



# The Biddeford Beat

THE CITY OF BIDDEFORD WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2018

VOLUME 18.41

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For updates on:

- ✓ Meetings and events
- ✓ Construction and road closures
- ✓ General government updates

And more! Spread the word!

## UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Meetings are located in the Council Chambers at City Hall unless otherwise stated.

<b>Tuesday</b> 7:00 p.m.	<b>October 23, 2018</b> School Committee @ BHS Little Theater
<b>Thursday</b> 6:30 p.m.	<b>October 25, 2018</b> "My Neighborhood Network" meeting @ J. Richard Martin Community Center
7:00 p.m.	Conservation Commission @ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room

[Click here](#) to view updates on the full city calendar!



Several parking changes will be coming to downtown Biddeford starting on November 1. See page 5 of this week's Beat for new details. For a full description of the upcoming changes, please visit:

[www.biddefordmaine.org/parking](http://www.biddefordmaine.org/parking)

## BIDDEFORD, IT'S OUR TIME!

Thanks to a grant opportunity through Heart of Biddeford, the City Hall Clock Tower was selected as one of only 20 historic sites across the country to compete for **\$150,000** in historic preservation funding, **BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP!**



The 2018 *Partners in Preservation: Celebrating Diversity on Main Street* campaign invites the public to **#VoteYourMainStreet** to decide which historic sites along 20 Main Streets across America should receive a portion of \$2 million of preservation funding from American Express and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

**That means that we need YOUR VOTES to restore our clock tower!**

Visit [VoteYourMainStreet.org/Biddeford](http://VoteYourMainStreet.org/Biddeford) to cast your vote for us! You can cast up to **five votes per day every day** until the contest ends **THIS FRIDAY**, October 26.



You can find more details about the campaign from [Heart of Biddeford](#) and more information about the condition of the clock tower in our [press release](#).

# Biddeford Recreation Youth Halloween Party 2018

**For kids up to age 10**  
**Friday, October 26th, 2018**  
**6:30 to 8:30pm**  
**J. Richard Community Center**  
**Gymnasium**  
**Free of Charge!!**



Kids can play games to win prizes,  
 make Halloween decorations and enjoy  
 refreshments.



For more information  
 please call the recreation  
 office at 283-0841  
**HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!**



Costumes are encouraged.  
 Please bring a container  
 for prizes.

**Adult Supervision  
 Required!**

## Notice to Residents of Biddeford Important Leaf Collection Information and Collection Dates

Curbside collection of leaves will be limited to leaves placed in bio-degradable bags. Bio-degradable bags may be purchased at the Biddeford Recycling Center or at a number of other local stores.

Leaf collection for wards 1, 2, 3 & 4:  
 Monday, November 5th  
 Monday, November 19th

Leaf collection for wards 5, 6 & 7:  
 Monday, November 12th  
 Monday, November 26th

Leaves can also be brought to the Biddeford Recycling Center during regular operating hours AND on the following SUNDAYS from 7:00am until 2:45pm - November 18th & November 25th



Please call the Public Works Department at 282-1579 with any questions.

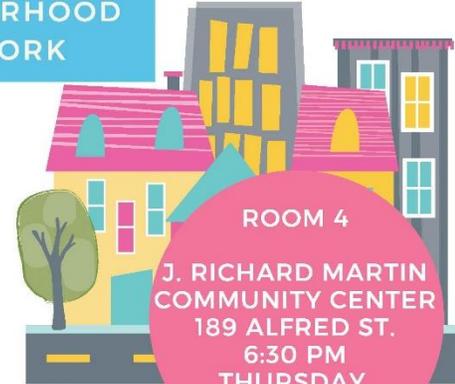
Not sure of your ward number? [Click here](#) and look for your address to find out.

## \$3,090 Raised for General Assistance Fire Fund



The City of Biddeford's General Assistance Office maintains a fund to support the immediate needs of victims of devastating fires in the city. However, after a major fire on Hill Street in April 2018 left over 30 people displaced, the General Assistance fund was depleted. To help replenish that fund, the **Biddeford Career Firefighters** and **Dirigo Brewing Company** partnered to create a special brew called "Big Water", with a portion of the proceeds benefitting the fire fund. At Tuesday's City Council Meeting, the City was presented a check for the \$3,090 that was raised for the fund at the Big Water launch event August. Thank you to the Fire Department for going above and beyond to help the community and to Dirigo Brewing Company for assisting us in these fundraising efforts!

