



2019 Has been an active year for Cumberland County. We've continued to find new ways to branch out into service offerings, collaborations and efficiencies in our communities, and find ways to guide the region toward working together to solve our problems and capitalize on our strengths. Here are a few examples of new initiatives that the County launched or expanded on last year.

Municipal HR Services

Over the past two years, the County has heard from Town Managers that County Human Resource services would be a benefit to their organization. Many communities do not have the luxury of having a designated staff person, or any additional capacity to take on some complex HR issues in-house. With Federal and State employment laws ever changing, many communities have a difficult time keeping up on the latest laws or best practices in the field. Many times this results in a call to their Corporation Counsel (outside law firm), which can be expensive.

In an attempt to address some of these needs, the County has developed a list of HR services to be offered through the County's Human Resources Office. This past October, Cumberland County staff made themselves available to answer questions or provide guidance on the following topics:

Human Resource Generalized Employment Questions

Personnel Management - Discipline - Due Process - Workplace Behavior - Performance

FMLA, Workers Comp, ADA, Extended Leave of Absences – guidance, spreadsheet-tracking model

Workplace Investigations Guidance –Consultation - Conduct

Wage & Hour – Fair Labor Standards – Withholdings – Getting Pay Right

Employee Resources – HR Checklists

The above list is the first phase of a multi-stage HR service rollout. Additional HR services may be provided to the cities/towns once we determine the level of need and time commitment of existing County staff. At this time, we are gauging interest and have not opted to work from a fee-based system with the exception of those services taking a significant amount of staff time (i.e. conducting and reporting on an internal investigation).

CDBG Administration

Cumberland County receives an annual allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 2019, the County received \$1,523,331 in CDBG funds. These funds are then distributed through a competitive process to participating towns and cities across Cumberland County. In recent years the funds have been used for a variety of public infrastructure and social service programs, such as building a health clinic and wharf improvements on Long Island; building improvements to the Steep Falls Library, Bridgton Community Center, and Orr's and Bailey Island Fire Station; homeless prevention and domestic violence prevention programs; and recreation improvements in South Portland, Bridgton, Westbrook, and Casco. In addition to Cumberland County's allocation of CDBG funds, the City of Portland received \$1,893,566 in CDBG for similar public infrastructure and social service programs. These funds go a long way in helping to improve the quality of life for all residents living throughout Cumberland County.

The City of Portland and Cumberland County receive a joint annual allocation of HOME Partnership funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 2019 the City of Portland/Cumberland County HOME consortium received \$1,020,693. These funds are used to build new affordable housing units for Cumberland County residents. Recent projects include the building of Larreebee Commons, improvements to Larreebee Woods in Westbrook, and improvements to Avesta Blackstone senior housing in Falmouth. Avesta has also been awarded HOME funds for two new projects along Westbrook Street in South Portland.

EMA COOP/Youth Fire Safety

This year, Cumberland County EMA began Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning within Cumberland County government. This planning will help to ensure that, in the event of a disaster, the county can continue to provide needed services to its constituents. Continuity involves setting into policy the orders of succession and delegation of authority needed to keep operations ongoing, figuring out which functions are so essential that they must continue with in interruption (e.g., county law enforcement, jail operations, emergency management, etc.). Deciding which personnel and resources would be needed--for either a partial or full move of operations to another location--is another critical task.

This is an ongoing process, but Cumberland County has developed the Base plan, which provides general direction and control, and is now working on Departmental Annexes. These annexes will give detailed guidance to each department on who, how, and when the plan will be activated. The process has included the necessity of some personnel policy changes. It is a challenging process but the major benefit is a thorough re-thinking of how we could accomplish our mission under adverse circumstances.

The Cumberland County Youth Fire Safety Collaborative (CCYFSC) position was formed and funded this year in partnership with the Cumberland County Fire Chief's Association (CCFCA) to create a formally managed program that provides assessments and education to youths involved in fire setting behavior. The CCYFSC is open to and consists of fire, police, and EMS personnel from many of the communities in Cumberland County. Additional stakeholders include representatives from the Department of Corrections- Juvenile Justice Division, Forest Rangers, social workers and clinicians, and other interested

individuals including representation from the State Fire Marshal's office. It is currently staffed by one part time employee in the Emergency Management Agency office and has potential to grow as education and awareness of the program is increased.

BROADBAND

Cumberland County continues to work on initiatives that will improve connectedness and access to broadband resources in our communities. We performed a major study throughout the first half of the year, identifying all existing fiber resources in the County and what it would take to create new products and services through a town-by-town analysis. The challenge in Cumberland County is that service is mostly good in most places - so in the places where it isn't good, there isn't enough pent-up demand to force change. But the report will be a useful guide for every town and taxpayer to understand what exists, and what they might need to do to change or improve it. We're also using the report as guidance in launching County-sponsored wi-fi hotspots in the communities that have down towns or parks where people congregate, and especially where there might be a need for more free access due to economic or geographic conditions. We expect to begin planning within the next few weeks, and to launch the first round of free County hotspots across Cumberland County in 2020.

BROWNTAIL MOTHS

Many of you participated in lobbying efforts launched by Cumberland County this year to support University funds that would be dedicated toward research to eradicate the browntail moth. This effort came about as managers began to highlight the problem with more urgency at county-wide manager meetings. We formed a smaller working group of the towns that were struggling with the moth so we could focus on the singular issue, invited guest presenters and researched options. When we finally determined that the best (or only) viable option was research, we developed a legislative strategy. The County ran point in this effort, creating a central entity to work on the issue, gather legislative support, corral testimony and develop a cohesive message. The result was a widely coordinated effort, resulting in two different vehicles to fund research that ended 2019 in strong positions. It was a great example of how effective counties can be as representatives for uniquely local issues that spread across multiple towns.

MAT AT THE JAIL

We don't have to tell you how complicated this issue is. In Cumberland County, where we're operating a jail that is closer to the size of a prison, managing SUD treatment in the middle of an opiate epidemic is phenomenally difficult to figure out. We have established a system that works for people who come into the jail and are already on a managed treatment plan, and are now looking at how to expand that program into the Greater Portland recovery community. Earlier this year we won a technical assistance grant through a private foundation, which allowed Cumberland County to create an action team including members from the jail, our medial contractor, the Portland Police Department and the regional treatment community, with a goal of creating a seamless handoff back to the treatment community when an inmate is released - which is absolutely critical to support their long-term sobriety and reduce recidivism at the jail. We just learned that our work through the TA grant has made us

eligible to apply for more funds through the foundation to work toward implementation, so we expect to announce more developments on this subject in 2020.