MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 1778

H.P. 1189

House of Representatives, April 24, 2025

An Act to Update Provisions of the Maine Administrative Procedure Act

Reference to the Committee on State and Local Government suggested and ordered printed.

ROBERT B. HUNT

Clerk

Presented by Representative KUHN of Falmouth.

Cosponsored by Representatives: LEE of Auburn, SINCLAIR of Bath, Senator: BAILEY of York.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

- **Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §8052, sub-§2,** as amended by PL 1993, c. 362, §2, is further amended to read:
- 2. Requirements. Any A public hearing shall <u>must</u> comply with any requirements imposed by statute, but shall <u>is</u> not be subject to subchapter IV 4. Any public hearing shall be held and conducted as follows. In the case of a rule authorized to be adopted by a board or commission consisting of 3 or more members, at least 1/3 of the board members must be present during any hearing on the rule.
 - A. In the case of a rule authorized to be adopted by more than one agency member, at least 1/3 of the agency members shall be present.
 - B. In the case of a rule authorized to be adopted by a single agency member, either the agency member, a person in a major policy-influencing position, as listed in chapter 71, or a designee who has responsibility over the subject matter to be discussed at the hearing shall hold and conduct the hearing.
- **Sec. 2. 5 MRSA §8052, sub-§5, ¶B,** as amended by PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. NNN, §1, is further amended to read:
 - B. A rule may not be adopted unless the adopted rule is <u>substantively</u> consistent with the terms of the proposed rule, except to the extent that the agency determines that it is necessary to address concerns raised in comments about the proposed rule, or specific findings are made supporting changes to the proposed rule. The agency shall maintain a file for each rule adopted that must include, in addition to other documents required by this Act, testimony, comments, the names of persons who commented and the organizations they represent and information relevant to the rule and considered by the agency in connection with the formulation, proposal or adoption of a rule. If an agency determines that a rule that the agency intends to adopt is substantially <u>substantively</u> different from the proposed rule, the agency shall request comments from the public concerning the changes from the proposed rule. The agency may not adopt the rule for a period of 30 days from the date comments are requested pursuant to this paragraph. Notice of the request for comments must be published by the Secretary of State in the same manner as notice for proposed rules.
- **Sec. 3. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§1,** as amended by PL 2011, c. 479, §§1 to 3, is repealed.
- Sec. 4. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§2, as repealed and replaced by PL 1979, c. 425, §5, is amended to read:
- 2. Notice of rulemaking rule-making hearing. When an agency holds a public hearing prior to adoption of a rule, notice of the hearing shall must be given in the manner described in subsections 1 and subsection 5, using the date of the hearing to calculate the time periods involved;
- **Sec. 5. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§3,** as amended by PL 2019, c. 146, §§1 to 3, is further amended to read:
- 3. Contents of notice. Except for notices governed by subsections 5 and 7, a \underline{A} notice under this section must:

- 1 A. Refer to the statutory authority under which the adoption of the rule is proposed;
- 2 A-1. Identify the agency proposing the rule;