MY  
 NEIGHBORHOOD  
 NETWORK



ROOM 4  
 J. RICHARD MARTIN  
 COMMUNITY CENTER  
 189 ALFRED ST.  
 6:30 PM  
 THURSDAY,  
 OCTOBER 25

## NEIGHBORHOOD GET TOGETHER - JOIN US!

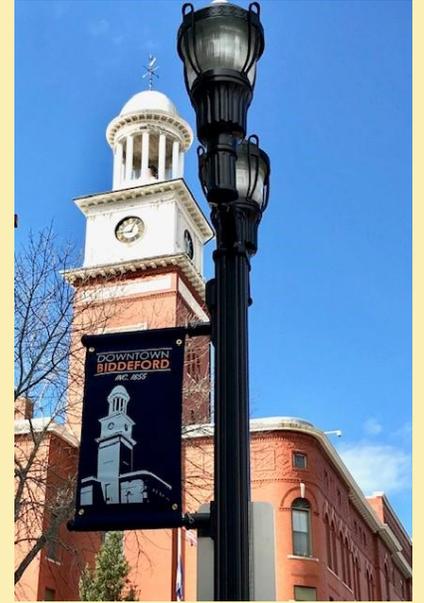
Do you love your neighborhood? Are there things you want to change? "My Neighborhood Network" wants to hear from you! Join your neighbors for discussion and refreshments. Kids welcome, with an adult. Kids who draw a picture of their neighborhood will win a prize!

FMI, call 284-9105 or email  
[linda.waters@biddefordmaine.org](mailto:linda.waters@biddefordmaine.org)

## FIRE DEPARTMENT AWARDED SAFETY ENHANCEMENT GRANT

We are pleased to announce that the Biddeford Fire Department has been awarded a Safety Enhancement Grant by the Maine Municipal Association Workers Compensation Fund in the amount of **\$1,477.80!** This grant program provides financial assistance to members of the MMA Workers Compensation Fund to purchase safety equipment or services to assist in reducing the frequency and severity of workplace injuries. The Fire Department's grant will be used to purchase a 12-step rolling ladder.

Have you noticed the beautiful new banners along Main Street?



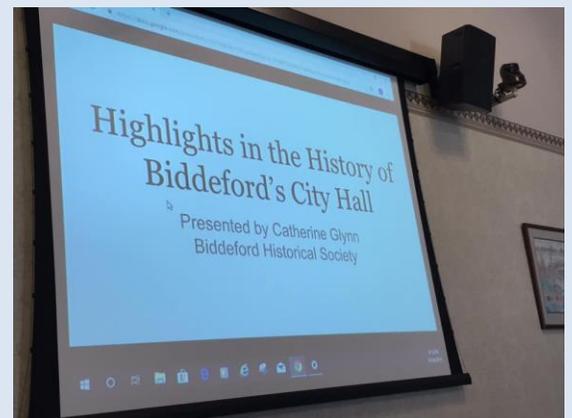
## BIDDEFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY VOLUNTEER PRESENTED KEY TO THE CITY



At Tuesday's City Council meeting, historian Charles Butler was recognized with a ceremonial key to the City for his 50 years of service to the Biddeford Historical Society! Since he first started with the organization in 1968, Butler has logged thousands of hours preserving, protecting, and promoting Biddeford's history by telling the colorful stories of the city's past.

## IT'S OUR TIME OPEN HOUSE

Thank you to all who attended Heart of Biddeford's *It's Our Time* Open House! The event included tours inside the City Hall clock tower, a community celebration with projections on City Hall, a performance by True Story Theater highlighting the stories of Biddeford residents, and more! A special thank you to all who volunteered their time to organize and run the event. Don't forget to keep voting for the clock tower through Friday, October 26 at [VoteYourMainStreet.org/Biddeford!](http://VoteYourMainStreet.org/Biddeford!)



# 2018 GENERAL ELECTION INFORMATION



The 2018 General Election will be held on November 6. Polls will be open from **7 a.m. to 8 p.m.** at the Tiger Gym at Biddeford High School on Maplewood Avenue, regardless of ward.

A sample ballot for the election is available on our website at <https://www.biddefordmaine.org/sampleballot>.

**The City Clerk's Office is offering extended hours on Thursday, November 1, 2018 to help prepare for the general election.** The office will be open from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. for absentee voting, acceptance of new voter registrations, and change of name and/or address. Please use the Main Street entrance to City Hall if you arrive after 5 p.m.

