expenses;
- Applied toward the 25% local match required for FEMA-eligible expenses;
- Used toward the same expenses covered by other federal grants such as community development block grants.

Information regarding the MRF program, including the [Town-By-Town Allocation, Program Overview and Guidance, GOFERR Grant Agreement](#) and GOFERR Reimbursement Request Form are available on the [Municipal and County Payments](#) page of the GOFERR website.

We know there are lots of questions regarding the MRF program, and we are in the process of preparing guidance addressing those questions. Please bear with us as we work with state officials to provide the answers you need.

First Responder COVID-19 Stipend Program

Also on Monday, the governor announced the \$25 million First Responder COVID-19 Stipend Program, which provides a stipend of \$300 per week for full-time and \$150 per week for part-time first responders during the period May 4 through June 30, 2020. The stipend also applies to on-call and volunteer first responders. The program will be administered by the New Hampshire Department of Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), and is funded from the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund. Municipal participation in the program is voluntary, and municipalities may submit the First Responder Stipend Worksheet for the entire 8-week period up front, then pay the stipend to eligible first responders weekly, bi-weekly, or in a single lump sum. The stipend is subject to applicable payroll taxes and is included in the calculation of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) overtime rate, but is not considered earnable compensation for New Hampshire Retirement System purposes.

After Monday's announcement, NHMA and HSEM began fielding many questions regarding the stipend program and consolidated those into the [First Responder COVID-10 Stipend Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). These FAQs, the Stipend Worksheet, and additional information are available on the [HSEM First Responder COVID-19 Stipend Program](#) website.

NHMA Presentation to Reopening Task Force

We have heard concerns from many of you that towns and cities are not represented on the governor's Reopening Task Force. We have conveyed those concerns, and, as a result, NHMA has been invited to give a presentation to the Task Force **next Thursday, on May 14 at 1:30**. We will focus on the impact of the reopening process on towns and cities, and how integral they are in the process. We have heard from many of you already, but we would like to hear our members' concerns or ideas about the reopening process in advance of our presentation.

Election Support Committee Hears Concerns

The Select Committee on 2020 Emergency Election Support, which is charged with advising the state on the use of \$3.2 million in CARES Act money for election support, met three times this week. On Wednesday and Thursday the committee heard over five hours of testimony from city and town clerks, moderators, and supervisors of the checklist about the many, many challenges municipalities are going to face as they try to hold state and federal elections during a pandemic. NHMA also submitted a [letter to the committee](#) summarizing the major concerns.

The committee is planning to meet at 2:00 every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for the next few weeks.

Slow Reopening Continues at Legislature

The House Municipal & County Government Committee met via Zoom yesterday, only the second meeting of any House committee since March 13. The committee voted to recommend passage of [HB 1218](#), the net metering bill that NHMA supports, but which the governor has promised to veto. The committee also voted Ought to Pass on [SB 79](#), which requires municipalities to report certain information to the Department of Environmental Services regarding solid waste disposal and recycling. Both bills will go next to the full House for a vote, if and when it is able to meet again.

The House Ways & Means Committee is holding an executive session next Tuesday to take up eight bills, including [HB 1603](#), which would allocate any funds from the state's lawsuits against PFAS manufacturers into a dedicated PFAS remediation and mitigation revolving fund. The Executive Departments & Administration Committee is meeting on Thursday.

The House is still not scheduling hearings, and the full House is not planning to meet anytime soon, because right now it has only five bills to act on. There is the further problem of finding a place where 400 people can meet safely. In today's House calendar, the Speaker states, "We are exploring other venues where we could all meet to do our work in a socially distant and respectable manner."

There was no activity in the Senate this week, and none is scheduled for next week.

2020 NHMA UPCOMING MEMBER EVENTS	
May 13	Webinar: The Workings of a Planning Board (12:00 – 1:00)
May 19	Virtual Workshop: 2020 Local Officials
May 20	Webinar: What is Community Power and How Does Community Power Work? (12:00 – 1:00)
May 27	Webinar: Trails for People and Wildlife (12:00 – 1:00)
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.	