

City of Auburn, Maine

Office of the City Manager



TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Clinton Deschene, City Manager
RE: Weekly Report
DATE: September 13, 2013

Assessing

- Renee attended educational training for Applications in Litigation Valuation and Appraising Condos, Co-ops and PUDs
- The department is responding numerous taxpayer inquiries related to tax bills
- Staff processed abatements and completed property inspections related to tax bill inquiries
- Brian is continuing to process the back log of deed transfers since April 1, 2013
- Karen entered commercial permit data for new commercial construction

Auburn Public Library

- With school in session the Library has been very busy getting into its Fall routines. One of our more successful children's programs has been the new "Young Engineers Club" that runs on Friday afternoons through the end of September.
- "Sprouts," a rousing lap sit program for babies through 36-months and their caregivers is back at its usual Saturday morning slot – 10:30 AM. We'll gather on the story quilt with Heather to enjoy songs, nursery rhymes, dancing, while making new friends
- Registration for the Great Falls Yoga Festival on Sept. 28th is still open. This day-long program is for experienced practitioners of the art and those who would like to give it a try. This is a new fundraiser for the Library.
- The Library's staff is taking advantage of professional development opportunities. We have available to us a number of free or inexpensive webinars. We strive to keep up with current trends in libraries.
- Upcoming programs include "Networking Etiquette and Speed Networking" on the 19th and "Lost & Found: Maine's Popham Colony" on the 17th.
- Our collaboration with Best Buy that provides help with various electronic devices continues. The public is invited to stop by the Library on Thursday afternoons from 2 to 3 pm.

City Clerk

- I attended the Secretary of State's Elections Conference on Tues. and Wed. Sept. 10 and 11.

City Manager

- In response to questions I've received regarding the auctioning off of fire apparatus:
Concerning the upcoming auction of fire apparatus, some background on the units being auctioned may be helpful. And while a fire truck may appear to be in good shape from the outside, it is the internal systems, engine, transmission, pump and frame and body that really tell the condition of a piece of used apparatus.

The fire department will be disposing of three pieces of apparatus - two Engines and a Rescue:

- Old Engine Two is a 1999 American LaFrance engine. It has serious pump problems, numerous engine and transmission problems as well as rust issues. This engine in fact caught fire prior to it permanently being placed out of service. It has not been operated or driven in nearly two years. It has 111263 service miles and 11327 service hours on the engine. This is very high. This vehicle has been retained 4 years longer than our apparatus replacement schedule recommends.
- Engine 6 - This is a used commercial 1995 International Central States engine that was purchased as a stop gap measure when the old Engine -2 (see above) went out of service and the city was left with no reserve engines. It has a severe rust situation with its frame rails that now make it unsafe to operate. It has 47914 service miles and 3838 service hours on the engine. This is moderate. This vehicle has been retained 8 years longer than our apparatus replacement schedule recommends.
- Rescue Two is a 1994 medium duty rescue. It has 108189 service miles and 10380 service hours on the engine. This is high. It is worn out. This vehicle has been retained 13 years longer than our apparatus replacement schedule recommends.
- All of these units have rust and body issues of various significance with Engine 2 having critical issues.

Auction is the most effective and provides the city with the greatest ability to dispose of equipment "As is" with no liability as there is no guarantee of performance or serviceability with the equipment being disposed of. The buyer assumes all liability and responsibility.

These units have little value, and in fact a leading wholesaler of used fire apparatus and equipment, when contacted and given detailed condition reports on the equipment we are taking to auction, would not entertain selling them due to age and condition.

- Hotel Road Bridge information from John Storer:
 - The Water & Sewerage Districts won't be taking down the old concrete bridge until spring or summer of 2014. We have too much of a backlog of work to remove it this year. It was the proposed removal of the old concrete bridge that started the trail discussion. If the current construction schedule holds, we will have our new pipes operational on the new bridge within the next 2 weeks.
- In addition, Greg Whitney reached out from one of the snowmobile clubs, and that eventually led to a meeting of all the local clubs. As a result, it is expected that there will be a follow-up meeting and the City will be updated at a later point.
- Council has requested four workshop items via the new request process:
 - Citizen survey at the November elections – per meetings with Councilor Hayes, it was mutually agreed to withdraw the request and instead concentrate efforts towards Community Conversations.

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- Regular meeting process between School and City regarding budget -The Mayor is meeting with the Superintendent, Committee Chair and City Manager on a regular basis, thus fulfilling this request.
- Finish board appointments (specifically LACFB and Rec Advisory) -LACFB is a Mayor appointment. The Rec Advisory appointment process is going to be held during the Public Services review and implementation process
- The tree harvesting policies – per request we're looking at the cords program and tree harvesting. The Mayor and City Manager are reviewing and will potentially set a date for workshop.

