



THE CITY OF AUGUSTA

WILLIAM R. BRIDGEO
CITY MANAGER

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Bill Bridgeo
RE: Administrative Report
DATE: April 25, 2016

Meetings:

On Thursday, April 28th there will be an Executive Session of City Council beginning at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers to discuss a possible real estate transaction. Immediately following will be the informational portion of the meeting and budget review for the School, Police and Fire Departments.

Other Items:

At the televised Council budget review session last Thursday evening, the comment was made regarding the accomplishments of the City's Economic Development Bureau that "never has so little been accomplished with so much" and, further, that Augusta compares poorly to Gardiner and Waterville. Understandably, that led to some discouragement on the part of Matt Nazar and Keith Luke (and later Dan Nichols) who rightfully believe that we have a robust economic development team that has accomplished a great deal in recent years.

To set the record straight (in particular for those who may not have been involved with City government for all that long), I asked staff for some evidence to support my contention that Augusta's ongoing economic development efforts justify our investment and our community's expectations. Here is some of what I was provided:

According to the State's equalized assessed valuation report, between the years 2008 and 2016, the total assessed valuation of Augusta grew by \$62 million dollars or 4.18% (the vast majority of that from commercial/industrial development). The total assessed valuation of Waterville dropped by \$40 million or 5.13% and Gardiner's total assessed valuation dropped by \$30 million or 8.54%.

In 2015 (according to our resident mayoral real estate appraiser), the average value of a single family residence was 15% higher in Augusta (\$123,000) than in either Gardiner (\$105,000) or Waterville (\$105,000).

Since January of 2013, according to the Maine Department of Labor, the aggregate number of private businesses in Augusta has grown from 976 to 1,011 while during the same period that number in Gardiner has dropped by one (172 to 171) and while Waterville has lost seven (from

590 to 583). Average private employment in our City has increased from 15,095 to 16,330 (8.2%) during the same period.

Please refer to the attached memorandum from Keith Luke for more background and amplification to the above.

I certainly have no desire to speak ill of Gardiner (my wife's hometown) or Waterville. They are both quintessential Maine communities with proud histories and many positive attributes. But Augusta, Maine in 2016 is an economically thriving, forward-leaning capital city by any number of important metrics. Certainly there is much that we can continue to be doing, especially in our efforts to revitalize downtown (and I will soon have a couple of programmatic proposals to present to you – as soon as the Downtown Alliance is ready to present them), and there will be no letup in our efforts. Steps that you have taken and propose to take (e.g. vacant property registry; property maintenance ordinance; historic district ordinance; TIF approvals; CDBG grant approvals; zoning amendments; and so forth) all contribute to Augusta's reputation as a community that welcomes growth and development balanced with quality of life concerns.

On another matter, be advised that the Augusta Police Department will be hosting a drug take-back in their lobby on Saturday, April 30th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. This is part of the national campaign for drug take-back. Please pass the word.

Finally, I was pleasantly surprised last week to receive a note from City Manager Mark Ryckman, a longstanding colleague from the lovely upstate New York community of Corning. He wanted me to have a copy of a recent letter to the editor from Corning's daily newspaper drafted by a former council member that I had great respect for from my time in Canandaigua. I share the letter in this package as an FYI.

C: Department and Bureau Directors
Augusta Legislative Delegation