

City of Auburn

To: Mayor LaBonté and the Auburn City Council
From: Clinton Deschene, City Manager
Subject: **SEPTEMBER** Monthly Reporting – *Fire, Police, Finance, CDBG, Health & Social Services, Planning, Permitting & Code, ICT, and Human Resources*
Date: October 22, 2012

Fire

Prevention

- In September, there were twenty-six Life Safety Inspections conducted by the fire companies in twenty-two businesses and four apartment buildings. Out of those inspections fifteen businesses and two apartment buildings were found not to be in compliance with the fire code.

Training

- In September crews conducted motor vehicle extrication refresher training. The training focused on managing vehicles that end up on their sides or roof. These times are especially dangerous for the responders and victims due to the instability of the vehicle.
- The Auburn Fire Department also participated in two disaster exercises this month. The first was a city sponsored exercise that looked at how we would manage a disaster involving the Auburn airport and the surrounding industries. In the second exercises we supported Savage Safe Handling. Our role in this event was to monitor the exercise and provide technical information about response and management of the incident.

Public Relations

- The Auburn Fire Department provided a static display and was on hand to answer questions during Lowe's Safety Day.
- On September 11th we conducted a 9/11 remembrance ceremony that concluded with a blood drive here at central station. The American Red Cross had set a goal of collecting 49 pints of blood during the drive. We exceeded their goal with the drive collecting 52 pints.

Emergency Responses

- In the month of September, the fire department responded to 280 requests for emergency service. These requests include, but are not limited to, one building fire, 181 emergency medical calls, twenty false alarms, and twenty motor vehicle accidents. The city received mutual aid from other communities twice and provided aid once.

MONTHLY REPORTING

10-22-12

- On September 10th the Auburn Fire Department welcomed Chief Frank Roma to the organization. Chief Roma comes to us after retiring as an Assistant Chief from McKenny, Texas. Chief Roma is the first chief hired from outside the department in thirty-two years, the last being Chief Clifton Smith who was hired in 1980 after serving as an Assistant Chief in Lewiston. Chief Roma replaces Chief Wayne Werts who followed Chief Smith in 2001. Chief Roma's experience and positive attitude make him a welcome addition to the fire department.

Police

Operations

- The Department responded to 2341 calls for service in September.
- Officers made 101 physical arrests, issued 96 criminal summonses and processed 343 offense reports, of which 35 were felonies.
- Officers issued 75 traffic citations and 396 warning for various traffic offenses.
- Officers responded to 102 traffic crashes in September, of which 81 required accident reports.

Training

- All officers underwent annual firearms qualifications and training in September
- Corporal Bouchard attended Veterans Awareness training in Augusta.
- Detective Moore attended a Child Abuse Investigation Seminar hosted by Auburn Police.
- Several supervisors and officers attended an Active Shooter Seminar hosted by the Department of Homeland Security in Portland.
- Support Service Technician Lacasse attended a Property/Evidence Room Management class in New Hampshire.
- Corporal McCormick attended Drug Recognition Expert refresher training at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy.
- Members of the Auburn Police Department partnered with City of Auburn Safety Coordinator Ray Lussier as well as members of the Auburn Fire Department, Lewiston-Auburn 9-1-1, Androscoggin County Emergency Management, and others on the *City of Auburn Intermodal-Airport Functional Exercise*. This very detailed exercise simulated a plane crash at the Auburn Municipal airport, and was a practical test of our Incident Command System (ICS). Participant skills were put to the test in preparation for a 'full-blown' exercise which will take place sometime next year.

Community Outreach

MONTHLY REPORTING

10-22-12

- As part of a crime prevention initiative sponsored by the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation, we joined law enforcement agencies from across the state at the University of Maine (Orono) for “Badges for Baseball.” This youth mentoring program uses baseball and softball themes to help prevent juvenile crime and delinquency by encouraging healthy activities that improve relations between police and youth. As part of the program, our police officer mentors (Sgt. Boulet, Cpl. Bouchard & Officer McCamish) worked with more than 200 kids from underserved communities across Maine, participating in a day of baseball-themed activities designed to help build character and teach critical life lessons.

Finance

- The auditors completed their fieldwork for the audit on September 21st. They were here for 3 weeks. Things went smoothly during the fieldwork.
- The bond issues were completed and the City received the bond proceeds via wire transfer on September 27th.
- The first half of the property taxes was due on September 15th, so the tax department has been very busy processing payments.
- The Facilities Manager/Purchasing Agent position applications have been reviewed and we are in the process of determining who we will interview for the position. I hope to have the interviews in mid October, with the new person starting in early November, if possible.

