

## Memorandum

**TO:** All NHMA Members

**FROM:** Judy Silva, Executive Director  
Cordell A. Johnston, Government Affairs Counsel

**DATE:** June 17, 2014

**RE:** 2015-2016 Legislative Policy Process *Important Dates!*

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**FLOOR POLICIES DUE: August 15** ♦ **POLICY CONFERENCE: September 26**

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The NHMA legislative policy process is moving forward! Enclosed with this memo is a copy of the policy recommendations made by NHMA's three policy committees. This document will also be posted on NHMA's website, [www.nhmunicipal.org](http://www.nhmunicipal.org).

The policy recommendations are listed by committee: (1) General Administration and Governance; (2) Finance and Revenue; and (3) Infrastructure, Development and Land Use. Each committee's recommendations are listed in order of priority, as "action," "priority," or "standing" policy recommendations. You will see that some of the policy recommendations have a statement of the municipal interest to be served and a further explanation of the proposal, while others do not. The policy recommendations that include this additional information are new recommendations this year; the ones without the additional information are existing policies that are recommended for re-adoption. Also enclosed is a list of NHMA's Legislative Principles, which will be considered for re-adoption.

*We urge each municipality's governing body, prior to the Legislative Policy Conference, to vote a position on the recommendations and floor proposals (see below) to provide direction to your voting delegate at the Conference. Otherwise, your delegate is free to cast your municipality's vote as he/she*

chooses. For more information about the legislative policy process and the Policy Conference, please see the enclosed Questions and Answers document.

### **Floor Proposals**

Please note that the deadline for submitting floor proposals is **Friday, August 15**. A floor proposal will be accepted only if it is *approved by a majority vote of the governing body* (Board of Selectmen, Aldermen, or Council) of the town or city submitting the proposal, is submitted in writing, and is received **no later than August 15**. We will mail all floor proposals to each municipality so there will be an opportunity to take a position on them before the Policy Conference. Floor proposals should be in the same format as proposals submitted to the policy committees.

A Floor Policy Proposal form has been included for your convenience, or you may find it on the NHMA website. (Go to [www.nhmunicipal.org](http://www.nhmunicipal.org), click on "Advocacy," then "Policy-Setting Process," then "Floor Policy Proposals.") To submit a floor proposal, please send it to NHMA, Government Affairs Department, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord, NH 03301, or fax it to 224-5406, or e-mail it to [governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org](mailto:governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org).

### **Legislative Policy Conference**

The 2015-2016 Legislative Policy Conference is scheduled for **Friday, September 26, 2014, at 9:00 a.m. at NHMA's office, 25 Triangle Park Drive in Concord**. We will include with the floor proposal mailing a card for each town or city to return indicating who has been appointed as the municipality's voting delegate.

Please call the Government Affairs Department at 800-852-3358, ext. 3408, if you have any questions.

# 2015-2016 Legislative Policy Recommendations

## General Administration and Governance

### Action Policy Recommendations

#### 1. Right to Know Costs and Specificity Required

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT amendments to RSA 91-A allowing municipalities to recover the actual costs of retrieving, reviewing and reproducing documents, and clarifying the level of specificity required when requesting public records.

#### 2. Regulation of Weapons in the Workplace

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to provide immunity to local and county governments against acts committed by employees with firearms (except for those employees authorized by that governmental entity to carry a firearm in the course of their official responsibilities).

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** To limit the exposure of municipalities in circumstances where an employee brings a firearm into the workplace, which the municipality cannot prohibit, and injures a citizen or co-worker by discharging the firearm. Example: a firefighter takes a weapon to the workplace and while training on a ladder, someone below is accidentally shot by the holstered gun above. Example: a town office employee brings a weapon to the town office, as it is town property, but accidently or intentionally shoots a co-worker or citizen.

**Explanation:** In ordinary non-municipal circumstances, employers can easily and lawfully prohibit weapons in the workplace for safety reasons and more (unless the employee has a special permit to do so). In municipal government the law provides that individuals can carry on town property; some employees translate that law into allowing them to carry guns while they are at their municipal workplace. The present wording of RSA 159:26 appears to prohibit local and county governments from prohibiting the possession of firearms in the workplace. This statute leaves local and county governments exposed to significant liability from acts committed by employees with firearms against citizens and other employees. These employees have not been authorized by the municipality to possess or use a firearm in the workplace, nor have they been trained by the municipality in the use of firearms, nor have the firearms been issued or approved by the municipality. This policy recommendation is not intended to affect workers compensation. **Submitted by: Joel Bourassa, Selectman, Woodstock**

#### 3. Welfare Lien Priority

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to give liens for local welfare payments arising under RSA 165:28 a higher priority position, so that those liens fall immediately after the lien for the first mortgage.

## Priority Policy Recommendations

### 4. Cross-Border Liability.

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to encourage cooperation between emergency response entities from New Hampshire and bordering states by affording municipalities from bordering states the same limitations on monetary damages in civil actions that are afforded to New Hampshire municipalities.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** Remove a disincentive for cooperation between emergency responders in New Hampshire and neighboring states.

**Explanation:** New Hampshire law limits the liability of “governmental units” for bodily injury, personal injury or property damage in civil actions, but the definition of “governmental unit” is limited to political subdivisions “within the state.” In one case, the New Hampshire Superior Court ruled that a town in a neighboring state, which had cooperated with a New Hampshire town in responding to an emergency, was not protected by the liability cap. A similar issue could arise in many situations in which New Hampshire municipalities work with neighboring municipalities in Maine, Massachusetts, or Vermont in responding to emergencies. For example, New Hampshire police officers were called upon to assist after the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013, and Maine police officers have responded to recent shooting incidents in New Hampshire. Municipalities are less likely to provide cross-border assistance if they do not have the benefit of liability protection under the neighboring state’s laws. Any legislation providing liability protection to municipalities in neighboring states should require reciprocity from the neighboring states. Submitted by: NHMA staff, based on request from other state municipal leagues.

### 5. Consultation with Counsel Expansion Under RSA 91-A

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to amend RSA 91-A so that exempt consultation with legal counsel would also include discussions about written legal correspondence provided by legal counsel, without requiring the presence of counsel at the meeting.

