

# City of Auburn, Maine

## Office of the City Manager



**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Howard Kroll, City Manager  
**RE:** Weekly Report  
**DATE:** Week Ending January 16, 2015

### Assessing

- Katelyn is working on linking the deeds and DOV's to the property record cards.
- Joe is reviewing the deeds identifying splits to be processed in Patriot
- Karen reviewed tax exempt applications
- Karen is working on estimated valuations for two new proposed developments

### Auburn Public Library

- The Library will be closed on Mon., 1/19, for the Martin Luther King holiday.
- The monthly staff meeting was held on Weds., 1/14. Mamie Ney introduced Barbara Trafton and Susan Weiss, new APL board members. Mamie also introduced Susan Geismar, our new development person.
- The capital improvement plan portion of the FY16 budget has been submitted to the City. We have requested the continuation of the brick/mortar refurbishing, new carpeting, and our share of the City's server that takes care of the HVAC system we share.
- Our operating budget is in the works.
- We are fine tuning our wireless printing for our public computers. Overall our new printing system is going well and has been embraced by our customers.
- Plans are being made for February vacation and Winterfest activities.
- We will host an intern from UM-Augusta in our children's department. She needs to do a 150-internship to complete her graduation requirements.
- The Minerva board which governs the State's interlibrary loan consortium has been asked to reconsider its decision to have all items check out for three weeks. This has been causing long waiting periods for audio/visual materials because it means that items can be gone from the library for a total of 5 weeks.
- The annual Farmer's Market will be held on Fri., Feb. 27th, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. There will be a couple of new vendors and the local embroiderers' guild will be doing a demonstration. Please watch for additional participant information.
- The IRS has informed libraries that they will not be sending printed tax form instructions this year. We will work with customers to get them the information that they need online. Tax forms should be arriving within the next 2 to 3 weeks.

## Weekly Report

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- Marty Gagnon, Adult Services Librarian, is working with a new group, Maine Centers for Women Work & Community, to do programming.
- Donna Wallace, Teen Librarian, has begun a 4-month life skills programs. The first session was held Tues., Jan. 14, and centered on nutrition. There should be an article in the Sun Journal's "B-Section" on Sunday, Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Donna Wallace recently served as judge for the Saint Dominic's Academy poetry contest.
- John Kelley, Head of Lending Services, made our monthly visit to Schooner. The program is well received and we have new customers each month. We bring a wide variety of books and take requests. We work with senior residences throughout the City to provide books for their residents.
- Our boiler problems have been solved but we are still working on a sensor problem.
- Upcoming programs include:
  - With our Teen Life skills theme focused this month on Health & Safety, Phoenix Karate Academy will join us for two workshops on self-defense on Tues., Jan. 20 and Jan. 27. This will be a hands-on workshop wherein teens will learn basic self - defense against common strikes and holds. We will discuss the importance of being aware of your surroundings, how body language can deter a possible attack, and how your attire can limit your ability to defend yourself. Registration is required.
  - Weds., Jan. 21, at 1 p.m. our creative writing group will meet. If you are looking for a chance to join a creative writing group to share ideas and help improve your writing, this is your chance. This group of inspiring writers will make all group members feel at home in a supportive environment. Sharpen your pencils or stretch those keyboarding fingers and join us.
  - National Readathon Day will be celebrated on Sat., Jan. 24, from Noon to 4 p.m. in a comfy setting in our Androscoggin Community Room for four fun and leisurely hours of reading. Grab whatever book you're reading or have been planning to read. Grab a stack of books and read a bit from each. Come early and explore the Library's collection. Join with others across the country in this celebration of reading. National Readathon Day is sponsored by the National Book Foundation, Penguin Random House, Goodreads, and Mashable. To support this cause we are asking each participant to bring either a new or gently used children's book that we will donate to local agencies to distribute. This is a chance to relax on a Saturday afternoon and read, read, read. This is an event for individuals, families, book groups and more. What could be better than reading a good book on a wintry Saturday afternoon with a cookie or two and a cup of hot chocolate? This event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. Prizes will be awarded.
- For more programs check out our online calendar at [www.auburnpubliclibrary.org](http://www.auburnpubliclibrary.org).