CDBG

- The second closing for a Curb Appeal project was held this week.
- Community Development staff viewed 4 additional properties looking for a property to purchase, and an offer was made for one of the properties. Upon hearing from our realtor there were multiple offers, we increased the amount to a full-price offer.
- Reine and Yvette attended a briefing of the HOME final rule which was released in July, 2013. These new regulations have been in the making for several years, and will require an even greater scrutiny of rental projects than in the past. The rule also makes it more difficult to undertake CHDO projects for which there is a 15% reservation of the grant.
- Yvette attended a homebuyer education class offered by Community Concepts to explain our Homebuyer Program and market the City's property on Cook Street.
- The Community Development Loan Committee approved two applications. Partnering with Community Concepts, a Spot Rehab loan of \$3,500 will help a low income couple to repair a roof and replace the heating system. An \$8,400 loan was approved under the Homeowner Rehab Program for comprehensive repairs to a property. One loan was denied one due to cash flow issues.

Engineering/Public Works

- The Helm Bridge Replacement Project has begun. The contractor has moved a trailer onsite and has begun clearing to make room for the temporary bridge.
- Construction on South Main Street continues with paving scheduled for Wednesday, the 18th.
- EL Park project has been completed and all silt fencing and accoutrements pertaining to the work has been removed. The new grass is rooted. We will continue to monitor the park for vandalism.
- Ditching and placement and repair of culverts being done
- Parks Division continuing with ball/playing field lining for the remaining sports seasons.
- Mowing/Weeding around the City
- Emergency investigation and repair of sinkholes
- Paving and patching operations ongoing
- Arborist operations ongoing
- Recycling operations ongoing
- Manley Road - building sidewalks and driveway aprons
- Turner Street - driveways are being worked on as well as punch list items
- 2013 Neighborhood - driveways are being worked on as well as punch list items

Finance

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- The auditor's are here for the second week and the Finance Director has been working directly with them.
- The Finance Director met with representatives from Bangor Savings bank to review products they have available. We are working on an RFP for Banking Service and hope to put this out before the end of this fiscal year.
- The Tax Office has been busy this week with tax payments at the counter and helping the City Clerk's office with vital statistic requests due to them being short staffed. Property taxes collected this week are \$2,271,974
- The Facilities/Purchasing met with Public Works at the dam at Pettingill Park, scheduled the demolition of the shed at Oak Hill Cemetery, and continued work on asbestos abatement at PW and Parks and recreation.
- The Tax Collector has received the new dog license program for MUNIS and it was loaded by Paul Fraser of ICT. The tax collector will be scheduling training with MUNIS on the module so that we can begin using it and integrating with our MUNIS financial software.

Fire

- A public meeting was held at Central Station to discuss EMS transport. The meeting provided for some good discussion and was valuable in gaining insight into the public's views on the FD pursuing EMS transport.
- A meeting was held with area nursing and care facilities to discuss EMS transport as well. This meeting was very informative and positive.
- The Auburn Citizens Fire Academy program formulation and delivery was the educational presentation at the Androscoggin County Fire Association meeting held in Durham.
- There were 6 business and 2 apartment building life-safety inspections conducted by the fire companies. Out of those inspections, 5 were found not to be in compliance with the fire code.
- The fire department responded to 69 calls for service. These include, but are not limited to, 1 structure fire, 51 emergency medical calls, and 2 hazardous conditions. There was no mutual aid calls during this period.

Health and Social Services

- Two of our regular clients for Social Service, were hired this week as a result of this office's collaboration with the Career Center and mandating participation in workfare and Job Fairs

Human Resources

- Chris Mumau and Deb Grimmig attended the first case review meeting with WorkMed staff and representatives from the City's third party administrator. The purpose of the meetings is to review the status of the employee's recovery from work related injury and to consider different options to assist the employee's return to work. The plan is to hold the case reviews on a monthly basis.
- Ray Lussier met with the committee working on the emergency planning exercise involving a potential dam failure.
- Ray Lussier is conducting Job Tasks Analysis for the Public Services Department specific to some of the parks maintenance functions.

ICT

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- Friday PM – We were notified around 7PM that the network connection to Engine 5 had failed. Remote troubleshooting failed to identify the problem. We arrived on scene around 11PM and determined that it was an Oxford Networks issue. By that time it was too late to bring the on-call tech down from Bangor, so we agreed to meet at 10AM Saturday. By 10:45, Oxford Networks had resolved the problem.
- The Animal Licensing Module was installed into the MUNIS Financial software. This will allow counter staff to better integrate the annual dog licensing with the financials.
- Staff worked with a technician from Cardinal Software to upgrade the TicketTrak parking enforcement software at APD.
- Staff worked to install print accounting codes on the copier/printer in the Engineering/Planning/Assessing/Economic Development area. This will allow for better tracking of expenses by each department.
- Met with Al Manoian to discuss the use of GIS for economic and community development, and specifically for form-based code discussions and presentations. Developed a preliminary task list.
- Met with Lewiston and AVCOG to review available data layers for regional Emergency Management mapping
- Final agreement with Lewiston on combined geodatabase structure for base mapping layers. We will be working together over the next several weeks to migrate our data into the new, combined, structure.
- Finalized specifications for joint planimetric mapping purchase with Lewiston and James Sewall. This project will update our base mapping using the newly acquired (soon to be delivered) aerial photos.
- Attended meeting of Gulf Island Dam Local Planning Group and developed list of mapping requirements for emergency exercise in November.
- Held meeting to discuss mapping of Oak Hill Cemetery. We are working with an Auburn Middle School humanities teacher; the Maine Old Cemeteries Association and possibly the Androscoggin Historical Society, to set up a 7th grade field trip to the cemetery, in October – just in time for Halloween! Although still in discussion and development, the teacher's plans include combining cemetery mapping and research into the 7th and 8th grade geography and humanities curriculum as part of a 2-year project. Over the next few weeks we will be working to inventory resources and put together a finalized project plan.