### 6. Petition Signature Requirements

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation amending RSA 39:3 to require that in towns with an official ballot referendum town meeting (SB2/RSA 40:13), petitioned warrant articles must be signed by not less than 2% of registered voters, but in no case fewer than 10 voters or more than 150 voters.

### 7. Clarifying What Information Is to be Included in Town Reports in SB2 Towns

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to clarify which version of the budget and warrant articles is to be included in town reports in SB2 towns.

## 8. Public Notice Requirements

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to amend all public notice requirements to allow the choice of electronic notification and/or newspaper print, as well as posting in public places, for official public legal notification.

## 9. Amended Warrants in SB 2 Towns

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT statutory changes allowing SB 2 communities to post changes to the warrant to reflect amendments to warrant articles by action of the voters at deliberative session. Further to allow the governing body and the budget committee to change their recommendation due to amendments made at deliberative session.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** These changes would allow the amended language and dollar amounts to be correctly warned prior to the second session of town meeting. The recommendations of the governing body and the budget committee are there to provide guidance to the voters. Changes made at deliberative session in some cases would cause the governing body and/or the budget committee to change their recommendation. The statutes presently do not allow this change. Therefore the recommendation of those boards may be erroneous. A system that relies on direct democracy is based upon an informed/educated citizenry. If the voters are relying on a warrant that is posted and is no longer correct due to changes made, then citizens cannot properly educate themselves. Additionally, those citizens who value the recommendation of the governing body and/or the budget committee may have an incorrect recommendation before them when they decide which way to vote.

**Explanation:** During the 2014 deliberative session the voters made changes to the language of several of the warrant articles. The voters present also made amendments to the town and school budgets. Money was added to the town budget and substantial cuts were made to the school budget. After consultation with DRA, NHMA legal staff, and town counsel, it was clear that we could not post an "amended" warrant after the deliberative session that would indicate the changes made. In the case of the school budget the amended budget number was significantly different than what the school board recommended. The warrant still showed the old budget and the previous recommendation. The ballot showed the new budget numbers and language changes; however, the ballot still showed that the school board recommended the budget article, which was no longer the case due to the drastic changes made. Submitted by: Shaun Mulholland, Town Administrator, Allenstown

## 10. Long-Term Storage of Records

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation modifying the requirement that municipal records retained for longer than ten years be transferred to paper, microfilm, or both.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** Save space and cost, and allow a more practical way to store records.

**Explanation:** RSA 33-A governs the retention of municipal records, establishing retention periods for many classes of records. Section 5-a states that electronic records must be transferred to either paper or microfilm or both if they are required to be retained longer than ten years. Permanent

storage of paper records creates serious space problems. Storing records on microfilm has been a practical alternative, but microfilm is becoming harder to find and may soon be unavailable entirely. Some within the document storage business have indicated that microfilm may be impossible to obtain within a year. If microfilm is not available, paper storage becomes the only legally permitted method. Submitted by: NHMA staff, based on inquiry from Linda Smith, Board Administrator, Northwood

#### **11. Building Plans Under 91-A**

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT an amendment to RSA 91-A:5, IV to specifically add "building plans/construction drawings contained within a building permit file and/or building plans/construction drawings submitted as part of a building permit application" as an exempt record under this chapter.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** There is uncertainty within RSA 91-A:5 as to the status of building plans and/or construction drawings in the possession of municipalities and their code enforcement officials or building inspectors. Since "...personnel practices; confidential commercial, or financial information; test questions, scoring keys, and other examination data used to administer a licensing examination, examination for employment, or academic examinations; and personnel, medical, welfare, library user, videotape sale or rental..." files are specifically exempted from the statute, one would think building plans on file with building permits would fall under the remaining exemption of "...other files whose disclosure would constitute invasion of privacy." We were ordered by a district court to release such plans when an unrelated party requested them.

**Explanation:** The district court rationale was that the legislature had constructed the statute with specific records stated as being exempt. Conversely, building plans were not expressly exempt so their disclosure had to be subject to a balancing test of the full disclosure vs. the privacy rights of the building owner. The court sided with full disclosure due to the absence of a specific exemption. Building plans can contain a wealth of information considered private. Alarms systems, communication access points, physical access points, safe rooms, structural components like vaults, built-in safes, and secure storage areas are only some of the features that could be exploited if plans showing these features were readily available to the public. Many commercial sites like banks, medical facilities, and defense and Homeland Security contractors would be appalled to know the building plans for their facilities were open to public access. Access to building permit applications would still be available. It is only the plans that are being exempted. The additional benefit would be solving in part the problems of copy right infringement. Many designers (engineers, architects, and the like) have expressed concern about the wide distribution of their work and possible copy right infringement by having publicly accessible building plans on file with municipalities. There is no way for them to enforce their copy right without knowing what unrelated parties are accessing and copying their work product. Submitted by: Paul Deschaine, Town Administrator, Stratham

#### **12. Municipal Departments and MV Information**

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to make it clear that municipalities may obtain information about motor vehicles registered to an individual for the purposes of verifying asset levels when the individual is applying for general assistance or asset-based tax relief and in order to determine the ownership of vehicles for official purposes.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** Allow access to motor vehicle registration and licensing information by municipal departments to verify asset levels when administering public assistance and tax relief programs and when needed for other proper governmental purposes.

**Explanation:** As RSA260:14 is administered and interpreted departments which administer public assistance programs are denied access to motor vehicle registration records and the opportunity to verify statements made by the applicant(s). It has become problematic as folks game the system and lie about the cars parked or the ownership of the cars parked in their yards. **Submitted by: Susan Snide, Pelham Assessing, Pelham**

### **13. Blue Lights on Fire Department Vehicles**

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT amending RSA ch. 265 and RSA 266:78-b, "Blue Lights Restricted to Law Enforcement," to allow for the inclusion and use of a single rear-facing blue colored light panel on emergency response vehicles owned or leased by municipal, village district or federal fire departments.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** To enhance the visibility and safety of public emergency responders and the public they are serving by allowing fire and emergency medical vehicles to include a single rear-facing blue colored light panel among the red or amber lights on municipally-owned emergency vehicles to provide clearer and more distinct warnings to the motoring public at various emergency response scenes in all types of lighting and weather conditions. There is significant data documenting the mix of colors utilized in various light and weather conditions (i.e. – dusk, dawn, fog, cloudy, rain, etc.) provides for enhanced safety for emergency responders and the motoring public.