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- 3 A-2. Provide the chapter number and title of the proposed rule;
- 4 A-3. Cite the statutory authority pursuant to which the rule is being proposed;
- 5 B. State the date, time and place of any scheduled public hearing or state the manner in which a hearing may be requested; 6
- C. State the manner and time within which data, views or arguments may deadline by which comments on the proposed rule must be submitted to the agency for 8 9 consideration, whether or not a hearing is held;
 - C-1. State the name, address and phone, telephone number and e-mail address of the a staff person responsible for providing additional information or a printed version of the proposed rule of the agency proposing the rule to whom inquiries about the rule, and requests for copies of the rule, may be sent:
- 14 D. If possible, contain the express terms of the proposed rule or otherwise describe the 15 substance of the proposed rule, stating the subjects and issues involved and indicate 16 where a copy of the proposed rule may be obtained;
- 17 D-1. Provide a summary of the proposed rule;
- 18 E. Refer to the substantive state or federal law to that would be implemented by the 19 rules proposed rule;
 - F. Indicate where a copy of the statement of impact on small business information may be obtained about any adverse economic impact on small businesses that were documented by the agency proposing the rule pursuant to section 8052, subsection 5-A may be obtained; and
 - G. Indicate whether the rule is routine technical or major substantive as those terms are defined described in section 8071.
 - Sec. 6. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§3-A, as amended by PL 2003, c. 207, §2, is further amended to read:
 - **3-A.** Copies of proposed rules available upon request. At least 20 days prior to a public hearing on any proposed rule and at least 20 days prior to the comment deadline of any rule without for which a public hearing will not be held, the agency shall make eopies available on its publicly accessible website a copy of the proposed rule available in writing or, with agreement of the requestor, electronically, as well as provide a paper copy of the rule to persons any person upon request.
 - Sec. 7. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§4, as amended by PL 2003, c. 207, §3, is repealed.
- 35 Sec. 8. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§5, as amended by PL 2009, c. 256, §2, is further 36 amended to read:
 - 5. Publication Newspaper publication and online posting of agency rule-making proposal notices. Using the format of notice pursuant to information listed in subsection 7 3, the Secretary of State shall:
 - A. Arrange Shall arrange for the weekly newspaper publication of a and post, or cause to be posted, on the Secretary of State's publicly accessible website consolidated notice

- notices of rule making of all state agencies, which shall also include a brief explanation to assist the public in participating in the rule-making process agency rule-making proposals. Notice Notices of each rule-making proceeding shall proposal must be published and posted once 17 to 24 days prior to the public hearing on the proposed rule or, if no public hearing is scheduled, at least 30 days prior to the last date on which views and arguments comments on the rule may be submitted to the agency for consideration if no public hearing is scheduled;
- B. Designate Shall designate certain newspapers, which together have general circulation throughout the State, as papers of record for the purpose of publishing notice under paragraph A. Notice of proposed rules affecting only a particular locality or region need only be published in the designated newspapers having general circulation in the area affected;
- C. Designate Shall designate one day as rules day for publication of notices on rulemaking as set forth agency rule-making proposal notices described in this subsection are to be published and posted; and
- D. Be <u>Must be</u> reimbursed for the cost of publication of rule-making notice by the agencies proposing the rulemaking <u>rules</u>. The total costs of each consolidated publication will notice must be prorated by the Secretary of State among all agencies submitting notice for a particular week.
- Sec. 9. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§5-A is enacted to read:

- 5-A. Agency posting of proposed and adopted rules. An agency shall post its proposed rules on its publicly accessible website. An agency also shall post on its publicly accessible website its adopted rules or provide a link to the adopted rules posted on a website maintained by the Secretary of State.
- **Sec. 10. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§6,** as amended by PL 2011, c. 326, §1, is further amended to read:
- 6. Electronic publication Online posting of agency rule-making adoption notices. In addition to the printed publication online posting of agency rule-making proposal notices required in subsection 5, the Secretary of State shall maintain a publicly accessible website for posting the notices of all proposed and adopted rules. The contents of the notice for electronic publication are pursuant to subsection 3. An agency, on its publicly accessible website, shall either post its proposed and adopted rules or provide a link to the proposed or adopted rules posted on the Secretary of State's website. Notice of each rule making proceeding must be published on the Secretary of State's website 17 to 24 days prior to the public hearing on the proposed rule or at least 30 days prior to the last date on which views and arguments may be submitted to the agency for consideration if no public hearing was scheduled post, or cause to be posted, on the Secretary of State's publicly accessible website the weekly notices of agency rule-making adoptions, provisional adoptions and final adoptions. The adoption and final adoption notices must state the effective date of the adopted or finally adopted rules, as well as provide the information specified in section 8053, subsection 3, paragraphs A-1, A-2, A-3, C-1, D-1 and G.
 - Sec. 11. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§6-A is enacted to read:
- 6-A. Explanation of rule-making process. The Secretary of State shall post on the Secretary of State's publicly accessible website a brief explanation to assist the public in

participating in the rule-making process. The explanation must include information regarding the manner in which a hearing on a proposed rule may be requested by a member of the public if the agency proposing the rule did not schedule one.

