

Commonwealth Report

News for the Citizens of the First Plymouth and Bristol District

March/April 2009 edition

Budget Process:

Facing Tough Choices

It seems as if everyday there are reports of another program to be cut, more layoffs, and a new tax proposal.

Understandably, there is a lot of confusion and concern about the state's budget process right now. Municipalities are waiting to hear from the state on local aid before setting budgets for fiscal 2010, but the state is dealing with a constantly shifting revenue picture, making it difficult to determine how much money there will be.

To address concerns, I am holding a district-wide budget briefing to help explain how the legislature is working to address the budget crisis, even as the revenue numbers continue to fall. The briefing will be Wednesday, May 13, at Bristol Plymouth Regional Technical School's Cafetorium from 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Everyone needs to be paying close attention during this fiscal crisis. I encourage anyone who can, to attend this briefing to get a better understanding of the choices we are facing and the consequences of each.



Environmental work moves forward

A package of comprehensive environmental laws—including the landmark Global Warming Solutions Act—passed during the last legislative session, positioned the commonwealth as a national leader on the environment.

As the EPA prepares to regulate the greenhouse gases, and the U.S. Congress debates a carbon cap bill, our groundbreaking work on the climate change issue will be a key factor in the national dialogue.

Meanwhile, as federal funds start to flow from President Obama's \$787 billion economic stimulus package, we have another opportunity to make huge leaps forward as energy efficiency projects and renewable energy projects receive unprecedented funding. The investments in resource conservation and the resulting long term

cost savings make this a unique opportunity that calls for the rigorous attention of all communities of the Commonwealth.

It is crucial that local governments and citizens inform themselves on the provisions of these grants, as federal guidance and application deadlines are starting to be set.

The public can get further information from these websites:

Recovery.gov (federal)

Mass.gov/recovery (state)

Also, information about energy efficiency grants and other energy-related funding can be found at mass.gov/eea/recovery.

Federal stimulus funds are separate from the state's budget and can only be spent for certain federally-designated programs.

Legislature overseeing federal stimulus funds to state

Senator Pacheco, senate chair of the Joint Committee on Federal Stimulus Oversight, is holding a series of hearings to examine the administration's oversight of spending under the Massachusetts Recovery and Reinvestment Plan, and to ensure transparency.

Secretary of Administration and Finance Leslie Kirwan told the committee that Massachusetts' investment priorities are well aligned with the federal bill—focusing for example

on infrastructure improvement, wind, solar and biofuels development, broadband expansion and education—and is therefore well-positioned to benefit from the federal funds.

Attorney General Martha Coakley emphasized the need for “front-end” monitoring, to reduce problems and litigation down the road. She cautioned against changing procurement rules just to speed the process of distribution. “Those rules are there for a reason,” she said.

Taunton to get \$519k in stimulus money for energy efficiency

The governor announced in March that Massachusetts would receive \$42.4 million under the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants program funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Taunton's \$519,000 share is to be used for job-creating investments that reduce energy and fossil fuel use.

Senator Pacheco told the Taunton Gazette the funding helps the environment, but does much more.

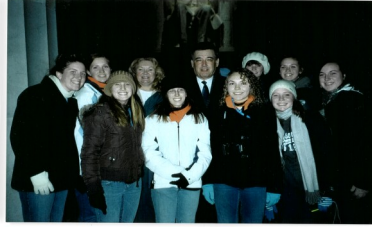
“It's also about greening up the bottom line,” he told reporter Gerry Tuoti. “It's an opportunity, if done correctly, to stimulate the economy locally, put people back to work and save money on energy bills.”

NEWS NOTES:

Highway funding: One of the first five “shovel-ready” highway projects to go under construction in Massachusetts under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will be a resurfacing of Route 18 and Route 28 from Bridgewater Center to Middleborough Rotary. “This project will be underway in the next two weeks,” Pacheco said. “That means stimulus money will start to flow into the region and jobs will follow.”

First solar project: Senator Pacheco was delighted to announce to Carver officials on April 8 that the state had granted a request for an easement along state Route 44, to allow Carver to erect a 112-kilowatt photovoltaic array along the state highway to power town water supply wells. It would be the first solar project along a state highway in Massachusetts.

Read Across America: Senator Pacheco read *The Lorax* at the Mary K. Goode School in Middleborough, the Bennett Elementary School in Taunton, and the Raynham Middle School during the National Education Association’s Read Across America event the week of March 2.



Front row: Molly Driscoll, Lauren Simao, Courtney Simao, Gabriella Hornbeck, Taylor Duarte. Back row: Corinne Monty, Susan Miller, Senator Marc Pacheco, Erica Pike, Lauren Tierney, Caitlyn Lynch.

Inaugural trip: A group of Middleborough High School students (above) traveled to Washington, D.C. with teacher Sue Miller to get a close-up view of history during the inauguration of President Barack Obama. Senator Pacheco met the students at the Lincoln Memorial and talked with them about the significance of the events in the nation’s capital.

Schools honored: Bridgewater-Raynham Regional School District, Taunton Public Schools and Wareham Public Schools were recognized as pioneers in the creation of trauma-sensitive school environments with a Senate citation. These districts received Safe and Supportive Learning Environment grants from Massachusetts Advocates for Children. “I am proud of the cutting-edge work they are doing with children who have been traumatized by exposure to war, violence, homelessness and other adversities,” Pacheco said.

Recipients of Senate resolutions and citations: Congratulations, and thank you for your service.

RETIREMENTS

Sandy Leahy—36 years teaching, Bridgewater-Raynham regional schools.

Christopher B. Slater—38 years as a teacher and education advocate in the Bridgewater-Raynham regional schools

M. Louise Turner, Plymouth Co. RMV

Robert T. Joy—Chairman, Plymouth County Democratic League

The following people retired from the Department of Mental Health:

Ted O’Brien, 41 years

Tex R. Halloway, 25 years

James Tibedeau, 41 years

Carol Soares, 39 years

Joan Y. Silva, 34 years

EAGLE SCOUTS

Liam Kelly, **David Hayhurst**,

Joseph Nelson Carver Troop 48

Lucas Ivaldi Bridgewater Troop 88

ANNIVERSARY

James Silvia and Janet Silvia, 50th

SERVICE TO VETERANS

Eileen Alden of Wareham

STUDENTS

Amanda Young, student at Bridgewater-Raynham Regional High School, award recipient, Classmates Today Neighbors Tomorrow program of Jewish War Veterans of the South Shore Post No. 302.

Keith S. Pontes, the 2009 Outstanding Vocational Student of Dighton-Rehoboth Regional Vocational High School.

Robert Stephanian, the 2009 Outstanding Vocational Student of Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School.

Meghan Malone, the 2009 Outstanding Vocational Student of Bristol County Agricultural School.

Pacheco attends historic climate change discussions at national level

Senator Pacheco said hearings on a major climate change bill in Washington, D.C. show the United States is getting serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming.

“These are historic discussions that are finally beginning at the federal level, thanks in great part to the longstanding leadership and consistent efforts of Congressman Ed Markey,” said Pacheco, chairman of the Senate Committee on Global Warming and

Climate Change. He was in Washington to attend the National Conference of State Legislators’ spring policy forum.

Pacheco noted that Massachusetts is already beginning to see some benefits from its bill: \$10 million in revenue generated by the auctioning of carbon allowances will be used to provide technical assistance to cities and towns for initiatives such as purchasing fuel-efficient vehicle fleets or developing renewable energy projects.