**Explanation:** This proposal is the result of some experiences the Auburn Fire Department has had at some emergency & motor vehicle accident scenes, particularly on NH Route 101 (from the intersection of I-93 through to Exit 3 / Candia town line. Our firefighters have experienced that the visual of all red flashing emergency lights do not always seem to encourage the motoring public to maintain a safe distance from the emergency responders as they are driving past. The Auburn Fire Chief has indicated other states allow fire and emergency medical vehicles to include a blue light/lens in their light bars and it provides a stronger safety presence for both the emergency responders and the motoring public. This would be similar to the provisions of RSA 266:78-c, where red lights are allowed for police, fire and rescue vehicles. **Submitted by: William Herman, Town Administrator, Auburn**

## **Standing Policy Recommendations**

### **14. Counting Absentee Ballots**

(Legislation pending—SB 271) To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to eliminate the requirement that absentee ballots cannot be counted prior to 1:00 P.M., and instead allow them to be counted throughout the time when polls are open.

**15. Swearing in Town Officers**

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to reconcile RSA 669 with RSA 42:3 regarding when certain town officers may be sworn in.

**16. Human Resources Record Retention**

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation that amends the record retention requirements for successful job applications and personnel records from 50 years after termination or retirement to 20 years after termination or retirement.

**17. Modifying the Adoption, Revision, and Amendment of Municipal Charters**

(Legislation pending—HB 422) To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation similar to HB 379 in 2008 that modifies the adoption, revision, and amendment of municipal charters.

**18. Consolidated Policy on Collective Bargaining Items**

**Evergreen Clause:** To see if NHMA will OPPOSE legislation to enact a mandatory so-called "evergreen clause" for public employee collective bargaining agreements.

**Binding Arbitration:** To see if NHMA will OPPOSE mandatory binding arbitration as a mechanism to resolve impasses in municipal employee collective bargaining.

**Right to Strike:** To see if NHMA will OPPOSE a right to strike for public employees.

**Mandated Employee Benefits:** To see if NHMA will OPPOSE any proposals to mandate employee benefits, including any proposal to enhance retirement system benefits which may increase employer costs in future years, for current or future employees.

**19. Contracted Services and Bargaining**

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to give public employers greater flexibility to privatize or use contracted services.

**20. Maintenance and Policing of State-Owned Property**

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to enable municipalities to recover the expenses of policing publicly-owned land against all illegal activity (including public consumption of alcohol and littering), including the ability to receive reimbursement/compensation from individuals engaged in the illegal activity.

**21. Supervisor of the Checklist Sessions**

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to reduce to one the number of required sessions that the supervisors of the checklist must hold prior to town elections.



22. Municipal Recreation Programs

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT the continued exemption from state child care licensing for municipal recreation department programs and also supports the exemption from state camp licensing for municipal recreation department summer programs.

23. Requirement to Hold Elected Office

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation clarifying that to run for and hold a local elected office, one must be a registered voter.

24. Appointment of Town Clerks and Town Clerks/Tax Collectors

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to allow the legislative body to authorize the governing body to appoint or elect town clerks and town clerk/tax collectors.

25. Warrant Article Language; Adoption by Reference

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to amend RSA 48-A, Housing Standards, to allow a town to adopt a proposed housing standards ordinance on the ballot by reference, as opposed to printing the entire ordinance on the warrant.

26. Perambulation

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT legislation to eliminate the RSA 51:2 requirement to perambulate town boundaries every 7 years when the abutting municipalities have identified the boundaries and markers by survey quality GPS coordinates or by a certified survey and have filed a return including the survey or GPS coordinates as required by RSA 51:4.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** Saving of dollars (for repeated surveys) and the saving of substantial time to coordinate with others. Also to determine boundaries by easily reproducible means.

**Explanation:** This procedure has become increasingly archaic over time with a declining number of communities faithfully following the requirement. There is no longer a need to continue to physically walk boundaries given "modern" technology. It is time, at best, to abolish it as Maine has or, at worst, provide an opportunity to be relieved of the obligation upon the filing of a mutual report accompanied by GPS documentation. Submitted by: Carter Terenzini, Town Administrator, Moultonborough

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# Finance and Revenue

## Action Policy Recommendations

### 1. Tax Rate Setting

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation that expedites the receipt of information, including utility values as determined by the Department of Revenue Administration, necessary for the Department to set tax rates beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> and to improve the overall efficiency and timeliness of the tax rate setting process.

### 2. Use of RSA 83-F Utility Values

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** changing RSA 83-F to prevent any determination of utility value by the Department of Revenue Administration from being used in any way by either the utility taxpayer or the municipality in any application for abatement of tax under RSA 76:16 or any appeal thereof under RSA 76:16-a or RSA 76:17.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** To see that any opinion of value generated by the State's Department of Revenue Administration for imposition of the State's Utility Tax under RSA 83-F is not used against another subdivision of the State in a legal proceeding. By eliminating that use, the state and municipalities avoid the expense of all necessary discovery associated with the DRA's 83-F process and the trial testimony of the DRA's representatives concerning the same.

**Explanation:** The Berlin City Council passed a motion in support of the above amendment to RSA 83-F at their April 21, 2014 City Council Meeting. **Submitted by:** James A. Wheeler, City Manager, City of Berlin

### 3. Real Estate Income and Expense Statements on Appeal

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation that prohibits the use of real estate income and real estate expense information by a taxpayer in any appeal of value if the taxpayer, after request by the municipality, has not submitted the requested information.

## Priority Policy Recommendations

### 4. Clarification of Elderly Exemption.

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** changes in language for RSA 72:39-a, 72:29, and 72:39-b that define and recognize a household as occupying a property and increasing tenancy requirements for elderly exemption tax relief.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by the proposal:** Equitable distribution of property taxes, consistency between statutes offering relief from property taxes.

**Explanation:** Elderly exemptions are granted for elderly home owners who qualify per income and asset criteria established by the town. Often an extended family will move in and occupy the home and also enjoy the benefit of reduced taxes. The law as currently interpreted does not allow for income or assets from all members of the home to be considered as part of the income or asset test. **Submitted by: Susan Snide, Assessing Assistant, Pelham**

**5. Separate Ballot Boxes for Bond Votes.**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation clarifying that separate ballot boxes are not required for bond articles in SB 2 towns.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:**  
Avoid confusion and impracticality.

