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September 20, 2019

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Municipal Clerks: Please forward to your Mayor, Governing Body and Department Heads.

I. State Issues

a. League Provides Testimony to Senate Committee on WQAA

Earlier this week the League was invited to provide [testimony](#) before the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee concerning the administration of the [Water Quality Accountability Act](#). The Act became effective in October of 2017 and requires public water systems with more than 500 service connections to create and implement an asset management plan designed to inspect, maintain, repair, and renew the system's infrastructure. The Act also specifies a methodology for routinely testing valves and hydrants, and requires the development of a cybersecurity system.

The Committee is holding hearings to gauge the success of the Act and determine what may need to be done to further support efforts to improve the safety, reliability, efficiency of the state's water systems. The League offered a variety of tools that could be made available or enforced for use by municipalities to support these goals. An additional hearing with further testimony from invited guests is scheduled for September 25.

The League would like to thank, Senator Singleton as chairman of the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee, as well as all other members of the Committee for allowing the League to participate in this important discussion. We look forward to partnering with the legislature to address this critical issue.

Contacts:

- Michael Cerra, Assistant Executive Director, mcerra@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x120.
- Frank Marshall, Esq., League Staff Attorney, fmarshall@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x137.

b. Bill that Could Mean Additional Municipal Obligations under the MLUL Heads to Governor

Last week, the NJ Senate voted to approve [A-1371/S-606](#), a bill which the League opposed. With the Assembly approving the measure early this summer the bill now goes to the Governor for his action. The intent of A-1371/S-606 is to encourage local units to plan for electric vehicle charging (EVC) infrastructure. This would be achieved through changes made to the “optional elements” of the municipal master plan and the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law. Under this bill municipalities could be required to show on their master plans existing and proposed locations of public electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

While the League appreciates the underlying intent, the bill places new, unnecessary and unfunded requirements on municipalities while running contrary to the clear legislative intent of the “optional” elements of the master plan. Further, it is unclear whether a municipality can properly plan and determine when EVC infrastructure is necessary or appropriate without a more comprehensive plan at the State level.

Contact: Frank Marshall, Esq., League Staff Attorney, fmarshall@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x137.

c. Looking Ahead to Lame Duck: Path to Progress’ Pension Hybrid Plan

As noted in the [Path to Progress Report](#), “the State’s combined pension and retiree health benefit liabilities of \$151.5 billion are four times the size of the State’s annual budget; and more than three times the size of the State’s bonded debt. That public employer debt represents \$16,772 for every one of New Jersey’s nine million residents. It will continue to grow every year. Without changes to the pension and benefit structure, the cost of pensions and benefits will rise by \$4.1 billion over the next four years and eat up 26 percent of the state budget.”

To address the strain of rising pension and benefits cost, Senate President Sweeney and Senators Oroho and O’Scanlon have introduced [S-3753](#), which establishes cash balance plans in PERS and TPAF for new public employees and employees with less than five years of service and makes various changes to PERS and TPAF retirement eligibility.

Besides increasing the retirement age to 67 years of age and increasing the years of creditable service from 25 years to 30 years, S-3753 creates a hybrid pension system for those employees hired on or after July 1, 2020 or for those with five years or less of creditable service as of July 1, 2020. Employees who have more than five years of creditable service as of July 1, 2020 will not be impacted by the changes proposed in S-3753. For more on S-3753 please see our recent [blog post](#).

The bill is part of the Path to Progress [bill package](#). In announcing the bill package Senate President Sweeney noted that “without pension & benefits reform we cannot invest in higher education or improving infrastructure. We cannot invest in the future of our state until we make long overdue reforms.” S-3753 could lead to lower pension costs for local employers.

Contact: Lori Buckelew, Senior Legislative Analyst, lbuckelew@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x112.

II. Federal Issues

a. Transit Submits New Portal Bridge Proposal to Feds

In another effort to end Federal inertia on the Portal Bridge project, New Jersey Transit (NJT) has forwarded a new funding plan to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The plan to finance construction of a new crossing was approved by the NJT Board on Thursday, September 12, and transmitted to the FTA on Friday the Thirteenth.

The latest NJT plan represents an honest effort to respond to previous Federal objections, which asked project proponents to identify dedicated funding sources and to account for possible cost overruns. NJT, taking the lead on this, has now identified \$600 million to earmark for the project. Amtrak, NJT's Portal Bridge project partner, has committed an additional \$55 million to the cause.

Acting FTC Administrator, K. Jane Williams, has indicated that the agency is in no hurry to evaluate the new plan. While calling the reworked proposal 'a new ballgame,' Administrator Williams anticipated her agency's review would take months.

