



The Biddeford Beat

CITY OF BIDDEFORD WEEKLY NEWSLETTER | Tuesday, February 27, 2018 *Volume 18.8*

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

6:00 PM – Conservation Commission
(School Outreach committee) Meeting
(2nd floor Conf. room)

Friday, March 2, 2018

8:30 AM – Economic Development Commission
(2nd floor conference room)

Monday, March 5, 2018

6:30 PM – Downtown Development Commission
(2nd floor Conf. room)

Tuesday, March 6, 2018

4:00 PM – Community Center Ad Hoc
Committee Mtg (Council Chambers)
5:00 PM – Capital Projects Committee (2nd fl conf rm)
5:00 PM – Finance Committee Meeting (live)
6:00 PM – City Council Meeting (live)

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

6:00 PM – Planning Board (live)

Thursday, March 8, 2018

5:30 PM – Budget Committee Workshop

Monday, March 12, 2018

6:30 PM – Policy Committee meeting (live)

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

5:30 PM – City Council Workshop – live
7:00 PM – Solid Waste Committee meeting (PWD)

To view updates of upcoming meetings,
please [click here](#) for the full calendar.

Upcoming Caucuses:

The Democratic Party Caucus is scheduled for Sunday, March 4th at 1:00 p.m. at the J. Richard Martin Community Center Cafeteria. The Voter Registrar will be there from 12:30 to 1:00 p.m. to accept new registrations and party enrollment.

The Green Independent Party Caucus has not yet been scheduled.

Stay up to date on events:

<http://heartofbiddeford.org/>



heart of biddeford
a main street maine community

Parking Ban Hotline (207) 571-0616

**[Click here](#) to view Biddeford's
Downtown Parking Map.**

To receive email subscriptions to the Biddeford Beat, [click here](#). Thank you for reading!

Local Newspapers File Lawsuit

Last week, the *Biddeford Journal* and the *Courier* newspapers filed a lawsuit against the City. The basic claim in the lawsuit is that the City, through the recent enactment of an ordinance, is trying to impact (or cease) their ability to independently provide news. Like all lawsuits filed against the City, the direct result is that the cost to defend the lawsuit is paid for by citizens. Since the citizens will be impacted by the lawsuit, the City would like to provide the circumstances resulting in the ordinance.

The City Council enacted the ordinance to protect the privacy rights of Biddeford citizens and to avoid the accumulation of unwanted materials that might signal that a home is unoccupied. It also seeks to prevent littering. The ordinance is directed not only to the newspapers that have filed the lawsuit but to anyone who delivers unsolicited materials to a property more than twice a year. The ordinance only restricts the delivery of newspapers or written materials to a home after the property owner has said he or she does not want it.

At issue is the two newspapers performance as it relates to the delivery of the free papers that are hand tossed onto private property throughout the community. For many years, residents have complained about the papers. Many have asked that they not be delivered; yet the papers still show up every week. Any papers that are not picked up by citizens are supposed to be picked up by the newspaper company; most times they are not. With nearly the same consistency of an annual holiday, city officials (not only from Biddeford but also from our neighboring communities) meet with the newspaper business owners to address the concerns. Assurances are given, promises made, and improvements are temporarily made. Unfortunately, the promised behavior is short lived and the cycle continues with growing frustration.

Last fall, elected leadership held several public meetings trying to come up with a reasonable ordinance that would require two simple things:

1. That newspapers and other material not be delivered to locations when a citizen previously has said they do not want them, and;

2. The companies must return to pick up any uncollected papers left on the ground for 72 hours.

These seem relatively simple things to expect. We would expect no less from our own families or our neighbors. For papers that want to be your 'neighborhood' resource, we don't believe the request is unreasonable or difficult.

Upon passing the ordinance, the City was contacted by the newspaper companies to ask if we would work with them in order to develop a reasonable solution to the issue. The City Council considered their request and agreed to not implement the ordinance for an additional two months. This would allow the newspaper companies (and the national attorneys) to provide suggestions to the City, which they assured us they would do.

Despite several requests by city officials and assurances from the local publisher, the City did not get any suggestions. The two months went by without any specific suggestions on how to modify the ordinance. Ironically, there were some that speculated that the only solution the newspaper companies would accept is a complete repeal of the ordinance; leaving the City back with the old system of 'trust us' we will get it right this time. Unfortunately, more than a decade of broken promises and failed performance led to the implementation of the ordinance in the first place.

It is clearly unfortunate that the newspaper companies couldn't find a way to just do what we are sure they would want their own neighbors to do (and what they tell us they are doing). Please don't throw something onto our private homes after we tell you we don't want it. Please come pick up anything you throw in our yard that we haven't picked up after three days so that we can keep our yard clean and avoid an appearance that we are not home. For many years city officials asked that the newspaper companies respect this common courtesy request. For whatever reason the newspaper companies couldn't come up with a way to do that. They shouldn't now be surprised that there is an ordinance in place that will create consequences (fines) for not being a reasonable neighbor. The City will be both prudent and pragmatic in its approach to the litigation but will enforce the ordinance so that its citizens' desires and privacy rights are protected.