**Explanation:**

RSA 33:8-a, which governs the procedure for authorizing a bond or note in excess of \$100,000, states that articles proposing a bond or note shall appear in consecutive order on the warrant and shall be acted upon before most other business (with exceptions), that polls shall remain open for each article for at least one hour, and that “a separate ballot box shall be provided for each bond article to be voted on pursuant to this section.” This statute was enacted before the SB 2 form of town meeting existed and obviously did not contemplate such a system. It makes no sense to require separate ballot boxes when all votes are made on a single ballot. Presumably no SB 2 town actually follows this requirement. **Submitted by: NHMA staff, based on inquiry from Lynne Bonitatibus, Administrative Assistant, Kensington**

**6. Expanding 10% Limitation**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** amending RSA 32:18 to expand the 10 percent limitation on increasing the budget committee’s appropriation recommendation to include both increasing and decreasing the total amount to be appropriated.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by the proposal:** With fewer voters and taxpayers actually participating in the local deliberative forms of municipal government – both traditional town meetings and SB2 communities’ Deliberative Sessions – the 10% rule should be expanded to limit both any increase or decrease in proposed appropriations to ensure that a small minority not be able to dramatically alter what the silent majority likely supports.

**Explanation:** An Auburn resident spoke with me about some sort of protection such as this following the 2014 Allenstown School District Deliberative Session, where a very small number of voters approved by a one-vote margin a near \$1 million reduction to the proposed school district budget of approximately \$9 million. The Deliberative Session action left the School Board and the Budget Committee with a budget proposal going forward to the voters that neither board supported. As I understand part of the historic logic of the 10% Rule is that voters not present at the meeting had been forewarned of proposed spending levels and their absences could be viewed as a form of support. The limitation protected them. I believe the same could be said in reverse with respect to drastic cuts. **Submitted by: Bill Herman, Town Administrator, Town of Auburn**

**7. All Public Real Estate Taxable if Used by Private Occupants**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to clarify that taxation of a private occupant on public land is required by statute, even if an agreement or lease does not include a tax provision or the specific wording of RSA 72:23, I(b).

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** The amendment would make it clear that taxation of a private occupant on public land is required by statute, even if an agreement or lease does not include a tax provision or specific wording of RSA 72:23, I(b). This amendment should even the playing field for all municipalities and all tenants occupying public land, so that all are treated similarly under the same set of laws. It would also help to ensure that municipalities receive tax revenue from private tenants that would pay taxes anyway to the municipality if they owned the real estate.

**Explanation:** The proposed amendment is intended to make legislative intent clear that all public real estate is taxable if used by private occupants, unless the occupant qualifies for a tax exemption. The use of public land by a private occupant should be deemed to be its consent to the tax by operation of law. It does not make sense for a private company to be tax-free just because it occupies public real estate and does not agree to pay taxes, but the same or similar company on private land has to pay taxes, regardless whether it agrees or not. The current situation is not fair to taxpayers who do have to pay taxes. This amendment also addresses inequity between tenants, if one tenant gets a tax exemption while using public land while a similar tenant of public land must pay taxes. The proposed amendment is patterned after the policy statement made by the Supreme Court in Rochester I. Recent confusion about legislative intent makes this amendment necessary.  
**Submitted by: Adele Fulton, Attorney, on behalf of City of Lebanon**

**8. Pollution Control Exemption**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** repeal of the so-called "pollution control exemption" (RSA 72:12-a) or amendment of the statute to impose a term limitation on any exemption granted.

**9. Prorating Disabled Exemption**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation prorating the disabled exemption under RSA 72:37-b when a person entitled to the exemption owns a fractional interest in the residence, in the same manner as is allowed for the elderly exemption under RSA 72:41.

**10. Penalty for Failure to Submit Current Use Information**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation imposing a penalty for failure to submit current use information as needed to update municipal records—*i.e.*, Marlow matrix.

**11. Recording Fees for Elderly Deferrals**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to reimburse municipalities for recording fees related to the establishment and release of elderly and disabled deferrals under RSA 72:38-a.

## **12. Flood Control Payments**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to fully fund flood control payments in lieu of taxes to municipalities, including retroactive payments from the state for Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013.

## **Standing Policy Recommendations**

### **13. Downshifting of State Costs and State Revenue Structure**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL OPPOSE** legislation which will downshift state costs or state program responsibilities, either directly or indirectly, to municipalities and/or counties, resulting in increased municipal and/or county expenditures, whether in violation of Article 28-a or not, and **OPPOSE** any reductions, deferrals and/or suspensions of state revenue to political subdivisions, such as revenue sharing, meals and rooms tax distribution, highway block grants, environmental state aid grant programs, adequate education grants, catastrophic aid, or any other state revenues.

### **14. State Revenue Structure and State Education Funding**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** asking the state to use the following principles when addressing the state's revenue structure in response to its responsibility to fund an adequate education:

- a) That revenues are sufficient to meet the state's responsibilities as defined by constitution, statute, and common law;
- b) That revenue sources are predictable, stable and sustainable and will grow with the long term needs and financial realities of the state;
- c) That changes to the revenue structure are least disruptive to the long-term economic health of the state;
- d) That the revenue structure is efficient in its administration;
- e) That changes in the revenue structure are fair to people with lower to moderate incomes.

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation prohibiting retroactive changes to the distribution formula for adequate education grants after the notice of grant amounts has been given.

### **15. New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS)**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** the continuing existence of a retirement system for state and local government employees that is strong, secure, solvent, fiscally healthy and sustainable, that both employees and employers can rely on to provide retirement benefits for the foreseeable future. Further, **TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** continuing to work with legislators, employees, and the NHRS to accomplish these goals.

To that end, **TO SEE IF NHMA WILL:**

- a) **SUPPORT** legislation that will strengthen the health and solvency of the NHRS and ensure the long term financial sustainability of the retirement system for public employers;
- b) **OPPOSE** any legislation that: 1) expands benefits that would result in increases to municipal employer costs; 2) assesses additional charges beyond NHRS board approved rate changes on employers; or 3) expands the eligibility of NHRS membership to positions not currently covered.
- c) **SUPPORT** the restoration of the state's 35% share of employer costs for police, teachers, and firefighters in the current defined benefit plan and any successor plan; and
- d) **SUPPORT** the inclusion of municipal participation on any legislative study committee or commission formed to research alternative retirement system designs (such as a defined contribution or a hybrid plan) and the performance of a complete financial analysis of any alternative plan proposal in order to determine the full impact on employers and employees.

