

THE COOPERATOR

News and updates for leaders of resident-owned communities

ROCs prepare for major infrastructure projects

It's a new year and a great time to look at what projects are ahead for your community. All resident-owned communities (ROCs) have capital improvement needs, whether replacing water lines, repaving streets, improving site drainage, or constructing a community building.

As many of you know, funding for most of these projects come out of your community's Capital Improvement Reserve account, but some require outside funding due to the size of the project.

Taking some of the lessons learned over our 20 year history, NCF is working on formalizing the process for how we approach capital improvement projects with our client ROCs. Here are some ways we support ROC infrastructure projects:

- Help identify and evaluate the scope of work;
- Connecting ROCs with qualified engineer firms;
- Obtaining bids from qualified contractors;
- Preparation of grant or loan application ;
- Assistance with contracting;
- Serving as an 'owner's representative.'

NCF understands capital improvement projects can be overwhelming for any Board. NCF is happy to partner on special projects with our client ROCs to ensure projects go smoothly and to minimize stress on the board.

Among the most important things that ROCs can do to ensure their project's success is to be proactive in project planning and engage NCF staff early in the planning process.

Early planning by the Board (or project team/committee) is essential so as funding becomes available, the ROC has already laid the groundwork for success.



Park Plaza Board Members (pictured above) at the groundbreaking of their new stormshelter in August 2018.

NCF has developed a policy for how we will support future ROC capital improvement projects. Some of the key features of the new policy include:

- A 'project readiness' checklist with items NCF staff would like to see the ROC has started on before approaching NCF for support (for example: NCF wants to see that the ROC has strong financial performance and has membership support for the project);
- Information on how NCF prioritizes projects to support (for example: health and safety projects get preference for support);

We will be sharing this policy and a template 'special project support' contract with all ROCs for the next time a major project comes up. For any additional questions about project readiness, please reach out to your TA provider.

NCF tracks eviction moratoriums in 2021

There is still a national moratorium in place through January 31, 2021 which halts residential evictions due to nonpayment of rent for tenants that meet certain criteria.

Please consult your cooperative's attorney for specific legal advice on this moratorium. With the new administration taking office this month, we anticipate there will be more announcements and potentially an extended federal moratorium on evictions.

Minnesota

On January 13th, 2021 the Governor issued Executive Order 21-04, extending the peacetime emergency declaration through February 12, 2021. This means the suspension of evictions and landlord-initiated lease terminations currently remains in place until February 12, 2021.

The state recently announced that more rental assistance is coming to Minnesota as a result of the Federal COVID-19 Relief bill passed in December, so stay tuned for more information.

Wisconsin

There is no additional moratorium currently in place in Wisconsin. The federal moratorium is still in effect and requires tenants to declare under penalty of perjury that they have applied for available government assistance, cannot pay rent due to lost wages or high medical bills, and are using their best efforts to make timely partial payments as best they can.

Residents must certify that they understand that fees may be charged, and payment is still due at the end of the temporary halt on evictions, Jan-



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uary 31, 2021. Just like Minnesota, Wisconsin will be receiving emergency rental assistance as part of the December relief bill, which will be allocated by January 26, 2021.

NCF will keep all cooperatives up to date when there is more information available about rental assistance.

Residents organize for Opportunity to Purchase in MN

In most states around the country, homeowners in manufactured home communities find out that their community has been sold only after the sale has already taken place.

As members of resident-owned communities, you know this fact well. But what you might not know is that a growing number of states including New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Vermont have passed laws that mandate owners to provide notice and an opportunity for residents to purchase their community at the time of sale.

In Minnesota, this is not YET the case but a group of residents hope to change that fact.

In January of this year, several manufactured home residents from across the state came together to form a campaign to pass Opportunity to Purchase (OTP) legislation in Minnesota, similar to those laws passed in other states.

The group is comprised of residents from residents owned communities as well as non-resident owned communities. They are flanked with the support of All Parks Alliance for



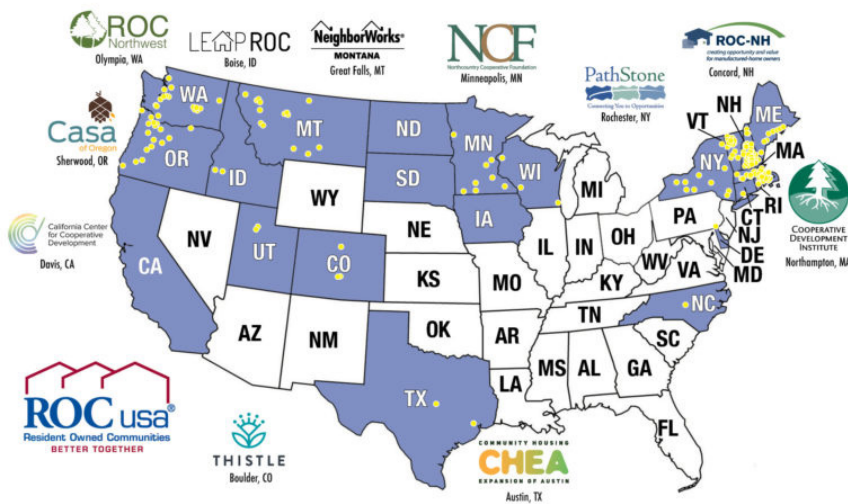
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Change (APAC).

