



The Biddeford Beat

CITY OF BIDDEFORD WEEKLY NEWSLETTER | TUESDAY APR 25, 2017

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A1

FY18 Budget Review Documents Live

The municipal budget as submitted to the City of Biddeford's Budget Committee is available to public for review and download on City website, [click here](#).

Files are available individually in order to easily locate and access specific budget information.

To view Budget Committee meetings previously televised and recorded please visit biddefordmaine.org/video.

Recreation Recap & Registration

The Recreation Department just finished another school break with trips and activities for youth in grades K-5. (A2)

Save the Date: Ribbon Cutting

Laconia Plaza ribbon cutting on Thu. May 11th at Noon at Pepperell Mill Campus. (A2)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tue Apr 25

6:00pm - Strategic Planning Committee
(City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room)

7:00pm - School Committee Meeting
(BHS Little Theater)

Wed Apr 26

5:00pm - Personnel Committee
(City Hall Council Chambers)

6:00pm - Budget Committee
(City Hall Council Chambers)

Thu Apr 27

6:00pm - Budget Committee
(City Hall Council Chambers)

For Full Calendar, [click here](#)

FY18 Budget: Data, Statistics, Facts and Implications

By: James Bennett, City Manager

My first service in local government was in 1982. Over the next 35 years, I saw many changes. While most have been good, a current trend is very disturbing. At least at the national level, it feels like we have gotten to the point where society has given into the expectation that political 'spin' no longer needs to have any basis of truth. Instead of insisting on integrity, it appears that citizens have thrown up their collective hands and given up.

Is that trend heading into our state and local discourse? While there are emerging signs that suggest that it could be, I hope not. Universally, I believe most citizens understand that their local government is the one that affects their daily lives more so than the other levels. It is arguable that the local decisions are therefore more important.

The Biddeford City staff is like all others I have served with, during my career. They pride themselves in being outside of the political arena. Hired because of their professional abilities and ethical standards, playing the game of political 'spin' completely undermines their reputations and effectiveness. Simply put, staff does not participate in the game. Actually, staff is more like the referees in this game; handing out the yellow cards with the correct information when the participants want to mislead the public.

The proposed FY18 budget is one that is asking the community to have a collective dialogue on several different difficult decisions. It asks the City Council to reflect on the current budgetary trends in the City, understand them and determine the sustainability of that path. Most importantly, it asks the Council to evaluate if changes are needed and if so, how much change in direction should occur in this year. It is about making investments today to prevent expenses tomorrow. These are high-level discussions that require honesty and seriousness of purpose.

To help clarify this point, here are a couple of examples of the budget dialogue that will occur within the Council Chambers. Last year, citizens supported just under \$6,000,000 in bonds for roadwork. Like many communities, as the state took funding away from local governments, Biddeford joined other municipalities and temporarily placed some of the infrastructure investments on hold. Communities were told that these raids by state government were temporary until the state recovered. While the economy has improved, the state has failed to restore the funding. (A2)

(Continued from AI Recreation)

Friday, April 14th:

- Funworld in New Hampshire.

Tuesday, April 18th

- Hilltop Fun Center
- Chuck E. Cheese (a kid favorite!)

Wednesday, April 19th

- Urban Air Indoor Trampoline and Jokers

Thursday, April 20th

- Spare Time Bowling and Summit Adventures

Friday April 21st

- Happy Wheels and Smitty's Cinema.

The program runs during the Christmas, February and April school break with trips changing each session.

Registration is open for summer camps:
Safari and Outdoor Summer Bonanza Summer Camps: grades K-8
Caravan and Convoy Camps: Similar to vacation camps (two one-week programs offering daily field trips).

www.biddefordrec.com

(Continued from AI FY18 Budget by James Bennett)

To be very clear, state spending is higher than ever. Instead of restoring those revenues locally to ease the burden of the property taxes, the funds are being used for other state programs.

Today, our leaders must decide between obtaining more funding from the operating budget for things like roads, city buildings and fields or continue to borrow money for these projects. More funding will require one of three things to occur:

1. Spending in other areas need to be correspondingly reduced.
2. The property taxes have to go up.
3. A combination of the two.

Another example is the decision to expand the pre-K program in the school. The proposed school budget will expand this service to our children. It will cost more money this year, but according to the state educational budget formula, the city, next year, will receive additional new revenue to more than pay for the program. There are also strong indications that the long-term savings is substantial when a community invests in pre-K. While the school budget is coming in flat, the question for the Council is whether this is the best time to implement the program or, should funds be used to offset other costs or reduce the property tax burden.

These are just two examples of many others. I hope that you can see there is no 'right' answer to these questions. However, the answers selected will affect the community in different ways beyond just financially.

I began this article discussing the emerging trend of citizens beginning to accept less than honesty from the federal government. In today's world of 'fake news' and social media, it is realizing how citizens may be misled. Simply taking two facts and connecting them into a way that sounds logical is tempting to believe, even when that connection is lawfully impossible. Some may promote this practice because they simply do not understand. For others, I suspect that it is with malice intent, hoping to mislead for personal gain.

Through the process of the budget discussions, staff will continue to play its role as advisors and the political 'spin' referees. When someone misunderstands, we will clarify the information. When someone misleads, we will provide the yellow card with the correct information. At times, this can be an uncomfortable role for staff, especially when the misunderstandings are sometimes among the employers. Therefore, it is the one of the major leadership responsibilities that we have during these important discussions. To that end, we will continue to provide specific information about the significant issues.

Please feel free to contact a member of the city staff or myself if you have any questions that you may have.

Please join us for our



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
for
Laconia Plaza

Now a part of Biddeford's beautiful RiverWalk

Thursday, May 11, 2017
12 noon to 1 p.m.

Biddeford Mill District



City of Biddeford 205 Main Street Biddeford, Maine 04005