

City of Auburn

To: Mayor LaBonté and the Auburn City Council
From: Clinton Deschene, City Manager
Subject: Monthly Reporting – *Fire, Police, Finance, CDBG, Health & Social Services, Planning, Permitting & Code, ICT, and Human Resources*
Date: August 28, 2012

Fire

- In July, companies conducted facility tours of the new Bedards building and Savage Safe Handling. These tours are important because they provide the staff with an opportunity to review buildings and facilities and ask about their features and systems. This is especially important with a facility like Savage Safe Handling that works with hazardous chemicals. The information obtained in the tours is utilized in developing preplans for potential future incidents.
- In July, there were thirty-nine Life Safety Inspections conducted by the fire companies in twenty businesses and nineteen apartment buildings. Out of those inspections twelve businesses and nineteen apartment buildings were found to not be in compliance with the fire code.
- Companies try to capitalize on the warm weather to conduct as much outside training as possible. In July, crews conducted the mandatory, annual hazardous materials response refresher.
- The department's new employees continue to progress through their probationary training. In July, they worked toward completing their driver/operator qualification for the fire trucks. Every line firefighter in the department must know how to drive and operate every vehicle in the fleet. This is necessary because firefighters may find themselves assigned to any vehicle at any time.
- Other trainings conducted included tower ladder operations, pumper operations, water rescue, and topics in emergency medical services.
- The Auburn Fire Department participated in a few community events in July. These include Emily's Run and the Pizza Hut-kids night.
- In the month of July, the fire department responded to 306 requests for emergency service. These requests include, but are not limited to, four building fires, 206 emergency medical calls, twenty eight false alarms, and twenty five motor vehicle accidents. The city received mutual aid from other communities three times and provided aid once.

Police

- Our new Information Assistant, Crystal Parshall, has started and has hit the ground running, as has our Evidence Technician, Rebecca Lacasse; our newest patrol officer, Mitchel Morse, is currently at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy; Officer Michael Chaine has been assigned as our Support Services Officer.
- WatchGuard in-car camera systems will be installed soon in all APD cruisers; APD is trying out a rugged new MDT (mobile data terminal) in one of our cruisers. These are part of the CIP funded projects for FY13.
- Speed enforcement details have begun in our school zones in preparation for back to school. The support services unit has also had a meeting with crossing guards to discuss concerns and safety issues.
- The APD's 10 Annual National Night Out, which was held on Tuesday, August 7, was a big success and a wonderful community event. More than 750 hotdogs were served; the live music was enjoyed by all; the kids loved the bounce house, laser tag, police & fire demonstrations, inflatable 'wrecking ball,' face painting & give-aways; and more than 15 community partners participated in Auburn's "night out against crime!" The APD/Auburn Parks & Rec "Park Watch" program was launched at NNO, and 15 members enrolled that evening.
- Also under the category of police/community partnerships, Sergeant Barry Schmieks and Police Planner Liz Allen participated in the 12th Annual "Celebrity Waiter Dinner" to benefit the Sexual Assault Crisis Center.

Finance

- The Finance Department has been preparing for the audit. The auditors will be here on September 4th and are scheduled for 3 weeks. We will have all of the work papers completed by Friday, August 31st.
- The interim Facilities/Purchasing Manager has been working on organizing various contracts and making sure that all are current.
- The new Tax Collector began on July 30th. Her name is Nancy Lee Bosse and we are very happy to have her. Her first job was to work with the Finance Director, Assessor and Munis to get the 2012 Tax Bills sent out. Those went out the week of August 20th. Nancy has also been working with the various mortgage companies to get them list of their escrowed taxpayers. Taxes are due on September 17th, so the staff will be busy over the next few weeks.
- We are in hopes of posting the Facilities Manager/Purchasing Agent position the week of August 27th and hope to have someone on board by the beginning of October.