Ice Arena

- CONSTRUCTION UPDATE:
 - Exterior Mezzanine Framing and Drywall is completed in Rink 1 and 2
 - Rink 1 concrete slab was poured Sept 12th (28 days to boards and glass)
 - Installation of cold floor piping has begun in Rink 2
 - Masonry Walls are complete
 - Wall painting continues
 - Interior Walls, electrical, mechanical and plumbing work continue
 - Rough plumbing is being finalized, awaiting fixture installation
- 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:
 - \$98,500 in annual sponsorships has been secured.

- \$12,500 in contracts pending, \$45,000 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 continue with interested parties, initial contract conversations have begun.
- Conversations have begun for those interested in concessions operation, the development of an RFP for concessions and lounge services is being developed.
- Lease Agreement for ProShop space is still being finalized. Details of lease terms are being negotiated. Final review and execution is expected next week..
- Cabling, Telcomm, and data layouts are being finalized and we are working on the build out of technological needs of the facility.
- Initial scheduling has been completed through March, staff is continuing to execute “no less than” contracts for rental agreements with primary tenants and partners.
- Marketing plans continue to adjust awaiting naming rights partner, website development has begun based upon content and programming, awaiting design rollout with Naming Rights sponsorship.

Planning and Permitting

- I am pleased to announce that Douglas Greene, Planner and Registered Landscape Architect, has accepted the City Planner position. Doug has substantial experience and a great record track on neighborhood plans, multi-modal projects, greenways along the Erie Canal, site plan and development review, urban design and in-fill and economic development. Doug is scheduled to start work on Monday September 30th.
- The Planning Board discussed downtown redevelopment, zoning, urban form and opportunities for an improved urban lifestyle at their September 10th meeting. The discussion was kicked off with a presentation by Alan Manoian, Economic Development Specialist. Councilors Gerry and Hayes attended and added value to the discussion. We are discussing a game plan for moving this forward and hope to continue to build momentum and excitement for downtown redevelopment and urban living. We will be discussing technical aspects of modifying ordinances to allow maximum use and investment on private property while creating a great public realm. We all have downtown or village areas that we have visited where we can picture ourselves there just enjoying the space and walking between shopping or eatery destinations. Many of us look forward to our next trip there. The goal is to make downtown Auburn one of those places for as many people as possible.
- Code cases are steady with 23 new code requests, 18 requests closed and 7 new active code cases carrying over for next month. Construction permitting and inspections have likely peaked for the year and code case numbers related to heating are expected to rise soon based on seasonal fluctuations. We will be holding an interdepartmental meeting with Fire, Police, Code and General Assistance to review no-heat case protocols and update shelter and assistance summaries for people affected by this problem.
- We will be replacing a few leased street lights with City owned lights in the next week or so to verify a process that works for the City and CMP. Now that funding for the larger street light replacement has been approved we will be working to update exact costs, options and process with CMP. When options and costs are finalized we will bring those back to the Council with a Staff recommendation for a final decision. We have been watching a proposed bill that may affect how this works and we have been communication with Senator John Cleveland who not only represents our region, but is also the Chair of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee.

Recreation

- Interviews for the vacant Recreation Specialist position were completed.
- The Adult Men's softball league lower division playoffs were completed on Monday. Middle division playoffs conclude Wednesday night and Upper division playoffs wrap up Thursday evening.
- The 7-8 grade football program will play their second regular season game against Augusta on Saturday.
- The 5-6 grade football programs will play in the third week of their season against Lewiston and Brunswick on Saturday and Sunday.
- The 3-4 grade football programs will play in the third week of their season against Lewiston on Saturday and Sunday.
- Registrations for Pee Wee soccer closed last week with a total of 69 children registered in the program. The program was set to begin on Sunday but was postponed due to inclement weather.
- Player evaluations for Flag Football took place on Wednesday. During evaluations, players perform basic drills that help coaches assess individual skill levels. Currently, a total of 28 players are registered for the program.
- Staff attended a debriefing meeting in Lewiston on Monday for the Great Falls Balloon Festival.
- Staff attended the monthly Advisory Board meeting on Wednesday evening.
- Staff attended the PAL Board of Directors meeting on Thursday.