All Parks Alliance for Change (APAC), Minnesota's statewide manufactured homeowners advocacy or-

Continued on page 3

ROC USA Network expands into four new states



ROC NETWORK MAP 2021

Within the last year, four new nonprofits have become affiliates in the ROC USA Network. Including NCF, there are now 11 non-profit affiliates who serve 22 states.

Each of the affiliates has a core belief in the cooperative ownership model and is responsible for developing and supporting resident-owned communities (ROCs) within their market area.

The 11 affiliates are shown on the map above. Blue states are served by one of the 11 affiliates, and yellow

dots are ROCs. Did you know that your ROC belongs to a nation-wide family of 267 resident-owned manufactured home communities that represent 18,089 households?

New Network Affiliates

LEAP ROC is based in Boise, Idaho and is a program of LEAP Charities. LEAP supports all types of homeowners to secure affordable housing. LEAP has helped two manufactured home communities become resident-owned.

California Center for Cooperative Development (CCCD) is based in Davis, California. CCCD supports agricultural, arts, childcare, energy, housing, and worker-owned cooperatives in California with start-up, management, and other technical assistance.

Community Housing Expansion of Austin (CHEA) is based in Austin Texas. CHEA creates, sustains, and advocates for affordable housing communities in Central Texas, with an emphasis on co-op ownership and control. CHEA has helped one manufactured home community become resident-owned.

And last but not least, **Thistle** is based in Boulder County, Colorado. Thistle develops, manages and preserves affordable rental and ownership homes in Colorado. Since its founding in 1989, Thistle has created more than 1,000 affordable homes. and has helped three manufactured home communities become resident-owned.

NCF is excited to welcome these four new affiliates into the Network.

OTP continued from page 2

organization, worked with several legislative champions to introduce Opportunity to Purchase in the 2019 Legislative Session (SF 614).

APAC entered the 2020 session with the OTP bill in the same form it was in 2019. The authors of the bill in partnership with the resident led group are reintroducing the bill in the 2021 session.

Strong OTP legislation, as it exists in other states, empowers homeowners with an opportunity to assess the option to buy their community and match any outside investor's offer for the property. It levels the playing field for residents and provides a choice.

In states where this law has been enacted, it has resulted in a significant increase of resident-owned communities.

OTP works to ensure that owners

are required to inform residents thus giving more residents the opportunity to choose the fate of their community. If you are interested in learning more about the committee, please reach out to Natividad Seefeld at president@parkplazacooperative.org.

Spotlight: Libraries Without Borders works with ROCs to bring resources to members

Libraries Without Borders (LWB) is an international nonprofit organization formed in 2007 to expand access to information and bridge the digital divide. Across the United States, LWB has brought together leaders from communities, business, government, nonprofits, and libraries to design library spaces and learning opportunities in existing sites. These programs have been developed in laundromats, lobbies of apartment buildings, parking lots, and other informal spaces. Ed Hilbrich, the Manufactured Housing Project Coordinator with LWB, has been in touch with several ROCs in Minnesota about bringing programming to ROC members.

LWB's Approach

LWB partners with public libraries interested in providing programming in hard-to-reach communities to see if there is an opportunity to collaborate on hosting programming directly in the community they hope to serve (for example: in a storm shelter building of a ROC or a laundromat in a particular neighborhood). Programming can mean increasing access to books, art materials, computers, or providing early literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) resources. As a first step, LWB reaches out to libraries and conducts community surveys of residents to gauge interest.

LWB partners with ROCs

As part of a one-year grant award from the Blandin foundation, LWB and State Library Services, a division of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) are



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working to create a statewide model for partnerships between public libraries and manufactured home communities in Minnesota. The overarching goals are to bridge the digital divide, connect Minnesotans to critical educational and employment opportunities, and to promote affordable housing.

In 2021, LWB will be partnering with Minnesota ROCs with the possibility of expanding the work to other states in the future. LWB has been working with Sungold Heights, Madelia Mobile Village Co-op, Hillcrest Community Co-op, Sunrise Villa, and Stonegate Co-op.

If you have any questions about this program, please reach out to your TA provider who can connect you with the Project Lead, Ed.

Have an idea for the next Co-op Spotlight?

Email or call Emily Stewart

emily@northcountryfoundation.org | (612) 767- 2132

All ideas are welcome!



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NCF advocates for ROCs at the MN Legislature

For the last five years, NCF has been working to advance legislation that improves the lives of homeowners in Minnesota resident-owned communities.