If you are planning on voting absentee, you must do so on or before November 1, 2018.

## **Ranked-Choice Voting**

The November 6, 2018 General Election will be conducted using a system of ranked-choice voting for the offices of U.S. Senate and U.S. Congress. Ranked-choice voting, sometimes called "instant run-off voting," allows voters to choose their candidates in order of preference by marking candidates as their first choice, second choice, third choice, etc. The votes are counted in rounds, with the lowest-ranked candidates eliminated in each round until there are only two candidates left. The person who is determined to have received the majority of the votes (more than 50%) in the final round is declared the winner. It is different from our previous method of voting, in which voters choose only one candidate for each office and the winner is determined by plurality (whoever gets the most votes).

Biddeford voters will use ranked-choice voting in the following two races:

### The U.S. Senate race

- Eric Brakey (R)
- Angus King (I)
- Zak Ringelstein (D)

### The U.S. Congressional District 1 race:

- Martin Grohman (I)
- Mark Holbrook (R)
- Chellie Pingree (D)

Ranked-choice voting will NOT be used to select Maine's governor.

This [slideshow](#) shows several examples of how your ballot could be filled out and how it will be counted under ranked choice voting.

## **How can I register to vote?**

You can register to vote at the City Clerk's Office on the ground floor of City Hall during normal business hours. There is no cutoff date for registering to vote.

## **What House District and Ward do I live in?**

Please refer to [this document](#) on our website. Once you find your address on the document, you can find your ward in the "Ward/Precinct" column and your House District in the column titled "SR".



## **DOWNTOWN PARKING CHANGES Q&A**



At the September 18 City Council meeting, the Council took the next step in the development of a Parking Strategy for municipal parking lots and on-street parking in the city core. The details of these changes can be found on our website by visiting [www.biddefordmaine.org/parking](http://www.biddefordmaine.org/parking).

Previous editions of the Biddeford Beat have included frequently asked questions about *what* changes to expect. This week's edition will focus on *why* these changes are occurring.

***Q: Why is the City dealing with parking changes anyways?***

A: Our downtown is changing and significantly. One of the greatest change is that there is an increase in the amount of parking that is being demanded. There is no indication that trend is going to stop in the future.

***Q: I don't visit downtown enough to understand where the parking demand is coming from. Could you explain to me where it is coming from?***

A: There are two major sources of the increased parking demand. First, a number of the buildings in the downtown that were empty or underutilized have been rehabbed and now occupied. Since 2010, 67,000 square feet of this type of space have been renovated. It is estimated that at least another 50,000 square feet of vacant space still remains. Second, the residential rental market has changed greatly in the downtown. For many years, a large share of renters either did not own a vehicle or only had one vehicle. Today, it is more common for renters to have multiple vehicles per unit, including several younger unrelated individuals, each with their own vehicle.

***Q: Now that I have an understanding of the reasons why the City is dealing with the parking issue, can you explain to me what goals are driving these changes?***

A: The goals are really quite simple. They are:

1. Stop having property taxpayers pay 100% of the costs associated with giving others free parking in the downtown; instead, require the people that choose to use the space pay for their parking.
2. Continue to provide free and easy to find parking for customers that come into the downtown. It is also important that there is plenty of customer parking available to continue to encourage the customers to come to the downtown.
3. Have more parking built in the downtown to allow growth in the downtown to continue without impacting residential areas surrounding the downtown.

***Q: How will the program achieve these goals?***

A: *Stop having property taxpayers pay 100% of the costs associated with giving others free parking in the downtown; instead, require the people that choose to use the space pay for the parking instead.* The underlying financial goal is really quite simple. Today, all costs associated with parking are paid for by every single property taxpayer. The entire program is designed to shift who pays for parking in downtown - from the property taxpayers to those that use the parking. To be more specific, it is focused on the long-term uses of parking spaces in the community, not the customers of the businesses that go into the downtown. Any business (for long term parking only) or rental property that does not provide enough parking for their property's needs will no longer get that parking free from the community. They can seek private parking alternatives or pay to use the city parking lots.

