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Biddeford City Hall Clock Restored to Working Condition

BIDDEFORD — The Biddeford City Hall is ticking once again.

Balzer Family Clock Works reinstalled the E. Howard & Co. clock in the Biddeford City Hall clock tower on October 10 after making the necessary repairs to restore it to working condition.

The restoration project was supported by a grant from the American Express Partners in Preservation program, a partnership of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Express Foundation. Heart of Biddeford, a nationally designated Main Street program, received the \$150,000 grant in October 2018 thanks to community support for the project in a nationwide online voting contest. The grant funding allowed the clock to be restored without the use of any taxpayer funding.

“It is wonderful to look up on Main Street and see the clock showing the correct time,” said Mayor Alan Casavant. “The community has been buzzing with support for this project since the grant competition began last year, and now we can finally say that It’s Our Time to feel pride in this landmark once again.”

The City Hall clock was originally installed in the tower in the early 1900s as a weight-driven, pendulum-regulated and completely mechanical operating timepiece. Around the 1960s, some of the mechanical components were removed and electric motors were installed to drive the remaining mechanical components for the time function and to ring the bell.

A large portion of the Balzer’s restoration work was to convert the electrified mechanical timepieces back to their fully mechanical operation as they were originally designed. Many of the original mechanical components, including the pulleys, weights, and pendulum bob, were missing and were replaced. The Balzers also installed an automatic winding system for the weights so that staff will not have to manually wind the clock.

The clock’s four dials and hands also received a facelift. The new hands are made of redwood and were gold-leafed to be more visible against the new glass dials.

“Main Street programs get involved in preservation because buildings like City Hall tell a story about our history that we don’t want to lose,” said Delilah Poupore, Heart of Biddeford Executive Director. “This beautifully restored clock stands here as a reminder of the people who came to Biddeford, built Biddeford, and brought their families here from countries all over the world.”

The Partners in Preservation grant also included funding to repair the woodwork surrounding the clock. The remainder of the project will be completed by June 30, 2020.



Above: The City Hall clock as restored by Balzer Family Clock Works.

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