The two-track swing-bridge was built by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1910. More than 450 Amtrak and NJT trains use the Portal Bridge, every day. NJT trains carry approximately 90,000 customers on an average weekday. The span must swing open to accommodate Hackensack River marine traffic. With increasing frequency, it can fail to fully close, causing hours of delays on the busiest section of the northeast rail corridor in both directions. The new bridge would be higher above the river, eliminating the need for stoppages related to nautical commerce.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x121.

b. House Passes Stop-Gap Federal Funding Bill

After an agreement was reached among the members of a bipartisan group of budget negotiators from both legislative chambers, the House of Representatives, on Thursday, passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund federal operations through November 21. Absent such an agreement, the threat of yet another government shut-down loomed, as the Federal Fiscal Year will end on September 30. The deal which was passed in the House, 301-123, will also extend the life of the National Flood Insurance Program.

The bill now moves to the Senate, which is expected to pass it next week.

The CR allows Federal agencies to commit funds in the upcoming Fiscal Year, on the assumption that final appropriations will equal the levels specified in the current Fiscal Year.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x121.

III. Annual League Conference

a. REMINDER: League Conference Deadlines

**ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION CENTER
NOVEMBER 19 - 21, 2019
CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**

You can register for a badge online or use the paper registration. Please do not create duplicate registrations by creating an online registration and paper registration or if you have already registered prior to this reminder notification.

- The Delegate Municipal Pre-Registration Form: [WORD](#) or [PDF](#) [Ends October 1, 2019]
- The Non-Municipal Pre-Registration Form: [WORD](#) or [PDF](#) [Ends October 1, 2019]
- Municipal Online Pre-Registration: [To Register online click here](#) [Ends October 1, 2019]

NJLM MEAL FUNCTION REGISTRATION FORMS NOW AVAILABLE TO PRINT

Please note attendees who wish to attend the League ticketed meal function must be registered for a conference badge. Ticketed meal function fees are separate from badge registration fees.

- Meal Function Form: [WORD](#) / [PDF](#)

b. NJLM Annual Conference Exhibit Booth Registration is Open!

Invite your vendors to exhibit at the 2019 NJLM Annual Conference and showcase their product or service to other municipalities. Exhibit space is over 90% sold out so contact your vendors today – or send us a note and we'll reach out to them! [The 2019 Exhibitor and Sponsorship Prospectus \(PDF\)](#), [Interactive Floor Plan](#) and [other exhibit information](#) can be downloaded on the League website.

Contact: Kristin Lawrence, Director of Exhibition and Sponsorships, 609-695-3481 x125, klawrence@njlm.org.

c. Reserve Your Hotel for the Annual League

Preparations for the Annual League Conference, November 19-21, are underway and the hotel reservations system is open for attendees and exhibitors at the [League Conference webpage](#).

There you will also see a preliminary schedule of conference sessions. Staying in Atlantic City for the Conference is a great way to get the most from your attendance at the Conference. Staying over will maximize your time and opportunities to participate in the educational, informational, and networking opportunities offered throughout the Annual League Conference.

d. Unauthorized Hotel Reservation Services

Every year unauthorized firms solicit housing and hotel reservations from attendees at the

Annual League Conference. We assure you that the only firm authorized to handle our conference housing reservations is AC Central Reservations. This information is on the top of the [official conference housing form](#) sent to all municipal clerks and posted on the League website.

Using unauthorized reservation services creates real problems for you and the conference as a whole. You cannot be assured your credit card information is secure and your room reservation may not actually be made. Using unauthorized services means your room will not be part of the official conference housing block and you will not get emergency housing information (which happened in both 2011 and 2012), nor will there be adequate shuttle bus services to your hotel.

As always, the League is available to answer your questions on any aspect of the annual conference and we strive to make your participation both enjoyable and highly productive.

Contact: Michael J. Darcy, CAE, Executive Director, mdarcy@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x116.

IV. Also of Interest

a. The League is Accepting Applications for the Innovation in Governance Program!

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities will again acknowledge and promote Innovation in Governance through our annual recognition program. This is a great opportunity to showcase innovative solutions to any problems that have cropped up – either suddenly or overtime – in your municipality. It can also be an opportunity to let your peers in on innovations that prevented problems from even arising.

Visit our awards page to see previous years of impressive ideas created by our winning municipalities as well as the [full invitation and application](#) to this year's program.

Contact: Ciara Bradley, Legislative Administrator, CBradley@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x128.





New Jersey State League of Municipalities

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