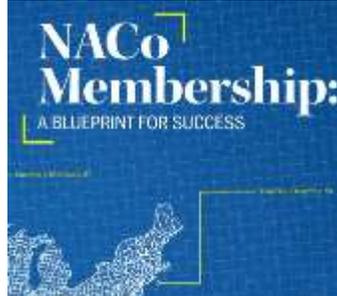


# COUNTY NEWS

## Maine County Commissioners Association Newsletter

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John Losh with MCCA President Tom Coward

Membership Outreach Manager John Losh recently participated in the 2018 Convention of Maine Counties as a presenter and an exhibitor. His presentation, *NACo Membership: A Blueprint for Success*, highlighted the many benefits and advantages of belonging to NACo. Too much data for most of us to remember, John graciously shared his PowerPoint slides with MCCA staff for inclusion on the NACo web page of the Association website. [~Click here to see the full presentation now.](#)

#### NACo provides value to our member counties through:

- Federal Policy Advocacy
- Cost-Saving Solutions
- County Centered Learning & Research
- Member Engagement



It was great to see so many of you in Portland at the MCCA summit in September. We hope you enjoyed your visit here and found the sessions to be as useful and informative as we did. Special thanks to MCCA and the team of committee members who worked for months to make the event a professional, well-attended gathering of perspectives and visions for county government.

Much has changed in Cumberland County since the last time we reported to you in this newsletter. Throughout his first full year as County Manager, Jim Gailey has evolved the makeup of the Executive Team in order to streamline management functions and improve our capability to identify and act on regional needs.

The concept of regional collaboration is really starting to gain steam here, as communities struggle with replacing key employees, embarking on major projects and meeting specialized local needs. We're trying to take a reasoned and responsive approach to the issues that our communities are identifying and seeing a lot of new space where county government may be able to help - if nothing else at first, as a convener and matchmaker.

In 2018 we have also embarked on efforts to support regional broadband expansion, grown our service offerings, battled Brownail moths and explored other projects and collaborations that can save money and improve services for our communities. We're excited to continue building on our new model and becoming the force for collaboration, efficiency and problem-solving that we know our branch of government is capable of. Here are a few highlights of our recent work:



This year, Cumberland County added Gorham and Baldwin to our regional assessing program. We've also received significant interest from a few other towns who are interested in coming on board.

North Yarmouth, Standish and Sebago joined the Regional Communications Center, bringing the total of participating towns to nineteen.

Through Cumberland County's unique position as a direct receiver in the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), we distributed almost \$1.4 million in federal funds to a wide range of projects across the County in 2017 through a competitive process administered by volunteers from a strong geographic range of our cities and towns. We will distribute a little more than that amount in the 2018 program year. Funding supported a wide range of projects including group home rehabilitation, wheelchair ramps, road construction to Habitat for Humanity homes, broadband planning and construction, new public water systems, historic building repairs, recreation courts, refrigeration units for food pantries and a host of other critical improvements.

### Major Projects:



**BROADBAND** - Several Cumberland County municipalities suffer from a lack of access to affordable, high speed broadband. Even consumers living along major arteries in the County report that they cannot gain access to acceptable speeds for home and business use. These towns have come to accept that a private sector solution is unlikely, and so they are exploring municipal investment. But an individual community venturing into the world of municipal broadband will run into countless roadblocks: from absorbing the cost of construction and maintenance, to the complexity of make-ready negotiations, to establishing service contracts, to the question of whether usage rates will support the investment long term. A combination of these barriers - risk, cost and complexity - can stop a municipally-supported broadband project in its tracks. Based on feedback from our community leaders, Cumberland County has made access to broadband a priority goal. With limited resources and no home rule, our capability to support this goal lies in planning, education, advocacy, and very strategic funding. Early in 2018, Cumberland County secured a planning grant of \$25,000 through the Community Development Block Grant Program to help interested communities form a regional utility; and a construction grant for a portion of their multi-town project when they are ready to move forward. We released our planning grant RFP in the last week of September, and are excited to support our communities by collecting and distributing the resources that they need to make smart decisions

**SOLAR** - Cumberland County has begun to explore the potential for solar arrays on some County properties - in particular the Cross Insurance Arena, where financial modeling suggests that we could save County taxpayers up to \$1.5 million over the 40-year life of the system in electrical costs.



Following are a few pictures from the Convention of Maine Counties Hosted by Cumberland County.

