



The Biddeford Beat

DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUE

If you haven't been in downtown this summer, there have been lots of changes; and still more improvements are underway. Below are a couple of pictures of the new 'old-style,' traffic-calming cobblestone that is being installed. Every one of the cobblestones come directly from the street. The stones have been placed to primarily slow down traffic and for visual accents. We encourage you to visit and see the beautification of our Main Street.

Record Year for Building

Code Enforcement had a record year. Here are some of the statistics for the most recent city budget year FY17 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017)

- 562 permits issued
- \$638,336.14 building permit fees collected
- 489 electrical permits issued

(continued A2)



UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tues July 11

- 5:00 PM - Finance Committee
- 6:00 PM - City Council
(City Hall Council Chambers)
- 5:45 PM - Personnel Committee
(City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room)

Wed July 12

- 4:00 PM - Historical Preservation
(City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room)
- 6:00 PM - Board of Appeals
(City Hall Council Chambers)

Thurs July 13

- 8:00 AM - Downtown Task Force
(Mayor's Office)

For Full Calendar, [click here](#)

FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) Q & A

Here are a few commonly asked Q &A about the freedom of information act, commonly referred to as FOIA or FOAA

Q: What is FOIA or FOAA?

A: FOIA refers to the federal freedom of information act of 1967; FOAA refers to Maine's version called the freedom of access act. Used interchangeably, these laws reinforce that at the heart of a democratic society is the right of citizens to have access to information concerning government activities. Most actions of local government are available via FOIA; however, the law does provide exceptions to protect legitimate government activities and the privacy rights of citizens.

(continued A2)

Lobster Bowl Parade

Saturday, July 15

1:00 PM



All of your favorite Kora Shrine Units will be in the City to support their annual Lobster Bowl Classic. Parade begins on Lincoln Street, proceed to Main St and proceed to Saco Island. This will be a rare opportunity to see all of the Shrine units at one time. [Learn more](#)

Record Year (continued from A1)

- 489 electrical permits issued
- \$65,530.49 in electrical permit fees collected
- 229 plumbing permits issued
- \$25,261.25 in plumbing fees collected

In addition, the City started an aggressive apartment inspection program to ensure all units are safe for tenants. Unlike other communities, Biddeford is not charging the apartment building owners for the inspections. Below are the statistics since the program began a year ago:

- 487 apartment buildings received notices
- 325 apartment buildings inspected
- 170 apartment buildings have received second notices

Biddeford Historical Society

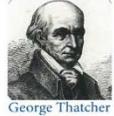
Celebrate the 200 Anniversary of James Monroe Coming to Biddeford

At the Meetinghouse on Meetinghouse Road



1817 - 2017
200 year anniversary
James Monroe

James Monroe 5th President
Monroe Doctrine



George Thatcher
Congressman
Supreme Court Judge

Come and learn about the first President to visit Biddeford.
His meeting with George Thatcher.
Guest speakers, Tour of Meetinghouse, Free food.

July 15

11:00 to 2:00

BiddefordHistoricalSociety.org

For email subscriptions, [click here](#)

For questions or comments:

t. 207.284.9313 e. newsletter@biddefordmaine.org

Thank you for reading.

FOIA Q & A (continued from A1)

Q: How Do Policy Decisions and FOIA Interact?

A: The City believes that all citizens benefit from receiving as much information as possible. In the last two years, it has worked hard to increase the 'transparency' of the decisions that are being made. All policy decisions of local government (the ones that have the most direct impact on citizens) have to be made in public. Each of those actions must happen at a public meeting of the body that has the authority to make the decisions. All public meetings are noticed on the City's website. Agendas, support information about the actions to be considered and minutes of the meetings can be found on the website. Many meetings are televised and streamed live. These meetings can also be replayed from the City's website. Given that all major decisions are made in a public forum, use of FOIA requests to obtain information is seldom needed or used.

Q: Can I View FOIA Requests?

A: Of course. Those requests are as much part of the public record as other city documents. The City actually posts all FOIA requests and the responses on its website. If one person wanted the information, then there might be others who would like that information as well. You can view FOIA requests [here](#) (There are over 75 FOIA requests since February 2016).

Q: Understanding Time is Money, As a Citizen, Am I Paying for These Requests?

A: The answer is yes and no. State law requires the City to provide the answers to any FOIA request for free, if the work can be done in under 2 hours. Anything over 2 hours requires the requestor to pay for the actual and reasonable costs.

Q: In Reviewing Some of the Requests, I Notice a Lot of Emails Are Included. With So Many Emails, It Must Have Taken Longer Than Two Hours?

A: On average, the City receives between 90,000 to 100,000 emails per month. About 3,000 are rejected as spam or for other security reasons. Employees and officials send out an average of 16,000 to 17,000 per month. The City retains six months of emails. All totaled that is nearly three quarters of a million emails to search per request. When the City receives a request, a key word(s) search is done based on the request, which screens all these stored emails. The results of the search are checked manually to make sure there are no emails that are confidential. Often this process takes the full 2 hours.

Q: If the Really Important Decisions (Policy) Are Made in Public, FOIA's Seem Unnecessary. Why Are They Made?

A: That is a question that cannot be answered with certainty. It was not that long ago when most Maine communities would very rarely get any FOIA requests. When they did receive a FOIA request, it was usually made by a law firm that was involved in litigation. More recently, some communities have found an increase in requests from self-described community activists.