CDBG

- Community Development staff inspected 8 properties to purchase with Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP-1) funds. Staff presented two properties for acquisition to the Neighborhood Stabilization Program Committee. The building at 143 Hampshire Street would have been demolished and the site used as winter relief parking lot for the Union Street neighborhood. Another property at 181 Cook Street would have been repaired for homeownership. The Committee authorized the acquisition of the Hampshire Street property, but tabled Cook Street. Negotiations were not successful with the budget limitations for the Hampshire Street property. Other properties are now being considered.
- Community Development is relocating one of the tenants at 60 Summer Street to make the apartment available for a homebuyer.
- An NSP property that had been under a lease/purchase contract was sold to the leasee. The leasee had worked with Community Development staff for two years to repair her credit. The homeowner is a single parent with two children and is happy to call this property her home.
- The Academy Street Townhouse project is slightly ahead of schedule. Units will be available for sale the first of the year.

MONTHLY REPORTING

10-22-12

- The marketing efforts in September for our homebuyer program produced results. We signed up our first participant for the HOME Savings Account. Yvette will be working with this client to make them ready for home purchase.
- Community Development staff of Auburn and Lewiston met with Rick Whiting, Auburn Housing Authority's Executive Director, to discuss their sponsoring our homebuyer program. Auburn Housing's non-profit development company is a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) and as such, can utilize the 15% CHDO set aside mandated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This partnership benefits both Cities since we cannot access the CHDO funds without their assistance.
- The Lead Committee, a subcommittee of the L/A Public Health Committee, has been working on gathering material to make a public presentation to the City Councils of Auburn and Lewiston. The presentation will be educational for the public as well as City Councilors.
- I met with the property owner of 6 Second Street. This parcel is adjacent to Little Andy Park and is critical to the development of the New Auburn river trail project. The owner was not satisfied with the properties used as comparables to determine market value. A new appraisal will be done by another firm.
- A contract was signed with John Schwartz of Mainland Appraisal Consultants to conduct appraisals at 15 Broad Street and 6 Second Street.

Health & Social Services

- The H & SS department paid in welfare assistance a total of \$10,824 in September 2012 compared to \$8,880 in the same month in 2011.
- We took in 101 applications compared to 65 in September 2011.
- We assisted 10 household which have timed out from TANF (exceeded their 60 months) for a total of \$2,446. Few families are found eligible for extension of TANF in the Lewiston DHHS office.
- Workfare was completed by 10 people for a total of 178 hours, and a value of \$1,424. The majority of the workfare was completed at the Parks department.
- As a result of LD 1903 we now have a "Disability Advocate" out of Lewiston DHHS office to work solely with general assistance clients pending disability with the SS office. The goal is to help expedite client's decision for eligibility to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and reimburse the City quicker.

Planning, Permitting & Code

- During the month of September the Department processed 71 building, electrical, sign and plumbing permits. The permits resulted in the collection of \$25,992.00 in fees for work with an estimated construction cost of \$6,583,352.00. The number of permits and monthly revenue was down slightly from last month, however, overall estimated value of

construction costs was up nearly \$3,000,000.00 from \$3,520,000.00 last month. Overall, this year has been a stronger year for the number of permits than either of the past two years and we have some substantial projects coming soon if all goes well.

- As of October 5th we are about 25% through FY 13. Our expenses are at 21.1% 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 56% with most of that from building permit revenues which were at 79% of the projected annual total on October 5th. 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.
- During the month of September, the Planning Department made additional 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. The Mayor has been working with Staff and the Consultant to ensure that representatives include a broad stakeholder group and we are still looking for an interested business owner or representative along Minot Avenue between Garfield and Hatch Roads.
- Patrick Venne, Code Compliance Officer, Planning and Assessing Assistant accepted a position with the town of Berwick, ME. His last day at the City was Wednesday October 17th. We currently have two vacancies and we are interviewing over the next couple of weeks to fill those. In the interim, response times on complaints and other projects may be delayed more than usual. □
- During the last four weeks we tracked 27 Code Requests. Cristy Bourget conducted 35 sanitation inspections including lodging, mobile vendors, restaurant and takeout facilities. 33 of those were new inspections and two were follow ups.
- The Planning Board attended legal training hosted by the Maine Municipal Association training on October 10th. There were no applications submitted for the October Planning Board Meeting.
- Over the past few months the department was 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 split into 2 separate classes, residential and commercial. The survey produces a Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule for each municipality it reviews with a rating of 1 to 10, with 1 being the highest. The initial result for the ratings was a 4 for commercial and a 5 for residential. This matched our last review (completed in 2002) for commercial, with a 1 point drop for residential. We provided additional information to the mitigation agent and the rating of both areas will be 4 which is the way it has been for some time. 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.

