

Maureen King, *President, RSU 21*
 Kim Bedard, *President-Elect, Kittery*
 Sue Hawes, *Vice President, Bangor*
 Becky Fles, *Past President, MSAD 11*
 Steven W. Bailey, *Executive Director, sbailey@msmaweb.com*
 Victoria A. Wallack, *Director of Communications & Government Relations, vwallack@msmaweb.com*

UPDATE...

November/December 2017

King Elected President

Maureen King, a 19-year school board member from Kennebunkport, was elected president of MSBA at the October Delegate Assembly and has watched the role of school boards and their statewide organization evolve in its advocacy on behalf of students and in support of public education.



King, who has been on the MSBA Board of Directors for 11 years and also served as president of the organization in 2010-2011, is the vice chair of the RSU 21 School Board, serving Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Arundel.

She believes MSBA and its executive board are and need to continue to be more proactive at the Legislature – adopting resolutions that now often lead to legislation.

(continued on page 2)

Invest in students to grow economy

Former State Economist and Thomas College President Laurie Lachance told school board members and superintendents the most important investment in economic development the state can make is an investment in the education and training of its people.



“The work you’re doing is absolutely critical to the future of this state, and it is absolutely critical to the children we serve,” she told the lunch audience on the second day of Fall Conference.

“A high school diploma is critical, but no longer sufficient to ensure a decent standard of living,” she said. And to assure that our high school graduates are career and college ready, the place to focus, right now, is “making sure our five-year-olds are kindergarten-ready” with strong pre-kindergarten programs.

Lachance became a college president after working as the state economist for 11 years and for 8 years was president of the Maine Development Foundation – an organization that focuses on sustainable, long-term economic growth in Maine and leadership training.

(continued on page 2)

New way to define success

Redefining Ready – a national initiative to look at multiple factors when deciding if students are ready for college or work after graduating high school instead of over-relying on standardized test scores – was the theme of the opening keynote at Fall Conference.

Dr. David Schuler, superintendent of a nationally recognized high school district in Illinois and former president of The School Superintendents Association (AASA), has helped take the Redefining Ready model nationwide.

The Maine School Superintendents Association has adopted a resolution in support of its approach and Schuler’s keynote and related clinic were well received at the conference.



“Students are more than what they earn on a standardized test,” Schuler said, but those same tests can label them and the districts that educate them as failures.

Redefining Ready looks at multiples measures that are supported by research as being reliable indicators of a student’s likelihood to succeed in college or a career after graduation.

College-readiness indicators include:

- GPA of 2.8
- Passing Algebra II with a C or better
- Scores on Advance Placement and International Baccalaureate exams
- Dual college credit in English or Math with a C or better

There also are standardized testing benchmarks including:

- SAT Exam: Math (530) and Reading and Writing (480)
- ACT Exam: English (18), Reading (22), Science (23), Math (22)

Career-readiness indicators include:

- 90 percent attendance
- 25 hours of community service

(continued on page 2)

MSBA Resolutions Adopted

The MSBA Delegate Assembly on Oct. 26 gave nearly unanimous support for all eight proposed resolutions recommended by the MSBA Board of Directors.

The titles are:

Support for Public Education

School Board Training

Career and Technical Education Opportunities

Regional Service Centers

Career and Technical Education Programs

Technology in the Classroom

Graduation Pathway for All Learners

Funding for Proficiency Based Graduation Standards

Click [here](#) to read the full resolutions, which are posted on the MSBA page of the MSMA website, www.msmaweb.com.

King Elected President

(continued from page 1)

“Our ability to work with legislators has increased our visibility and credibility and has improved MSBA’s impact on Maine’s K-12 education,” she said.

School Boards too have evolved, she said, and are taking a more active role to make sure the community continues to support public education. They also are using data to drive decisions about what’s best for their students.

“The superintendent’s role is to run the schools and the board’s job is to make sure the schools are being well run,” she said. The superintendent’s recommendations have to be supported with data that includes student assessments, teacher evaluations, statewide studies and other statistics that go well beyond the school budget.

“Each individual board member needs to be informed about the issues in order to have full, productive discussions at board meetings,” she said.

King encourages board members to use their state organization and the National School Boards Association to get information about current events in education, trends and research.

