



The Biddeford Beat

CITY OF BIDDEFORD WEEKLY NEWSLETTER | MONDAY, July 17, 2017

Volume 17.23

A1

CITY CONTINUES POSITIVE GROWTH:

Over \$56 Million in New Value

The final numbers are in from the Assessor. Once again, the City has seen positive growth. The total new value in the community exceeded \$56,000,000 since last year. In the downtown alone, the new value was \$15,426,700.

There are three parts to the new value figure that have to be considered to identify the net new value and impact on taxes. First, 3,368 homeowners qualify for the homestead exemption. In 2018, the exemption went up by \$5,000. This eliminated \$16,815,000 of value that was taxable last year.

Frequent readers of the 'Beat' realize that some of the property is in a TIF; a process that allows the City to protect the taxpayers from the negative impacts of state funding formulas. This year, the real properties in the TIF also increased in value by \$15,179,400.

Finally, the net value for the remaining properties increased by \$24,158,600. Using the current tax rate of \$19.86, this new value generated \$479,789.80 in new property taxes.

All totaled, the value of the City actually increased by \$56,153,000. The current trend is expected to continue, forecasting positive results next year as well.

CITY HONORS RETIREE



Captain Norman Melancon retired from the Biddeford Fire Department after 42 years of service. The ceremonies included recognition at the July 11th Council meeting and a ceremony at the fire station on July 12th. Capt. Melancon began his career in 1975, was promoted to lieutenant in 1983 and captain in 1988.

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Tax Assessments: Common Q & A's

Here are a few commonly asked Q &A about tax assessment, local valuation and asking prices.

Q: How is the value determined for my property?

A: Every Maine community is required to establish a value for all real estate in the community. This is done by the Tax Assessor. The Assessor job is to establish values on all properties in the community in order to make the property taxes paid fair. In other words, values are placed on properties so that similar properties pay a similar amount of taxes.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tues July 18

5:00 PM – Finance Committee
6:00 PM – City Council
(City Hall Council Chambers)

Wed July 19

6:00 PM – Planning Board
(City Hall Council Chambers)

Thurs July 20

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

For Full Calendar, [click here](#)

Questions/Comments:

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Retiree – Normand Melancon

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Surrounded by co-workers, firefighters from other municipalities, past retirees, friends, family, and city officials, Capt. Melancon was the guest of honor at a ceremony held at the Biddeford Fire Station on Alfred Street.



After an opportunity to meet with attendees and enjoy a brief meal, Captain Melancon cut the cake.



Later, Chief Scott Gagne and other members of the fire department offered comments on Capt. Melancon's, career, work ethic, and friendship.



The ceremony also included two long-held traditions. The first involved presentation of an American flag that has flown over the station for the past week.



The flag carries with it the activities of the station during its period in service and represents a "piece of the station."

Finally, Capt. Melancon received a ceremonial last ride from the station to his home in a fire truck.



It is clear by the turnout and the heartfelt words offered by attendees that Capt. Melancon is a valued member of the Biddeford Fire Department and shaped the careers of many current and past firefighters. The City honors his 42 year service.

**PROMOTIONS ACCOMPANY
FIRE SERVICE RETIREMENT:**

Capt. Justin Cooper & Lt. Robert Lang

With the retirement of Capt. Melancon, two firefighters received promotions during a swearing-in ceremony at the July 11th Council meeting.

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Assessments Q & A (continued from A1)

Q: What Does the Assessor Use to Determine Values?

A: The values on properties are established by the Assessor by looking at properties that have sold in the last year or so. All sales are initially evaluated. Any sales that are not considered ‘arm’s length’ transactions are eliminated. Any sale that is under distress or is sold to a relative is not considered an arm’s length transaction.

Q: Is There a Difference Between the City Assessment and a Private Appraisal?

A: Yes. When a person gets an appraisal for their property, the appraiser is determining what the value of that property is as of the date of the appraisal. The property tax assessor uses data that is older, often several years old. As long as all properties are assessed using the same method **and** there has not been a substantial change in the market, the property tax burden is equalized for all property taxpayers

Q: How Does the Asking Price of Property Impact Taxes ?

A: Asking price is irrelevant to taxes. As we shared earlier, only an honest sale of property that has occurred has an impact. The Assessor looks backwards at sales to determine the value to place on property for the purpose of ‘equalizing the tax burden’.

Q: Recently a Citizen Compared Taxes Paid by City Officials’ on Their Property to Homes For Sale in Other Communities Based on Asking Prices. Was That Valuable?

A: A comparison was done and provided to the City Council during the budget process. The purpose of the comparison was to show how high taxes are in Biddeford. The flaw in the comparison is using the asking price of a property to determine a like property in another community. The asking price does not reflect what the home is assessed for in the other community. The City Manager used the same approach the other way around. That comparison showed how flawed the process is. To further illustrate the point, a property in Biddeford recently sold for \$6,000,000. Locally, we had it assessed for \$3,000,000. All homes in other communities assessed \$6,000,000 will have a higher tax burden than a \$3,000,000 Biddeford assessed home.

Q: Where Could I Learn More?

A: Several resources are available. A good place to start would be on the Maine Municipal Association’s (MMA) website. You can reach it [here](#). Start by reading *Guide to Property Taxes*.

Promotions (Continued from A2)



Lt. Justin Cooper (left) was promoted to captain and Robert Lang (right) was promoted to lieutenant.

Both Justin Cooper and Robert Lang have served with the



Biddeford Fire Department since 2004. Captain Cooper has served as a lieutenant since 2010. The promotion ceremony involved a swearing in by the city clerk and pinning of the shields by their respective wives. We wish them success in their new positions. The ceremony is available for viewing [here](#).

Information Meeting



Saulnier Development is holding a public information meeting on July 18th at 5:30 pm at TA Library, 438 Main Street in Saco to share info on a proposal for the undeveloped waterfront area on Saco Island.

Biddeford residents may be interested in attending to hear about traffic patterns and other potential impacts to the lower Main St. area of Biddeford.

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For questions or comments:
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Thank you for reading.