

City of Auburn, Maine

Office of the City Manager



TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Clinton Deschene, City Manager
RE: Weekly Report
DATE: Week Ending August 8, 2014

Auburn Public Library

- The Auburn Public Library and the Lewiston Public Library have collaborated to offer Mango Languages, an online service. Learning a new language is FREE! Over 60 language courses available, including English for non-English speakers. This service can be used either in the library or at home. A library card is necessary to register for the program.
- The Library will hold a paperback book sale on our lawn on Sat., 8/15, from 9 a.m. until noon. There will be lots of great books at bargain prices.
- The Library has received a grant from the Maine Humanities Council for a series of three foreign policy programs in Sept. and Oct. The first program, titled "Children and War: What Can the United States Do?" will be on September 17th at 6 pm. Recent years have seen a growth in recognition of the plight of child soldiers, from the Kony 2012 campaign to concern about war in the Sudan. University of Maine at Farmington professor Scott Erb asks what the United States can do about this on the global scale. On September 24th at 6 pm, Professor Erb returns for a presentation titled "Oil, Islam, and the Arab Spring." Many Americans are perplexed by the changes taking place in the Mideast, the growth of political Islam, and our dependency on oil. Yet these issues promise to become even more important in coming years, and will require a rethinking of US foreign and economic policy. Professor Erb will discuss what some of these new directions may be. Concluding the foreign policy series, Brad Babson, Director of the World Affairs Council of Maine, will present "Challenges and Opportunities on the Korean Peninsula" on October 2 at 6 pm. This presentation provides an historical overview of the division of Korea and the changes that are creating new opportunities for engagement.
- Auburn Page Turners is a new book club for adults. On Thurs., 8/28, Amy Tan's latest novel, "The Valley of Amazement," is featured. This is the story of two women's intertwined fates and their search for identity. The first five who sign up for this session will receive their own copy of the book. FMI contact the Library at 207-333-6640 x 4.
- The library staff is continually engaged in professional development efforts. In addition to being enrolled in the state's voluntary public library certification program, staff is attending

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free webinars such as developing book groups, innovative programming, and collaborative meetings with other librarians.

- The very popular parachute play program returns for two sessions on Mon., 8/11, at 10 and 10:45 a.m. This is for children ages 3 through 8 and pre-registration is required. Storybook Yoga will be held on Thurs., 8/14, at 11:30 a.m. for children in Pre-K through 3rd grade. This is a very popular program taught by Tisha Bremner, a nationally certified yoga teacher. Please register for this program, also. Remember – you can now register online for programs!
- Teen programming for the upcoming week includes a gaming hour on Weds., 8/13, from 4-5 p.m. The Library features Xbox and Wii games. Snacks are provided. Safe Voices will be in the Teen Room from 3-4 p.m. on Thurs., 8/14, for their regular visit for conversation and fun projects.

City Clerk

- On Monday, we received from the State the Applications for Absentee Ballots for the November 4th election. Voters can request absentee ballots now and once ballots are available (30-45 days before the election), ballots will be mailed to those who have requested them.
- We received approximately 200 voter registration cards on Monday from Maine People's Resource Center and approximately 100 new voter registration cards and change requests from the Secretary of State's Office. We are working on entering those new registrations and changes in the Central Voter Registration System.
- Sue Clements-Dallaire attending the Maine Town and City Clerks' Associations Executive Board meeting on Wednesday, August 6th.
- The City Clerk's Office remained open until 7PM on Thursday, August 7th which is the deadline to request absentee ballots for the August 12th election.
- There were no absentee ballots requested for the August 12th election.

ICT

- Met with Randy Berry, the new Assistant Planning, Training, and Operations Officer for the Androscoggin County Emergency Management Agency. Randy will be bringing GIS skills to the agency. We met with him to share data and discuss common goals for data development. We will continue to explore potential opportunities to work together to create data and analysis that will benefit Auburn.
- Provided Excel assistance to the Fire Department for a complex spreadsheet used to keep track of vacation time. The spreadsheet was outdated and didn't always work as it should. We revised the formulas and tested the results. The next step is to meet with the Fire Department to review the changes.
- Created several project maps for the City Manager, Planning, and Public Services departments.
- The issue of matching proximity cards to the new elevator controller has been mostly resolved. There are just one or two stragglers that have popped up and they will be taken care of by the vendor. This means that we can now resume creating prox cards for new staff.