Sec. 12. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§7, ¶F, as amended by PL 2019, c. 146, §4, is further

- **Sec. 12. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§7,** ¶**F,** as amended by PL 2019, c. 146, §4, is further amended to read:
 - F. Indicate where a copy of the statement of impact on small business pursuant to section 8052, subsection 5-A may be obtained; and
- **Sec. 13. 5 MRSA §8053, sub-§7, ¶G,** as amended by PL 2019, c. 146, §4, is repealed.
- Sec. 14. 5 MRSA §8056, as amended by PL 2011, c. 380, Pt. NNN, §2, is further amended to read:

§8056. Filing and publication of adopted and provisionally adopted rules; online posting of adopted rules

- 1. Requirements. With respect to every rule adopted, the or, in the case of a major substantive rule, finally adopted, an agency shall:
 - A. Submit the rule to the Attorney General for approval as to form and legality;
 - B. File the original rule as signed by the Attorney General or an assistant attorney general and the authorized representative of the agency, and the statement required by section 8052, subsection 5, After the rule is approved by the Attorney General as to form and legality pursuant to paragraph A, file with the Secretary of State in, using a form or forms or an electronic filing platform prescribed by the Secretary of State, which form is susceptible to frequent and easy revision. the adopted rule and any such other filing documentation as is required by the Secretary of State. The adopted rule and all other filing documentation must be in a format approved by the Secretary of State; and
 - (1) Through rulemaking, an agency may incorporate by reference all or any part of a code, standard, rule or regulation that has been adopted by an agency of the United States or of this State or by a nationally recognized organization or association.
 - (2) The reference in the agency rules must fully identify the incorporated matter by exact title, edition or version and date of publication.
 - (3) The rules must state where copies of the incorporated matter are available at cost from the agency issuing the rule or where copies are available from the agency of the United States, this State or an organization or association originally issuing that matter.
 - (4) An agency incorporating a matter by reference shall submit a copy of the incorporated matter to the Secretary of State;
 - C. Supply Provide, without cost or at actual cost, eopies a paper copy of each such rule to any person who has filed with the agency within the past year a written request to be supplied with all copies of the agency's rules; and requests a paper copy.
- D. Publish, pursuant to the procedures set forth in section 8053, subsection 6, a notice containing the following information: A statement that the rule has been adopted, its

effective date, a brief description of the substance of the rule, and the address where a 1 2 copy may be obtained. 3 2. Form. With respect to every rule adopted by the agency and in effect, the agency 4 shall print and compile and make available to any person, at each of its offices, for inspection at no charge and for copying with or without cost, as the agency shall determine, 5 and for distribution free or at actual cost, complete sets of such rules currently in effect. 6 2-A. Incorporation by reference. Through rulemaking, an agency may incorporate 7 by reference into a rule all or any part of a code, standard, rule or regulation that has been 8 9 adopted by an agency of the United States or of this State or by a nationally recognized organization or association. 10 11 A. The reference in the agency rule must fully identify the incorporated matter by exact title, edition or version and date of publication. 12 B. The rule must state where copies of the incorporated matter are available at cost 13 from the agency issuing the rule or where copies are available from the agency of the 14 15 United States, this State or the organization or association that originally produced the incorporated matter. 16 17 C. An agency incorporating a matter by reference into a rule shall maintain a copy of the incorporated matter at its principal office. 18 19 3. Secretary of State. The Secretary of State shall: maintain, and make available through the the Secretary of State's publicly accessible website, current electronic copies 20 of the rules of each agency that are in effect. 21 22 A. Maintain and make available at the Secretary of State's office, for inspection at no 23 charge and for copying or purchase, current copies of complete rules for all agencies 24 filed in accordance with subsection 1, paragraph B; 25 A-1. Compile, edit, index and arrange for publication and distribution all current rules 26 of state agencies as available resources permit. Compilations must be supplemented or revised at least annually; 27 28 A-2. Publish an annual list of current rules of state agencies; 29 B. Supply, at actual cost, annually updated copies of complete sets of rules of an 30 agency to any person who has filed with the Secretary of State within the past year a 31 written request for such sets of rules; and 32 C. Codify all current state agency rules in an electronic text file data base, in 33 consultation with affected state agencies and in accordance with subsections 7 and 8, 34 as available resources permit. 35 4. Additional requirements. The requirements of subsection 2 shall additionally be 36

