



# Maryland Municipal League

## *State of the League Report*

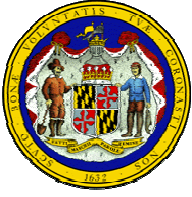
July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007

### *JUST ANOTHER ELECTION YEAR?*

By Scott A. Hancock, Executive Director

MML began the 2006-2007 Fiscal Year with elections on everyone's mind. The regular "every four year" state election cycle was in full swing when David E. Carey, Commissioner from Bel Air, became MML President at the end of June. President Carey was himself a candidate for office, seeking a seat in the House of Delegates representing Harford County. Incumbent Governor Robert Ehrlich was being challenged by Baltimore Mayor and MML Director Martin O'Malley. The incumbent Lieutenant Governor, Michael Steele was running for an open U.S. Senate seat, a newcomer was slated to become the next state Attorney General in January upon the announced retirement of longtime AG Joseph Curran and the only other statewide officer, the Comptroller, would have a new face as well after the unexpected primary election defeat of the incumbent Comptroller and former Governor William Donald Schaefer. It was quite evident from the early Fall that 2006 would **not** be "just another election year"!

President Carey wasted no time making superb committee appointments in early July. Havre de Grace Council President Gary Wasielewski was named Communications Committee Chair. Bladensburg Mayor Walter James served as his Vice Chair. Edmonston Councilperson Tracy Farrish was appointed Chair of the Convention Planning Committee while Chesapeake Beach Councilman Bruce Wahl became Vice Chair. Ellen Moyer, Mayor of Annapolis stepped up as Chair of the Legislative Committee and Perryville Mayor Jim Eberhardt served as Vice Chair.



## Legislative Activities

The 2007 legislative season officially began with the 2006 Fall Conference held at the Annapolis Doubletree Hotel from October 19 - 21, 2006. As is tradition during an election year, all the major party candidates for statewide office were invited to address the MML membership during the 2 day event. Candidates for Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller and U.S. Senate took turns at the MML podium. The annual Business Meeting was held on Friday, October 20, 2006 and the membership approved legislative priorities proposed by the Legislative Committee including increasing state aid for police protection and legislation to allow municipalities to purchase, from utility companies, street light fixtures mounted on wooden poles. The membership also adopted a priority that set aside valuable staff time to establish or to build upon relationships with the elected Administration and staff, new legislators and other newly elected officials. At the urging of former legislative committee chairman and Rockville Mayor Larry Giammo, the membership also chose to adopt another priority regarding electricity aggregation; hardly a new initiative for MML.

The MML 2007 Board of Directors and Legislative Committee proudly co-sponsored a wonderful cocktail reception on the opening day of the 2007 General Assembly Session to welcome reelected legislators back and new legislators and staffers to the Capital City of Annapolis. The City and the Annapolis Convention and Visitors Bureau sponsored the event with MML.

As always, the arrival of Maryland's mayors in Annapolis in early February, 2007 was a welcome addition to the already strong advocacy program at MML. The Maryland Mayor's Association (MMA) held noteworthy meetings on February 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> welcoming newly inaugurated Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley back to the "fold". Governor O'Malley praised his former colleagues for their commitment to local government and pledged his full support for Maryland's "government closest to the people". Senate President Mike Miller, House Speaker Mike Busch, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee Chair Ulysses Currie and House Appropriations Chair Norman Conway also addressed the MMA during their annual gathering.

Special thanks go to the 2007 Legislative Committee for a job well done with the priority legislation. By the end of Session, MML was successful in seeing bills enacted and signed into law to increase state aid to municipal police agencies and legislation adopted permitting cities and towns to purchase their street light fixtures on wooden poles. The League saw the demise of the electric aggregation

legislation once again as a result of strong lobby pressure from the utility companies.



## **MML Headquarters Renovation**

Last year, I reported that construction had finally ended on the long anticipated renovation of the MML headquarters building. MML staff returned to the newly renovated building in February of 2006. The MML Board of Directors was proud to dedicate the new building and to host an open house as part of the 2006 Fall Conference held in Annapolis on October 19<sup>th</sup>. The newly renovated building has no staff offices in the damp basement area of the facility, has a much improved and larger space for meetings, a larger and more accessible library and much needed additional storage space. The MML membership is urged to visit the new headquarters building anytime they are visiting the Capital City.



## **Convention, 2007**

Once again this year, convention attendance and exhibit sales records were set. 230 exhibit booths were sold and nearly 1,600 attended the three-day event in Ocean City at the end of June.

One of the highlights of the 2007 convention of Maryland's municipal leaders was the introduction of *Commerce Day*, a special Convention day established for cities and towns who can't afford to send valuable staff members to the entire event to allow them to attend a portion of a day in the exhibit area meeting vendors and collecting ideas. The inaugural year was well received and plans are already underway to repeat *Commerce Day* in 2008. The 2007 Convention was also the venue for the announcement of the first-ever MML City/Town Banner City Awards. This program is the highest member recognition program offered by MML and rewards member cities and towns for strong commitment to continuing education in municipal government operations, quality of life in the community and efforts to educate citizens about municipal government. Only 14 of Maryland's 157 Cities and Towns qualified for the award in 2007.



## Of Note:

- The MML Board of Directors approved the establishment of a Mediation/Collaborative Facilitation program during the past year. Although the program has experienced a slow start, many of MML's member cities and towns have inquired about the program and have expressed interest.
- The *If I Were Mayor* Essay Contest for 2007 received a record breaking 2,811 entries from 119 Maryland schools. Lieutenant Governor Brown recognized the eleven winners during an award ceremony at the State House in May. Awardees also enjoyed lunch on the grounds of the U. S. Naval Academy and a boat ride tour of Annapolis Harbor.
- MML posted a new PowerPoint program on the MML website in mid year that highlights Maryland's municipal government. The program may be personalized for any use by a member municipality and has seen widespread use since it was introduced
- MML's Corporate Partner program continued to prosper and grow during the past year. All prior year participants continued their membership in the program and MML was pleased to welcome ESRI, a GIS company, to the Corporate Partner Program at the Corporate Investor level in October
- MML continued its record of 100% member participation in 2006-2007 for the ninth consecutive year.

## Summary

In 1999, on the fifth anniversary of my becoming MML Executive Director, I wrote:

"MML member municipalities are incredibly diverse. Some are large, some are small, and many are tiny. Some are urban and many are rural. Some enjoy life on the water and some enjoy the panoramic views of the mountains. But as diverse as we may be, we hold several common beliefs:

- Municipal government is the most responsive and effective form of government as it is the closest to the people it serves.
- Municipal government is most effective when all are joined together with one voice and in one spirit.

This year was another one for the record books. The membership, through its collective strength, made that happen. Enthusiasm and vigor coupled with a deep love and affection for one's city and town is why MML's success succeeds itself." There is nothing more to say except "thanks!"