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- The PC at the NSB Arena that had been damaged by a power surge has been replaced and is now available to Arena staff to drive the lobby displays.
- One of our critical servers slowed on Thursday afternoon, to the point that most staff thought it had stopped. It took a couple of hours to get it back running at acceptable performance levels. Staff will review procedures for remote monitoring of all of our infrastructure to (hopefully) keep this from happening again.
- The hand-over of phone lines and infrastructure belonging to Auburn Housing is almost complete. We had been sharing our Data Center and phone system with them, but the ever-increasing voice and data needs of both parties made it more practical for them to operate their own system.

Planning

The Planning Board will review four applications at the August 12 Meeting. The projects include the following:

- 34 Court Street - 10 market rate apartments in upper floors of the historic Goff Block.
 - 62 Spring Street - 2400 square feet of first floor storefront commercial space and 39 apartments on the upper floors including 28 one bedroom units, 7 two-bedroom units and 4 efficiency units.
 - 166 Center Street – Aroma Joe’s coffee shop with a drive through and an adjacent retail space for lease to a tenant that will be determined at a future date.
 - 410 Summer Street – An adult day center operated by Personal Onsite Development in the existing building that was formerly served as the offices of Taylor Engineering.
- Dangerous Buildings Demolition Update. Staff has identified some buildings that can meet the definition of a Dangerous Building under State Law and we have been working to keep them secure in the absence of funding for demolition. With the CIP approved and first reading passage of the bonding we want the Council to be aware that we will be bringing some condemnations for review soon. With limited funding, we may want to workshop the list and prioritize the properties based on risk, location and impact on the community. We hope to structure the funding so that it can be recycled but eliminating the dangerous building and placing a lien against the property that can be paid by the owner or the City will take ownership of the property and try to recover costs through the sale where appropriate.
 - The street light ownership project is moving forward slowly while we wait for the PUC to establish rules for it’s implementation. The City Electrician has concerns with the recently proposed requirements and is contacting the PUC for answers. We need to be involved in the final stages to make sure we have a good plan; however, it looks promising to begin the actual process of making the switch to our own fixtures. This process may start sometime in October or November. The City Electrician will have more information after he makes contact with the committee members in the street light group.
 - The Zoning Board of Appeals meets on August 7th to hear the following cases:
 - Administrative Appeal of Daniel and Marie Herrick to appeal their denial of a building permit to construct a single family home in the Agriculture and Resource Protection District at 240 Hatch Road.