### City Clerk

- The deadline for citizen initiative petitions to be filed with municipal officials was 5PM on Monday, January 12, 2015. The City Clerk's office remained open until 5PM on that date in order to accommodate
- Now accepting applications to fill the Board and Committee vacancies. The deadline to submit applications for this round of appointments is February 18, 2015
- Mailed term expiration letters to Board and Committee members whose terms have or are about to expire
- Received 44 petitions and validated 570 signatures

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- Received 2 Banner Permit Applications
- Scanned approximately 150 voter registration cards into CVR (Central Voter Registration System)
- Filed approximately 200 voter registration cards
- Mailed out 20 dog licenses
- Completed State Vital share for December 2014
- Issued 12 taxi drivers licenses and 1 taxi cab license
- 3 birth certificates, 59 death certificates, 5 marriage certificates, 1 marriage license, 10 burial permits
- Received 2 renewal business license applications, 2 new business license applications, issued 6 renewal licenses
- Prepared agenda packet for the 1/20/2015 Council Meeting

**Community Development**

- The Lewiston-Auburn Lead Program is officially off the ground. Applications for lead grants are available at Community Concepts for properties that meet certain criteria. For Auburn they must be in census tracks 101, 102, 103, 104 or 105 and the occupants must meet the income restriction. A grant, up to \$8,500 per unit, is available for rental properties with a 10% private match or 15% public match, and \$20,000 is available for a single family owner-occupied unit with no match. In previous years, 1-bedroom units were ineligible, but they are included this time. The Community Development office has been keeping a list of persons interested in this program, so we expect to get projects off the ground fairly quickly. Priority will be given to properties where there are children with lead poisoning.
- The L/A Cash Coalition had its “Kickoff” Press Conference on January 13 at Lewiston City Hall. Yvette Bouttenot spoke at the press conference on behalf of Auburn focusing on the benefits of homeownership. Auburn Hall is a tax prep site every Tuesday from 11:00 – 2:00 through March. Beginning on January 24 free tax preparation will be available for low-to-moderate income households in Auburn and Lewiston. Phone lines for making appointments open on January 15. In addition to the tax prep services the coalition also offers one-on-one financial coaching to help people find their “American Dream” whether it is buying a home, furthering their education or starting a small business. Other events sponsored by the coalition include “Super Refund Saturday and Community Resource Fair” on February 7 and “For Love and Money” on February 11. All the services are free and funding is made available by a Statewide VITA Grant, Key Bank, & John T. Gorman Foundation Grant.
- Hal Barter attended training on standards for accessible design. The training focused on renovations to existing buildings and covered some commercial applications. Some of the technical information from this training related to better product selection, especially bathroom products, as well as required distances and clearances.

**Finance**

- Finance Director
  - Prepared a report on the EMS Transport program for the January 20<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting.
  - Prepared the December Financial report for the January 20<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting.
  - Sent the completed City CIP to the City Manager for his review.

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- Met with the Tax Office staff to go over possible reorganization of department.
- The Facilities /Purchasing Manager has been working on various projects (listed below):
  - The bids for Ingersoll repurposing were opened on Thursday, January 8, 2015. They are currently in the review process.
  - The bid for the window project at Hasty was awarded to Crappots Corp. the low bidder on the project. They have been authorized to complete 2 sections of windows at this time. We will be requesting additional funding in FY16 in order to complete the balance of this project.
  - Work is moving forward on renovating the kitchen at Hasty.
  - The lighting project at Public Works was awarded to DeBlois Electric, the low bidder. The project has started.