- As the Council is aware; The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) published its revised floodplain maps for Androscoggin County, including the City of Auburn early this summer. June 7th 2012 began the ninety day period for property owners to appeal FEMA's proposed floodplain designations based on scientific and/or technical information. We processed a total of seven appeals and spoke to many property owners about the maps and appeal process. The appeals resulted in one appeal being granted, one being dismissed by the appellant and five appeals that did not warrant a change because the information was not scientific and/or technical information or did not prove that the map was in error. Staff has also been working with FEMA for larger area problems and that has resulted in flood elevation reductions for Taylor Pond and portions of Taylor Brook will not increase as much as FEMA originally proposed. This has been a long and time consuming process and although the outcome is not exactly what we had worked for, we had some success in making it better. I want to thank the Engineering and Public Works Departments for their assistance with this project.
- On Friday, September 28, 2012 we started a customer service survey for our inspection / field staff. The following was posted on our website and mailed to over 300 permittees, homeowners and contractors that have permitted projects in Auburn this summer:

The Planning & Permitting Department wants to hear from their customers to evaluate their performance on inspection services. Planning & Permitting will use this information to ensure that they keep doing things that they do well and to determine how to modify practices that will improve their service.

We would greatly appreciate any feedback you could give us regarding your experience! Please take part in our [survey](#) today...

To date, we have received 19 responses and will continue collecting until the end of the month. Although the response has been limited we have received some helpful feedback and will use it to evaluate our services.

ICT

- The City rolled out its new website at the beginning of September. The new site reflects a much more modern approach to two-way communication with the public. ICT worked to re-direct traffic from our old site to the new one. The developer of the new site is a local entity, Clearpath Innovations, working with local artists and software designers. Part of the project included developing a new banner for the site, which incorporates a new logo symbolizing the canopy art at Festival Plaza.
- We discovered in September that our phone switch had been hacked into, and might have been exploited to make International phone calls. When we brought it to the vendor's attention, they moved swiftly to tighten security on the switch and blocked all International calling. International calling is rarely used by staff, and this will limit the City's exposure to toll traffic should the switch be compromised again.

- Part of the City's effort to reduce the use of paper involves converting much of our financial documents handling to electronic methods. These currently include payroll information sheets, the equivalent of a paycheck stub, and EFT transmittal of payments to vendors. The product being used, MUNIS GoDocs, required setting up an email relay from the MUNIS server to our Exchange server.

Human Resources

- Recruitment Update – The vacancy for Building Maintenance Technician for Auburn Hall and the Library has been filled by Richard Duchesneau. Mr. Duchesneau worked for the past several years at the Auburn-Lewiston Municipal Airport. He has a CDL License and a solid background in building and grounds maintenance.

The entire Department Director Team participated on the interview panel for five candidates for Assistant City Manager. This position works closely with all departments and Department Director input is critical to making this selection a success.

The City of Auburn and the City of Lewiston started a joint recruitment in September for entry level Firefighters/EMT's/Paramedics. Candidates complete one application for consideration for both cities and take one physical agility test. Candidates who meet the minimum standards and also pass the physical agility test or who have taken a nationally recognized and certified physical agility test in another Fire Department are added to the certified list for both the Auburn and Lewiston Fire Departments. The certified list is in effect for one year.

Recruitment is on-going for the City Planner and Facilities Manager

- Contract negotiations are on-going with the following unions – M.A.P. (Maine Association of Police) for the Patrol/Detective/Corporal Unit, M.A.P. for the Police Command Unit for the Sergeants and Lieutenants, 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.
- The Charitable Giving Campaigns are underway in several of the off-site facilities. Chris Mumau has solicited gifts as incentives for those employees who attend the rallies and/or complete their pledge cards.
- Ray Lussier conducted the Airport/Intermodal Terminal tabletop exercise with key public safety personnel. The tabletop helped to identify some weaknesses in the plans and procedures prior to the full-scale exercise. This full scale exercise will test Auburn's Incident Management System.
- Ray Lussier provided safety orientation training for several new employees in Auburn Hall, including some new School Department employees.