



# The Biddeford Beat

CITY OF BIDDEFORD WEEKLY NEWSLETTER | Friday, April 13, 2018 *Volume 18.15*

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Monday**      **April 16, 2018**  
City Hall **CLOSED** – Patriots’ Day
  
- Tuesday**      **April 17, 2018**  
5:00 PM      Finance Committee Meeting *(live)*  
6:00 PM      City Council Meeting *(live)*
  
- Wednesday**      **April 18, 2018**  
6:00 PM      Planning Board *(live)*
  
- Thursday**      **April 19, 2018**  
5:30 PM      Budget Committee Meeting *(live)*  
7:00 PM      Conservation Commission  
*(2<sup>nd</sup> floor Conference Room)*
  
- Thursday**      **April 26, 2018**  
5:30 PM      Budget Committee Meeting *(live)*
  
- Tuesday**      **May 1, 2018**  
5:00 PM      Finance Committee Meeting *(live)*  
6:00 PM      City Council Meeting *(live)*  
7:00 PM      Public Hearing on Budget – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading *(live)*

[Click here](#) for the full calendar

## Thank you Biddeford!

A week ago, a request was sent out to the Biddeford community for donations (small and large) to benefit families displaced by the recent fire on Hill Street. Thanks to community members, local businesses, agencies and neighboring communities, you came together through the generous donations of clothing and household items.

City staff and volunteers sorted and organized the donated items in preparation for a “donation benefit” which was held on Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup> and again on Sunday April 15<sup>th</sup> at a designated location for residents affected by the fire to have the opportunity to go through all donations and take what they needed and wanted.

The outpouring of everyone’s collective generosity was truly appreciated! The overwhelming response to the call exemplified the true spirit of Biddeford!

For those who would still like to help, you may certainly give monetary donations either by dropping off cash or a check in the City Clerk’s Office or by going to the Go Fund Me fundraiser page:  
<https://www.gofundme.com/biddefordhillstreetfire>

## Downtown Parking Survey

Many years have passed since the City conducted a comprehensive review of its parking policies. The downtown has seen many changes since then. Over the last few years, the City has invested many hours into understanding the parking issues in the community; not only to meet the needs for today but to position the community for a better tomorrow. As part of the City Council’s review and potential changes to the current parking regulations, we are asking for your help. A survey consisting of 10 questions has been created in order to understand the parking needs that your business and/or properties have. Your answers will be considered as staff prepares recommendations for changes in the current parking regulations. The City Council will be formally reviewing the recommendations in the very near future.

If you would like to fill out a downtown parking survey, you may obtain one by contacting Brad Favreau, the Biddeford Economic Development Coordinator at [Brad.Favreau@Biddefordmaine.org](mailto:Brad.Favreau@Biddefordmaine.org). Surveys need to be returned to Brad Favreau by **April 20, 2018**. Responses along with updated data and previous reports will be considered as the city prepares recommended changes to the current parking regulations. For further information about work related to Biddeford’s parking program, please see: <http://www.biddefordmaine.org/parking>. The site also offers an opportunity to provide further input beyond the questions found on the survey as well as links to 11 studies or reports related to parking issues. We appreciate your input!



Check out the Heart of Biddeford’s website:  
<http://heartofbiddeford.org>  
for more information on community events.

If you would like to receive email subscriptions to the Biddeford Beat, please [click here](#).

Thank you for reading!

## **Parking Policy: Important Decisions for Biddeford's Story**

As has been expressed a number of times, downtowns are important in many ways. They are the heart of a community, and serve as centers for services, employment and civic interaction. They create a community's identity, to its residents and to people throughout the region.

Downtowns are complex; they have an organic pulse of their own. They are an ever-changing organism, a term defined as a complex structure of interdependent elements whose relations are determined by their functions as a whole. Our downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods grew up together, driven by their relationship between the available work within the proud mills along the mighty Saco River and those workers that lived in those neighborhoods.