**Fire**

- Crews had BLS update training taught by Capt. Flanagan
- FPO O'Connell and DC Allen met with the owner of America's Best Value Inn on Center Street to discuss issues they are having with their sprinkler and alarm systems.
- Crews did training on Ice Rescue equipment and techniques. Also Crew did training on SCBA use and air management drills.
- Lt. Jon Woodhead continued to provide fit testing for all personnel required to wear a respirator.
- FPO O'Connell did C of O's at the new John Murphy building on Minot Avenue and at Lepage Bakery.
- Crews responded to a significant vehicle accident with extrication on 1/14 which had 3 injured including 1 serious injury.
- For the week of January 8<sup>th</sup> to January 14<sup>th</sup>, we responded to 81 calls for service. These include, but are not limited to: 7 fire alarm calls, 2 fire calls, 51 Emergency Medical calls, 14 Motor Vehicle Accidents, 67 with injuries, 2 service calls and 4 Hazardous Condition calls. We provided no mutual aid and received 1 mutual aid during this period. We also provided 1 EMS Mutual Aid call during this period.

**Health and Social Services**

- With the cold snap we experienced this week, a 3 family building needed to be closed down due to busted water pipes. The last family in the building came to our office for assistance but was able to secure a new rent on their own.
- This past week 11 households were assisted out of 25 applications taken.
- We are working on our next year's budget.

**Human Resources**

- Chris Mumau received notification that the City of Auburn has once again received the Fit Friendly Gold Award from the American Heart Association. The award was based upon an application Chris Mumau submitted in November outlining various health, wellness and fitness activities that the City Auburn offers its employees as well as policies that promote wellness in the workplace. The City has won the gold level award for 7 years in a row and was the first city in the State of Maine and one of the first in the country to receive the award. The City of Auburn has been recognized in such publications as Forbes Magazine and the Washington Post.

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- The City is gearing up to do a Firefighter/Paramedic Recruitment to cover a military deployment and a second vacancy. The application packets are being updated for posting and sending to applicants on the mailing list. The last recruitment was in 2013.

ICT

- We are exploring a joint GIS project with Edward Little High School. We met with Jim Horn, ELHS Asst. Principal, a few weeks ago to discuss possibilities. Last week we met with a group of ELHS teachers and showed them the potential of GIS in the classroom. This group of teachers (covering disciplines from math and science to history, humanities, art and photography) are enthusiastic about using this technology to engage students. They want to explore a joint project that will have benefit to the city and will also engage the students within their community. We provided the teachers with a list of resources and have enlisted a number of local and regional GIS professionals and educators to participate. The Maine Geographic Alliance, UMF, Esri, and an independent GIS contractor have agreed to support this project with software and/or personnel. The Maine GIS User Group and Auburn Public Library staff have offered resources as needed. We hope to reduce the amount of hands-on city staff time required for basic tasks, while increasing the chances of success. We continue to solicit project ideas from staff and welcome additional ideas and/or comments.
- Restructured the GIS process used in the annual assessing update. The new process reduces the time spent on the update by at least 50%.
- Consulted with assessing staff on a number of workflow modifications that would improve efficiency.
- Completed a few dozen routine tasks that occur week after week, are routine, and are generally not worth mentioning in this report – setting up printer drivers, troubleshooting Adobe forms, print queue problems, setting up and/or modifying user account privileges, replacing cables and more. There seemed to be more this week than usual. Perhaps it was the moon phase.
- Staff assisted the Finance team with preparing for W-2 and 1099 production. This turned out to be much more time-consuming than usual. The application that automates much of the process kept failing on a “database access” error. Several hours were spent chasing down permissions and running data integrity checks. Eventually, MUNIS tech support was brought in and they quickly solved the issue. It turns out that we had downloaded the application too early, and kept trying to reuse it (hoping for a different outcome on the next attempt?). A later version of the application ran smoothly and all is now well! This proves the procrastinator’s maxim that there’s no great reason to go rushing into things.
- The reconfiguration of the Council Chambers audio/visual room left one important control disconnected. The portable microphone mixer, which is used frequently by the School Department, was only partially set up. The mics work fine, but there is not a way to control their individual volumes. The vendor has been contacted, and will be in to resolve the prior to the next School Committee meeting.
- Staff continues to work to replace older Windows XP computers. The most critical remaining ones are at the Tax Counter. Unfortunately, our receipt printers require a parallel interface which is no longer commonly available on new PCs. MUNIS, our financials software, only recently began allowing for USB-connected printers. We’ll be working out the kinks on the bench and then will be able to roll out the replacement Tax PCs.

