

City of Auburn, Maine

"Maine's City of Opportunity"

Office of the City Manager



TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Clinton Deschene, City Manager
RE: Weekly Report
DATE: August 23, 2013

Assessing

- I worked on finalizing the commitment and preparing the documents for the tax collector.
- Brian issued sign permits and reviewed the tree growth document.
- Brian and Karen worked on the Municipal Valuation Return and completed a property review.
- Karen met with a business owner and worked with her to complete their personal property Business Equipment Tax Return.

CDBG

- On Monday the City Council approved the HOME Program amendment that will allow staff to commit funds to a project. Community Development staff has been searching for a single family dwelling in the target areas, but found the offerings are inadequate. There is only one property that we could purchase and renovate; however, it appears we could run into budget issues. We have expanded the search to other areas. We want to find a building where we can make a difference in the neighborhood, stay on budget, and achieve a product that is appealing to a home buyer.
- Yvette Bouttenot has been intensely marketing the Homebuyer Program. The most effective approach has been advertising on Great Falls TV. Half of the inquiries have been from people who have seen our posted advertisement. Other inquiries have come from an article appearing in the Twin City Times, our webpage, and referrals from past clients or public service agencies. Regardless of our efforts, there is still very low demand for this program.
- Reine Mynahan prepared the bid document for the demolition of 6 buildings, 143 Hampshire Street, 325 Turner Street, 61 Webster Street, 6 Second Street, 9 Broad Street and the vault on Riverside Drive.
- Three projects under the Curb Appeal Program have progressed to a point of closing. All three involve a grant, but no loan. Two of the projects required engineering support which slows the process. All of these are residential buildings and there has been very good cooperation with all applicants in meeting Housing Quality Standards in the dwelling units.
- The low bid for a rehabilitation project was substantially higher than available funding. It took Hal Barter several hours of negotiating with the homeowner and contractor to get the project within budget, having a scope of work that the client was happy with, and still meeting our program standards. Negotiating cuts in the budget seems to be a trend with high construction costs, program loan limits and people's limited capacity to take on debt. We approach each project with the idea that our customers will be pleased with the product. We encourage pride and educate our customers on home maintenance practices.

60 Court Street • Auburn, ME 04210

(207) 333-6600 Voice • (207) 333-6601 Automated • (207) 333-6621 Fax

www.auburnmaine.org

- The City of Auburn's consultant, Frank O'Hara of Planning Decisions, presented the report on Impediments to Fair Housing Choice. The report is the product of a study to research and identify barriers that would limit housing choices for populations protected by fair housing laws. The report concluded that many landlords and renters don't understand their rights and responsibilities, there are many physical barriers, particularly for the disabled populations, and there are no mortgage products that meet the customs of the Muslim community. The plan established strategies to address these barriers.

City Clerk

- The School Budget Election was held on Tuesday and was approved by voters with 1049 voting yes and 545 voting no. 10% of registered voters voted.
- I received notification from the State that as of August 16th the Governor and the Legislature agreed on a bond package to be voted on so there will be a State Referendum Election (in addition to the Municipal Election) on November 5th. Once the Legislature meets for a Special Session before the end of August to finalize several bond questions for the ballot, the State will be sending out Absentee Ballot Applications to the Municipalities.
- The deadline for submitting nomination papers is Thursday, August 22. The Clerk's Office will be open until 5 P.M. to allow time for people to get their papers in.

Engineering and Public Works

- Turner St. was Paved
- Manley Road was reclaimed and graded
- Main St. was Stripped
- Elm and High St. were paved
- E.L. Park project progressing. Trees planted, benches place, trees trimmed, loam/seed/watering.
- Ditching and culverts being done
- Parks Division continuing with ball/playing field lining for upcoming sports seasons.
- Mowing/Weeding around the City
- Emergency investigation and repair of sinkholes
- Paving and patching operations ongoing
- Arborist operations ongoing
- Recycling operations ongoing
- Removed festival plaza canopies due to damage and safety concerns
- BOL annual Hearing Conservation Program testing being done
- Dan Goyette and staff attended a meeting in Augusta one morning to discuss the South Main Street project and the issues surrounding concerns on the quality of the construction to date. In attendance were members of Maine DOT staff, Federal Highway (FHWA) staff, Gorrill-Palmer (the City's Construction Inspector on the project) and City staff.
- Concerns expressed centered on the quality/quantity of the reclaim material used on the top portion of the roadway section. These concerns were raised in order to ensure the project was in compliance with Federal Highway guidelines and therefore eligible for reimbursement by the FHWA and MDOT. A discussion followed on construction to date, the chain of events that led to the position we are in now, and how we can remedy or alleviate concerns about the construction to ensure eligibility.
- Two courses of action were plotted:

