

FY 24 State Budget Change to Standards for Investment of Trust Funds in Municipalities September 11, 2023

The FY 24 state budget, Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023, includes a change to the standards for investment of trust funds in municipalities. Section 26 amends G.L. c. 44, §54, to insert a local acceptance provision that allows investment in accordance with the so-called “Prudent Investment Rule” (G.L. c. 203C), which essentially allows for a broader range of investments, some of which may be “riskier” than what would otherwise be allowed for investments in savings banks. The revised version of G.L. c. 44, §54 provides as follows (with the new text italicized):

Section 54. (a) Trust funds, including cemetery perpetual care funds, unless otherwise provided or directed by the donor of the funds, shall be deposited in: a trust company, co-operative bank or savings bank, if the trust company or bank is organized or exists under the laws of the commonwealth or any other state or may transact business in the commonwealth and has its main office or a branch office in the commonwealth; a national bank, federal savings bank or federal savings and loan association, if the bank or association may transact business and has its main office or a branch office in the commonwealth; provided, however, that a state-chartered or federally-chartered bank shall be insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or its successor or invested by cities and towns in participation units in a combined investment fund under section 38A of chapter 29 or in bonds or notes which are legal investments for savings banks. Cities and towns having such funds in the custody of the treasurer in an aggregate amount in excess of \$250,000 may also invest such funds in securities, other than mortgages or collateral loans, which are legal for the investment of funds of savings banks under the laws of the commonwealth; provided, that not more than 15 per cent of any such trust funds shall be invested in bank stocks and insurance company stocks, nor shall more than 1 1/2 per cent of such funds be invested in the stock of any 1 bank or insurance company.

(b)(1) A city, town or district that accepts this subsection in the manner provided in section 4 of chapter 4 may manage trust funds held in the custody of the treasurer of the city, town or district as a combined investment pool and may invest said funds in accordance with chapter 203C and not in accordance with subsection (a). If any provision of this subsection conflicts with the terms of a bequest, trust or other instrument that expresses the clear intent of the donor, then such funds may be managed and invested only in accordance with the terms of such bequest, trust or other instrument.

(2) Paragraph (1) shall only apply to trust funds and shall not apply to any other money held or controlled by a city, town or district or to any money held or controlled by any other municipal authority, commission or other such entity or fund which is authorized to invest its funds pursuant to this section.

(c) Municipal trust funds subject to this section invested in a chartered, insured financial institution shall only be deposited in accordance with subsection (a).

(d) This section shall not apply to the City of Boston.

Note that since Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023 included an emergency preamble, it took effect immediately, unless as otherwise specified. Section 115 of said Chapter 28 states that the Act took effect as of July 1, 2023.

Therefore, if towns want to include this local acceptance provision on their upcoming fall or special town meeting warrants, the article can take a form similar to the following:

To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of G.L. c.44, §54(b) to allow Town trust funds to be invested in accordance with G.L. c.203C, the so-called “Prudent Investment Rule”, or take any other action relative thereto.

For further information, please contact your KP Law attorney at 617.556.0007 or contact Attorney Lauren Goldberg at lgoldberg@k-plaw.com or Attorney Mark Reich at mreich@k-plaw.com

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