



# COUNTY NEWS

## Maine County Commissioners Association Newsletter

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For rural counties, broadband internet supports commerce, medicine, agriculture and educational opportunities that even the playing field in attracting and retaining residents and steadying economic health. Broadband serves as a rural lifeline and building block. For example, Lori Shaw came home to Coalstrip, Mont. from Bozeman. She was in her mid-20s, a prized demographic for rural Rosebud County. She started a pet care business, visiting houses and caring for animals. Within a year business was booming and the income allowed her to start an activist movement supporting the state's coal industry and environmentalism. Shaw marketed her business in town on social media. Even more critically, her activism relied on social media to spread messaging statewide. But there was a drawback to life in her town of 2,300, located 30 miles from an interstate. "Fifty percent of the time, I don't have internet," she said. "I'm paying for it, but I can't get it. A lot of my clients will need me on the fly and they'll message me, and I just won't get it until it's too late".

This is food for thought. Collectively, we need to work to expand the infrastructure to achieve the common goal to be able to provide a standard level of service to all. [~Click here to read more.](#)



**Trunk-or-Treat** HALLOWEEN OCTOBER 31 This year will mark the second annual Sheriff's Office, "Trunk or Treat" event in the Sheriff's Office parking lot on October 31st. A cruiser will be decorated, and deputies will help hand out candy to all the little creatures that come to trick-or-treat. This community outreach event is scheduled from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. so it happens before dark. The popular activity gives kids and parents a chance to interact with law enforcement in a healthy, positive way. Kids can feel safe, and parents will have peace of mind that the candy hasn't been tampered with. Last year's turnout was more than a hundred children, and this year is expected to be greater.



The Department of Labor visited Knox County on September 13, 2018 inspected and reviewed each department which included looking at all safety training records, and visually walked all work areas. Knox County received its initial SHAPE certification in 2016. This process for 2018 was for Knox County to be recertified. Once final approval has been determined Knox County will be certified for all departments of Knox County. The DOL was very impressed with how far we have come in the last two years. Upon receiving the 2018 SHAPE certification, the award will be presented at a future Commission Meeting and our recertification is for an additional two years.

### One Woman's Journey as a County Commissioner

~ By Carol L. Maines, District 1



When I first became a Knox County Commissioner, nearly eight years ago now, I was a little worried. I had previously served on the Rockland City Council, and before that, as Rockland City Attorney. Those positions had given me plenty of insight into how passionate the electorate can be about its local government.

Soon after I was sworn in as Commissioner, Knox County implemented personnel changes recommended by a salary study. Some County positions had earlier been eliminated as a result of an organizational study, and the salary study proposed an increase of compensation for other positions, by several thousand dollars in a few cases. The budget hearings right before the implementation were pretty rough, with outraged citizens packing the hearing room, carrying signs and charts. County employees were, for the most part, supportive of the changes, but many hesitated to say so because of the negative reaction of the audience. I wondered whether it would be like this for my entire term.

Thankfully, the controversy gradually abated, and there were few county-related matters that drew public attention for either the rest of that term, or during my next four-year term. In fact, I think the citizens of Knox County seemed to look favorably upon the way the County government was run during these years. For example, voters approved a bond issue to acquire and renovate additional space for the Regional Dispatch Center, the Sheriff's Office and Emergency Management, a result which somewhat surprised the Commission and County Administrator. The public also supported the replacement of the disintegrating trailers which were used as the passenger terminal of the Owls Head Airport, with a new, spacious energy-efficient structure. During this time, the County made many needed repairs and updates to the historic Knox County Courthouse, much of the work having been postponed for years.

All in all, my initial misgivings about serving on the Commission were dispelled as the years passed. The competence of the County Administrator, Andrew Hart, and the congeniality of the other Commissioners with whom I served, Roger Moody, Rick Parent and Sharyn Pohlman, made my tenure predominantly satisfying and rewarding.

We completed the runway extension adding 400 feet to the long runway, 13/31 in 2017. This improvement has been in the planning stages for several years. The first time a runway extension was seriously contemplated was during the creation of the 2009 Airport's Business Plan. The FAA had indicated our 5000-foot runway was at the edge of safe operations for some of the jets using our airport, especially in inclement weather. In addition, several aircraft users who frequently fly into and out of our airport, indicated they were often not able to put on enough fuel to fly to their destinations (Europe, West Coast, Caribbean, etc) and were required to make an intermediate stop, just to upload fuel. This extra stop increased the environmental impact of these flights and shifted fuel sales to other airports. Consideration of a modest extension to the runway was included in the Business Plan as a future goal. The FAA and our engineering firm, Stantec, conducted an Environmental Assessment of the impacts and alternatives to lengthening the runway. It was determined the runway could be extended, to the northwest, within the current airport boundaries and without impacting the approaches. This distance would also accommodate the fuel load requirements for most of the aircraft using the airport. The study also determined the extension would shrink the aircraft noise footprint, especially on the southeast end of the runway. The results of this study were incorporated into the airport's 2015 Master Plan. The \$3M project was funded in 2017 and 2018, through the FAA's Airport Improvement Program. This grant program provides 90% of the funding from the FAA, the State of Maine provides 5% and the County provides 5%. The extension was completed in 2017 with some additional work in 2018. The extension allowed Downeast Air's fuel sales for the last quarter of 2017 to increase by 15%. The longer runway also allowed Switchback Aviation to replace their 2011 Cessna 525 (a \$9M aircraft) with a 2014 Gulfstream 280 (a \$24M aircraft) to enable them to fly non-stop from RKD to Europe. This one aircraft swap has significantly increased the aircraft excise taxes the airport receives. In addition, two other airport users have committed to keeping their aircraft at Knox County Regional Airport (rather than frequently flying in and out) and have requested to build hangars on the airport (private hangars are a significant source of revenue for the Town of Owls Head).

### Knox County Jail Garden

Every year the jail plants gardens that are tended by the Inmates from start to finish, from tilling up the soil, fertilizing, planting, weeding/watering, harvesting and turning the soil back in the Fall. There are about two (2) acres that get planted. What gets planted varies from year to year, but usually the crops consist of corn, squash, cucumbers, peas, lettuce, cabbage, potatoes, tomatoes, beans and something "fun," like pumpkins or cooking herbs, such as basil. The Inmates harvest the crops, which are used in the jail kitchen to supplement the Inmate meals. When the harvest produces more than can be eaten or stored before it goes bad, those vegetables are donated to local charities, such as Salvation Army, local nursing homes, or the vocational cooking school to use for their classes. (This year we had a few daily deer, and Canada Geese that helped themselves to everything so there were no leftovers.) When pumpkins get planted, leftover pumpkins get donated to local grade schools or childcare facilities. The garden program also includes a tractor safety course.



### The Chicken Coup

At the Knox County Jail, there is also a chicken coop maintained by one inmate for the duration of his/her time there. The inmate feeds the chickens and provides water, keeps the coop clean and in good repair, gathers eggs, and reports on the condition of the chickens. The inmates have access to books about raising and taking care of chickens which are kept in the shed with the chicken feed and can be referred to at any time. On average, there are usually twenty (20) chickens in the coop. All of the eggs go directly to the jail kitchen for consumption, which means there are no leftovers.



Arial view of the airport before the new extension.