CDBG

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted on-site monitoring of Auburn's programs for compliance with prevailing wage requirements of federally assisted projects—better known as Davis-Bacon. There were no findings or recommendations.
- Nine contracts were signed by sub-recipients of the Community Development Program. These contracts are with grantees who will receive public service dollars to assist Auburn residents. In addition to social services, a grant agreement was signed with Community Concepts to provide weatherization assistance to income-eligible Auburn property owners. The agreements stipulate the conditions of the grant award.
- Community Development staff completed a review of all deferred loans that are part of the loan receivables to determine if any properties had changed ownership. We found three properties had been transferred to a trust, and one was transferred to the owner's heirs. A transfer of ownership constitutes a default of the loan conditions.
- The Community Development Department took control of a property at 60 Summer Street that had been previously leased to a potential buyer. The property will now be placed on the market for sale to an income eligible household.
- Community Development staff completed the annual monitoring of four public service agencies, Pathways, Seniors Plus, and Catholic Charities of Maine/ Search and St. Francis Recovery Center Outpatient Services. Areas of testing were client income verifications and program goals. There were no findings.
- Now that demolition of the bowling alley (261 Main Street) is complete, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP-3) project has now entered the construction phase. Community Development staff will be attending construction meetings with the general contractor and owner to monitor quality and progress.
- The Community Development Department signed a contract with Dot Fernald, Worden Realty, to buy and sell NSP properties. This contract will carry us through March 2013 when we expect to wrap up with the NSP-1 grant.
- The Community Development Department is actively marketing the Homebuyer Program. Staff arranged a presentation to Auburn School Department teachers and aides on the first day of their return from summer vacation. The next round of marketing will be to Auburn School Department clerical staff on September 19th.
- The Community Development Loan Committee met once in August. They approved two homebuyer loans under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, and a loan under the Community Development Rehabilitation Program.

Health & Social Services

- The Health & Social Services department paid in welfare assistance a total of \$11,995.72 in July 2012 compared to \$6,642 in July 2011. We took in 98 applications compared to 69 in July 2011.

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- We assigned 219 workfare hours and had 176 completed hours for a \$1,408 value. Most of the workfare was completed at the Parks department.
- A notice was received from Maine Community Foundation giving Auburn, our allotted trust fund amount of \$3,280 for this fiscal year. This is payment of designated grant awarded from the Blanche D. Stevens fund money and is used for individuals in need who do not qualify for general assistance but has a genuine need.
- The Lewiston Auburn Public Health Committee (LAPHC) is working on introducing an ordinance to Auburn council restricting smoking in any of the public parks.

Planning, Permitting & Code

- During the month of July the Department processed 78 building, electrical, sign and plumbing permits. The permits resulted in the collection of \$9262.00 in fees for work with an estimated construction cost of \$1,936,550.00. The number of permits and fees were down from 101 last month with \$10,216 in fees and the overall estimated value of construction costs was up nearly \$450,000.00 from \$1,491,585.00 last month. In July of 2011 we issued 87 permits with a value of \$804,150. Overall, this year has been a stronger year for the number of permits than either of the past two years, however, the overall value of the work was down at the end of July.
- As of August 24th we are about 15% through FY 13. Our expenses are at 10.1% but billing is usually a couple of weeks behind so some expenses have yet not been accounted for during that period. Revenues are at approximately 24.47% with most of that from building permit revenues which are now at 41% of the projected annual total. This is mostly due to some large project building permits in August including an addition at Tambrands and the two residential developments on Main Street. While we are ahead of projections currently on revenues and anticipate an above average year if this continues, that will typically be corrected somewhat by the slower winter months.
- As we look critically at all of our expenses we have identified a few areas that we pay for that benefit other departments or organizations and not the general public. The Council should be aware that the Planning and Permitting Department Budget pays for exterior parking lot lighting at Edward Little High School at a cost of \$3000-\$4000 per year. There is analytical value in reporting costs where they belong to make good decisions regarding service delivery costs and I hope to discuss this in preparation for next years' budget.
- During the month of August, the Planning Department made exciting progress with respect to a years-long effort aimed at conducting a joint land use study (JLUS) in collaboration with the Maine Army National Guard for the area surrounding that entity's Auburn training facility. This study will examine ways to protect and enhance the compatibility of occasionally conflicting land uses present at and around this site, and will result in a final plan and report for the Council to consider as a potential appendix to Auburn's Comprehensive Plan. Earlier this month, the City concluded a thorough review of a competitive bidding process, and selected highly qualified 'Integrated Planning Solutions' (IPS) as the consultant to lead this project. With knowledge of the

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consultant's fee statement, staff was able to quantify the projected JLUS cost and corresponding grant request as approximately \$169,000; at present the City is awaiting acceptance of this figure by the project's funding source, Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) in Washington, D.C. It is anticipated that the funding request will be granted and the project concluded within twelve months of a commencement date projected for sometime this fall.

