



Legislative Update: May 21, 2021

Legislative committees are meeting over Zoom through May 21st, and some a bit longer, conducting public hearings to gain input on bills and then work sessions to take action on those bills. We anticipate that several important broadband bills will be worked by the committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology next Tuesday. The broadband bond bill will likely be carried over until next session.

We continue to track about twenty bills of interest with relevance to our mission and where GrowSmart Maine's unique voice can provide meaningful content. You can read all our testimony [here](#)

The House and Senate plan to convene every weekday from June 2nd until the June 16th adjournment date. You can watch proceedings online using these links:

[Senate Chamber Video Livestream](#)

[House Chamber Video Livestream](#)

You can search [here](#) to watch the committee process live or to watch recordings of prior public hearings and work sessions.

I'm writing this update on Wednesday, May 19th, as I listen to the House in session at the Augusta Civic Center. I'm impressed with both the speed at which "papers are moved" to ensure Bills and Resolves efficiently make their way through the legislative process, as well as by the thoughtful debate on issues from the Right to Food to the SAT as an educational testing method.

This makes me nostalgic for the eight years I served in the Maine House prior to coming to GrowSmart Maine. It is an incredible experience, one I compare to parenting in that others might describe it to you, but until you actually live it, you won't truly understand it. It's also where I made several lifelong friends, because when you learn who has your back, and when you grow and mature together so significantly, you stay connected even when no longer in regular contact. I recommend the experience of running for office to anyone who wants to make a difference.

Public hearings this week

LD 221: The Governor's Change Package to the Biennial Budget. We support all the proposed changes relevant to our mission, and provided written testimony specifically in support of the creation of three planning positions to the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. These planners will support regional and municipal climate projects for resilience and technical assistance and incentives for energy generation and reducing emissions. The request includes \$2.5M for resilience grants plus \$3M for



emissions and energy technical assistance and grants, plus staffing capacity to support communities in these areas.

In our testimony, we noted our support for numerous bills and resolves this session that offer proposals to address the lack of municipal capacity for planning, and the resources to implement those plans. Each time, we advocated that additional resources be made available to municipal and regional efforts to plan for their future. This proposal provides both planning expertise and resources to implement those plans beginning in this year and continuing. Between the opportunity that comes with federal funds from the American Rescue Plan to recover from the pandemic, and the risks associated with climate change, Maine must empower municipalities and regional planning entities to chart a course and then implement it. We support providing state funds and staffing positions to do so.

Follow Up On Earlier Public Hearings: Further Committee Action:

LD 1694 "An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority"

Sponsored by Representative Melanie Sachs ***Bill Summary: This bill establishes the Community Redevelopment Land Bank Authority to coordinate the acquisition of blighted, abandoned and environmentally hazardous or functionally obsolete property for redevelopment. The bill establishes a fee on the disposal of construction and demolition debris. The bill also establishes a Development Ready Community Planning Committee for the purposes of establishing statewide community redevelopment guidelines.***

In our testimony, we strongly support creation of land bank capacity at local, regional, and state levels. This is a powerful tool in redeveloping old mill sites and even abandoned homes. However, we raised concerns about the need for and value of the statewide development guidelines as a primary focus for community development along with concerns of maintaining local authority over eminent domain.

THIS WEEK: At Tuesday's work session, the committee voted without debate and unanimously of those present to Table the bill with intention to carry it over until next session.

LD 446 "An Act To Reestablish the State Planning Office" sponsored by Rep. Bailey

Though the original concept draft for this bill was just a paragraph long, when the sponsor presented it he clarified that the ultimate goal is expanding planning resources for municipal and local levels. It had its public hearing on March 3rd and has been held by the Committee on State and Local Government with the intention of working this bill beside LD 1694, though that bill went to another committee late in session.

THIS WEEK: State and Local committee held a work session during which the sponsor presented a resolve to replace the bill. Resolves are legislative proposals that do not



amend public law and usually have short term actions. The committee voted today, with majority voting to move the amended version forward and minority vote “ought not to pass” so it moves forward to the House and Senate.

In The Legislature

LD 201: "An Act To Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Promote Weatherization in the Buildings Sector by Extending the Sunset Date for the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit" Sponsored by Senator Nathan Libby

THIS WEEK: The bill was passed in the House and in the Senate, the bill was placed on the special appropriations table. This is the normal process for bills with a fiscal note/cost to the state to go first to the special appropriations table BEFORE final enactment. It will remain there until the end of session when the Appropriations committee will “work the table” and determine which bills are funded...and which are not. There would be no revenue reduction from this extension until fiscal year 2026-27 so with no impact to the pending budget, odds of passage continue to be strong.

Partnerships: In addition to the Maine Alliance for Smart Growth, we are working with two other collaborative efforts this session: We have joined **Climate Maine** to review and prioritize legislative proposals that fall within our policy priorities to ensure our advocacy is effectively coordinated with others. In addition we continue to lead the policy work of the [Maine Broadband Coalition](#), which will focus on several key funding and policy bills. Check out the [Broadband Policy Page](#) for testimony, value propositions for each committee, and recordings of the Broadband Caucus!

How can you engage?

We'll keep you posted on bills as they are printed and work their way through the legislative session, and invite you to participate as you are comfortable. You can offer written or oral testimony for any bill, and track its progress on the Maine Legislature's website <http://legislature.maine.gov/>

You can watch live or recorded committee work as each committee has a dedicated YouTube **channel**. **You can search [here](#) to watch the committee process live or to watch recordings of prior public hearings and work sessions.** From the Legislature's website, you can find Your Senator [here](#) and your State Representative [here](#).