



The Biddeford Beat



CITY OF BIDDEFORD WEEKLY NEWSLETTER | Monday, December 18, 2017

Volume 17.44

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday, December 19:

6:00 PM – City Council Goal Setting Session

Thursday, December 21:

6:30 PM – Airport Commission (live)

7:00 PM – Conservation Commission (2nd floor conf. rm.)

Friday, December 22:

City Hall will be Closing at Noon

Monday, December 25:

City Hall will be Closed

Monday, January 1:

City Hall will be Closed

Tuesday, January 2:

5:00 PM – Finance Committee Meeting (live)

6:00 PM – City Council Meeting (live)

Wednesday, January 3:

Planning Board Meeting (live)

For Full Calendar and to check on any changes of upcoming meetings, please [click here](#).

Snow Ban Hotline

(207) 571-0616

[CLICK HERE](#)

To view the Biddeford Downtown Parking Map

Save the Date!

WinterFest

February 2, 2018 @ 9:00 am - February 4, 2018 @ 5:00 pm

Details are coming together for another exciting weekend of snow-related fun (plus, great indoor events for those who might prefer the warmth). Initiated by Mayor Casavant, this is a community-created event, with something for everyone during one great weekend of winter fun!

Notice to Readers:

The Biddeford Beat will not be distributed on:

Monday, December 25th or January 1st

The City wishes everyone a safe and joyous holiday season!

2017 Holiday Trash Collection Schedule

CHRISTMAS DAY & NEW YEAR'S DAY

There will be **NO** trash and recycling pick up Monday,

December 25, 2017 and Monday, January 1, 2018.

If your trash is normally picked up on these days, it will be picked up the following Tuesday instead.

The Transfer Station will close at 10:45 AM on Saturday, December 23rd and will reopen at its regular time on Tuesday, December 26th 2017.

REMINDER: HOLIDAY HOURS

City Hall will be **CLOSED**:

Friday, December 22nd @ Noon

Monday, December 25th **ALL DAY**

Monday, January 1st **ALL DAY**

in observance of Christmas and New Year.

Questions/Comments:

t. 207.284.9313

e. newsletter@biddefordmaine.org

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Carpe Diem!

On Tuesday, December 5, 2017, the City of Biddeford held its 148th Inauguration inside the Biddeford City Theater. At the inauguration, Mayor elect Alan Casavant delivered the following speech:

“Tonight, we are participating in a celebration that has been a tradition for over 150 years. While it is a celebration of the elected officials, in whom residents place their hopes and trust, it is also a celebration of all that has been accomplished and transformed, in our city, during the past six years. It is a celebration of each of you, as well as your family and friends, as this event is a public declaration of whom we are as a people, and of what we can accomplish, together, to continue to move this city forward.

When I look out of my office window, I see bricks being repointed on the Lincoln Street mill, and the renovation of the old First National Bank. I can walk on Alfred Street and see the superb workmanship of Seth Harkness and his vision of historical integrity. I can walk into Elda, a new restaurant on Main Street, which offers farm to table meals. I can go into Angelrox, or Lakonia Greek Products, and see the hand of Doug Sanford and his transformation of acres of bricks and mortar into countless spaces of entrepreneurs and artisans. I can amble along the River Walk, stop by Dirigo Brewing, and see the majesty of the Saco’s pounding, powerful Falls. I can shop at Market Basket, and witness the enthusiasm of shoppers who love the chain’s first Maine store, or when I crave serenity, I can walk in Clifford Park, and see how a group of volunteers have woven a fabric of trails and local history.

There are many other wonderful projects and businesses, but tonight, I want us to consider how we reach the next level of our community’s renaissance. How do we make that final, transitional leap from the old mill town stereotype, to a robust, 21st Century creative city? How do we remove ourselves from the shackles of fear and timidity that have kept us chained to our past? How do we learn to believe in ourselves and our destiny?

Jim Bennett, the City Manager, recently mentioned to me that our city is today experiencing a once in a lifetime opportunity. Development, such as the \$65 million Lincoln Street Mill project, the \$65 million courthouse, and the contagious buzz of the “Biddosance” simply do not happen every day. We are blessed to have become an exciting place for entrepreneurs and those seeking quality of life, but how do we collectively sustain this magical and magnetic attraction of interest and investment? What do we need to do to ensure, not only that we get it right, but that we preserve our inherent beauty and assets?

To actualize our future, we, as a community, must continue to embrace innovation and investment. This past year, the council smartly allocated funds for visual and infrastructure improvements on Main Street: new sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks, and flowers. These dollars have been transformational, as residents enthusiastically adore the colors and design. They love the new shops and restaurants, and they feel a resurgence of deep pride in the new Biddeford, a pride that has been missing for many years.

A few weeks ago, I was sitting in a local establishment, and a young man, who works there, began to tell me how he had just bought a home in Biddeford. He did not recognize me. He said that he moved here because he loves the vitality, the buzz, and the new downtown. He enjoys the dining options, the night-life, the physical jewels like our parks and beaches. Biddeford offers him everything that he desires, at an affordable price. His story is not unusual. Contrary to the traditional, local stereotype, our median age is 35: we are the youngest city in the state, and young people are moving here because they find that our city possesses a unique urban charm and is bursting with potential.

Strengthening community pride in who we are as a people is a critical intangible in developing new opportunities and building a cohesive community. For decades, many of us have unfortunately embraced a philosophy of not being good enough and accepting of being second best. We became embarrassed at who we were. Some members of the Franco community Anglicized their names; some, on social media, preferred to identify their residence as being in the Portland area, not Biddeford. We somehow lost our way: losing our community spirit and muting our destiny and possibilities.