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- Variance Appeal of Peter & Susan Bunker to reconstruct an existing structure at 167 West Shore Road / PID # 255-004 without requiring that 50% of the structural members remain in place.
 - Variance Appeal of Frank C. Goudreau to reconstruct an existing structure at 63 Chicoine Avenue / PID # 237-007 without requiring that 50% of the structural members remain in place.
 - Variance Appeal of Roland and Stacie Brown to reconstruct an existing structure at 28 Sandy Beach Road / PID # 237-017 without requiring that 50% of the structural members remain in place.
- Based on the request from Council and the Ag District Study will begin soon. Doug Greene, City Planner is putting together a planning symposium on “Agriculture in Auburn”, for late August or early September. We will invite state “experts” on Agriculture in Maine, farmers, realtors and any interested citizens. The symposium would be for an afternoon and feature brief presentations on what’s happening around the state, a round table discussion and public comment.
- Doug Greene, City Planner started initial stages of a Recreational Trails grant application for the Barker Mill Sidewalk/trail to improve the connection from South Main Street to the Barker Mill Trail. Staff met with a representative from Maine Bureau of Parks and Land for preliminary site visit. The grant is due in November and if successful would fund 80% of the costs of the project.
- Maine DEP installed several groundwater monitoring wells near 7 Chestnut Street earlier this summer. They also installed a ventilation system under the 7 Chestnut Street multifamily building. Recent tests show that the air quality has improved and all results show that the homes are safe for occupancy.
- The Planning Board is working to finalize updates to Planning Board By-laws and recommend some amendments to Planning Board Ordinance. The ordinance changes will require review and approval by the Council before changes can be made.
- Code Staff wants you to know: For Code Enforcement Staff, a large percentage of time is spent dealing with and following up on tenant or neighbor complaints. Housing complaints vary from “my lights flicker”, “my apartment smells”, “I think I have mold/lead/asbestos”, bedbugs, rodents, bats, etc. Neighbor complaints are mostly regarding trash but others include unregistered cars, illegal uses (auto repair/other business) or fences. Many of the cases require follow up with notices and citations; however, many of these issues are civil and the City doesn’t get involved, but a good amount of time is spent explaining what is and what isn’t a violation of City Ordinance.
- Trash and Debris – The issue seems much more prevalent in the summer time. It is a particular problem in the densely populated areas like our downtown neighborhoods. Tenants tend to pile trash outside of their building and problems occur when bags get torn open or landlords fail to empty dumpsters in a timely manner. The issue can sometimes feel like whack-a-mole, take care of one and another one pops up across the street. Zachary Lenhart has put together an Ordinance amendment that would clarify the existing landlord requirement to provide a “suitable waste container”. We believe this would help make us more efficient and reduce the amount of trash bag piles and the resulting litter and filth. We will be asking the Council to consider the changes soon.
- We’ve always dealt with an occasional hoarding situation but lately we have seen a few that are worse than usual. We have approached the issue jointly with the Fire Department and

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State Agencies as a health and safety concern to not just the occupant but neighbors and emergency medical responders as well. It can be a complicated issue because we are often dealing with residents that see their “stuff” as highly valuable and difficult to part with. Cooperation between the departments and State Agencies seems to be paying off. We have seen substantial progress in two of the situations and hope to see similar success in the future.

Police

- The department handled 659 calls for service this week. Officers conducted 144 motor vehicle stops and 57 field interviews. Officers investigated 94 offenses of which, 14 of which were felonies, generating 24 arrests, 30 criminal summonses and 4 juvenile arrests. Officers responded to 28 motor vehicle crashes.
- Officers arrested two subjects on Reginald St who broke into a residence during the night while the homeowner was sleeping. K9 Dutch was deployed and forced the suspects out of the residence into the arms of officers waiting outside.
- Officers assisted State Police with an armed home invasion in Minot. Drug Task Force Agent Madore responded and executed a search warrant that yielded a large amount of drugs and over \$6000 in drug money.
- The Annual National Night Out event was a huge success. Thank you to all that attended and made it possible.

Public Services

- Whitney Street- adjusting structures to grade, paved sidewalks
- Holbrook Road- driveways, ditching, shoulders
- Hotel Road- drainage pipe installation
- Turner Street Sidewalk Ramps- contract modifications
- Pavement Management- ongoing
- Stormwater Compliance- ongoing
- Work Zone Traffic Training
- Lock Out Tag Out Training
- Parks Maintenance (at several locations)
- Paint Fields
- Infield Groomer Setup
- Ball Field Prep
- Hot Patching around the city
- Maintenance – repair of city equipment
- Mowing around the city
- Cleaning catch basins
- Drainage project(s)
- Repairing shoulder(s)
- Dig safe markings on-going
- Permits; excavation (private/right-of-way), fill, drive opening, pole permits etc.
- District inspections
- Replace culvert(s)
- Pit Work
- Weed Whack islands

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- Downtown Maintenance

Recreation

- Registrations continued for Youth Football and Adult Dodgeball.
- Registration opened for Pee Wee Soccer and Flag Football.
- Eddies Football Camp took place on Saturday.
- Youth Football practices (grades 3-6) began.
- Track & Field practices continued. State meet will take place on Saturday in Windham.
- Adult Softball games continued.
- Summer Day Camp continued.
- Planning for Fall programming continued.
- Staff worked on website updates, press releases, news items and e-alerts.