

SESSION ONE

Title: Rhode Island Ready: Preparing Industrial Sites throughout Rhode Island for the Future

Narragansett/Ocean Rooms

The session will discuss the enrollment process for RI Ready, and the benefits of the RI Ready program for property owners and municipalities. We will also provide detailed examples of wrap-around services and supports provided to projects enrolled in RI Ready, including workforce development, expedited permit review, identification of state agency liaisons, and facilitating discussions regarding economic incentives.

Speakers:

Chelsea Siefert, Director of Planning and Development at Quonset Development Corporation and RI Ready Program Manager

Hilary Fagan, Executive Vice President, Rhode Island Commerce

Robert Sykes, Senior Project Engineer, Pare Corporation

Title: Leveraging American Rescue Plan Act Funds to Accelerate Infrastructure Investments

Bristol A Room

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) offers a transformational opportunity for Rhode Island communities. The Act provided cities and towns with substantial funding that can be used for water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure expansion and improvements. This session will review some of the innovative strategies and best practices being pursued by municipal leaders as they plan for ARPA-funded infrastructure projects. The panel will discuss planning and project delivery challenges and will explore how creative financing can help municipalities stretch their ARPA dollars for greater local impact. This is a practical, practice-oriented work session that will provide actionable suggestions to improve planning, community engagement, and finance design.

Speakers:

Jeff Diehl, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank

Rob Zarnetske, Senior Economic and Policy Analyst at the Rhode Island Pandemic Recovery Office

William Fazioli, Director of Planning and Economic Development for the City of East Providence

Title: A System Out of Balance: Property Taxation Across Rhode Island

Bristol B Room

This session will review property tax systems across the Ocean State's 39 cities and towns. There is a wide variety among municipalities in terms of property wealth, tax rates, exemptions, and reliance on property tax revenue. This session will provide comparative analysis, as well as a historical and legal overview of property tax in Rhode Island and around the country. Referencing the consensus of academics and researchers of property tax, presenters will additionally point to some of the elements of property tax systems in Rhode Island that state and local policymakers should consider for reform.

Speakers:

Michael DiBiase, President and CEO of the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council

Justine Oliva, Manager of Research for the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council

Title: FirstNet: Leveraging Broadband for Public Safety

Rhode Island/Patriots Room

Nearly every After-Action Report completed for large-scale emergencies and disasters lists poor or inadequate communication as a problem or cause for concern. This was the case on September 11, 2001 during the attacks on New York City, the Pentagon, and Shanksville, PA. In 2012, in accordance with the 9/11 Commission recommendations, Congress established the First Responder Network Authority or FirstNet. This workshop will inform participants of the progress of the FirstNet Program within Rhode Island and provide real-world examples of how the network can be leveraged to assist with day-to-day and large-scale operations.

Speakers:

Gary McCarraher, Senior Public Safety Advisor for the First Responder Network Authority through US Department of Commerce

SESSION TWO

Title: Building Community Resiliency through Municipal Stormwater Management

Narragansett/Ocean Rooms

All Rhode Island communities are challenged by managing stormwater for water quality and flooding and often lack the capacity, expertise, and funding to proactively address the issues. In response, new technical assistance programs have been established to work with cities and towns to help prioritize, design, and fund stormwater projects for local community resilience. This session will provide an overview of new and innovative statewide programs which can help your municipality accelerate projects and stretch limited funding. Specific examples of multi-benefit green infrastructure, grant programs, innovative financing, and statewide resources will be shared.

Speakers:

Shaun O'Rourke, Managing Director of Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank

Dean Audet, Senior Vice President of Fuss & O'Neill

Alisa Richardson, Acting Administrator of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation

Anthony Hebert, Senior Planner for the City of Pawtucket

Title: ARPA Disaster Recovery Planning and Grants Management Approach for Warren, RI: A Case Study

Bristol A Room

This case study will focus on Warren, Rhode Island's path to Economic Recovery from the pandemic. This panel includes a review of strategies used, barriers and best practices surrounding ARPA project rules and guidance, community engagement, grant management software, and data consultancy. The presentation will demonstrate the methods deployed to assess the landscape, efforts applied and the ongoing Town-approved projects in development benefiting the businesses, constituents, and community of Warren. The services were initiated in 2020 and continue today regarding all

matters of ARPA projects. Consultants will describe how they started with a short list of projects that met ARPA funding guidelines, and the process that has led to the determination of the projects the Town Council has approved and their status.

Speakers:

Allison Marovelli, Assistant Director of Communications for HCH Enterprises

Kate Michaud, Town Manager for the Town of Warren

Bob Rulli, Director of Planning for the Town of Warren

Robbie Mantooh, Project Manager, HCH Enterprises LLC Constantine

Leotsakos, Director of Sales, HCH Enterprises LLC

Title: Census 2020: Rhode Island's Population and Housing Market is Changing Are You Ready for It?

Bristol B Room

With the release of US Census data this fall, we have the most accurate information on the state of housing, population, and demographics in the state that has been available in the past 10 years, and it will be the most accurate information available for the next 10. The 2020 data has included some surprises, particularly an additional 45,000 residents compared with estimates from the year before. These changes have significant implications for municipalities, from schools to housing.