In years past, NCF has fought and won a number of legislative battles including a Manufactured Housing Infrastructure Grant Program through the MN Housing Agency (\$2 million in base appropriation) and the reinstatement of renters' credit for Minnesota ROCs. This year, NCF is hoping to advance two major pieces of legislation:

- 1. Title Reform for manufactured homes in resident owned communities.** This policy would allow ROC residents to title their homes as real property and gain access to more competitive home financing options;
- 2. Increasing funds appropriated to the Manufactured Housing Infrastructure Grant program.** Increasing the amount of funds available will allow more ROCs to apply and receive much-needed resources to replace and repair aging infrastructure.

NCF will provide an update in the next issue of *The Cooperator*, on the outcomes of the 2021 Legislative Session.

Overview of the Minnesota Legislature

For those who might be unfamiliar with the legislative process in Minnesota, NCF has provided an overview of how the legislative session operates. The following content was developed by TakeActionMN.

The Minnesota Legislature meets for two years at a time, often called a biennium. During the first year, the odd numbered year, the Legislature passes two-year-long state budget. During the second, even numbered year the Legislature often passes a capital investment (or bonding) bill. It's a bill that authorizes the state to borrow money to pay for building projects across the state.

During either year, the MN Legislature works on policy bills; these are bills that don't cost money but change the language of our state laws. All this work is processed through finance and policy committees that roughly correspond without state agencies: Education, Health and Human Services, Taxes, etc. Policy bills are often heard in multiple committees by pre-set deadlines to stay on



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the path to becoming law.

MN state constitution is required to have a balanced budget at the end of the biennium, or June 30th, 2021. If the budget doesn't pass by then, Minnesota risks a state government shutdown.

So, how does a state budget get passed? Officially, it starts when the Governor proposes their budget. Unofficially, it starts much earlier. To get you oriented, here are 20 key steps:

- 1.** During the summer, the Governor's office directs state agencies to start preparing budgets for the next year.
- 2.** On the second Tuesday after the first Monday in November, elections are held. Candidates run on the issues they intend to prioritize.
- 3.** After the election, the Speaker of the House and Senate majority leader are elected by the majority caucus in each house in early November.
- 4.** The Speaker and Majority Leader pick Committee Chairs later in November.
- 5.** Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) creates the November budget forecast, usually published in early December. It tells MN residents if there is a defi-

Continued on page 6

NCF hosts first-ever LIVE CHAT as follow-up to *The Cooperator* Tuesday, February 23rd at 6pm

NCF would like to invite you and your community members to join NCF staff in a live chat discussing the articles featured in this issue of *The Cooperator*.

In effort to bring ROCs together this year, we are hosting these live chats to create a space where ROC leaders can both ask questions and share information with peers in other ROCs.

You can access the live chat via video and/or phone

conference. To join by video: go to <https://meetings.ring-central.com/j/1495391231> or call in to (720) 902-7700, access code: 149 539 1231#. An email will go out after *The Cooperator* is distributed that will provide the same information.

Hope you enjoyed this issue of *The Cooperator* and we look forward to bringing you more news about ROCs across Minnesota and Wisconsin in the future.

MN Legislature continued from page 5

cit or a surplus. As of December 1, 2020, there is a \$1.273 billion deficit for our 2022-2023 biennium.

6. MN Legislature always starts the biennium on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January, or January 5th, 2021.

7. The Speaker & Majority Leader create committee deadlines to organize the legislative process.

8. The Governor releases a budget proposal by the end of January and gives a State of the State address, usually in January and February.

9. MMB updates its budget forecast, often on the last business day in February.

10. The Speaker and Majority Leader set 'budget targets' for their Finance Committees telling them what funds they are permitted to spend or are required to raise through taxes and fees.

11. The First Deadline is when a bill must be acted on by at least one committee in either the House or the Senate.

12. The Second Deadline is when the bills that made First Deadline must be acted on by at least one committee in the other body.

13. The Legislature has a spring recess usually accommodating Passover & Easter. During the week, legislators often go home to hear from their constituents.

14. The Third Deadline is when budget bills must be

passed by the relevant Finance Committees. If Easter is early in April (like it is in 2021), this deadline is usually after the spring recess.

15. All the budgets must then be passed by their chamber's lead finance committees: Ways & Means in the House and the Finance Committee in the Senate.

16. In late April and early May the House and Senate bring each committee's budget bill to a 'floor vote' where any member can amend them.

17. Each passed budget bill is sent to a Conference Committee (an ad-hoc committee made up House Members and Senators) that works out the differences between their two versions.

18. During the endgame of session the Speaker, Majority Leader & Governor negotiate joint budget targets and resolve any disputes the Conference Committees couldn't.

19. Bills approved by Conference Committees go back to each house for final floor votes. Bills cannot be amended at this point.

20. Bills that are passes can be signed, allowed to pass into law without the Governor's signature, unallotted (i.e. line-item vetoed), vetoed, or, in the last three days of session, pocket vetoed. If the Legislature disagrees with a veto, they can override it with a two-thirds majority vote in each body.

If the Legislature doesn't finish its work by May 17, the Governor can call them back for a Special Session. Once back, the Legislature decides when it adjourns.