



The Biddeford Beat

CITY OF BIDDEFORD WEEKLY NEWSLETTER | Monday, October 30, 2017

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A1

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday, October 31:

HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

Please watch out for children and families out trick or treating!

Wednesday, November 1:

6:00 PM – Planning Board Meeting (live)

Thursday, November 2:

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

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM: Extended Clerk's Office Hours for Absentee Voting

Monday, November 6:

6:30 PM – Downtown Development Commission
(Second floor conference room)

Tuesday, November 7:

7:00AM – 8:00 PM – **ELECTION DAY**

Voting takes place at the Tiger Gym at Biddeford High School located on Maplewood Avenue.

For Full Calendar, [click here](#)

Election Information:

If you are planning to vote by absentee ballot, please plan to do so by or on Thursday, November 2, 2017.

On Thursday, November 2, 2017
(5:00 – 7:00 PM)

the City Clerk's office will have
Extended Clerk's Office Hours
For Absentee Voting.

Per State Law, the City Clerk's Office will NOT be conducting absentee voting after 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 2, 2017.

You will NOT be able to absentee vote on Friday, November 3, 2017 and/or Monday, November 6, 2017

Unless a special circumstance exists.

Voting will take place on Thursday, November 2, 2017 at the

Tiger Gym at Biddeford High School

Located on Maplewood Avenue.

For email subscriptions, [click here](#)

Thank you for reading!

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History of Biddeford's J Richard Martin Community Center



Biddeford High School, circa 1890



In last week's Biddeford Beat issue (v. 17.36) we reported on the boiler failure and current heating system issues at the Community Center. In the next few issues of the *Beat* we will publish different information regarding the J Richard Martin Community Center. Today's article will focus on the building's history and name sake.

The J Richard Martin Community Center is located at 189 Alfred Street. The original building was constructed in 1888 and began as the Biddeford High School with the first graduating class in "1890." Later, the building became the Biddeford Junior High School. The front part of the school was built in 1888, however it was rebuilt in 1893 after a fire. The rear section and gymnasium was built in 1925 and dedicated on March 12, 1926. The architecture of the building has been described as *Romanesque Revival* with interior baseboards and casings made of maple, oak flooring with exterior brick and stone design known as *corbel* (where the upper brick juts out over the lower brick). This was not your typical school building design for the times, however the design was by H.G. Wadlin who also designed Thornton Academy.

By 1993, the building was 105 years old, and in disrepair as it sat vacant for several years with the exception of the gymnasium which was used by the local boxing club. The City of Biddeford decided to renovate the building and convert it into the Community Center with dedicated space for a Senior Center and Adult Learning Center. The renovation project was made possible through federal and state grants, city funds, donations and fundraisers. During this time, a Biddeford City Councilor named J Richard Martin promoted the renovation project and donated his time as a consulting engineer. Councilor Martin was an early and strong promoter of revitalizing the building and advocated for the restoration during a time of economic difficulties. The community center would be renamed the J. Richard Martin Community Center in his honor shortly after he passed away in 1998 at the age of 72. At the time of his death, he was a current City Councilor under the Donna Dion administration. J Richard Martin had also served on the council during the tenure of Mayors James Gratello and Bonita Belanger.

A news story dated October 1887 described the structure during its construction as a "decidedly handsome building" and promised to "be a positive addition to the architecture of the city, outshining anything now in existence and comparing favorably with other buildings of its kind in the state". That description still rings true today, 129 years later.