

Crighton's community benefits bill moves forward in Legislature

Posted: Tuesday, December 1, 2015 3:00 am

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Legislature's Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Businesses reported favorably on House Bill 144 — “An Act Establishing Community Benefit Districts,” clearing the first major hurdle on its way to a vote on the floor of the House of Representatives.

This legislation, sponsored by state Rep. Brendan Crighton (D-Lynn) and Sen. Eileen Donoghue (D-Lowell), would provide cities and towns with the opportunity to create Community Benefit Districts (CBD).

“Community Benefit Districts provide cities and towns with a sustainable way of providing a high level of programming and services—from sidewalk shoveling to farmers’ markets — for their downtowns and Main Streets,” said Crighton.

A CBD is a public-private partnership that provides supplemental services and management in important areas, including downtowns, town centers, “Main Streets,” villages, or urban squares.

“This bill will give small businesses an additional tool to promote their goods and services,” explained Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante (D-Gloucester), chair of the Committee. “It will revitalize our neighborhoods, and provide a much-needed boost in our local economies.”

The legislation defines a “Community Benefit District” as a geographically defined area in a city or town in which an assessment funding tool is dedicated to improvements in that area. These districts would be enabled by this bill and established by local-option, and must be managed by a non-profit.

“Local governments are hard-pressed to maintain even basic services in their communities,” said Andre Leroux, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance. “Community Benefit Districts will create public-private-nonprofit partnerships allowing local people to make their communities even more special and solve problems for themselves.”