

Maine State Cultural Affairs Council

Maine Arts Commission
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Maine Library Commission
Maine State Museum Commission
Maine State Archives
Maine Historical Society
Maine Humanities Council

130th Maine Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

LD 221 – An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2022, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2023

February 23, 2021

Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs; Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Peter Merrill, Chair of the Maine State Cultural Affairs Council. I am speaking in support of the Council's item in the Biennial Budget.

Introduction

The Maine State Cultural Affairs Council was established in 1991 to ensure a coordinated, integrated system of cultural resource programming and projects and to ensure the support of cultural heritage institutions and activities of the State.

The members of the Council are the Maine Arts Commission, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, the Maine Library Commission, the Maine State Museum Commission, the Maine Humanities Council, the Maine Historical Society, and the Maine State Archives. The Chair and Vice-

Chair (or designee) of each member serves on the Council. The chair of the Council is appointed by the Governor from among the members of the governing body of the member agencies. The agency directors and a representative from the Governor's Office are *ex-officio* members.

The functions of the Council are to:

- Coordinate budget requests,
- Provide a forum for interagency planning,
- Coordinate communications,
- Prepare a joint annual report and planning documents for the agencies,
- Meet with the Maine State Film Commission and the State Law Library and others as appropriate to exchange information and coordinate statewide cultural planning, and
- Administer the New Century Community Program fund.

New Century Community Program

The New Century Community Program was created by the Legislature in 1999 to:

- Preserve the State's historic resources, properties, artifacts, and documents,
- Expand access to improved educational resources, and
- Enhance community and economic development through strengthened local cultural resources, including through increased community access to the State's leading cultural institutions.

The program is funded with a general fund appropriation and received the proceeds from two bond issues in 2005 and 2007.

Each agency has its own budget. The Council has a General Fund appropriation of \$39,445 for the New Century Community Program. We also have an Other Special Revenue line of \$65,424. That is, unfortunately, not actually cash – it allows us to accept contributions to that level without going through the financial order process.

These funds will help support the agencies' efforts. At the Maine Historical Society, these funds are used to support the Maine Memory Network, MHS's web based repository of Maine's oral history. At Maine Humanities, the funds are used to support humanities projects at non-profit organizations statewide. At the State Museum, the funds will be used to support their database platform and hosting which is essential to getting their collections before the public. The Historic Preservation Commission

combines the funds with federal funds to enhance their grants program. The Archives made small grants to qualifying institutions to help preserve, organize, or share their archival collections of Maine history. Each agency uses the funds to further support their mission.

Maine Bicentennial Celebration

The Council also has a line item for our bicentennial celebration. (Sigh)

The \$500 is a place holder to keep the account open. We Maine Bicentennial Commission received two appropriations from the 128th and the 129th Legislatures totaling \$1,075,000. Those funds were run through the Council's account. Of that just over \$150,000 remains unspent. In September we worked with the Budget Office to get what was currently needed through a Financial Order and left what had to be delayed due to covid. Members of both committees have been enthusiastic supporters of Maine's Bicentennial effort and we appreciate that. Attached to my testimony is a copy of the most recent update the Maine Bicentennial Commission Chairman, Senator Diamond, sent to the Commissioners. It provides a status report on our efforts.

For the cultural agencies, these funds are important. The New Century amount is small – too small – but nevertheless critical. I think as you listen to each agency describe the work they do, you will agree with me that they are doing incredibly important work that although often overlooked, is fundamental to our state and society.

Each of the agencies will discuss the important work that your support allows them to do. Both Committees have been supportive of the Council and the cultural agencies. We thank you for that support.

Maine Bicentennial Commission Activities Update from Chairman Diamond

Greetings. As we make our way into 2021, uncertainty remains regarding whether the pandemic situation will subside such that we will be able to execute our plans for the commemoration. However, we are forging ahead and remain hopeful.

On Statehood Day, Monday, March 15, we will co-host a press conference with the University of Maine, in Orono, to showcase their work on the [bicentennial time capsule](#). We will be working with UMaine to publicize the event to highlight their contribution in creating a composite Dirigo Star for our capsule, which will sit atop a Maine Heritage Timber cabinet. This event will provide a boost for us to show our momentum in the new year. We will be announcing this event publicly in early March. Special thanks to Sam Warren and Jason Libby for their work on this project.

The Statehood Day ceremony is still on hold. We are eyeing late July as a possibility and will be firming up plans this spring.

[The State of Maine Bicentennial Parade Presented by Poland Spring](#) subcommittee is reconvening in March. We will be checking in with the leadership of Lewiston and Auburn next week to discuss options for moving ahead. We are tentatively considering August 21 for the parade, in conjunction with the Great Falls Balloon Festival.

[Maritime events](#), sponsored by Bangor Savings, are taking shape. Rockland will be featuring the Windjammers on the 4th of July weekend and are preparing roughly the same event that had been planned for 2020. Boothbay is tentative for late June. The Penobscot loop committee is active and targeting the days encompassing Bastille Day, July 14. Portland is reaching out to a couple of the large vessels that were invited in 2020, and moving the event there to the first week in August.

[The Innovation Expo](#) presented by CMP &MTI is on track for Nov. 20, 2021 at Thompson's Point, in Portland. The planning team, funded by the Maine Technology Institute, has a floor plan and event outline, with additional event planning and outreach underway.

In other business, we have reached out to the Legislative Council for permission to fly the bicentennial flag atop the Statehouse on March 15, and also to Gov. Mills for a Statehood Day proclamation.

We also have filed requests with the appropriate parties to fill vacancies on the Commission.

A bill to extend the use of the bicentennial commemorative license plate (LD312) is making its way through the legislative process. A bill to extend the commission through 2021, sponsored by Rep. Bryant, is not yet printed but is expected soon.

A warm welcome to our newest commissioners, Secretary of State Shenna Bellows and Deputy Secretary for the Maine State Archives Kate McBrien, whose nomination as State Archivist received unanimous approval from the House on Feb. 8; she is expected to be confirmed by the Senate next week.

Thank you all for your continued commitment to Maine's bicentennial effort as we continue to navigate through the uncertainty of the pandemic situation.

-Bill