*Continue to provide free and easy to find parking for customers that come into the downtown. It is also important that there is plenty of customer parking available to continue to encourage the customers to come to the downtown. This is probably the most misunderstood part of the parking changes. Throughout the downtown, all short term on street parking remains free. During the hours of 8 AM to 6 PM, most downtown parking is limited to 2 hours or 4 hours. There are a few places that have shorter time limits because of the nature of the nearby businesses. These are FREE. After 6 PM, there is no time limit. However, in some areas, there is no overnight parking from 1 AM to 6 AM.*

*Have more parking built in the downtown to allow growth in the downtown to continue without impacting residential areas surrounding the downtown. The long-term solution to the parking issue is to create more parking in the downtown. A parking garage that will hold between 400 and 625 spaces is currently in the final design stages. This garage will not be paid for using tax revenue from property taxpayers in the community. However, the property taxpayers will receive the benefits of continued growth in the tax base in the downtown. You can read more of those details in other questions.*

***Q: How are these changes impacting the general property taxes in the community?***

A: The good news is a lot of the new growth in taxable property in the community is coming from the downtown area. Since 2014, the taxable value in the downtown has grown by \$26,831,204. Assuming today's tax rate of \$19.70, these properties are paying \$419,247.95 more in property taxes in 2018-2019 than they did in 2014. These funds have been used by the city in three ways. First, it was part of the reason that the tax rate dropped last year from \$20.07 to today's rate of \$19.70. Second, the increase in the homestead exemption (the \$394.00 savings that every single-family homeowner gets if they filed for the homestead) was paid in part by the increased values in the downtown. Finally, the city is spending (and paying cash) nearly \$1,500,000 more annually fixing roads, buildings and replacing equipment than it did in 2014. This has occurred while reducing the tax rate due in part to the increased value in the downtown.

***Q: How is the increased demand for parking affecting the downtown?***

A: The competition for parking continues to grow in the downtown. As the demand has grown, there are more vehicles parking all day in the downtown. This continues to erode the available parking for customers. We continue to see more all-day parking spilling over into traditional residential neighborhoods. As more property redevelops, the problems will get increasing more difficult. At some point, the parking issue will have an adverse impact on continued growth in the downtown.

***Q: I am hearing the argument from some that they have been able to park for free forever. They are saying, "make the new people causing the demand pay and let the people that have been long term tenants and taxpayers continue to get it free". Why isn't that the plan?***

A: By the nature of the argument, it puts the City in a place that requires it to treat groups of people differently. This creates the difficult decision of determining the basic fairness of who gets free service and who will not. Even if making such a decision would be easy, trying to implement such a program would be very difficult. The current program is set up to treat all parties exactly the same. If you want long term parking, you either need to find a private solution for that parking or you can buy those services from the City in the parking lots. Either way, property taxpayers will not be paying for someone else's parking needs.

***Q: I heard that in the past the City has given out parking waivers through the Planning Board review process. Is this the reason for the parking challenges? If I received a waiver, does it mean that I should continue to get 'free' parking? Will the Planning Board continue to issue parking waivers?***

A: The Planning Board did give out some limited parking waivers for redeveloped residential spaces in the downtown. At the time these waivers were issued, there was not the demand that exists today. The granting of the waivers did not guarantee anything by the City beyond the permission for the project to get the permits necessary for the project to be constructed. There was no implication of a right to publicly funded parking and certainly not "free" (meaning that parking is being supported by property taxpayers). Finally, the Council put in place a moratorium that does not allow the Planning Board to grant any further waivers. At a recent workshop on this issue, the Council supported a recommendation to have staff prepare changes to the code of ordinances permanently eliminating parking waivers as an option.

***Q: I am a property taxpayer in the community that seldom comes into the downtown. Why should I care about this issue at all?***

A: After several years of discussions about parking in the downtown, it is hopeful that everyone understands what "free parking" means. Given that the City has very limited resources, free means a portion of your property tax bill pays for others to park for free. There is growing pressure to create more parking in the downtown. Unchanged, it will be your property taxes that will be used to pay for it. Ironically, a lot of the long-term employees that park for free are not Biddeford residents. The same can be said about the landlords that own the apartments and apartment buildings that do not provide parking for their tenants. Without changing the system, you pay for their parking needs. With this change, when you do come downtown to enjoy the businesses, there will be more no-charge, short-term parking available. Finally, having more public parking constructed in the downtown will continue to allow the downtown to change from what it was 10 to 15 years ago to the path that it is on now. The growth in the downtown has had a positive impact on your personal property tax burden and ensuring an opportunity for continued growth is expected to continue the trend.