#### 16. Utility Appraisal Method

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL OPPOSE** mandating the exclusive use of the unit method of valuation in the appraisal of utility property, by either administrative or legislative action, and **SUPPORT** the continuing right of municipalities to use any method of appraisal upheld by the courts.

#### 17. Modifying Post-Municipal Appeal Deadline Date

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to modify the post-municipal appeal deadline date as called for under RSA 72:34-a- "Appeal from Refusal to Grant Exemption, Tax Deferral, or Tax Credit".

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** The current appeal date of a municipal denial of a property tax exemption/credit/deferral is September 1 of the following tax year. For example, municipality A denies a vet credit in March of 2014, the applicant has until September 1, 2015 to appeal that, that is 18 months of appeal window, that sort of timeframe is not found within the property tax appeal RSA's, nor current use appeal RSA's etc. There is no rational basis to have that long a window leaves the municipality at risk on such a long view that it makes it difficult to plan for with legal costs, overlay cost and the like.

**Explanation:** The appeal window under this RSA for tax exemptions/credits/deferrals should mirror the property tax window. The communities by law have until July 1<sup>st</sup> to issue a decision, taxpayers have until September 1<sup>st</sup> to perfect their appeal, the same should be true under RSA 72:34-a as it is under RSA 76:16-a & RSA 76:17. **Submitted by: Jim Michaud, Assistant Assessor, Town of Hudson**

#### 18. Charitable Definition and Mandated Property Tax Exemptions

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL OPPOSE** legislation that expands the definition of "charitable" in RSA 72:23-1, unless the state reimburses municipalities for the loss of revenue, and **SUPPORT** creating a method of reimbursement to municipalities for state-owned property.

19. Telecom Company Property Tax Exemption

TO SEE IF NHMA WILL OPPOSE any exemption from the property tax for poles, wires, and conduits owned by telecom companies.

20. Collection of Statewide Education Property Tax

TO SEE IF NHMA WILL TAKE NO POSITION on the collection of the statewide property tax by the state or by municipalities, but will continue to work to ensure that any system based on the property tax coordinates and synchronizes as seamlessly as possible with existing local property tax assessment and collection procedures.

21. Negotiated PILOTs for Water System Property

TO SEE IF NHMA WILL OPPOSE legislation that eliminates the current obligation of the public water entity to make a PILOT equal to what the property taxes would be for the property in the absence of a negotiated PILOT.

22. State Budget Cap

TO SEE IF NHMA WILL OPPOSE the adoption of any variation of a state budget cap which will impose on the Legislature pre-established limitations on state spending.

23. Budget Year Conversion

TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT legislation to simplify the process of a municipality's converting from a calendar year budget cycle to a fiscal year budget cycle.

24. Management of Trust Funds

TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT amendments to RSA 292-B:2 to include funds held by a town or other municipality under RSA 31:19, RSA 202-A:23, or a fund created by a town or other municipality under RSA 31:19-a to be included in those institutional funds subject to the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act.

25. Minimum Vote Required for Bond Issues

TO SEE IF NHMA WILL OPPOSE legislation to increase the 60% bond vote requirement for official ballot communities.

26. Mandatory Tax Liens

TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT legislation to change RSA 80:59 to read: "The real estate of every person or corporation shall be subject to the tax lien procedure by the collector, in case all taxes against the owner shall not be paid in full on or before December 1 next after its assessment, provided that the municipality has adopted the provisions of RSA 80:58-86 in accordance with RSA

80:87. A real estate tax lien imposed in accordance with the provisions of RSA 80:58-86 shall have priority over all other liens.”

## **27. Tax Bill Information**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to amend RSA 76:11-a to allow those municipalities which have adopted the deaf exemption to include the word “deaf” following the word “blind” in the information contained on tax bills.

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# **Infrastructure, Development, and Land Use**

## **Action Policy Recommendations**

### **1. Restoration of Full General Revenue Funding for Municipal State Aid Grant (SAG) Programs**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to restore full general revenue funding of municipal wastewater, public drinking water and landfill closure grants administered by the NH Department of Environmental Services.

### **2. Municipal Use of Structures in the Right-of-Way**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to authorize municipalities to use, for any municipal purpose, the space designated for municipal good upon all poles, conduit and other structures within their rights-of-way without paying unreasonable make-ready costs. This includes the right to use that space for data and voice transmission to, from, and by the municipal government, schools, library, and other governmental institutions. This includes a requirement that the owners of utility poles and conduit do the necessary work for that space to be available.

### **3. Regional Water Quality**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to encourage the State of New Hampshire and its political subdivisions to work cooperatively on a watershed or regional basis in addition to dealing with all water quality issues as individual communities.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** More efficient use of limited taxpayer resources to deal with achieving compliance under Clean Water Act requirements and state regulations.

**Explanation:** Many of the impaired water bodies in the state have numerous contributors to the impairments and no individual community can deal with all of the water quality issues within a water body. Also, limited resources should be targeted to the largest water quality improvements to provide the cleanest water resources to our citizens. Around the country various models have been



established, and New Hampshire should assess these various alternatives to see if one or a combination of several models would work for the state. **Submitted by: Carl Quiram, Director of Public Works, Goffstown.**

### Priority Policy Recommendations

#### 4. Diversion of Highway Funds.

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation and administrative action to limit or eliminate the diversion of highway funds for non-highway purposes.

#### 5. Site Evaluation Committee and Local Input

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation establishing a procedure similar to RSA 674:54 requiring applicants to the state's Site Evaluation Committee (SEC) to notify and appear before the local planning board prior to the issuance by the SEC of certificates for the construction of energy facilities under RSA 162-H.

#### 6. RSA 162-K: Authority for Inter-municipal Cooperation

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to provide more explicit authority for inter-municipal cooperation in economic development and revitalization districts (*see* RSA 162-K).

#### 7. Solid Waste Revolving Funds

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to allow municipalities to establish, by vote of the legislative body, revolving funds for their solid waste programs, including solid waste collection, disposal, and the operation of any municipally operated transfer station, in addition to recycling.

