Amendment to HB 1129

Amend the title of the bill by replacing it with the following:

AN ACT relative to notice requirements for certain municipal public hearings, providing for optional town meeting procedures during the state of emergency declared in response to the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19), and directing certain CARES Act funding to specific state agencies.

Amend the bill by replacing all after section 1 with the following:

2 Temporary Municipal Spending Authority; State of Emergency. Due to the state of emergency declared as a result of the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19), the provisions of RSA 32:13, II shall also apply to towns and districts, as defined in RSA 32:3, with a July to June fiscal year, so that such towns or districts may make expenditures between July 1 and the date a budget is adopted which are reasonable in light of prior year's appropriations and expenditures during the same time period.

3 Temporary Optional Town Meeting Procedures; State of Emergency. Towns, village districts, and school districts that are unable to hold in-person annual meetings in 2020 or 2021 due to novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) may conduct virtual meetings in accordance with this section. At the option of the governing body, the town or school district meeting may be convened and proceed to approve the posted 2020 or 2021 warrant in the following fashion:

I. The governing body shall host a live virtual meeting and information session, during which the proposed optional town or school district meeting procedures shall be outlined and warrant articles discussed. At least 7 days prior to this informational session, notice shall be mailed to all registered voters describing the procedures to be followed for conducting an annual meeting pursuant to this section. After the live, virtual meeting is adjourned, questions and comments from the public shall be solicited and received via electronic mail, voice mail, text message, or by other electronic means.

II. Within 7 days of the information session, the governing body shall hold another live virtual meeting to consider and address comments received from the public. The governing body shall then discuss, debate, and be permitted to amend the posted warrant. The final warrant, as amended, shall then be made available electronically for printing by voters to be brought to the voting session, which shall be scheduled for a date and time to be determined by the governing body.

III. Voting on final warrant articles shall be by secret ballot cast by voters through drive-up procedures to ensure appropriate social distancing. In a town or district that uses the official ballot
for the election of officers and has not yet held its town or district election, an official ballot will be printed for the election of officers and other items that are required to be placed on the official ballot. All other warrant articles will be printed on a separate ballot ("the alternative ballot").

IV. The first article on the alternative ballot shall ask whether voters approve these optional meeting procedures. If the optional procedures are not approved by a simple majority, all other warrant articles shall be deemed disapproved. However, the election of officers and action on other items on the initial ballot will be effective. If the optional voting procedures are approved, then all other votes on warrant articles shall be deemed the final action of the meeting, provided that if the operating budget warrant article is not approved, the governing body may vote to:

(a) Convene a meeting before September 1 to adopt an operating budget; or
(b) Elect to deem that the meeting has adopted the previous year's operating budget article, not including separate warrant articles.

V. In a town or district using the official ballot referendum (SB 2) form of annual meeting that has held its deliberative session but has not yet held its official ballot voting sessions, the governing body may choose to use the drive up procedures in paragraph III for the official ballot voting session, and paragraphs I and II shall not apply.

4 Online Access to Budget Information and Reports; CARES Act Funding. Beginning July 1, 2020, the commissioner of the department of administrative services, or the governor's office for economic relief and recovery, shall separately report on the state website the disbursement of all CARES Act funds, in a check register format, including the amount of the payment, the date of the payment, the person or entity to whom the payment was made, the title and number of the accounting unit and class code, the title and number of the expense account, and a brief description of said disbursement.

5 CARES Act Funding; Homelessness Support. The treasurer and the governor shall transfer $10,000,000 from CARES Act funds to the bureau of homeless and housing services, department of health and human services for the purpose of supporting existing housing and homelessness services, rapid rehousing, and supporting our homeless shelter system with both capacity as well as adaptations and staffing necessary during the state of emergency related to the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19), including adaptations relating to physical spaces and operations to support on-site public health protocols and safe social distancing measures.


I. The treasurer and the governor shall transfer $50,000,000 from CARES Act to the New Hampshire housing finance authority for a Covid-19 housing recovery fund, with moneys to be disbursed as follows:

(a) Assistance to landlords and renters impacted by the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) by relieving unpaid rent due to Covid-19 in order maintain and stabilize the housing market and avoid evictions for nonpayment of rent;
(b) Assistance to homeowners impacted by Covid-19 by relieving unpaid mortgages due to Covid-19 in order to allow homeowners to stay in their homes and avoid foreclosure;

(c) A $5,000,000 allocation to the affordable housing fund established in RSA 204-C:57, with a priority for housing markets most impacted by Covid-19.

II. The New Hampshire housing finance authority shall develop any and all requests for proposals, applications, and conditions on receipt of assistance to implement this section.

III. The New Hampshire housing finance authority shall provide a report, on or by October 1, 2020, to the governor and the joint legislative fiscal committee on the implementation and effectiveness of the Covid-19 housing recovery fund in achieving the purposes outlined herein.

7 Broadband Support. The treasurer and the governor shall transfer $40,000,000 from CARES Act moneys to the community development finance authority for the purpose of enhancing access to broadband for families and businesses in unserved areas of New Hampshire. The public utilities commission shall immediately issue a request for proposals for identified unserved areas and provide grants that meet the need in identified unserved areas. Such grants may be used to help leverage public-private provider partnerships for delivery of broadband services to properties unserved by broadband as defined in RSA 38:38 I(c). These funds shall support part of the public investment portion of partnerships that reach unserved properties through a municipal or town-wide project, or infill projects designed to serve specific unserved areas.

8 Effective Date.

I. Section 1 of this act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.

II. The remainder of this act shall take effect upon its passage.
AMENDING ANALYSIS

This bill changes the notice requirements for certain municipal public hearings by allowing notice of the hearing to be posted on the municipal website. The bill also temporarily permits legislative bodies with a fiscal year ending in June to make certain expenditures prior to the adoption of an official budget, temporarily provides for a virtual annual meeting procedure, requires online reporting of CARES Act disbursements, and makes certain distributions of CARES Act moneys.