- On the unpaved portion of the roadway, approximately 2000 linear feet, the existing top 6" of material would be removed. Additional density testing by MDOT staff would occur to validate previous density testing results on the remaining gravel. The removed material would then be replaced with 6" of new gravel. This course of action will result in full participation from FHWA and MDOT on the construction costs. The contractor has been notified to proceed on this course of action and estimates that it should take approximately one week to complete. They are planning on starting tomorrow, August 22. Base course paving would then follow immediately there-after.
 - The second course of action involves the paved portion of roadway. None of the parties present were in favor of removing the existing pavement and a portion of the gravel in order to ensure compliance. This would be costly and time consuming endeavor. It was decided that additional testing will be undertaken to determine what level of participation will occur. Estimates varied on the different materials from 55% to 100%. Until the testing is completed the level is unknown.
- In terms of budget this means the City may be obligated to fund a larger percentage of the overall construction costs. Due to the favorable bidding climate, the City does have the additional funds in the Maine DOT CIP match account to make up the potential difference. Any costs that the FHWA and MDOT do not use on this phase of the project will be used on Phase 2; in effect no participatory money will be lost.

Finance

- The Finance Director closed the fiscal year in MUNIS and is finalizing the audit work papers and preparing a draft CAFR for the auditors
- The Tax Office has been busy this week with vehicle registrations at the counter and helping the City Clerk's office with vital statistic requests due to them being short staffed.
- The Facilities/Purchasing manager been meeting with various vendors this week. He is doing a site inspection on the Pettingill Park dam this week and he has been working with the new arena manager on various items.
- Several members of the finance and tax departments attended a meeting on the proposed health insurance change.

Fire

- Deputy Chief Geoff Low has been accepted into the prestigious National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program. Out of many hundreds of applications nationwide, Deputy Chief Low's application was chosen and he will become a member of a select group of fire officers completing this program over the next four years. This training is provided at no cost to the city and funded through the US Fire Administration. CONGRATULATIONS to Deputy Chief Low!!
- The Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) is an initiative of the United States Fire Administration/National Fire Academy designed to provide senior officers and others in key leadership roles with:
 - An understanding of:
 - the need to transform fire and emergency services organizations from being reactive to proactive; with an emphasis on leadership development, prevention, and risk-reduction;

- transforming fire and emergency services organizations to reflect the diversity of America's communities;
- the value of research and its application to the profession; and
- the value of lifelong learning.
- Enhanced executive-level knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to lead these transformations, conduct research, and engage in lifelong learning.
- The officers enhance their professional development through a unique series of four graduate and upper-division-baccalaureate equivalent courses. The EFOP spans a 4-year period with 4 core courses. Each course is 2 weeks in length.
- EFOP participant must complete an Applied Research Project (ARP) that relates to their organization within 6 months after the completion of each of the four courses. A certificate of completion for the entire EFOP is awarded only after the successful completion of the final research project.
- As we approach next week, the AFD will have inspected each school in the city prior to the first day of school going back into session. This is an important service, and one that has not been a regular past practice. Kudos to FPO David O'Connell and the shift firefighters for getting this done. It will become standard practice to assure all schools are inspected prior to them opening each year going forward.
- Probationary firefighter training continues at a brisk pace and all of our new firefighters are doing well and working hard to complete the required probationary training assignments.
- Many applications have been received for the open Fire Planner position and we will begin to go through those applications with a target date of mid September to make an offer of employment to the successful candidate.
- The department responded to 82 calls for service and conducted 11 inspections during the last week.
- Fire standby services were provided at the filling site for the Balloon Festival with no incidents reported either from the filling or the festival it's self.
- Chief Roma and Deputy Chief Low attended a two day FEMA training class on Event Security Planning for Public Safety Professionals". This class was held in Auburn and was attended by both in and out of state fire, law enforcement and other local and state agencies concerned with special event planning and operations.