## Planning

- Staff met with the consultant group, ATRC and a representative from Platz Associates regarding the Downtown Transportation Center. That project is moving forward and remains on schedule.
- City Planner Doug Green is completing an application for private foundation funding for facilitation and technical agricultural assistance for the Agricultural District Study. The benefit of outside help will be to make more staff time available for other projects and to bring specialized assistance that we think can help producers, consumers, landowners and retailers maximize opportunities for cooperation, value added products and try to position Auburn to be more attractive for agriculture than our competition.
- We have two new eating establishment opening in Auburn soon!!
  - Restaurant/Cafe- Cavu Café located at 80 Airport Dr. ( previously it was The Landing Strip Café)- They plan on opening in early February.
  - Bakery & Café- Tripp's Primal Farm and Café located at 1056 Center St ( previously it was The Bread Shop)- They plan on opening in early February.
- Staff met with the Mayor and Councilor Walker this week to provide a status update and discuss strategies to continue moving forward. In summary, there is a lot going on in New Auburn that will help realize planned visions. Some highlights are below:
  - Working with Lewiston and ATRC to coordinate their striping plans and transition across the Lown Peace Bridge – this may require improvements on the Auburn side to address safety concerns and fit Auburns Plans.
  - Staked out approximate edge of the Riverway sidewalk from concept plans – design will determine exact locations and adjust for maximum economic opportunity.
  - Discussions with DOT consultants regarding the economic challenges of the current bridge location, providing plans and information on file and encouraging them to keep an open mind regarding bridge replacement rather than repair.
  - Major improvements coming in 2016/17 for Mill street and South Main Street intersection and refining estimates for the rest of Mill Street
  - Funding design-we hope to workshop this with the Council at the first meeting in February and we will have to act fast to be prepared to take advantage of opportunities.
  - We should learn if we were successful in our grant application for the South Main to Barker Mill Trail sidewalk grant this month.
- The Planning Board met Tuesday night and finished their Policies and Procedures work, scheduled a discussion of the Form Based Code for Downtown and New Auburn for February and discussed the creative reuse of institutional and historic structures as a way to help save iconic buildings.
- Street Light Project Update – The PUC voted, once again, to delay their decision on the Municipal Street Lighting Rules and Regulations. Staff is looking into moving forward under existing rules, however, we are coming up on the deadline for using these funds and it may be worth re-appropriating all or a portion of that funding in the short term to address a current infrastructure need or to promote economic development related projects. This will be part of upcoming discussions with the Council.
- Electrical Updates – We are still down to a single electrical staff person and struggling to keep up with service demands.
- Zack Lenhart, Code Compliance Officer continues to receive/respond to citizen complaints and questions and to address code and housing maintenance violations. There seems to be

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fewer “no heat” complaints than expected recently, an encouraging trend, but still a common complaint. There have been a couple buildings the City is aware of that have recently suffered pipes bursting and in the case of vacant buildings, the utilities are shut off and the building is placarded as unfit for occupancy until repairs are permitted and completed. Zack has also been putting together work logs and quarterly billing for the CDBG Targeted Code Enforcement program.

- We have had an above average start to the new year on the permitting front with over \$1 Million of investment documented and \$8,000 in permit fees collected in the first two weeks of January. Permit fees help offset the cost of permitting services to taxpayers that do not require permitting services. Overall we are on track for an average permitting year but if the new year trend continues it could put us above average for the fiscal year. There are a few substantial projects and a number of smaller projects being discussed that support a likely trend for increased development for 2015!