- During the month of July we processed 28 Code complaints resulting in 17 verbal agreements for corrections and 11 written enforcement actions. Cristy Bourget conducted 20 sanitation inspections including lodging, mobile vendors, restaurant and takeout facilities with 2 follow-ups for failed inspections.
- The City has an outstanding Court Order for the owner of property at 741 Broad Street to clean up the former illegal junkyard and pay a penalty to the City for non-compliance. The penalty amount is substantial but the property owner wishes to settle the matter for a lesser amount. Staff will discuss this negotiation with the Council in the near future to provide a recommendation and to get some direction.
- On August 14th, the Planning Board approved the Auburn Ice Arena, proposed by Auburn Plaza Inc., at 985 Turner Street and recommended approval of a proposed zoning amendment to change the zoning on a number of properties along South Witham Road from Low Density Country Residential (3 acre minimum lot size) to Low Density Rural Residence (1 acre minimum lot size). There are two proposals for review at the September 11th meeting, including up to 15 market rate apartments at 292 Court Street and replacement of the Cumberland Farms building at 119 Center Street.
- We are currently processing FEMA Flood Map Appeals for residents of Auburn. We are required to review each one, provide an opinion, and forward them to FEMA. We continue to discuss them with FEMA Staff and hope to see some additional map changes in the Parson's Mill Dam Area just upstream from Minot Avenue near Dag's Bait Shop.
- We hope to see improved traffic flow at the intersection of Court Street and Mechanics Row soon as the Electrical Division begins replacing the broken vehicle actuated ground loops with camera actuation at this intersection on August 24th. Ground loops are notorious for failing and requiring time consuming repairs so we continue to upgrade to camera actuation throughout the City. The City also added approximately \$4000 worth of funds to the Maine DOT project at Minot and Hotel to include camera actuation instead of ground loops.
- The department is currently being reviewed by the Insurance Service Office (ISO), a for profit agency that reviews aspects of the enforcement of building codes and produces a rating. These are separated into 2 separate classes, residential and commercial. The survey produces a Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule for each municipality it reviews, 1 to 10 with 1 being the highest. Currently the initial results for the ratings is a 4 for commercial and a 5 for residential. This matches our last review (completed in 2002) for commercial, with a 1 point drop for residential. We are in the process of providing additional information to the mitigation agent and hope to bring the rating of

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both areas to a rating of 4. These ratings do not directly affect insurance rates, but they can be used by insurance companies to provide credits to the insured properties and their owners.

ICT

- The City has finalized the configuration of its off-site back-up process. Our previous back-up scheme was strictly for disaster recovery -- in the event of a failure of one of our servers, we could restore the entire server to its pre-failure state. This was of no help if a user needed to restore just a portion of a server, as it would have meant overwriting ALL activity on that server. Now that all of our servers are virtualized, we have installed a product from Veeam that allows individual files (this is called "brick-level" back-up in the industry) to be restored. The back-up target is installed at the Auburn Public Library, to provide security of our data if Auburn Hall became unusable.
- The ICT Department welcomes Rosemary Mosher to the role of Geospatial Database Manager. This position was vacated when Megan Tylka took a position in Tennessee. Rosemary has a wealth of experience in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and was integral in setting up the GIS curriculum in the UMaine System.
- The Audio/Visual system in the Council Chambers will soon be updated. Changes planned are the installation of an Ultra-short-throw projector and screen, which will be wirelessly connected to a laptop. We will also be installing an improved , mobile mixer to allow more control of microphones when speakers are not at the Council bench.
- The first wave of replacement PCs for 2013 are underway. We purchased 15 ultra-small-form-factor PCs from Acer, and will be purchasing additional units as time and money allow.
- While we'll never be able to block them all (the spammers have more time for this game than we do), our Barracuda spam firewall has blocked over 28 million spam messages since it was installed four years ago. That compares to around 1 million legitimate messages in that same time-frame.

Human Resources

- The City is making progress on filling a number of vacancies. The following vacancies were filled in July – Tax Collector, Geospatial Database Manager and Public Works Equipment Operator. The recruitment for the Fire Chief is concluded and the new Fire Chief is scheduled to start on 9/10/12. We are very close to filling the Building Maintenance Technician for Auburn Hall and the Auburn Public Library. The deadline for submission of resumes for Assistant City Manager has passed and the interest in this position is great, with almost 100 resumes received to date.

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- Contract negotiations are on-going with the following unions – I.A.F.F. (International Association of Firefighters), M.A.P. (Maine Association of Police) for the Patrol/Detective/Corporal Unit, M.A.P. for the Lewiston/Auburn 9-1-1 Telecommunicators and M.S.E.A. (Maine State Employees Association) for the General Government Employees.
- Ray Lussier, Safety Coordinator, finalized the Workplace Violence Program written plan for final review by the Safety Team. The safety Team is developing the training plan for the Workplace Violence Program.
- Ray Lussier conducted Confined Space Training for the Public Works Department.
- Chris Mumau, HR Assistant wrapped up the open enrollment for the Cafeteria Benefit Plan, which includes meeting with all City Staff to make annual elections toward the Medical Reimbursement Accounts. This is a very labor intensive benefit plan and involves coordination with all of the departments as well as the third party administrator for the medical reimbursement account.