



Massachusetts Municipal Association

MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

Recommendations for Effective Local Government Administration and Management from MMA Policy Committees

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MMA Fiscal Policy Committee

Best Practice Recommendation: Capital Planning and Climate Change

BEST PRACTICE: Update local capital improvement plans by including specific policies and practices to ensure that new and upgraded capital equipment and projects are protected from the impact of climate change. CIPs should include evaluation of the vulnerability of capital assets, such as drinking water, wastewater and stormwater systems, roads and bridges, communications and utility systems and buildings and other structures that are critical to the operation of the city or town and the health and safety of the population. Policies should have specific criteria for using climate change adaptation as a factor for adding projects to local plans and setting priorities for funding.

The Government Finance Officers Association recommends that “finance officers evaluate both the financial and non-financial impacts of a project, including environmentally responsible measures that impact the jurisdiction in the long term as well as the local, regional and global environment, changes to resource use and efficiency, and other areas that impact quality of life for the public.” The GFOA recommends policy principles to apply when developing environmental components for a capital plan, including consideration of an environmental factor when prioritizing capital needs and methods of financing capital improvements.

The GFOA also recommends that local officials take steps to “educate and communicate” with residents. “Lack of engagement with the public can increase the risk of misperceptions of environmental responsibility-based initiatives. One method of communication for finance officers is through the capital planning document itself. Governments should be clear on how environmentally supportive projects directly relate to important environmental considerations and improve the quality of life for the public.”

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs manages the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant program, which provides support for cities and towns to plan for resiliency and to implement climate change adaptation actions. The state awards funding to local governments to complete vulnerability assessments and develop resiliency plans. The program helps cities and towns define extreme weather and natural and climate-related hazards, and helps municipalities understand the local impacts of climate change, identify existing and future vulnerabilities and strengths, develop and prioritize actions for the community, identify opportunities to act to reduce risk and build resilience, and implement key actions identified through the planning process.

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Resources:

- Government Finance Officers Association, “Environmentally Responsible Practices in Capital Planning”:
www.gfoa.org/environmentally-responsible-practices-capital-planning
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program: www.mass.gov/municipal-vulnerability-preparedness-mvp-program
- MMA Best Practices Vol. 1, Number 2, Capital Planning:
www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/mma_best_practices_vol1no2_jan2016.pdf
- MMA Best Practices, Vol. 3, Number 3, Municipal Climate Adaptation Plans:
www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/mma_best_practices_vol3no3_jan2018.pdf