Health & Social Services

- The General Assistance office is getting a number of requests for assistance with pending electric disconnections. Many clients owe excessive amounts of money to CMP and are unable to pay them. Each case is evaluated on an individual basis.
- As a result of the Workfare program two of our clients were recently hired to work at fast food restaurants. The Workfare program allows clients to establish a reference to apply for jobs. Many of them had not worked in years and had no references.

Human Resources

- Ray Lussier coordinated and attended a 2 day Event Security Planning Course held at Auburn Hall. The Course was taught by Eastern Kentucky University staff and focused on response to an emergency during a planned event. The course was attended by public safety officials from several communities as well as from Cumberland County and the New Auburn Ice Arena.
- A representative from the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust presented the third of three educational sessions on the PPO 500 Plan to City of Auburn employees as well as employees

from the 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center and the L/A Airport. This plan was offered to non-union employees effective 7/1/13 and the 30 day open enrollment period ends as of 8/31/13. To date 6 employees have enrolled in the new plan. There will be another open enrollment in January.

- The Human Resources staff is working with the AFLAC Representative to coordinate the annual open enrollment. AFLAC Plans supplement the City's health, life, dental and disability benefits.
- Deborah Grimmig ran driving records checks on all employees who have CDL (Commercial Driver's) licenses and updated the records for the Affiliated Drug Testing Services. Affiliated Drug Testing Services is the organization that administers the DOT random drug testing pool and is responsible for submitting to the Human Resources Department every month the names of employees who must be tested under the Federal Department of Transportation or the Federal Aviation Administration substance abuse regulations.

Ice Arena

- CONSTRUCTION UPDATE:
 - Mezzanine Framing and Drywall is being completed in Rink 1 and 2
 - Preferred Mechanical arrived on 8/19 and has started placement of tubes for the warmfloor.
 - Telcomm and Data Drops have been determined and planned for installation
 - Interior Walls, electrical, mechanical and plumbing work continue
- Continued to establish relationships within the community and attend client meetings focused on sponsorship/advertising and partnerships. Several contracts are pending, awaiting execution, and several proposals are out for review.
- To date:
 - \$77,250 in annual sponsorships has been secured.
 - \$19,500 in contracts pending, \$25,000 to \$30,000 in proposals under review.
- Naming Rights Sponsor has continued to be a priority; conversations continue to be held with regards to finding the right partner. Conversations are being held and questions answered as we await the receipt of the Letters of Interest.
- Beverage services RFP has been released, Bid opening date is scheduled for August 29th, 2013.
- Discussions are being held to finalize Kitchen designs, menus and branding partners for the delivery and service of concessions.
- Initial scheduling has been completed through March, staffing plans and operational procedures are being developed based upon ice schedule. Final discussions with major tenants about timelines and schedules continue. Site visits are occurring with Auburn PD and Safety Coordination to implement event planning details.
- Transitional year budget is being reworked and adjusted based upon staffing plans, ice rentals and sponsorship agreements. Staff is analyzing current versus projected budgets to create an accurate forecast for the facility.
- Staff participated in an Homeland Security, Events Security Planning course offered by the City of Auburn Safety Department. Course will lead to further developed relationships between Auburn Police Department and Auburn Fire Department with relation to events and activities at the Arena.