applicable to the agency's forms, instructions, explanatory statements and other items defined in section 8002, subsection 9, paragraph B, subparagraph (4).

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- 5. Record of vote. In addition to the foregoing, each agency shall keep maintain, at its principal office, and make available for inspection to any person a record of the vote of each member of the agency taken in rule-making proceedings.
- **6.** Attorney General review and approval. The review required in subsection 1, paragraph A may not be performed by any person involved in the formulation or drafting

of the proposed rule. The Attorney General may not approve a rule if it is reasonably expected to result in a taking of private property under the Constitution of Maine unless such a result is directed by law or sufficient procedures exist in law or in the proposed rule to allow for a variance designed to avoid such a taking.

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- 7. Codification of rules. The Secretary of State, in consultation with affected state agencies, shall develop a plan to codify all current rules of state agencies within its available resources. The codified rules must be maintained on an electronic text file data base. To develop the electronic text file data base, agencies may refile an existing rule or parts of an existing rule. If an agency refiles a rule or portion of a rule:
 - A. The agency may not make at the time of refiling any substantive changes in that rule or portion of that rule; and
 - B. The refiled rule or portion of the rule must be adopted in accordance with the Maine Administrative Procedure Act except that public comment on the refiling under section 8057-A, subsection 3 is limited to documenting where the refiled rule or portion of the rule is substantively different from the existing rule.
- **8. Electronic text file procedures.** Under subsection 1, the Secretary of State may establish by rule in accordance with the Maine Administrative Procedure Act procedures and criteria for the filing of rules in electronic text file format.
- **8-A.** Electronic filing procedures. In accordance with subsection 1, the Secretary of State may establish, including by rule, procedures for the electronic filing of rules and rule-making documentation. If the Secretary of State implements an electronic filing platform through which rules and rule-making documentation and information specified in this Act are to be filed, that platform is the exclusive means through which rules and rule-making documentation may be filed, except as otherwise determined by the Secretary of State. An adopted rule that is filed by an agency through an electronic filing platform and accepted for filing by the Secretary of State is an official copy of the rule.
- 9. Certification of published adopted rules. The Secretary of State may certify that a publication of the codified rules and any supplements or replacement volumes to that publication are a correct transcript of the text of the original rules a paper copy of an adopted rule accepted for filing and maintained by the Secretary of State is a true copy of the rule. A certified paper copy of an adopted rule must be attached to a printed certificate of the Secretary of State stating that the rule is an official copy.
 - A. Certified publications paper copies of rules must contain be accompanied by a printed certificate of the Secretary of State stating that the publication is the an official copy. A facsimile of the signature of the Secretary of State imprinted by or at the direction of the Secretary of State has the same validity as a written signature of the Secretary of State.
 - B. A publication of the rules paper copy of an adopted rule that has been certified by the Secretary of State constitutes prima facie evidence of the rules rule.
 - C. Any publication <u>or copy</u> of a <u>an adopted</u> rule or rules that is not certified by the Secretary of State:
 - (1) May neither state nor imply that the publication <u>or copy of the rule</u> is an official copy of the rules; and

- (2) Must state in a conspicuous location <u>information about from</u> where the Secretary of State's a certified copy is located of the rule may be obtained.
- 10. Minor errors. The Secretary of State may correct minor, nonsubstantive errors in spelling and format in proposed or adopted rules if the agency is notified.