A year ago, I pursued a relationship with Quebec City and its goal of linking together the Franco communities in North America. As part of the process, I was tasked with submitting scenic photos of our city. I considered a picture of City Hall, with a beautiful, full moon in the background. There was one problem: the moon was offset by a tattered and decrepit City Hall tower.

The current condition of that tower speaks volumes in terms of our civic pride and priorities. How can we advocate for redevelopment and investment in our downtown when we allow our own historic building to become so deteriorated? The tower has always loomed tall as a proud symbol of our city, but, today, the ongoing neglect is a repudiation of those who constructed this magnificent facility and an ongoing renunciation of our community pride. In many ways, the downtown is an extension of the City Hall campus. Downtowns, everywhere, define a community's livelihood and status. They are destination points that tell the story of a people. I want our story to be one of optimism and strength; of investment opportunities and social gatherings. I do not want our story to be that of a "might have been", a sad commentary of a city that failed to embrace its possibilities and instead succumbed to stagnation and fear.

Infrastructure investment for the common good is an essential tool in economic development and, as we have seen in the downtown improvements, the building of community spirit. Our future beckons with a walkable, clean downtown, with connecting pedestrian walkways through the mill district, to Main Street, to the River Walk, and to a parking garage, and such a reality not only radiates our inner confidence and pride, but also captures the essence of our unique architecture, our diverse history, and our spectacular river: all jewels of attraction for investors, residents, and visitors.

We are all in this together, though we may disagree on our chosen path towards that better Biddeford. We all desire a quality place in which to live, work and play. We all want success and a good education for our children. We all want a clean environment, affordable housing, and good jobs. We must stop obsessing about the negatives and instead embrace the positives, as positive energy is contagious and propelling. We must stop using divisive, polarizing rhetoric in our community discussions, and instead focus on our commonality. Biddeford is our home, and we are fortunate to be able to live here and enjoy all that it has to offer, but I challenge you to embrace the idea that we can be even better, if we so desire it and work towards it!

Despite the importance of bricks and mortar investment, human interactions are the foundation of the heart of a city. As part of our ongoing evolution, volunteerism and community participation must become integral parts of our lives. Too many of us are disengaged from local activities, and volunteerism, despite ongoing need, has waned dramatically. Even today, there are fears that Westbrook Skating Rink may not open because of the lack of volunteers, and they are not alone in that dilemma.

At our festivals and events, La Kermesse, Winterfest, the lighting of the Christmas tree, attendance is not what is mirrored in other communities that do the same types of things. Consequently, we are failing to enjoy each other's company and sharing our hopes and dreams. Our absence from these events builds walls, separating us from each other, and this is exacerbated by the isolation that is created by television, smart phones, and social media, and the declining influence of our unifying institutions. Our individual worlds are increasingly made of little silos that isolate us, and that isolation denies us the opportunities to share a common enthusiasm and passion for Biddeford, as well as to contemplate, civilly, other points of view. If we do not believe in ourselves, if we do not celebrate our collective aspirations, if we do not support or listen to each other, how can we build bridges to greater opportunities?

In a book called "Tuesdays With Morrie", Morrie Schwarz, who was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's Disease, is asked questions about life and living. One of his most poignant points was that life's greatest joy is found in the giving of oneself to others. It is not about money; it is not about material possessions; it is not about travels to exotic places. It is about dedicating one's time and expertise to helping those in one's community.

We need more Jim Godbouts and mirror his Herculean efforts at Waterhouse Field. We need more John Maxsons and Larry Patoines, and their accomplishments in making Winterfest a success. We need more Ray and Paul Gagnes, who steadfastly adorn our downtown with Christmas lights with a small pool of volunteers. We need more Joey Leblonds who carry the spirit of La Kermesse every day in their lives. We need more Holly Cullotons who carefully take care of our city parks. We need more Dan Michauds who teach the fundamentals of baseball to

our children. We need more Tammy Ackermans, who cannot seem to say no to any community request. We need every one of you to step up to the plate with a can-do spirit and a love of Biddeford in your heart, and share your skills and blessings for the greater good. We are a talented community, and I know that we can do this, but do we have the will and the passion?

Tonight, I challenge you to participate in the crusade for a Better Biddeford. I challenge you to volunteer: to lend your skills and your time. I challenge you to build bridges and knock down the walls that divide us. I challenge you to not be content with the status quo, but to imagine and actualize greater things and greater beauty for this city. You are all pieces of a colorful quilt, woven together with your different skills, different talents, different ideas, and different perceptions. The whole is worth more than the sum of the parts: We must all contribute, in our own way, to generate the energy to keep our magical moment alive and thriving. This moment in our time cannot be sustained by a few. It is all hands on deck.

We have it all, in Biddeford. We have the geographical location, the perfect landscape, the hardworking people, the superior schools, exceptional healthcare, a world-recognized university, impressive mill and building architecture, a superlative library, wonderful restaurants, a wonderful Twin City in Saco, and the diversity, culture, and history to bring us all together. To get to the next level will not be measured by dollars and city budgets. It will be measured by my heart, the hearts of the city council and school board, and your hearts. Our destiny is in your hands. Believe in the possible. Reject the negativity. Reject the polarization in our culture. Believe in Biddeford. Believe in each other. Carpe Diem! Thank you.”

Sincerely,

Alan Casavant
Mayor of Biddeford

If you would like to view the video of Mayor's Inauguration speech, [click here](#).

To receive email subscriptions to the Biddeford Beat, [click here](#).

Thank you for reading!