“Board members should pursue board professional development training and then continue to do the research, reading and consultations with the superintendent needed to make informed decisions that are best for students,” she said.

King said her goal for the coming year is to have MSBA recognized as the leading advocate for public education – a campaign that is embodied in the “Stand Up for Public Schools” campaign started by NSBA and supported by the MSBA Delegate Assembly this year.

“We need to position our organization as the number one voice in education,” she said.

She also reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to increased training and professional development for board members, both digitally and through in-person seminars.

Invest in students

(continued from page 1)

She spoke to school leaders about how to lead through tumultuous change and shared a favorite quote.

“Set a goal so big you can’t achieve it until you grow into the person who can,” she said.

Her other advice included:

- Stay laser-focused on who you are as a leader and who you are serving.
- Be brutally honest about strengths and weaknesses.
- Let every person know how important they are to your organization and thank them every day.
- Know your shortcomings and build a team to shore up your weaknesses.
- Meet leaders in your field that you respect; read about them.
- Get outside your comfort zone.
- As a leader really pump sunshine 24-7.
- Laugh at yourself; celebrate; and smile.

New ways to define success

(continued from page 1)

- Workplace learning experience
- Industry credential
- Dual-credit career pathway course
- Two or more organized co-curricular activities

Schuler highlighted some of the indicators, including the value of Algebra 2.

“Algebra 2 proficiency is paramount to college success,” he said.

He also talked about the importance of finding ways for students to earn dual credit college courses while in high school because that experience helps them perform better at the college level.

Research also shows that 90 percent attendance in high school doubles the likelihood of college success, and community service increases the likelihood of college graduation by 22 percent.

“I’m not suggesting that all kids need a 2- or 4-year degree,” Schuler said, but every graduate needs access to some post-secondary education to be successful.

Schuler also urged the school leaders in the room to use placement tests in English and math in the junior year to see if a student needs remediation in those areas before going to college rather than after they get there.

“Kids that take remedial classes in college most often don’t finish college,” he said, and they are paying tuition for remedial courses for which they earn no credit.

For more information on Redefining Ready, click here: <https://www.redefiningready.org/>

Planning, communication keys to successful budgeting

November 2017, Maine Townsman, reprinted with permission by Maine Municipal Association

By Janine Pineo

In municipal life, say “budget” and the word “challenge” soon follows.

What’s key to successful budgeting is planning, which helps anticipate tough sells to not only residents but to governing boards. Planning provides a road map for everyone, even during periods of financial uncertainty, according to five town managers whose annual budgets have faced issues that range from loss of state funds to losses of major property taxpayers.

Budgeting “little by little” is the moral of the story, said Tim Curtis, Madison’s town manager, who spoke during one of two budget sessions during the 2017 Maine Municipal Convention in Augusta. Madison was thrust into a financial crisis in 2014 when the valuation of a paper mill plummeted.

Madison Paper Industries closed two years later in May 2016, putting 215 people out of work in the town of 4,777. But the loss of valuation in 2014 already had triggered a series of changes, Curtis said. “How did we handle this?” he asked.

That year, the town used \$1.4 million from the reserves, established a line of credit and increased the mil rate. The next year, the municipal budget was cut by \$600,000 and the school budget by \$500,000. Curtis said the town also sought legislative help via the “sudden and severe” trigger, through which a major event like the loss of a paper mill gives a municipality recourse at the state level.

Among the municipal budget cuts, Curtis said, was contracting for police services. That saved \$100,000 the first year, he said, and now averages savings between \$120,000 and \$150,000 per year.

The Somerset County town isn’t without industry, however. It is home to 220 small businesses (75 percent of those have fewer than four employees) and to a number of large taxpayers:

- Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, a hydro company, valuation \$50 million.
- Backyard Farms, commercial tomato farm, \$44 million.
- Central Maine Power, \$15 million.
- IGS Solar, solar provider, \$6.3 million.
- Somerset Acquisitions LLC, \$4.8 million.

Curtis said it is crucial to strike a balance between “crisis” budgeting and “future” budgeting. Maintaining a competitive tax rate is important, as is striving to meet some level of capital spending on such things as roads and equipment, he said.

It also is essential to communicate and educate, pointing to social media and cable access broadcasts as a way to apprise residents of issues and disseminate information on the proposed budget, Curtis said.