#### 8. Clarify Establishing Highways

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation clarifying that the dedication and acceptance method of highway creation requires express acceptance by vote of the legislative body, or the board of selectmen if so delegated.

#### 9. Water Fund

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to implement the recommendations of the Commission on Water Infrastructure Sustainability Funding (the "SB 60 Commission"), including (1) the establishment of a water trust fund to ensure adequate annual investment in water infrastructure, and (2) a sustainable revenue source for the water trust fund.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** Long-term investment in the infrastructure that cleans and carries water is essential to the health and economy of New Hampshire. Water is a resource that cannot be neglected, and a water trust is essential to ensure that large and small

communities can maintain the infrastructure to meet the regulatory limits, and the social and economic goals of communities.

**Explanation:** The SB 60 Commission worked for three years to develop findings and recommendations for the establishment of a sustainable trust for water infrastructure. NHMA should support this initiative as it affects all New Hampshire municipalities. **Submitted by:** Shelagh Connelly, Chair, New Hampshire Water Pollution Control Association.

### Standing Policy Recommendations

#### **10. Adequate Highway Funding**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation to ensure adequate state revenue dedicated to highway improvements, which may include the road toll (gas tax) under RSA 260:32, increased motor vehicle registration fees, or any other source, so long as all additional revenues are used for highway purposes, and provided that the proportionate share of such additional revenues is distributed to cities and towns as required by existing law.

#### **11. Alternative Funding for Transportation**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** the establishment of alternative funding sources to ensure the maintenance and improvement of existing and future state and local transportation infrastructure and to provide greater focus and financial support for all modes of transportation.

#### **12. Conservation Investment**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** permanent funding for the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program and **OPPOSES** any diversion of such funds to other uses.

#### **13. Environmental Regulation and Preemption**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation that (a) recognizes municipal authority over land use and environmental matters, (b) limits state preemption of local environmental regulation, and (c) recognizes that even when local environmental regulation is preempted, compliance with other local laws, such as zoning and public health ordinances and regulations, is still required.

#### **14. Underground Utilities**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation clarifying that municipalities may incur debt for the purpose of removing overhead utilities and replacing them with underground utilities.

#### **15. Energy, Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation encouraging state and federal programs that provide incentives and assistance to municipalities to adopt energy use and conservation techniques that will manage energy costs and environmental impacts, promote the use of renewable energy

sources, and promote energy conservation, and opposes any legislation that overrides local regulation.

#### **16. Open Space Retention and Sprawl Prevention**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation encouraging statewide programs that provide incentives and assistance to municipalities to adopt land use planning and regulatory techniques that will better prevent sprawl, retain existing tracts of open space, and preserve community character.

#### **17. Sludge/Biosolids**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** reliable enforcement of scientifically based health and environmental standards for the management of sludge, septage, and biosolids; and **OPPOSE** any state legislation that would curtail the ability of municipalities to dispose of municipally-generated biosolids through land spreading, when done in accord with such scientifically based health and environmental standards.

#### **18. Current Use**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL OPPOSE** any legislative attempt to undermine the basic goals of the current use program and **OPPOSE** any reduction in the 10-acre minimum size requirement for qualification for current use, beyond those exceptions now allowed by the rules of the Current Use Board.

#### **19. Complete Streets**

**TO SEE IF NHMA WILL SUPPORT** legislation providing for consideration and possible implementation of a Complete Streets Policy at the state level, to include accommodating the input and needs of, and the financial impact on, political subdivisions.

**Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:** There is a growing awareness that conventional design, operation and maintenance of transportation facilities have been biased toward accommodating speed and capacity for motor vehicles, and that a more comprehensive approach is needed to adequately support mobility and quality of life for all members of the community. The Complete Streets concept is a response to this concern, which focuses on ensuring that streets are safe, comfortable and convenient for travel for everyone, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and public transportation users, and for all ages and abilities.

In recent years, the City of Portsmouth has been designing its street improvement projects with an increased attention to pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience, and in 2013 the City adopted a formal Complete Streets policy to formalize this approach. However, it is important that local initiatives such as Portsmouth's be supported by a statewide Complete Streets policy.

**Explanation:** A statewide Complete Streets policy would require transportation agencies to approach every transportation improvement and project phase as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. These phases include planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction engineering, construction, reconstruction, operation and maintenance.

Complete Streets principles can be applied on new projects, but also can be applied incrementally on existing streets through a series of improvements and activities over time.

An effective Complete Streets policy is sensitive to community context. A strong statement about context can help align transportation and land use planning goals, creating livable and resilient villages, towns and neighborhoods.

