



# COUNTY NEWS

## Maine County Commissioners Association Newsletter

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2017 spending package. The federal government is currently funded through a continuing resolution (P.L. 114-254) that expires on April 28. To avoid a government shutdown, lawmakers must pass either an omnibus spending bill – a compilation of appropriations bills – or a new continuing resolution that would keep the government funded at current levels. Of note for counties, these proposed cuts include a 50 percent reduction to the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) program. Additionally, the president's request eliminates the TIGER infrastructure investment grant program and reduces funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program by 11 percent, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMSHA) mental health block grant by 20 percent and the Community Services Block Grant by (CSBG) by 43 percent. Tax reform heating up: Republican leaders in the White House and Congress have identified comprehensive tax reform as a major goal for the 115th Congress. While the path forward remains uncertain, tax reform could impact two major county priorities: the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds and the state and local tax (SALT) deduction.

*~ Click here to read more in the full article by NACo writer Jack Peterson*



## County Of Waldo inc. 1827

*Working for A Better Tomorrow*

### Brownfields Remediation Work



To Start On  
Old Jailer's  
House, Old  
Jail And Barn



On April 13, 2017, the County of Waldo received bid proposals for remediation of hazardous materials in the Old Jail, former Jail Keeper's House and barn at 45 Congress Street in Belfast. This cleanup work will start as soon as the Commissioners announce the company awarded the project.

With great assistance in the application process from the City of Belfast and Ransom Consulting, Inc., the County of Waldo was awarded \$200,000.00 in Brownfields EPA Cleanup Grant Funds in late 2014 to remediate and repurpose these historical structures. Since then, the County has been working on emptying the buildings and preparing the buildings for remediation. The Commissioners have held public meetings to discuss planning and potential reuse. They have also been working with DEP, the State Historical Preservation Office, and Ransom Consulting as the qualified environmental professional in planning for the cleanup project.

At present, affordable housing is extremely hard to come by in Waldo County and the Old Jail Keeper's House and barn have the potential to be converted into some type of economy housing.

The County plans to convert the Old Jail to climate-controlled archival records storage for the County to comply with State statutes on records preservation.



The County of Waldo has operated a self-funded health insurance plan since 2008. During the past nine years, the cost of the County's plan has only increased a total of 12%. Part of keeping insurance costs so low is directly related to Waldo County's very successful Wellness Committee. Another factor has been the inclusion of an excellent prescription benefit program within the plan, keeping co-payments at a very reasonable cost.

As an example of the plan's affordability, for employee/spouse coverage, the employee contributes \$184.00 monthly toward the premium, with the County paying the rest. The Commissioners are extremely pleased to report that this self-funded insurance plan has saved taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars since its inception.



### Waldo County Operating Debt-Free

The Waldo County Commissioners are very frugal and since 2011, Waldo County has operated debt-free. The philosophy of the Commissioners is, "If we can't pay for it, we can't afford it."

The Waldo County Departments Heads have strongly supported the Commissioners in this effort. During annual budget preparation, when the Commissioners review the departmental budget requests for the following year, seldom do the Commissioners need to make any changes to those budgets. Commissioner William Shorey sums it up well - "Everybody in Waldo County watches the dime."



### Waldo County Garden Flourishing in 7<sup>th</sup> Season

Seven years ago, the County of Waldo started a garden project on five acres of leased farmland. Commissioner William Shorey has managed the project with strong support from the Sheriff and Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center staff. The produce is harvested and delivered to local food cupboards, soup kitchens, church groups, and the YMCA in Waldo County. Before the 5-year lease expired, the garden had expanded to the point that additional land was needed. In 2014, Waldo County purchased the adjacent 60 acres of the farm. The prior owners were thrilled that this land would remain productive farmland. The project grew steadily over the years and the 2016 harvest yielded 80,000 lbs. of fresh vegetables. A building was also constructed on the property in 2016 to house farming equipment.

For the 2017 season, Commissioner Shorey and his crew are gearing up to plant 10 acres, and production is anticipated to be in excess of 100,000 lbs. This project has improved the quality and availability of fresh vegetables for many families in Waldo County. It has also served as a very productive program for reentry clients, who have learned many farming skills and experienced the benefit of giving back to the community. The garden produces all of the standard vegetables, and for the past two years, a fruit orchard of 50 trees has been developed. The trees are young, just starting to produce and will hit their peak in about 3 to 4 years. The County Commissioners are extremely pleased that this garden project delivers a great benefit to the citizens of Waldo County.



Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center residents have a great motivator to start their day on Tuesdays. For the past few months, Captain Robert Walker has been blending healthy

"smoothies" and inviting staff and residents alike to meet on Tuesday mornings between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. to start the day with healthy drinks and conversation.

Volunteers of America staff member Bill Browning wrote the grant for the large, industrial-size smoothie machine and Vita Mix, which is a nutritional vegetable protein mix used as the base of these smoothies. Captain Walker has experimented with a variety of fruits along with peanut butter to create these delicious and healthful concoctions. It draws a crowd of early risers who mingle quietly in the Reentry Kitchen to enjoy time with each other and with the staff. Captain Walker reports that once the County Garden starts producing, vegetable smoothies will be added to the menu.

County Clerk Barbara Arseneau was recently invited to participate in "Smoothie Tuesday". She was pleased to be included and says it was a great pleasure to see staff and residents alike, working together to set up mugs and cups, enjoying Captain Walker's delicious blueberry/peanut butter smoothie, visiting quietly together and chatting about the upcoming day. She noted that several of the staff and residents cheerfully cleaned up afterward.

Major Porter reports that it "really motivates" the residents to get going, provides an opportunity to try different healthy smoothie options and it affords the staff productive communication time with the residents.

