



COUNTY NEWS

Maine County Commissioners Association Newsletter

In this issue:

- Tax Reform Brings Changes for Counties
- Featuring Hancock County
- Hancock County Workforce Recovery Program
- 2017 A Year in Review Administrator's Report
- Hancock County Thrives

Tax reform brings changes for counties

Work remains on tax reform as House and Senate try to reconcile differences in bills. As the end of the year approaches, the pace of tax reform only seems to quicken. On Dec. 1, the U.S. Senate passed its version of comprehensive tax reform (an amended version of H.R. 1) on a 51 to 49 vote, with Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) casting the only Republican vote against the package over budget deficit concerns (all 48 Democratic and Independent senators voted no). This follows House passage of H.R. 1 on Nov. 16. While the two versions share many similarities, there are also significant differences between the bills the two chambers now must resolve. The Senate bill, for example, phases out individual tax rate cuts after 2025, delays implementation of the lower corporate tax rate until 2019, repeals the individual mandate established under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and has a larger child tax credit — all of which diverge from the House bill. The two bills, and any final tax reform package, could have significant impacts on counties. For starters, the bills passed by both chambers would eliminate significant portions of the state and local tax (SALT) deduction, which provides state and local control over tax revenues. The legislation would retain a capped property tax deduction for individuals up to \$10,000, but few would be able to access this deduction. These changes also could constitute the federal government directing states and local governments to rely on a specific type of tax revenue, creating more competition between counties and state governments over property taxes.

~Click here to read the full article by NACo's Associate Legislative Director Jack Peterson.



HANCOCK COUNTY WORKFORCE RECOVERY PROGRAM

BY TIMOTHY RICHARDSON
JAIL ADMINISTRATOR



The Hancock County Jail is a 58-bed facility and is consistently at or over housing capacity. A large percentage of the jail's resident population is currently fighting a substance abuse problem. These addictions include alcohol and drugs. The inmate population's substance abuse is consistent with the struggles of non-incarcerated individuals. The residents held at The Hancock County Jail have a very unique opportunity. Unlike an individual that is not incarcerated, the jail's residents have an opportunity to focus on their recovery with fewer distractions. They do not have to worry about their next meal, a place to sleep or constant pressures from individuals that are not supportive of recovery. These individuals are often seeking the path to sobriety.

Prior to the implementation of The Hancock County Work Force Development Program, the residents of The Hancock County Jail had variety of programs available. Many of these programs are still available at this time. The Hancock County Jail provides as much inmate programming as possible. The programs offered are "self contained"; each volunteer works with individuals or groups that meet their programming criteria. The jail's operational budget is the major barrier for inmate programming. This budget limits staffing and potential funding for program growth. The Hancock County Jail is blessed to have a group of volunteers that work closely with the resident population. This group of volunteers is the strength of the inmate program.

~Click here to read the entire article!



Hancock County Thrives!

Despite being a very attractive area for tourism with places such as Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park; Hancock County is getting a boost from economic activity particularly in the Ellsworth area. Known as the gateway to Acadia, the surrounding area along Routes 1A & 3 are experiencing significant growth in business & services. Several projects are either in development or currently under construction for retail and office spaces. As well, to help support the increase in labor demands, housing projects are planned for several key areas in the region.

The one project that gets most of the attention and deservedly so is the new Jackson Laboratory Facility at the former Lowe's Home Improvement site on Kingsland Crossing. This 140,000 square-foot building will be the home of their new mouse vivarium where they breed research mice for sale to biomedical clients worldwide. Currently, they are expecting to have 100 employees at the beginning and grow to over 230 as things expand. Jackson Laboratory currently has a large facility on MDI in Bar Harbor.

As indicated prior, this project will sustain and initiate even more growth as it continues to operate and expand over the coming years!! Hancock County Government will be there to provide the necessary services and look to grow as well.

The County Commissioners took advantage of TIF funds and Community Benefit monies associated with the two wind farm projects, Bull Hill & Hancock Wind, to supplement other programs and services of benefit to the people of Hancock County. One of the uses was to establish a single year property tax reimbursement for Veteran's in all of the communities for around \$100,000. Each year the Commission has attempted to make financial awards to deserving local agencies or groups at \$50-75,000 resulting in the 2017 completion of the Mt. Waldo communications tower install which significantly enhanced emergency communications to a much-needed area of Hancock County. As the funds continue to grow, the Commissioners are making effort at developing a game plan for the best most productive use of these monies.



YEAR IN REVIEW

Administrator's Report by Scott Adkins

Hancock County has experienced tremendous growth & productivity since we last appeared in the newsletter about a year ago. I would be remiss if I didn't give credit to the great staff here on campus and the cooperative efforts between the Commission, elected officials & administration. It's been a pleasure to serve as County Administrator during this time.

The Commission of Hancock County went through some changes in 2017. As a result of the 2016 elections, Steven Joy, District I was replaced by the incoming William Clark who is the former Sheriff in Hancock County. Now serving in his second term as Commissioner, Antonio Blasi was elected by the board as Chair. The third Commissioner from District II is Percy Brown, Jr. who is in his 4th term. The Administrator is thankful for their service and cooperation over the past year as we make great strides. In addition, the Commission fulfilled its goal of having a Deputy Administrator with the promotion of Rebekah Knowlton to that position.

I can't decide who should go first so I will just go by department number!! EMA (Emergency Management Agency), Andrew Sankey, Director, has had a very busy and productive year. There were a couple of good storms during the year including a dangerous one around the Halloween holiday. Along with his capable staff of Brad Nuding, Deputy Director, and Helen; Andy keeps the citizens of Hancock County well informed and organized.



The District Attorney's Office, DA Matthew Foster at the helm, still continues to operate efficiently and effectively despite the volume of cases. Here in Hancock County, we are not much different than most of the state, where we continue to battle the opioid drug problem from all directions. Recently, the Attorney General's office provided grant

funding to supply additional help with regards to impaired driving. Considering new legislation in place & coming regarding marijuana, this is much welcomed assistance.

In the 911 Regional Communications Center (RCC), we unfortunately lost the services of Director Renee Wellman as she chose to pursue other endeavors. Hancock County is currently in the process of finding a replacement, but the very highly qualified staff of dispatchers continue to provide top notch emergency dispatch services to its citizens. Speaking of the staff, the two new hires from a few months ago are now up and running their own "chairs/seats" in the dispatch center which brings us to full staffing for the first time in a long while. We look to continue to strengthen this department in 2018!!

Registry of Deeds, Registrar Julie Curtis, and Registry of Probate, Registrar Gale Coughlin, both continue to handle a high volume of cases and corresponding paperwork. As most in County government know, we rely on those revenues to assist in the running of these departments. We have also invested in new or updated technology and equipment to assist in efficient delivery of services.

Under the direction of Sheriff Scott Kane, the Hancock County Sheriff's Office and Hancock County Jail continue to proudly supply law enforcement services to its citizens. The SO received donations for a K-9 unit several months ago and recently has put the K-9 into use with expected future funding for enhancement of services. Despite the continued funding constraints, the Jail tirelessly operates effectively as we persistently battle for appropriate monies to sustain a proper budget. As well, the Civil division continues to serve the citizens productively with the delivery of legal documents.

~Click here to read more!