Capital project planning

Spending on capital projects became a challenge for Dover-Foxcroft, with the issue’s roots dating to the 1990s, said Jack Clukey, town manager since 2004.

The Piscataquis County town focused on a number of things during that decade, including a new business park, a new solid waste and recycling facility and a new wastewater treatment plant.

What the town of 4,084 people didn’t plan for was maintaining paved roads, Clukey said. “When it came to paved roads, we got a little bit behind,” he said.

The town has 50 miles of gravel roads and 33 miles of paved roads. Clukey said to stay on top of paving, the budget should have had allotted about \$150,000 annually, not including reconstruction. By 2005, the town needed to “make up for lost time” during a year that included a town garage expansion, a library expansion, equipment purchases and a wastewater sludge project. Those items alone were more than \$1.2 million.

Paving was going to tack on another \$400,000.

Clukey said the budget passed but voters threw a monkey wrench into the proceedings. “We had a complete change in how we do business,” he said.

Voters petitioned that year for referendum voting, with the first referendum following the next year. A charter commission was established and in 2007, a new charter was adopted, one requiring all matters – barring an emergency – to be voted on by secret ballot.

Additionally, the Municipal Property Tax Levy Limit went into effect during the same period, which regulates how much money a municipality can raise through property taxes that are used for municipal operations, such as road maintenance.

(continued on page 4)

Planning, communication

(continued from page 3)

Over the next decade, the town rarely passed an increase in the limit, either failing to pass or not being taken to a vote at all. Meanwhile, Clukey said, asphalt prices were spiking and that initial \$150,000 per year for paving was now closing in on \$280,000.

By 2010, the town had to answer the question as to how far behind it had fallen in paved road work. The town was under funding the work by \$285,000 per year and needed \$375,000 for preservation, rehab and reconstruction.

“We’re in a hole,” Clukey said. “We need to get our arms around this.”

Despite that effort for 2011, the town ended up in “triage mode,” Clukey said, where only the “worst of the worst” sections of road had any work done. But a sort of breakthrough came in 2015, he said, and it revealed some lessons learned.

Capital spending education

The town decided it needed a management plan and a consultant. Educating the community about paving was critical, along with informing them of a 10-year plan, listing each road and when treatment would fall within that 10-year window.

The takeaways for Dover-Foxcroft? Deferring capital investments will end up costing you. You can’t fix everything in a single year. And, you need to communicate about what is in a budget and what is being left out.

Rhonda Irish, Wilton’s town manager, said her town is in the same predicament but with sidewalks. “In about six years, we’ll get caught up,” she said, when it will start all over again. 2014 marked the start of reconstruction, coinciding with the downtown revitalization that is being funded through Community Development Block Grants.

The Franklin County town of 4,066 has suffered a number of blows over the past 20 years, including the loss of shoemaker G.H. Bass & Co. in 1998 and Forster Manufacturing in 2004. Irish said there are “buildings that come back to haunt us,” including the former Wilton Tannery building, which qualified for a Brownfields cleanup grant. The town sold the property for \$1, she said, and the new owner is working on converting it into office space.

The town foreclosed on the Forster building in 2015, which needs to be demolished. The problem is asbestos, with an estimated price tag of \$1 million to tear it down. “It’s been one of our biggest challenges,” Irish said.

Wilton did not have capital accounts for its departments, which meant maintenance suffered. One big ticket item is the sewage plant. “We are now undergoing a \$10 million reconstruction,” she said.

The town is now “on the right path,” Irish said. “I recommend taking care of what you’ve got in place.”

Planning in growth communities

For municipalities considered growth communities, revenue is a big issue and planning is just as critical.

Scarborough’s population “just eclipsed the 20,000 mark,” said Tom Hall, town manager. That’s up from the 2010 Census by more than a thousand residents, more than any other Maine community.

“By Maine standards,” Hall said, “we’re doing very well.” The state valuation increased 9.43 percent from 2007 to 2015, and Hall described the pace of residential building permits as “breakneck.” In 2000, for example, 360 new permits were issued.

Because of the growth, Scarborough saw a severe decline in federal and state subsidies for its schools, to the tune of \$4.9 million since 2009.

“We have now bottomed out,” he said of the allowed minimum subsidy. “This freefall has caused huge challenges within our community.”