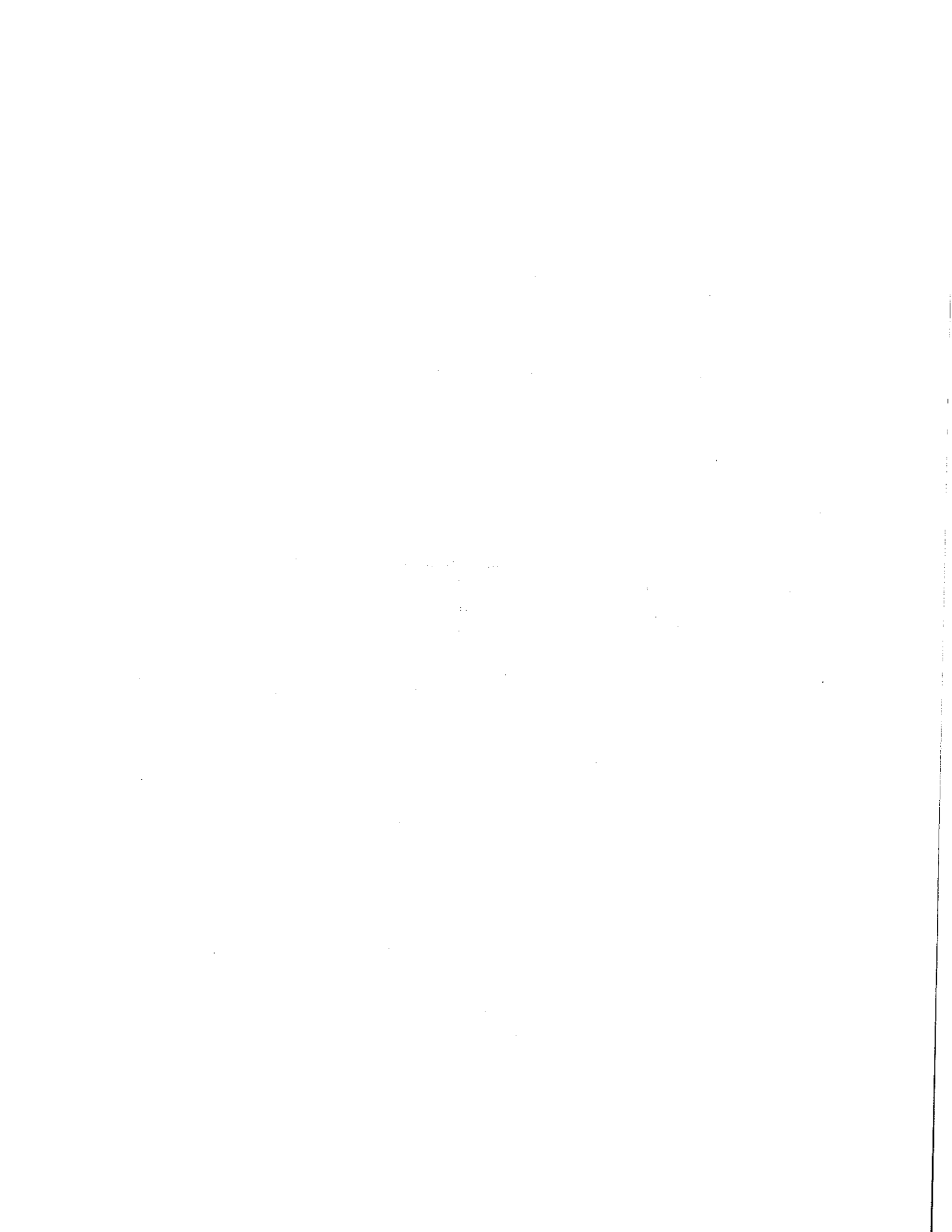
To date, 27 states have adopted statewide Complete Streets policies, including the New England states of Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. **Submitted by: Rick Taintor, Planning Director, Portsmouth; Christopher Parker, Director of Planning and Community Development, Dover; Thomas J. Aspell, Jr., City Manager, Concord.**



## Legislative Principles

In addition to the established Legislative Policy positions adopted by the New Hampshire Municipal Association membership, the following principles should guide staff in setting priorities during any legislative biennium:

1. Consider unfunded mandate issues that violate Part 1, Article 28-a of the New Hampshire Constitution to be paramount. Identify them and oppose them.
2. Work to maintain existing revenue streams to municipalities, (i.e. revenue sharing, meals and rooms tax, highway, and other state aid). Be especially watchful of proposals to reduce local aid in order to meet other funding commitments.
3. Advocate to maintain existing local authority.
4. Support issues which provide greater authority to govern more effectively, efficiently and flexibly at the local level, including local option legislation. If the legislature is considering adopting a program that is particularly controversial at the local level, support a requirement that a local legislative body vote is necessary before full implementation of the measure.
5. Support bills proposed by individual municipal members, except when they conflict with these principles or other NHMA policies. Staff should prioritize time and resources when there are competing demands in order to focus on NHMA's broad agenda first.
6. Encourage exemptions from state taxes rather than local property taxes when legislative intent is to preserve statewide resources.
7. Advocate for municipal representation on all state boards, commissions, and study committees which affect municipal government and have non-legislative members.
8. Work cooperatively with other groups and associations to support efforts to improve the delivery of services at the local level.
9. Support municipal efforts toward effective regional cooperation and delivery of municipal services.
10. Support efforts to develop a statewide technology network that fosters increased communication and greater compatibility among levels of government and within and between agencies in all levels of government.





**New Hampshire Municipal Association  
2015-2016 Legislative Policy Process**

**Floor Policy Proposal**

Submitted by (name) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

City or Town \_\_\_\_\_ Title of Person Submitting Policy \_\_\_\_\_

Floor Policy Proposal approved by vote of the governing body on (date) \_\_\_\_\_

To see if NHMA will SUPPORT/OPPOSE:

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Municipal interest to be accomplished by proposal:

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Explanation:

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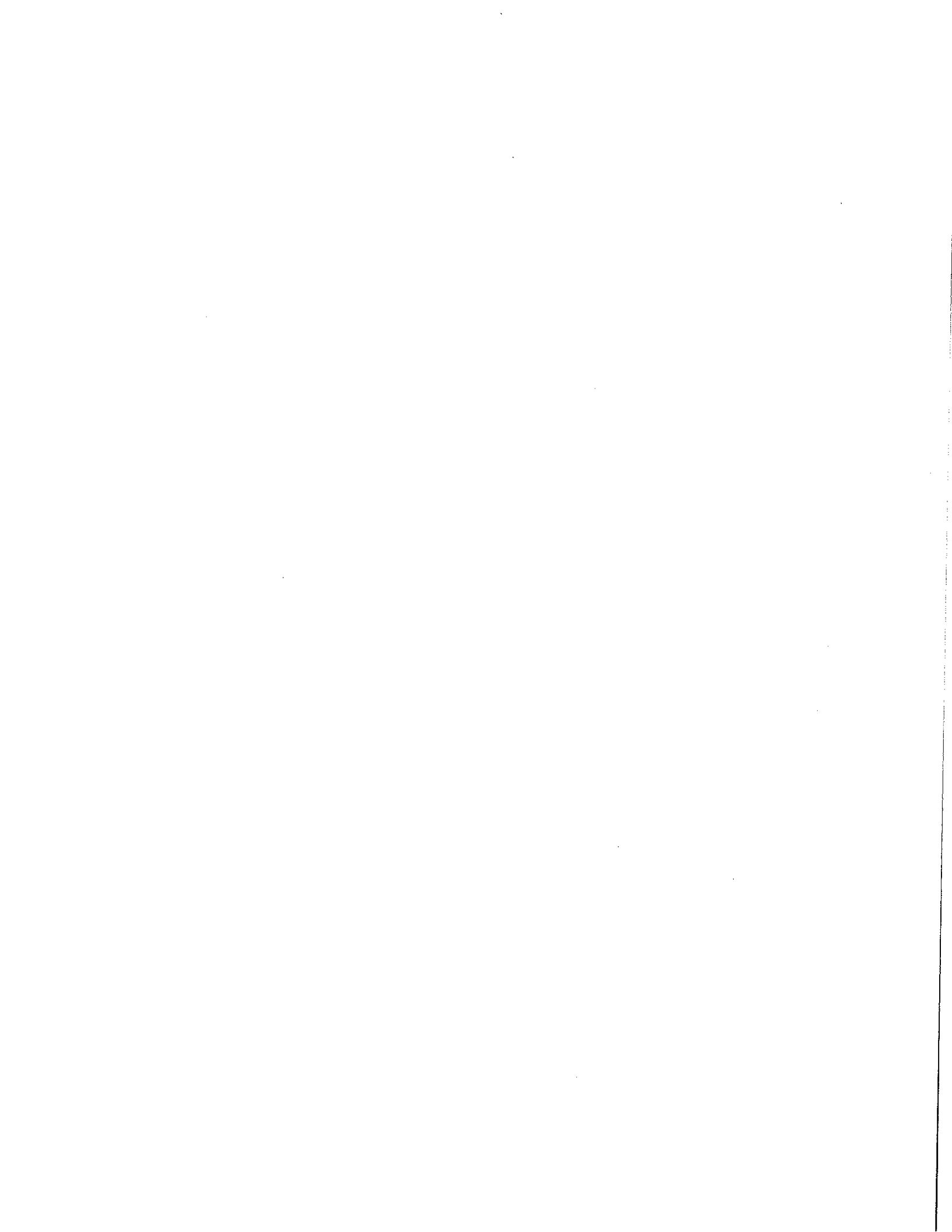
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A sheet like this should accompany each proposed floor policy and should record the date of the governing body vote approving the proposal. It should include a brief (one or two sentence) policy statement, a statement about the municipal interest served by the proposal, and an explanation which describes the nature of the problem or concern from a municipal perspective and discusses the proposed action which is being advocated to address the problem. Fax to 224-5406; mail to 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord, NH 03301; email to [governmentalaffairs@nhmunicipal.org](mailto:governmentalaffairs@nhmunicipal.org). **Must be received by August 15, 2014.**