- <u>10-A. Minor errors; updating words or terms.</u> Without having to initiate rulemaking pursuant to this Act:
 - A. At the request of or in consultation with an agency, the Secretary of State may correct minor, nonsubstantive errors in spelling and format in a proposed or adopted rule; and
 - B. At the request of an agency, the Secretary of State may update words or terms used in an existing rule for which new or more contemporary words or terms are used, including, for example, words or terms that are more respectful than those used in an existing rule.
 - Sec. 15. 5 MRSA §8063, as enacted by PL 1991, c. 233, is repealed.
- **Sec. 16. 5 MRSA §8063-A, first** ¶, as enacted by PL 2011, c. 304, Pt. B, §1, is amended to read:

In addition to the economic impact statement required under section 8052, subsection 5-A and the fiscal impact note required under section 8063, an agency may, within existing budgeted resources and in instances in which the consideration of costs is permitted, conduct an analysis of the benefits and costs of a proposed rule to evaluate the effects of the rule on the distribution of benefits and costs for specific groups and on the overall economic welfare of the State.

- **Sec. 17. 5 MRSA §8072, sub-§8,** as amended by PL 2011, c. 244, §8, is further amended to read:
- 8. Final adoption; effective date. Unless otherwise provided by law, final adoption of a rule or part of a rule by an agency must occur within 60 days of the effective date of the legislation approving that rule or part of that rule or of the adjournment of the session in which the Legislature failed to act on the rule or part of the rule as specified in subsection 11. Finally adopted rules must be filed with the Secretary of State as provided in section 8056, subsection 1, paragraph B and notice must be published posted as provided in section 8056, subsection 1, paragraph D 3. Except as otherwise specified by law, the rules become effective 30 days after filing with the Secretary of State or at a later date specified by the agency.
- **Sec. 18. 12 MRSA §685-A, sub-§7-A, ¶B,** as enacted by PL 1999, c. 333, §8, is amended to read:
 - B. Adoption and amendment of land use district standards, district boundaries and land use maps are rule-making procedures subject to the requirements of Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter $\underline{\text{H}}\ \underline{2}$, except that the requirements of Title 5, section 8052, subsections 5, 5-A and 7; section 8053-A; section 8056, subsections 1, 3 and $4 \underline{3}$; section 8056-A; section 8057, subsection 2; section 8057-A; section 8060; section 8062; and section 8064 do not apply. The requirements of Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter $\underline{\text{H}}\ \underline{2}$ are further modified by the following provisions.

(1) Public notice of proposals to adopt or amend land use district standards, district boundaries or land use maps must state the time and the place where copies of the proposal may be inspected prior to the hearing.

