



Maryland Municipal League

State of the League Report

June 1, 2004 – July 30, 2005

Growing in Sync

By Scott A. Hancock, Executive Director

MML's 2004-2005 President, Salisbury Mayor Barrie P. Tilghman, chose to make growth issues the hallmark of her year as MML President by choosing "Growing in Sync" as her theme. Recognizing the importance of good collaboration, cooperative spirit and ample communications between all levels of Maryland's government, Mayor Tilghman set out to begin a series of regional workshops/forums, with major government stakeholders at the table to focus on existing growth pressures across the State and the anticipated strains projected growth will have on Maryland's local government infrastructure. Along with the stand-alone forums, several 2005 convention workshop speakers addressed growth related issues. There was a general session on preserving community character and convention workshops on financing capital projects, land use and environmental policies and community revitalization trends. Mayor Tilghman also led a delegation of municipal leaders, joined by county and state leaders, to discuss growth and annexations in Maryland. Department of Planning Secretary and former MML President Audrey Scott ably facilitated the monthly meetings, which began in April. At the end of Mayor Tilghman's term as President, meetings were still being held with little progress made due to the Maryland Association of Counties insistence that annexation, not the larger topic of growth pressures, be the single focus of the discussions.



Legislative Activities

The 2005 legislative season officially began with the annual fall conference held at Rocky Gap Lodge in Cumberland from October 21-23. The City of Cumberland rolled out the red carpet for MML delegates, as usual. Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele addressed the membership at the Friday luncheon and

attendance at the conference workshops was record setting. In the end, the membership approved three legislative priorities including protecting and restoring municipal resources, public safety and interoperability issues, and municipal electric aggregation authority. By the April 11 conclusion of the 2005 legislative session, MML was successful in seeing much legislation passed with positive impact on cities and towns. House Bill 272 extended the current authority allowing municipalities to establish special taxing districts specifically for public safety activities. House Bill 221 raised the constant yield tax law threshold from \$10,000 in current law to \$25,000 effective October 1, 2005. It's estimated that this legislation will exempt an additional 20 municipalities from costly advertising and public hearing requirements of the constant yield law.

The MML Legislative Committee took position on 36 bills; 22 bills were supported by MML and 14 bills were opposed. Of the bills the Legislative Committee opposed, one passed but not before it was significantly amended to reduce the impact on municipalities.



Corporate Partners

The MML Board of Directors approved eight Corporate Partner applications during the inaugural year of the program. Verizon Maryland, Comcast, The Traffic Group, Giant Food, Funk & Bolton, Jakiubak & Associates, Complus Data Innovations and CGI Communications all received the green light for participation in the new MML program during the year. The MML Corporate Partner Program concept was approved by the 2003-2004 Board of Directors during its final meeting of the year but the 2004-2005 Board of Directors was charged with implementing the new program. The MML Corporate Partner Program is modeled after a similar program instituted by the National League of Cities three years ago.



Convention, 2005

Again this year, new convention attendance and exhibit sales records were set. 206 exhibit booths were sold and the first full year of offering on-line booth sales to prospective vendors proved to be very beneficial for MML. New for 2005 was a professionally produced laser light show used to highlight all 159 members of the Maryland Municipal League and a public safety theatre featuring demonstrations of equipment by the Maryland State Firemen's Association, the

Maryland State Police and several municipal police departments. Those demonstrations took place in Exhibit Hall C in an effort to attract more traffic to that area of the Convention Center. As usual, the Academy workshops presented at the annual gathering of municipal leaders were very well attended with “standing room only” for many seminars.



League Begins Headquarters Renovation

Construction finally began on the long anticipated renovation of the MML headquarters building in Annapolis in early March. MML staff was forced to relocate from the south side of the building so that Phase I of the project could commence. Immediately upon staff’s return from the annual June convention, all staff offices were temporarily moved into small quarters in the newly renovated south section of the building. This area will eventually become the new Elizabeth H. Tolbert Conference Room and tenant rental space. Although there were some issues with obtaining permits from the City of Annapolis and working out logistics, Phase I of the project proceeded on schedule.

MML Loses Municipal “Giants”

2005 proved to be a rather sad year for the MML family when three of MML’s most active and involved past presidents passed away. Former Easton Mayor Henry Purdy (MML President 1966-1967) died in October. Former Hyattsville Mayor Mary Prangley (MML President 1996-1997) died at the end of 2004 and Former Morningside Mayor Gerald Glaubitz (MML President 1973-1974) passed away in April. All three were very instrumental in the growth and development of the Maryland Municipal League in ways too numerous to recount in this report. I can personally attest to their unwavering commitment to the ideals of municipal government and to the Maryland Municipal League up until their passing. We shall miss them all.



Of Note:

- ▶ I had the distinct pleasure of participating in an exchange program with the Japan Local Government Center in November 2004 for ten days. Those days in Nara Prefecture proved to be life changing for me. I was able to reciprocate the valuable experience by hosting one of my Japanese colleagues at the annual MML convention in June.

- ▶ The ever popular MML Mayor’s Essay Contest continued Mayor Tilghman’s growth focus and requested that interested fourth graders write an

essay on how to deal with growth pressures if they were mayor of a Maryland municipality. 2,024 essays from 113 Maryland schools were received this year -- the second highest number of participants since the program's inception five years ago! First Lady Kendall Ehrlich recognized the 11 essay contest winners during an award ceremony held at the State House on May 6. The winners were also treated to a pizza lunch on the grounds of the U. S. Naval Academy and a boat tour of the Annapolis Harbor.

► Maryland Municipal League's Newly Elected Officials Orientation Program became available on CD Rom in December thanks to the efforts of Membership Manager Linda Burrell and IT Manager Carol Dowling. The Program lasts approximately 20 minutes and is sent to every new municipal official at the same time that they receive their MML *Quick Guide for Maryland Municipal Officials* and a letter of congratulation on their election to municipal office.

► MML's new intern/fellowship program was presented to a prospective group of graduate students at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy in November. Two students were selected by MML and school officials to participate in the inaugural year of the program. Both received scholarships of \$4,500 each and an invitation to participate in the MML annual convention in June. The interns were also assigned to work with the Cities of Rockville and Greenbelt.

Staff Notes:

There were a number of staff changes during the 2004-2005 Board year. MML Legislative Assistant Patty Rocker resigned in September to accept a position in the same school her two children attend. In November, we welcomed Kelly Pierce to the MML family as Legislative Assistant. Kelly was a former employee of the City of Bowie and had a great deal of experience and knowledge about the Maryland Municipal League.

In May, IT Manager Carol Dowling decided to retire from MML to spend more time at home and traveling. Due to our space constraints while the renovation project is underway, I chose not to fill the position immediately. Carol continues to consult with MML on an as needed basis.

In June, we welcomed Karen Spence Dorsey as the new Executive Assistant to the Executive Director. Karen began her tenure with MML two days before attending MML's annual convention. Immediately upon her return from Ocean City, Karen was instrumental in helping the staff relocate to the temporary quarters in the newly renovated section of the headquarters building.

Summary

MML's strength and viability have never been stronger as a result of superb leadership from the Board of Directors, chaired last year by Salisbury Mayor Barrie P. Tilghman. MML's staff continues to dearly love working for Maryland's municipal leaders. Every year, I know the admiration I personally feel for the work that you do in your communities continues to grow. Thank you for your continued commitment to Maryland's "government closest to the people" and also to the Maryland Municipal League.