

Maine State Cultural Affairs Council

Maine Arts Commission
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Maine Library Commission
Maine State Museum Commission
Maine State Archives
Maine Historical Society
Maine Humanities Council

132th Maine Legislature

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

February 7, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Peter Merrill, Chair of the Maine State Cultural Affairs Council.

The Maine State Cultural Affairs Council was established in 1991 to create a coordinated, integrated system of cultural resource programming and to ensure the support of cultural heritage institutions and activities of the State. At that time, four of the agencies were under the Department of Education. The goal was to make the cultural agencies independent but have their work be coordinated and complementary.

Today the members of the Council are the Maine Arts Commission, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, the Maine State Library, the Maine State Museum, the Maine Humanities Council, the Maine Historical Society, and the Maine State Archives. Each agency has a volunteer Board. The Chair and Vice-Chair (or designee) of each board serves on the Council. The chair of the Council is appointed by the Governor from among the members. The agency directors and a representative of the Governor's Office are *ex-officio* members. The Maine Historical Society and the Maine Humanities Council are not state agencies.

The Council has three items in the budget. The first two are under the New Century Program Fund (0904).

First is a General Fund appropriation of \$40,246. This is not much money, but it is important. Currently the agencies use the money to support their missions. The agencies can speak to how they use the funds but here are two representative examples: At the Maine Historical Society, which I represent on the Council, the funds are used to support the Maine Memory Network, a web based repository of Maine's oral history. At the Maine Humanities Council, the funds are used to support humanities projects at non-profit organizations statewide. It is important to keep the account active. Over the years we have received over \$6,000,000 from general obligation bonds and general fund appropriations and we hope receive more again in the future.

The second item is an Other Special Revenue allocation of \$65,424. These funds came from a portion of the revenue generated by the sale of the Bicentennial license plates. These are one-time funds. We have funded publishing a collection of essays on Maine history, supported Maine History day, provided support for a student trip to Washington, and supported the republishing of a history of Maine Statehood. We had a number of false starts for the balance and will be discussing a new proposal Monday.

Our third item is the Bicentennial Celebration (Z260). This is a dormant account.

Those are the Council's budget items. We appreciate your interest in and support for the work we do.