



## Legislative Update January 10, 2021

Happy New Year and here's to the beginning of another state legislative session!

The Minnesota House and Senate convened for the 92<sup>nd</sup> state legislative biennium this past Tuesday, January 5. It was a pretty slow week as House and Senate committee rosters were finalized the weekend before session started and legislators were just getting used to the lay of the land and the new way that the session and each chamber will operate. This is typical in the first year of the new legislature but also different, due to COVID.

To see the list of committees and their membership in the House and Senate, go to the following:

- House Committee Roster - <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/leginfo/comroster.pdf>
- Senate Committee Roster - <https://www.senate.mn/committees/2019-2020/info/comlegal.pdf>.

Besides the normal votes on House and Senate rules, decisions on operating in a COVID environment broke along party lines. The House majority decided that mask wearing is mandatory and that all committee hearings will be virtual. In contrast, the Senate majority determined that mask wearing is just strongly encouraged. Further, Senate Republicans are offering the option to meet legislators and testify at committee hearings in person or via Zoom.

The biggest news of the week was [a letter that Governor Walz sent to legislative leaders](#), highlighting his expectations before ending the peacetime emergency declaration. Among the items listed that need addressing are:

- Commonsense measures to ensure that businesses continue to provide safe environments to enable commerce to thrive.
- Increased protections for workers from unsafe working conditions and retaliation from raising concerns about workplace safety.
- Changes to the Unemployment Insurance program to continue to enable more job seekers to receive timely support.
- Requirements to wear face coverings in public indoor spaces and indoor businesses.

As for protests this past week, obviously much attention was focused on what happened in Washington, DC. However, some legislators in Minnesota have also been on edge as some protestors suddenly showed up at a couple of legislators' homes the previous weekend. But because of the loss of life and destruction this past week in DC, Minnesota protestors only chose to demonstrate at the State Capitol this past Saturday.

Specifically for MAT, it has been busy leading up to the beginning of the legislative session and this coming week (Jan. 11-15) will be busy again:

- Steve Fenske and Shep Harris met with House Property Tax Division Chair Rep. Cheryl Youakim this past Thursday, January 7. We spoke about returning authority to townships to hold Board of Appeals and Equalization, the Township LGA funding and annexation legislation.
- As a follow-up to the meeting with Chair Youakim, Steve Fenske and Shep Harris met with House Research staff to get legislation drafted to return local authority to townships to hold Board of Appeals and Equalization. Working with Chair Youakim, we hope to find a chief author on the bill in the House in the near future.
- Steve Fenske and Shep Harris also participated with a group of stakeholders on legislation this past week regarding Open Meeting Law (OML) requirements. The issue is about transparency, which was raised by a few media reporters last fall who were not allowed into a Minneapolis commission meeting. Along with the League of Minnesota Cities, the Association of Minnesota Counties, a couple of media organizations and state agencies, we believe that this legislation is not necessary.

This coming week, specifically on Wednesday, Jan. 13, Steve Fenske will be presenting to the House Local Government Committee about MAT and our priorities. This is a result of meeting with committee chair Rep. Sandra Masin in December and requesting that we brief the committee on township affairs. If anyone is interested in watching Steve present, click on <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/cco/rules/permrule/1001.htm>.

In addition to this committee hearing, other committees will get under way next week and bill introductions will take off. As issues of interest in committees and bill introductions take place, I'll be sure to add them in these weekly updates and in the weekly Zoom calls. If you have any further questions, please contact Steve Fenske so our communications can be coordinated and effective.