ICT

- 4 phones and extensions were installed at the PAL Center
- Added 51 email addresses and user logins at the Fire Department
- Aerial photo Quality Checks has been completed for Auburn's land area (1.8 trillion square feet)
- Helped to process absentee ballots for the Auburn School budget vote

LIBRARY

- Children's Services has just completed a summer "Bedtime Math" program. Three hundred and fifty calendars were distributed to parents and children. Each day on the calendar had a math problem to be solved before going to bed. The children were able to go online and earn stars for each problem solved. This program was funded by the "Bedtime Math" organization.
<http://bedtimemath.org/>
- In keeping with the Science-Math-Engineering-Technology theme, Children's Services is coordinating with the Maine Cooperative Extension Service to offer a "Young Engineers Club" for children aged 9 -12. The Friday afternoon program will run through the end of September and feature creating small machines such as lifts, mobiles, and wind-powered boats. Registration is required. The program is funded through a grant from the Extension Service.
- The Maine Job Corps visited the Library to provide information for teens and young adults about the free training services it provides in manufacturing, construction and other career paths.
- The Pickwick Club will meet on Sat., Aug. 24th, at 10:30 AM in the Androscoggin Community Room to discuss Charles Dickens' "The Old Curiosity Shop."
- To see what new books, movies, music, etc. have arrived at the Library, please link to our website at www.auburnpubliclibrary.org. Look for the "Find Books, etc." tab at the top of the page and then link to "New."
- The masonry and copper repair to the building has begun. This project addresses maintenance and long-term sustainability issues.

Parks & Rec

- Review of resumes for the vacant Recreation Specialist position continued throughout the week.
- The Adult Men's softball league playoffs began on Monday, August 19th. Barring any inclement weather which forces game cancellations, Men's playoffs should be completed the first week of September.
- The 7-8 grade football program began practices this week. Practices focus on conditioning, technique and player development. During this week, players wear helmets only, as opposed to full pads, and there is no contact. Games for this age group will begin the first weekend in September.
- Youth football game schedules have been finalized and are awaiting approval for field use.
- Youth football equipment fittings and adjustments continued throughout the week. The program picked up several more participants bringing the current total to 137 players, which is 17 more players than last season.
- The annual First Auburn/New Auburn Seniors barbeque took place on Wednesday. Over 100 senior citizens joined together at the Hasty Gym for a meal of hamburgers, hotdogs, corn-on-the-cob, potato salad, cake and ice cream.
- Staff participated in a meeting with CALEA assessors for the Police Department's site visit.

Planning, Permitting & Code

Below are some highlights from the Planning and Permitting Department during the last week:

- Last week was very challenging due to vacations and illness but we are back on track and catching up this week.
- I am working on incorporating the Complete Streets policy references into approval standards for projects and subdivisions and summarizing areas of the Comprehensive Plan that should be considered for amendment to reflect the Councils directive to change passenger rail related policy. We will be meeting internally over the next couple of weeks and are on target to meet the Councils timeline. Once we know that we have captured the Councils goals in the amended language we can begin the amendment process by having the Planning Board provide a recommendation.
- The Planning Board will discuss downtown redevelopment, zoning, urban form and opportunities for an improved urban lifestyle at their September 10th meeting. The discussion will be kicked off with a presentation by Alan Manoian, Economic Development Specialist. The public is invited to attend and we hope to continue to build momentum and excitement for downtown redevelopment and urban living. We are also hoping that City Councilors will attend the discussion.
- New Auburn Transportation and Land Use Plan. The next public meeting will be September 5th. A location will be available soon as we are waiting for an answer from St. Louis Church.
- The week of August 12th Lewiston & Auburn inspected approximately 24 food vendors associated with the Balloon Festival. Lewiston and Auburn inspectors work together and alternate years for the Saturday inspections for festivals like this to avoid overtime expenses. We had a beautiful weekend and everyone enjoyed the festival with 100% of scheduled launches taking place.
- New Auburn Transportation and Land Use Plan. The next public meeting will be September 5th. A location will be available soon as we are waiting for an answer from St. Louis Church.
- The City of Auburn welcomes two new food service establishments to Auburn “ Top it Off Frozen Yogurt” located at 168 Main St. and Maine Gourmet Chocolates located at 170 Main St. Please stop in and say “Hi” and try some yogurt or chocolates. Rumor has it the yogurt and chocolates are delicious!!
- Unfortunately we have been informed that Kelvi’s Pizza will be closing their doors on August 31, 2013.
- The barn at 621 Lake St. collapsed and we have recently been in contact with the owner. He claimed he had just received N.O.V. that we sent because he travels for work. He is soliciting demolition bids and trying to sell the property.
- A contempt hearing for the illegal junkyard owned by Michael Farrell at 145 Eastman Lane that was scheduled for September 5th will be rescheduled for a later date.
- This past week Zachary Lenhart worked on addressing the unsightly garbage issue on downtown Main St. A letter was sent to property owners reminding them that proper waste containers are required. He is also reviewing the ‘Solid Waste’ ordinance and may be suggesting possible changes that would help property owners and staff improve the situation.

