

2012 AUGUSTA CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND ACTIONS

GOAL 1: DEVELOP A CITY MISSION STATEMENT

In 2007, the City adopted a new Comprehensive Master Plan. A key element of that work product was Section A “A Vision for Augusta”. Council should, in the weeks ahead, revisit that two page document and determine if it contains the requisite elements for a 2012 vision and mission statement.

GOAL 2: IMPROVE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

In the coming year, the City will face difficult choices with regard to service cuts and taxes. It is important for the Council to communicate with the public, its legislators, City staff, and each other. The communication must go both ways – information going out to educate people about what the choices are, and the opportunity for feedback and advice to come back to the Council at key points of decision-making.

It was also noted in the meeting that many citizens didn’t know the good news about the performance of Augusta schools and city government. This is another function of communication.

Actions:

- A. Create “palm cards” with information on key subjects for Councilors to use.
- B. Issue a quarterly newsletter – and circulate broadly.
- C. Create a small committee (or use the Cable TV and Telecommunications Committee, and utilize Councilor Dan Emery’s expertise, to explore and make recommendations about the use of social media and the internet in order to:
 - (1) Communicate with citizens, particularly younger people;
 - (2) Address perceptions about the static nature of the City’s website;
 - (3) Provide ongoing feedback to topics before the Council; and
 - (4) Update citizen satisfaction surveys through a less expensive approach with the use of online options.
- D. Look to expand the use of CTV 7 by
 - (1) Exploring ways to improve the quality of televising School Board meetings and to potentially televise Planning Board meetings.
 - (2) Put department head presentations and powerpoints on CTV 7, both during and independently of Council meetings.

GOAL 3: HELP VOICE SERVICE CENTER ISSUES IN THE LEGISLATURE.

When state government sneezes, municipalities catch a cold. State budget troubles could make Augusta’s challenging financial situation even worse. Cuts in Medicaid could redound back on

General Assistance rolls. The effort to find alternatives to Medicaid cuts could threaten revenue sharing and school aid. A reluctance to bond could slow down road projects.

These issues affect all municipalities, but especially service centers. Augusta is the service center city with the most access to the Legislature. The City must be ready in the coming year to work with its allies – the legislative delegation, the Maine Municipal Association, the Service Center Coalition and others – to educate the Legislature, to provide alternatives for them to consider, and to organize public support for our positions.

This is always a role of Augusta city government, but in 2012 it is more of a role than ever.

Actions:

- A. Meet on a regular basis with Senator Katz and Representatives Maloney, Blodgett, and Foster to educate them on the issues, and to coordinate strategy.
- B. Use positions on MMA and Service Center coalitions to lead efforts to find alternative revenue sources, and to get information that keeps councilors informed.
- C. Ask councilors to be prepared to testify on a regular basis on issues before the Legislature.

GOAL 4: PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Because of economic conditions, the limitations of the property tax, and state aid policies, economic development by itself cannot close the revenue gap the City faces. However, economic development is essential for jobs and quality of life for its citizens.

The world of economic development is changing. There are fewer companies moving from place to place. The best prospects for new jobs are from growing the companies that already are here, and helping people who are here to start new businesses. It's less about real estate, and more about people, their education, their networks, their opportunities.

Actions:

- A. Meet with the Board of Trade and update joint strategies to meet the demands of the new environment
- B. Prioritize key buildings and assets in the community, and work systematically to address the top priority assets from among the following, using such criteria as availability of infrastructure, cost of maintenance, opportunity, etc.:
 - Flatiron
 - Lithgow Library
 - Arsenal
 - Statler and East Side

- Alumni Field and associated infrastructure
 - Riggs Brook
 - Hodgkins School
 - Soon-to-be-vacated hospital
- C. Market the City as friendly to business, and encouraging of entrepreneurs, through the communications tools described in the first goal.
- D. Ensure that the business career center is a success, and look for new ways to connect students and businesses at Cony, at the Capital Area Technology Center and at UMA (e.g. machinists for employers like Kennebec Technologies).

GOAL 5: CONTINUE TO PROMOTE DOWNTOWN AND EAST SIDE

The new Downtown Diner shows that the success of the Riverfront Barbecue can be replicated on the other end of the street. There continues to be progress downtown, with the UMA architecture program, Water Street Apartments, the Mill Park farmer’s market, and building renovations adding new life. Yet slow economic times, and state budget cutbacks, also require vigilance to keep office tenants downtown,

Actions:

- A. Move quickly to approve the demolition delay ordinance.
- B. Explore upgrading Augusta’s status in the Downtown Center to a full Main Street Program.
- C. Review and rewrite Augusta’s fire codes to reflect fire hazards in old buildings.
- D. Have the Historic Commission explore historic district status for the downtown.
- E. After getting public input (see Goal 1), upgrade the Haymarket Square area.
- F. Look to implement first initial steps of the East Side plan.

GOAL 6: CITY GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONTINUE TO LEAD IN FINDING EFFICIENCIES AND REVENUES FROM ENERGY PROJECTS

Augusta has been a leader among municipalities in Maine in considering energy generation and conservation projects that both save taxpayers money and help the environment. The City should continue its work on three key projects this year.

Actions:

- A. Explore subcontracting (waste to energy) some of the waste flow stream at Hatch Hill in order to generate enhanced revenues and to lengthen the working life of the landfill.
- B. Continue to explore cogeneration and other possible uses of the methane at Hatch Hill.
- C. Continue to explore the implementation of the proposed energy audit improvements to city operations.

ADDITIONAL TASKS IDENTIFIED IN THE RETREAT

Actions:

- A. Make a list of smaller city-owned properties that can be sold.
- B. Forward MMA legislative bulletin to Council members weekly with a highlight of key points to be found therein.
- C. Analyze and potentially initiate a pilot program for alternative treatments to road resurfacing to address shrinking amount of paving dollars available I the foreseeable future.