Among them is the pressure on property tax and the change in demographics to an older population with fixed incomes, Hall said. Prout’s Neck has some of the highest property values on the East Coast, while across town is farmland. “The property tax is totally blind on somebody’s ability to pay,” he said.

Where he sees this friction come into play is in the school budget vote. The norm now is that it takes multiple votes before it passes.

“We’re doing our part on the expense side,” Hall said, but the loss of subsidies complicates it.

Rockport Town Manager Rick Bates said that to meet challenges, a town needs to start with the end in mind. He recommends speaking with the board early on to discuss the plan so they know what is and what isn’t in the budget proposal.

Set aside for capital projects

For Rockport this year, that meant beginning to set aside money to pay for sewage, which is sent to Camden’s facility. That neighboring town is figuring out what to do about its facility, and Bates said that when Camden presents them with Rockport’s share in a few years, the town will have been saving toward the goal.

(continued on page 5)

Planning, communication

(continued from page 4)

The Knox County town of 3,313 sees competing forces at play, including an aging population and the need for more housing for the workers, who need places to live in order to work in the community.

Bates said Rockport and the rest of the state is hampered by lack of access to broadband, what he characterized as the most important infrastructure today. “One of the things we can do in this state, to make us competitive, is build our broadband capacity,” he said.

He had a few pieces of advice to share:

- Don’t lose sight of quality of life.
- Preserve open space.
- Create walkable communities.
- Parks and recreation are not simply cost centers to be avoided.
- Focus on what makes your community unique.
- Good schools are not the enemy.

That last one is key to what Bates sees as the steps to creating and maintaining a thriving community. Better schools make better communities and that attracts better businesses, he said.

CDS advisory group says major issues still unresolved

The Department of Education’s proposal to move services for 3- to-5-year-olds from a state agency and into the public schools needs additional time for planning and piloting and should not be rushed.

That was the general consensus of a 15-member advisory committee, whose own work was cut short by DOE Commissioner Robert Hasson, who wrote a letter cancelling scheduled meetings and asking for a final report following the group’s last meeting on Dec. 11.

The committee included people who work in Child Development Services (CDS) – the agency that currently provides services for children in the 3-5-year-old span; two school superintendents and two special education directors; contracted service providers and agencies; advocates; and, members of the DOE staff.

Key among the committee’s general recommendations was the move to shift CDS-like services into public schools would not be a “flip of the switch”.

Instead districts and CDS should “collaborate” with public schools to serve children during the transition. Pilots also need to be done in both urban and rural areas to uncover and address issues. And, there should be no shift of services to public schools until 2019-2020, at the earliest.

The DOE announced in mid-September that it wanted to shift CDS-like services into public schools and is introducing legislation to make that happen. The bill title is An Act To

Reorganize the Provision of Services for Infants and Toddlers and Children with Disabilities from Birth to 5 Years of Age and has not yet been assigned a legislative bill number.

In his letter to the CDS Advisory Committee, Commissioner Hasson asked the group to finalize discussions in four key areas: funding; facilities; staffing; and, regionalization opportunities.

Hasson asked the group to address “the inadequacy of funds, regardless of whether the proposed change is enacted or CDS remains the provider”.

CDS for some years has run a deficit, but that deficit had been plugged by the DOE with surplus funds. In 2016 that deficit was just over \$2 million on total spending of \$39 million for services not only for 3-5 year-olds, but also birth to 2. Click here to see the latest CDS annual report: <http://www.maine.gov/doe/cds/reporting/index.html>.

The concern school districts have is if they take on the 3-5 population will they be adequately funded from the state.

CDS Director Roy Fowler, who served as chair of the advisory group, said the two largest cost drivers in the agency are transportation and specially designed instruction.

Recommendations from the advisory group include:

Funding

- Do not run state funding for 3-5-year-old services through the school funding formula, which creates a local share and gives property-rich communities less state aid.
- Help districts bill for Medicaid reimbursement and determine who will fund the seed required for Medicaid reimbursement. Right now that seed for CDS is paid by the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Explore the option of 100 percent reimbursement from the state for money spent by districts on CDS-like services.
- Look at transportation issues separately and explore options, including partnering with school districts even if CDS services stay put.

