



# *City of Biddeford, Maine*

The Office of  
City Manager

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Last night, the local fire union issued a public statement regarding the leadership of Biddeford's Fire Chief. This public statement was provided directly to the Mayor and City Council. The union has not raised issues regarding the Fire Chief's performance with the City Manager's office at any time, even though the City Manager rather than the Council has direct hiring and firing authority of the chief.

On this date, my office has reached out to the union to seek a meeting to better understand any concerns they may have related to the specific job performance of the Chief. The fact that the union directed its statement to the City Council meeting to make their point, when they know that the Mayor and City Council have virtually no authority over the Fire Chief, should not be overlooked by the casual observer.

A vote of no confidence is usually caused by one of two issues: legitimate concerns about the leadership or as a tactic by a union during difficult labor negotiations. As is often the case in the latter scenario, the leader (in this case Biddeford's Fire Chief) is used by the union as a disposable pawn in order to seek leverage in the negotiations process. The fact that the public comment made by the retiring firefighter was strictly limited to his perception of the way elected leadership had treated the union for many years, not the conduct of Chief Gagne, should be noted.

In my time as City Manager, I have always seen Chief Scott Gagne advocate to improve the department with a laser focus on providing the very best service to the residents of this community. As a lifelong resident, a taxpayer and a parent to young children within the community, the citizens Chief Gagne serves are often friends and relatives, and their care and safety under his leadership is his top concern.

As stated by the union in its public release, issues that the union has raised are the subject of ongoing negotiations for a collective bargaining agreement between the City and the union. The issues of primary concern to the City in the negotiation process are entirely focused on making sure the citizens get the very best available service when it is needed. While the union's statement seeks to place blame on the Fire Chief, the City is concerned that the union has repeatedly resisted proposed common-sense solutions that would improve the city's ability to deliver life-saving services to the community.

The City of Biddeford, like every other community throughout the country, is dealing with the difficult issues in today's job market associated with recruiting and retaining qualified employees, especially public safety personnel. The City will continue to work to address these issues and seek partnership with employees and the union.

City leadership is proud of the individual members of the department. We know that we have talented and capable employees that do great things daily. We are requesting that the Union focus more on the safety of the citizens of the community and less on gaining leverage in ongoing union negotiations.

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*The City of Biddeford is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint, write to  
Diana Depaolo, Human Resource Director, 205 Main Street Biddeford, ME 04005, or call (207) 286-0593.*