Police

- The department handled 536 calls for service this week. Officers conducted 153 motor vehicle stops and 13 arrests. Officers investigated 67 offenses of which, 6 were felonies. Officers responded to 26 motor vehicle crashes.

- Our Accreditation Assessment concluded on Wednesday. The assessors spent four days in the department conducting in-depth interviews with staff and community partners. The assessors spoke with 60% of our employees during their stay. The assessors remarked on the high degree of professionalism our employees display. The team leader is a police chief from the Midwest who is veteran assessor. He ranked us in the very top percentage of agencies that he has assessed. The team will forward a favorable recommendation to the CALEA Commission for our reaccreditation status.
- Officers Gagnon and Parker arrested a local drug dealer during a plainclothes detail. The officers spotted the dealer's vehicle at a local motel and conducted a knock & talk. During their investigation, they seized heroin, crack cocaine, marijuana and prescription pills. They also seized \$2,464 in suspected drug proceeds. The female was charged with felony drug possession and violation of bail.
- Support Services is conducting the second week of our annual Junior Police Camp at the PAL Center. Approximately 20 kids are spending the week with SRO McCamish learning about all facets of police work and the Auburn Police Department.

City Manager

- With the passing of the school budget we are preparing to send out tax bills with a message from the City Manager outlining budget highlights
- We have ongoing discussions with our attorney on preparing a contract with Hannaford in regards to the Downtown Transportation Center
- We will be meeting with the City of Lewiston to review the Balloon Festival and what we can do in future years to coordinate our efforts
- City of Portland staff has reached out to meet with the Mayor and some of our staff to review how each of us conducts business such as infrastructure maintenance, policies, etc. We look forward to meeting with to explore new ideas and concepts.
- Jude Cyr and Katy Grondin met with Jeff Larimer, Project Architect, to talk about next steps for the committee. Jeff received information from Scott Brown, Director of School Facilities Services, **who is recommending that we do not continue our work until Edward Little High School is approved by the Department of Education for a state project.**

Here are the following reasons:

- The work of the committee may be outdated due to the time between when the work is completed by the committee and when the project is approved for state funding. It would be a redundancy in efforts and best to hold off on future work until the State approves moving forward with this project.
- Site selection is a major portion of the work that will need revisiting, once DOE authorizes us to proceed, to insure that we have obtained proper State Board Approval for site selection. Site selection information at this time may not be relevant at the time of state review and approval.
- Do not want to spend funds unnecessarily. Any funds spent now may need to be spent again at a later date.

Recommendations for next steps:

- **Put the work of the committee on hold until Edward Little High School is approved for state funding as a state funded project.**

- Pettengill Park Dam is being opened on Friday to help deal with the water issue. Once the water is to a safe level we will have our Safety Director review the facility and begin implementing an action plan to repair the dam so it can be operated safely, prevent flooding and procedures to use during heavy rains and flash flooding events. Expect a more detailed report at a future City Council meeting with staff recommendations to fix this problem.
- Attended the Androscoggin County Budget Committee Caucus. Auburn recommended Councilor Crowley to represent district 5 as a 'municipal officer' and Andrew Titus to represent District 5 as a 'resident'. We also recommended Councilor Hayes to represent District 6 as a 'municipal officer' and Joe Gray to represent District 6 as a 'resident'. District 6 encompasses the City of Auburn from Hackett Road to Pettengill Road and Rodman Road to Gracelawn Road. (please see attached map) The rest of the City is part of District 6 which is shared with the Towns of Poland and Mechanics Falls. You will be getting a ballot from the County to vote on each district in the near future.



District 6

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