This presentation will discuss 2020 decennial Census data with a focus on housing. It will describe changes to housing needs and demand for municipalities in the state with particular focus on price increases, vacancy, and changes to demographics including age, race, and ethnicity. The presentation will also describe recent housing market dynamics, including new construction levels, movers from out of state, and how the housing market has been affected by COVID and the Federal programs designed to blunt the impact of the pandemic. Panelists will also discuss steps municipalities can take to adapt to these changes while meeting their residents' housing needs.

Speakers:

James Comer, Deputy Executive Director of Rhode Island Housing

Brian DeChambeau, Manager of Research and Evaluation for Rhode Island Housing

Meredith Brady, Associate Director, RI Department of Administration, Division of Statewide Planning

Sharon Morris, Executive Director, Omni Development Corporation

Title: Unconscious Bias in the Workplace

Rhode Island/Patriots Room

Most of us are familiar with the general concept of bias. Which, simply put, is prejudice in favor of or against someone or something compared with another: usually in a way considered unfair discrimination. You might ask, "What does this have to do with me?" The goal of this session is to help you understand unconscious bias and recognize that while it exists in every organization, its negative effects can be overcome.

By the time this session is over, you should be able to:

- Explain what unconscious bias is and how it differs from conscious bias
- Identify common patterns, stereotypes, and biases that negatively affect the workplace
- Assess and address your own unconscious biases; and
- Apply strategies to isolate and overcome unconscious bias when it surfaces in your interactions with coworkers

Speaker:

Karyn Rhodes, Vice-President and Director of Complete Payroll Solutions

SESSION THREE

Title: Energy in New England: Cost, Strategy, Sustainability and Budgeting

Narragansett/Ocean Rooms

With the second highest cost in the U.S. (only behind Hawaii), New England's energy market poses unique challenges for municipalities. This workshop will provide an overview of the energy landscape so participants will: Learn how suppliers determine the price. Discover strategies for mitigating rising costs. Understand how sustainability and carbon reduction goals can be realized as part of an overall energy plan.

Speakers:

Meg Lusardi, Executive Vice-President of PowerOptions

Rita Moran, Business Development Manager of PowerOptions

Charlotte Diogo, Business Development Manager of Constellation

Brandan Fong, Principal of Commodities Management Group at Constellation

Title: How to Spend It: Best Practices for Capital Improvement Planning and Managing Federal Funds

Bristol A Room

Managing capital improvement planning has taken center stage with ARPA and Infrastructure funding as well as a renewed focus on growth and development for many cities and counties. Capital improvement planning is work often done on separate spreadsheets and off the side of desks, but it's becoming fundamental to the long-term growth and strategies of cities and towns. In response, leading finance teams are building more efficient, compliant, and transparent workflows. From documentation, to determination, to contract management, reporting and transparency, these cities and towns are creating new, efficient processes to ensure that funds are properly allocated, spent, managed, and reported.

Join this session to learn how to:

- Document and determine uses for funds transparently
- Ensure better bids and more efficient and equitable procurement processes
- Effectively manage contracts across hundreds of projects
- Report on the uses of funds compliantly and transparently

Speaker:

Scott Coble, Director of Solutions Engineering for OpenGov

Title: What Makes Housing So Hard? Accommodating the Needs of All Households**Bristol B Room**

After WWII, the landscape of housing in the United States exploded with the expansion of highways and the migration of many families to the suburbs. This housing landscape became a new reference point for the “American Dream.” The emergent dominance of single-family housing had many consequences for land use, political power, generational wealth, and a growth of socioeconomic and racial disparities.

British urban planner Patsy Healey defined planning as “managing our co-existence in a shared space”. Across Rhode Island, municipal comprehensive plans suggest several strategies that would enable a diversity of housing types better suited to meet the needs of all Rhode Islanders, yet many of these strategies never make it into zoning.

This session will explore the diversity of housing types and households that may no longer conform to a latter 20th century vision of our state by examining a brief history of housing, the successes of and challenges to these newer planning and zoning strategies, and the view to a future for spatial justice.

Speakers:

Kyle Bennett, Director of Policy & Equity, United Way of Rhode Island

Annette Bourne, Research & Policy Director, HousingWorks RI

Nate Kelly, Principal, Horsley Witten Group

Aiyah Josiah-Faeduwor, MCP/MBA 2022, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) Spatial Justice Fellow

Title: Strategies for Sustainability in Labor Negotiations and Budgeting Personnel Costs**Rhode Island/Patriots Room**

Cities spend 60% or more of their budget on labor each year. A focus on total compensation of salaries, retirement benefits, health benefits, special-pays and expenses has become more critical now with the steadily rising cost of pensions. In this educational session, you will explore the latest methods for managing labor costs through negotiations, personnel budgeting and effective stakeholder communications.

Attendees will learn:

- How to quickly cost-out proposals and communicate the fiscal impact of complex benefit changes to stakeholders (union representatives, elected officials, and other staff)
- How to build trust by presenting transparent and visual benefit costing models
- How to benchmark your agency against others in a meaningful way
- How to navigate difficult conversations to realize a fiscally sustainable future

Speakers:

Ted Price, GovInvest CEO & Co-Founder

Christine Spagnoli, Finance Director for the Town of Narragansett

Elaine Colarusso, Deputy Finance Director for the Town of Middletown