



**MeASBO**  
WGVSBO

## Newsletter for November 2023

### What's new



### Notes from your Executive Director, Joanne Allen

#### *Upcoming Meetings*

We will be on “hiatus” with in person meetings until March 1 when we will be hosted by the MidCoast School of Technology in Rockland. Our agenda will include “How to Prepare for Your Audit” presented by the RHR Smith team and, an Accounting Handbook presentation from Ida Batista, MDOE.

The Professional Development Committee is designing “Lunch and Learn” webinars for the months when our organization does not meet in person. Details are still being finalized but look for lunchtime webinars in December, January and February to include “Office Hours” with a panel subject matter experts, the CTE Funding Formula with MDOE, and more details on Fraud Prevention with Androscoggin Bank. Additional topics will be based on your survey responses; a big thank you to everyone who completed the survey. If you didn't complete the survey, there's still time; please reach out to [me](#) if you need the link.

Our full 2023-2024 meeting schedule may be found [here](#); virtual offerings will be included as soon as they are scheduled. And remember, [Tri-State](#) is May 22nd through May 24th – Maine is the host state this year and we look forward to seeing all of our Maine members there!



## November 17 Meeting Recap

Over 70 members spent the day at the Green Ladle with the MDOE Federal teams, discussing Federal Relief Programs, ESEA, and Local Entitlement. Topics covered included invoicing, monitoring, and time and effort. The team will be hosting office hours on November

30 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM for those of you with remaining questions about time and effort. Access to MDOE office hours may be found [here](#).

The full meeting recording will soon be accessible via our website's "Member Center/Meeting Archives" [link](#).



Thank you to our breakfast sponsor, Androscoggin Bank. Lena Hann and Christine Bishop provided an informative fraud presentation. Charlie Agnew and Lauren Grey from Competitive Energy Services also joined us.



## *Drummond Woodsum and MeASBO November 3 Law Seminar Recap provided by Sherry Moody, MeASBO Board of Directors*

Bill Stockmeyer opened the seminar with a quick summary of prior school approved construction projects, including the most current priority list. He went into an in-depth explanation of the school approval process and used the RSU 2 - Monmouth Middle School project as an example of the various steps including site approval, concept approval, design & funding and final funding approval. Emphasis was placed on the timelines and how critical it is to work closely with town clerks on the referendum process. A missed deadline could mean having to request a new vote from the town(s). It is expected, based on the recent legislation (LD 1415), that a new construction cycle will open up in 2024.

Kathleen Wade reviewed what is known about the new paid Family Medical Leave legislation. The new legislation creates a fund for paid family leave benefits to be paid through a new payroll tax that both employers and employees will contribute to. The new deduction begins on January 1, 2025 and is expected to be 1% of employee wages (initially). Kathleen urged attendees to **make sure to budget for this employer paid benefit in our next budget, FY25**. The state expects the tax to be shared equally between employer/employee at this time. The benefit is expected to be twelve weeks of paid family leave annually and that *all* employees (part-time, seasonal, temporary) will

be eligible for benefits with no waiting period or minimum hours worked annually. The good news is schools are not responsible for administering the program in any way, similar to Unemployment and Workers Comp. There will be a cap on weekly benefits and is based on the employee's income level prior to the leave. It is expected that employees will become eligible for benefits beginning on May 1, 2026. The Maine Department of Labor is required to adopt rules related to the paid family medical leave; as part of the rulemaking process, there is an opportunity for public comment so be on the lookout for the initiation of the rulemaking process on this topic.

Joanna Tourangeau spoke to the group about current environmental issues that may impact schools including property acquisitions, construction projects and operations. She discussed what happens when a property has a contamination (i.e. soil or water) and how to assess a property prior to purchasing for contamination (Phase I site assessment). More recent issues include PFAs, PCBs, lead, asbestos and indoor air quality. It is critical to know drinking water is safe (especially for schools on well water) and that environmental work is being done by certified contractors.