## 2015-2016 NHMA Legislative Policy Process Questions & Answers

**1. What is the purpose of establishing NHMA legislative policy?** The New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) is the voice of New Hampshire's cities and towns before the state legislature and state agencies. Adoption of legislative policy allows your municipal voice to be heard through the actions of your organization – NHMA. By adopting legislative policy, local officials can tell elected representatives what they feel are the major concerns of cities and towns.

The NHMA Board of Directors oversees NHMA's advocacy activities. Legislative policy positions direct the board and NHMA staff in representing municipalities before the legislature and state agencies.

**2. How are legislative policy recommendations prepared?** In the spring of each even-numbered year, NHMA forms legislative policy committees addressing different aspects of municipal government. The three committees this year are:

1. Finance and Revenue;
2. General Administration and Governance; and
3. Infrastructure, Development and Land Use.

These three policy committees consider issues and problems derived from their own experience as local officials, issues sent in by other members or brought to them by staff, past policy positions, and issues resulting from the most recent legislative session. Each committee holds several meetings during the spring and develops policy recommendations to be voted on by member municipalities at the Legislative Policy Conference.

**3. Who votes on adoption, amendment, or rejection of these recommendations, and when?** On Friday, September 26, 2014, at 9:00 a.m., the 2015-2016 NHMA Legislative Policy Conference will be held at NHMA offices (25 Triangle Park Drive) in Concord. *Each member municipality will be asked to appoint a voting delegate to cast its vote at this conference.* Each member municipality, regardless of size, has one vote on all policy matters.

In the absence of any other designation by the Board of Selectmen, Aldermen, or Council, a voting delegate card will be issued at the door (in order of priority determined by the NHMA Municipal Officials Directory) to:

Mayor/Chair of Board of Selectmen/Council Chair

**OR**

Mayor Pro Tem/Vice or Assistant Mayor/Council Vice Chair

**OR**

Selectman/Alderman/Councilor

**OR**

City or Town Manager/Administrative Assistant

**4. Will other policy proposals be voted on at the conference?** Yes, municipalities will have the opportunity to submit floor policy proposals for consideration at the conference. Each floor policy proposal must be approved by the governing body of the municipality submitting it, but the

proposals will not be reviewed or recommended by NHMA's legislative policy committees. Floor policy proposals will be voted on separately at the conference.

**5. How does our voting delegate determine a position on these recommendations?** We urge each municipality's governing body to discuss the recommendations in advance of the Legislative Policy Conference and vote to take a position on each one, in order to give direction to the voting delegate. Otherwise, your voting delegate is free to cast your municipality's vote as he or she desires.

**6. How are the policy recommendations presented and voted on at the Legislative Policy Conference?** The chair of the board of directors, as the presiding officer of the Legislative Policy Conference, introduces the entire set of recommendations of each policy committee, one committee at a time, as a slate. The co-chairs of each committee will be available to address questions. Any voting delegate may ask that a recommendation be set aside to be debated and voted on separately. The remaining recommendations are voted upon as a slate. When the slate from each policy committee has been voted, the voting delegates will then return to those items set aside for separate debate and vote. It is at this time that individual items can be killed, amended, passed over, laid on the table, etc. Votes are by a display of special voting delegate cards.

**7. Are policies adopted by a simple majority vote?** No. NHMA's by-laws require a two-thirds affirmative vote of all members present and voting for approval of any NHMA legislative policy.

**8. Why is the Legislative Policy Conference separate from the November annual meeting?** The Legislative Policy Conference must be held before the annual conference in order to meet the legislative deadlines for the filing of new bills. The staff needs time after adoption of policies to draft bills and secure sponsors.

**9. How will I know what policies are adopted if I don't go to the Legislative Policy Conference?** The final 2015-2016 NHMA Legislative Policies will be printed as a supplement in the November/December, 2014 issue of *Town & City* magazine. We will also post them on the NHMA's web site at [www.nhmunicipal.org](http://www.nhmunicipal.org).

**10. What happens if an issue that is not covered by any of these policies comes before the legislature?** The NHMA Board determines the position that the staff will advocate on issues not covered by specific NHMA Legislative Policy. The policy conference also endorses a set of 10 Legislative Principles, which augment the specific legislative policy positions by setting forth general principles that guide staff in their advocacy efforts.