- (2) The commission shall give notice of hearings to amend district boundaries, by mail, to appropriate state and federal agencies and the owners of directly affected and abutting properties, according to their names and addresses as shown on the records of Maine Revenue Services or plantation or town tax assessors. If the number of owners of directly affected and abutting properties is more than 50, notice may instead be by publication conforming to the requirements for newspaper publication of hearings under Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter IV 4.
- (3) At any time prior to the date of adoption of proposed land use district standards, land use boundaries or land use maps, the commission may elect to reopen the public hearing record and extend the time period for public comment to such date as it may designate.
- (4) The commission must act to adopt or not to adopt proposed land use district standards, land use boundaries or land use maps within 90 days after the date of final closure of the public hearing.
- (5) Land use district boundaries and land use maps become effective 15 days after adoption or amendment by the commission, as long as the boundaries and maps are available in the appropriate registry of deeds for each county. Notice of adoption or amendment of land use district boundaries and land use maps must be given by publication one time in a newspaper of general circulation published in the area affected.
- (6) Permanent land use standards adopted by the commission are effective immediately, but must be submitted to the next regular or special session of the Legislature for approval or modification. If the Legislature fails to act, those standards continue in full force and effect.
- **Sec. 19. 25 MRSA §2103-A, sub-§2, ¶D,** as enacted by PL 1989, c. 754, Pt. C, §1, is amended to read:
 - D. The Secretary of State shall maintain and make available at the Secretary of State's office, for inspection at no charge and for copying or purchase at actual cost, current copies of those state rules as filed in accordance with paragraph A and include them within the compilations subject to Title 5, section 8056, subsection 3, paragraphs A-1 and B. The Secretary of State shall also make available at the Secretary of State's office, for inspection at no charge, and for copying at actual cost, a current published copy of the referenced federal regulations and amendments, but requests for purchase of copies or certified copies of the federal regulations or amendments may be directed to the appropriate federal agency.
- **Sec. 20. 29-A MRSA §555, sub-§2,** ¶E, as amended by PL 2013, c. 50, §1, is further amended to read:
 - E. The Secretary of State shall maintain and make available at the Secretary of State's office for inspection at no charge, and for copying or purchase at actual cost, current copies of the rule and include it within the compilations subject to Title 5, section 8056, subsection 3, paragraphs A-1 and B. The Secretary of State shall also make available

for inspection at no charge and for copying at actual cost a current published copy of the referenced federal regulations and amendments.

SUMMARY

This bill updates certain provisions of the Maine Administrative Procedure Act and related provisions. More specifically, the bill:

Clarifies provisions relating to rule-making public hearings conducted by boards;

Replaces in a provision the use of the term "substantially" with the more accurate

2. Replaces in a provision the use of the term "substantially" with the more accurate term "substantively";

3. Repeals a provision that requires agencies to notify specific parties or persons about proposed rules, as notices of proposed rules are now widely accessible to the public because of their online publication by the Secretary of State;

- 4. Updates the provision that lists the information that must be included in rule-making proposal public notices to ensure consistency with current practices;
- 5. Updates the provision pertaining to agencies' obligation to make copies of proposed rules available to the public;
- 6. Repeals the provision regarding fees that agencies may charge to provide notices of rule-making proposals and copies of proposed rules, as such information is now readily available online at no cost;
- 7. Updates the provision that requires the Secretary of State to arrange for weekly newspaper publication of agency rule-making proposal notices and requires online posting of the notices;
- 8. Requires agencies to post their proposed rules on their publicly accessible websites, as well as to post their adopted rules on those websites or provide a link to their rules that are posted on a website maintained by the Secretary of State;
- 9. Updates and clarifies the provision that requires the Secretary of State to post agency rule-making adoption notices online;
- 10. Requires the Secretary of State to post online a brief explanation of the rule-making process, including an explanation of how a public hearing on a proposed rule may be requested if such a hearing has not been scheduled;
 - 11. Revises the provision regarding agencies' filing of adopted rules:
- A. To account for technological updates, including the availability of rules and rulemaking-related information and notifications online;
- B. To account for the fact that the Secretary of State does not compile and publish a formal code or registry of state agency rules;
- C. To relocate and revise the provision regarding the incorporation of materials by reference by agencies into their rules;
- D. To update and clarify the provision regarding certification of adopted rules by the Secretary of State; and
- E. To strengthen the provision that authorizes minor errors in rules to be corrected by the Secretary of State without agency rulemaking having to occur;

- 1 12. Repeals the provision that requires agencies to include a fiscal impact note at the 2 end of each rule, as such information is now collected in other documents that accompany 3 proposed and adopted rule filings with the Secretary of State; and
- 4 13. Makes various technical corrections.