Chris Stevenson discussed ACA reporting and how the IRS will be enforcing the penalties "Play or Pay" for any form 1095-C that is not prepared correctly. The penalties only apply to school districts that are considered "large" employers - any school that has a monthly average of 50 or more full time equivalent (FTE) employees working 30 hours per week or more. To avoid the sledgehammer penalty, a school district will have to offer at least 95% of its full-time employees the opportunity to purchase health insurance for themselves and their dependents. He discussed the "look back approach" where the average number of hours in a prior year are used to determine an employee's eligibility for insurance. There is also an affordability penalty that can be triggered if an employer fails to provide "affordable" health care coverage. The penalty is triggered if the employee is required to pay more than 9.5% of his "household income" for self-only coverage. Chris also provided materials covering the new general rules for cash-in-lieu of health insurance.

The last topic was managing fund balance, carry forward, and reserve funds. Documents listing the new fund balance statute and the statutes that apply to reserve funds for SAU's, RSU's, CSD's, CTE's and MSU's were provided; these statutes may also be found on the [legislative website](#), where you can perform a statute search based on key words. Also, sample warrant articles to transfer funds and expend from reserve funds can be found [here](#).

## *Legislative Update*

### School Funding and Analysis Study:

There will be one more report back from MDOE to the Education Committee on December 5. The meeting will be live streamed on the Education Committee [website](#) and any materials provided to the Committee during these sessions may be found [here](#), as well as on our website under "Member Center/School Finance".

To recap activity so far; the first monthly report was provided to the Education Committee on September 12. The MDOE presentation focused on the history of Essential Programs and Services. The second monthly report was provided to the Education Committee on October 3. Maine Revenue Services provided information regarding the calculation of state valuation and MDOE discussed the calculation of fiscal capacity in the funding formula, to include how state valuation is used. The MDOE Team also reviewed the components of the total cost of education calculation, which is a major factor in the state share of 55%.

The Education Committee continues to express interest in tying classroom outcomes to EPS. This bears watching as it would likely result in the collection of additional data points, at the very least.

### The Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System

The second meeting of this task force was held on November 8 and featured presentations surrounding four-year comprehensive CTE schools. One school in Maine, Region 10 in Brunswick, has completed a feasibility study which identifies challenges (state statute revisions for catchment areas and other barriers, as well as state funding models). The study also identifies additional funding that would be needed, based on a 300-student school; this amount would be \$3.6 million. The task force has interest in standing this up as a pilot project.

The next Task force meetings will be held on November 30. All Task Force materials may be found [here](#).

### Public Preschool Expansion Commission

[Public Law 2023, chapter 477 \(LD 1799\)](#) created a commission to study the expansion of public preschool, and early care and education. The first meeting provided an overview from MDOE regarding current status and strategies for increasing access, as well as a presentation from an existing mixed delivery program hosted by a community partner.

The Commission is seeking written public comment on this topic. As I have already received feedback from MeASBO members who are concerned about space constraints and costs associated with preschool expansion, I would encourage submission of comments. In order to facilitate this written comment, please use the following guidelines:

- If possible, please submit written comment as an attached pdf or word document, via email, to [Hillary.risler@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Hillary.risler@legislature.maine.gov); please use the subject line: "Preschool Commission Comment." This will make it easier for staff to compile the comments and forward them to the full commission;

- Written comment should be addressed to the commission, and should include your name and the organization you represent or town of residence;
- Please submit written comments as soon as possible, but **no later than 8:00 am November 23<sup>rd</sup>** (in order for the commission to have the written comment prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting); and
- Please remember that written comment submitted to the commission is public information. **DO NOT INCLUDE** any information you do not intend to make public, such as medical or other personal information.

Materials from the Commission meetings are posted [here](#). Livestream of the Commission meetings may be found [here](#).

## News and Upcoming Events from Our Partners



### *Education Organization Leadership Group*

MeASBO is currently represented in the education leadership group convened by MDOE. The group includes leaders from MSMA, MSSA, MSBA, MPA, MEA, MADSEC, MCLA (Maine Curriculum Leaders), and MACTE (Maine Association of CTE Directors).