Facilities

- Define space needs and determine whether contract service providers with their own space will remain part of the mix.
- Determine what the law and state and local codes require for early childhood spaces.
- Determine what is feasible in school districts, both in terms of costs and available space to expand.

Staffing

- There is not enough certified staff regardless of who is running the program for 3-5 year olds and it needs to be addressed, particularly in areas like speech and occupational therapy.
- Salaries are an issue.
- Determine what certifications are needed and, as important, what experience is required.

(continued on page 6)

CDS advisory group

(continued from page 5)

Regionalization

- Needs to be explored because smaller districts simply don't have the critical mass of children to do a program on their own.

The advisory committee also identified areas where more data is needed and that data should be provided to legislators, who ultimately must make the decision on moving CDS to school districts.

Those data requests include:

- What is the estimated number of 3-5-year-olds who need but are not now getting services from CDS?
- If CDS or CDS-like services were fully funded, what would it cost?
- Who will pay for the Medicaid seed money if services move to public schools?
- What formula would the state use to fund CDS-like services in schools? Is there a formula now for how CDS is funded?
- Should transportation be dealt with as a separate issue since it is a substantial costs driver and impediment to providing services, particularly in rural areas?

Upcoming Legislative Session

Senators and representatives will return to Augusta on Jan. 3 to begin what is known as the short session of the Legislature, which is supposed to wrap up its business by mid-April.

There are some key bills that will be heard affecting education, including some carried over from last session and new proposals.

The list includes:

Carry-Over Bills

- LD 40, "An Act to Strengthen Requirements for Water Testing for Schools" is about testing for lead in water in schools that are on public water supplies i.e. they don't have their own wells. Schools with wells already have to test their water. The plan right now is to work with the state's Drinking Water Program (part of DHHS) and design something that works. The problem in Maine is not with water mains, but most often with fixtures, like faucets and bubblers, and pipes connected with lead solder. The bill is before the Health and Human Services Committee. MSBA and MSSA last session testified we need to test, but also need a reasonable protocol and access to funding if major renovation is needed.

- LD 1331, "An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Recapitalize the School Revolving Renovation Fund", would put \$20 million into the revolving renovation fund and that could help with the lead bill and other needs.
- LD 1562, "An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Capitalize a Career and Technical Revolving Equipment and Renovation Fund" asks for \$10 million to help capitalize equipment purchases for CTE programs and improve CTE buildings.

New Bills

- An Act to Repeal Certain Provisions Regarding System Administration Allocation Affecting Maine School Districts in the 2018-2019 Biennial Budget" was put in by Senator Troy Jackson, D-Aroostook, to repeal the cuts to system administration funding currently tied to participation in School Management Leadership Centers.
- "An Act to Ensure the Successful Implementation of Proficiency-based Diplomas by Extending the Timing for Phasing in Their Implementation" is being sponsored by Rep. Tori Kornfield, D-Bangor, to extend the timeline for requiring proficiency in all the Learning Results. Under current law, this year's freshman class is supposed to be proficient in the core four – English, Math, Science and Social Studies – by the time they graduate in 2021. The remaining standards are supposed to be phased in through a 2025 deadline.
- The push for allowing guns on school property is back. "An Act Regarding the Prohibition on the Possession of a Fire Arm" is being sponsored by Rep. John Martin, D-Eagle Lake. The bill likely will mirror a bill defeated last year. That bill said the prohibition on the possession of a firearm on public school property does not apply to a person who possesses a firearm in a motor vehicle while dropping off or picking up a student. MSBA and MSSA have supported keeping the bright line on prohibiting guns on school property.
- "An Act to Restore Maine's School-based Health Centers", sponsored by Rep. James Handy, D-Lewiston, is in response to the elimination of funds for school-based health centers that was done at the last minute as part of the biennial budget negotiations.
- Two bills have been submitted by the administration around Career and Technical Education (CTE), with the goal of running CTE funding through the EPS formula, versus funding based on prior expenditures. The two titles are An Act To Amend Career and Technical Education Statutes and An Act Concerning Membership in Career and Technical Education Regions and Centers.



If you have questions about any articles in this newsletter or suggestions for improving this publication, let us know.

You can contact me, MSBA Executive Director, Steven Bailey. sbailey@msmaweb.com