**Police**

- The department handled 576 calls for service this week. Officers conducted 143 motor vehicle stops and 9 field interviews. Officers investigated 78 offenses of which, 12 of which were felonies, generating 13 arrests, 17 criminal summonses and 1 juvenile arrest. Officers responded to 49 motor vehicle crashes.
- Officers responded to Chickadee Drive for a report of a suicidal elderly male who was armed, threatening to shoot himself with his wife in the home. With the assistance of the State Police Crisis Negotiation Team, the male was convinced to leave the home and was taken into protective custody without incident. The male was transported to St. Mary's Hospital for evaluation.
- Officers are undergoing refresher Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) training in preparation for the deployment of AED's in the cruisers.
- Deputy Chief Moen and Lieutenant Cougle attended a body camera presentation in South Portland.
- For 2014, the department handled 28,716 calls for service. Officers conducted 8,127 motor vehicle stops and 1,304 field interviews. Officers investigated 3,793 offenses of which, 409 of which were felonies, generating 974 arrests, 1,217 criminal summonses and 187 juvenile arrests. Officers responded to 1,642 motor vehicle crashes.

**Public Services**

- John Wing and Bill Grealish, Supervisors of Auburn Public Services, presented at CMCC a class to high school students who were interested in operating heavy equipment and what tasks APS performs every day.
- Crews were out removing Christmas lights
- Crews were out plowing/sanding/salting/removing snow from streets and sidewalks around Auburn
- Crews were busy restocking the sand shed and loading trucks from the snow storms
- Crews were at Chestnut and Walton school prepping the ice rinks
- Staff is working diligently to inventory the parts room
- Staff had training on the Cirrus program for the trucks
- Staff completed the required ISC 300 part 2 training
- Mechanics performed vehicle maintenance on city vehicles

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- Excavation Technician investigated all emergency dig safe calls, as well as billing for street opening
- Broad Street Mill & Fill Project- bid documents are available on the City's website.
- Engineering staff are working with CDBG on contract documents for demolition at the following locations
  1. 14 Second Street
  2. 88 Newberry Street
  3. 115 Whitney Street
  4. 33 South Goff Street

**Recreation**

- Registrations opened for Adult Dodgeball. The fast-paced and action-packed game of dodgeball is back! Teams will participate in a 6 week regular season, culminating with a single elimination playoff tournament. Space in this program is limited, signup today!
- Youth Indoor Soccer, ages 4-7 began on Sunday. In this six week program, players will be introduced to the basic techniques of soccer in a fun and positive environment. Emphasis will be on learning through fun games and small-sided play. Other skills such as communication and sportsmanship will also be incorporated. Currently, a total of 46 players are registered for the program.
- Practices and games continued for 1-6<sup>th</sup> grade youth basketball players. Currently, a total of 170 players are registered in this age group.
- Practices and games continued for 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth basketball players. Currently, a total of 100 players are registered in this age group.
- Practice and game schedules are available online for both youth and adult basketball: [www.teamsideline.com/auburnme](http://www.teamsideline.com/auburnme)
- Adult Men's basketball games continued. A total of 24 teams are registered in the league this season. Approximately 288 players participate in this league.
- Adult Women's basketball games continued. A total of 6 teams are registered in the league this season. Approximately 72 players participate in this league.
- Pickleball has continued to be a big hit as week 15 of the program continued. Pickleball is a tennis-styled sport that is played on a badminton sized court indoors or outdoors. The "Pickleball" is a plastic ball with holes that is served, volleyed, and rallied back and forth over a net using a wooden paddle. As of Thursday, there have been 270 participants, with new members coming in each day of the program. Pickleball will take place every Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00am-11:00am in the Hasty Community Center Gymnasium. The fee is \$2.00 for Auburn Residents and \$3.00 for Non-Residents.
- Youth open gym continued. This free after school program is for Auburn students and runs Monday-Friday from 2:30 – 4:15 PM.
- The 2015 Auburn Winter Festival will begin on Friday, February 6th and conclude on Sunday, February 8th. Festival events and activities take place at a variety of locations. Some activities include: sledding, snowmobile rides, skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, ice skating, ice sculptures, torchlight parade, music and more! Information on activity schedule and event locations are available on the city Winter Festival webpage. Join us at the Winter Festival Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Auburn2014WinterFestival>
- Staff attended a Recreation & Special Events Advisory Board meeting on Wednesday evening.
- Staff continued work on the FY16 budget.



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- Planning for upcoming youth and adult programs continued.