During the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, MDOE discussed additional support resources that they will be publishing for staff and students dealing with trauma and crisis sparked by the traumatic event in Lewiston; a compilation of resources to date may be found [here](#). DHHS currently has resources available, summarized [here](#), and Grace Leavitt, MEA President, shared that the [MEA Benefits Trust](#) has resources available.

The Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and the Department's Director of Innovative Teaching and Learning through Technology have made a visit to Taiwan to learn more about their educational models and, to explore creation of an exchange program as Taiwan has too many teachers.

Maine has received a third round of funding for the [Outdoor Learning Initiative](#). There will be 40-50 grants available and applications to be released in early January.

Remember, the main purpose of the group is to provide an opportunity to bring concerns, questions, requests, and ideas to MDOE leadership. If you have a question, or a topic that you would like brought to the attention of MDOE, please contact [Joanne](#).

### *International Association of School Business Officials*

Daily clippings of interest:

[Teachers Push for Overtime Pay in Proposed Labor Rule Change](#)

[FCC proposes adding Wi-Fi hotspots to E-Rate program](#)



## *MDOE*

### School Bus Purchase Program

Applications for state subsidized school bus purchases opened on November 1 and **close on November 25**. Applications and supporting information may be found on the MDOE website: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/transportation/programs>

Remember, subsidy begins in the year after purchase. Therefore, if your school unit is approved to buy a bus, you must show the general fund expenditure for the year in which you were approved in your MEFS file upload (for example, you were approved to purchase in FY 2022-2023, you made the purchase, you showed the expense in MEFS for 2022-2023, and are receiving subsidy in FY 2023-2024). If that expenditure is not reported for the year of approval, subsidy for the bus purchase will be reduced on your ED 279.

Also, it is important to remember is that if your school unit is approved for a bus but decide not to purchase it, please let MDOE know ASAP so that your subsidy can be adjusted BEFORE subsidy checks which include that approved amount begin to be issued AND, so that the approval can be offered to another school unit. As there is a finite amount of state funds earmarked for bus support, there is a waiting list for any cancellations.

There is a helpful presentation from MDOE at this link:

[https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/T%20SBPP\\_Update\\_081822.pptx\\_0.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/T%20SBPP_Update_081822.pptx_0.pdf)

### Public Comment on School Construction Funding

As a result of the First Special Session of the 131st Maine Legislature, The State Board of Education is engaging in rulemaking in response to Public Law 2023, Chapter 462, “An Act to Expand Access to School Construction Funding”.

As part of this update, The State Board of Education is opening Rule Chapter 61: State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects to complete the legislative changes required by law and is proposing several other changes.

As required by law, a period of public comment opens November 1, 2023 through December 1, 2023. Written comments may be submitted to DOE Rulemaking Liaison Laura Cyr, State House Station #23, Augusta, Maine 04333; 207-446-8791 or [laura.cyr@maine.gov](mailto:laura.cyr@maine.gov) **until 5:00 pm November 30, 2023**. For documentation purposes, written comments are preferred.

The revised rule chapter, as well as the link to comment, may be found [here](#).

## *Upcoming Events:*

[MDOE Federal Relief Programs Office Hours, November 30<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM](#)

[MDOE Federal Relief Programs Office Hours, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM.](#)

[MDOE Federal Fiscal Programs Office Hours, December 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM.](#)

### Northern New England Facility Masters Conference

This conference will be returning to Portsmouth New Hampshire High School on February 28 and 29, 2024 to once again offer professional development opportunities for school facility managers and staff. [Check this link for more information.](#)

Tri-State ASBO May 22 through May 24<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland. Registration will be available at [this link](#) in February. There is also lots of great information from last year's conference available at the link as well.

*Last but not least.....*



### *MeASBO Website*

Can't find your newsletter? Want to verify our meeting schedule? Looking for school finance information and/or legislative updates? It's all available on our website.

### *MeASBO Forums*

New to our forum offering is a forum board specifically for our vendor partners to support our members through providing educational information, and continue to build positive, supportive relationships with our members. The forum is moderated by MeASBO leadership to maintain the goals and objectives of the forum board.

**Wishing everyone a very Happy Thanksgiving**