Our downtown is not a series of independent blocks; it never has been and it never will be. The mills (and the so-called mill district) are as much part of the fabric of our community as any other iconic symbols; from the 'Tiger Pride' to our fierce independent work ethic. While intellectually we may separate the mill and the downtown, we know in our hearts that such separation does not exist.

The constant changes in a downtown are usually steady, quiet and daily. However, Biddeford experienced a rapid decline when the downside of the private sector set its invisible economic hand upon a downtown. The cruel economics of the marketplace reality is seen quickly. As the great manufacturing era faded, the balance of the downtown and neighborhoods struggled.

Like every living organism, businesses constantly change their space, their offerings and their service levels. This keeps the downtown experience fresh and appealing. New offerings come with a renewed sense of optimism, enthusiasm and belief in themselves and the location which they will toil.

The unfortunate reality is that capitalism is not without risk. There will be businesses that will not make it for a variety of reasons. Whether it be because of market forces or changes in an owner's personal life that dictate a decision to close, there will always be business turnover in a capitalistic society.

We also know that there will be another person with a dream and belief their hard work and commitment to step up to offer another way to succeed. Like the very fabric of what it means to be Biddeford Proud, they will work tirelessly.

The economic reality is we know that our collective success is better when our downtown is diverse and thriving. While we may want to believe that we can live independently, we know the quality of life is better when everyone in our downtown has an equal opportunity to succeed. Our grandparents and our parents knew it. They lived during the era when our community was the envy of others; when our downtown was the principle source of the envy. If you listen attentively to those that understand downtowns, you will hear the steady buzz about Biddeford's re-emergence...all driven by the ever evolving, steady, and quiet daily changes.

Unfortunately, it does require you to listen attentively. As a chirping spring bird is drowned out by the noises of our daily routines, so is the steady evolving buzz drowned out by the vocal fears of opposition. Our downtown is a story of the

underdog fighting to regain its rightful place. The story is one of a collective community that handed the 'trash town' bully its final defeat. A story of how a community of hard working citizens that believed in itself never gave up even when the journey was hard, the goal seemed distant, and the non-believers challenged every step.

Downtown are complex. Therefore, public policy is complex. Parking policy is complex. Encouraging the balance between residents, the customers that generate revenue for the businesses and their employees is complex. Determining the costs of parking and the equitable way to distribute those costs is complex. The process of making these decisions has many different avenues to a conclusion. Each traveler will choose their own starting point and view the path to a conclusion with a different lens. It is the ultimate responsibility of the City Council to consider these diverse perspectives to make the tough public policy decisions in the best interest of the community.

As a starting point in the public policy discussion, the Council tasked staff with building an economic model to evaluate whether a parking garage could be built without requiring property taxes to support the costs. Those costs not only included the parking garage but all costs associated with parking in the downtown. An interactive model was built and shared with the Council on Jan 30<sup>th</sup>. The results (printout) of the spreadsheet has been available on the city web site

[https://legistarweb-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/attachment/pdf/155793/201802\\_ParkingProformaWorksheet.pdf](https://legistarweb-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/attachment/pdf/155793/201802_ParkingProformaWorksheet.pdf) for some time.

The City has received a request for the spreadsheet to be made available to the public in a format that the interactivity could be used. While compliance with the FOAA requirements was met with the original posting, the City is now proud to be offering a functional version of the spreadsheet. You can download it by clicking [here](#). All aspects of the spreadsheet have been locked to prevent any changes, *except for those sections that were intended to be changed by the user in order to fully utilize the interactivity of the spreadsheet.* This should prevent unintended deletions or additions that could impact the functionality of the spreadsheet.

Please feel free to use the model for your evaluation purposes. The complexities of downtown public parking policy are reflected within the model. If you have questions about those complexities, we encourage you to reach out to my office for clarification.



James Bennett,  
City Manager