



THE CITY OF AUGUSTA

WILLIAM R. BRIDGEO
CITY MANAGER

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: City Manager Bill Bridgeo
RE: Administrative Report
DATE: July 13, 2015

Meetings:

The Planning Board will meet on Tuesday, July 14th at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. An agenda is in council packets as well as the minutes from the last meeting.

On Wednesday, July 15, 2015 there will be a meeting of the Vacant Properties Committee beginning at 5:30 p.m. in Conference Room A.

There will be a Business Meeting of the City Council this Thursday, July 16, 2015 beginning at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. An agenda for this meeting is in your council packets. There will be a pre-meeting in Conference Room A beginning at 6:30 p.m.

On Friday, July 17, 2015 there will be a Senior Staff meeting at the City Center in Conference Room A.

Other Items:

According to this morning's KJ, the Public Utilities Commission is taking up a rate increase request from Maine Natural Gas. According to the article, the PUC staff is recommending that only Augusta rate-payers be subjected to the increase (apparently on the theory that the recent investment by MNG in Augusta should be paid for by Augusta customers). It is worth noting that large MNG customers (including the State of Maine, MaineGeneral Medical Center, the university and others) will not be subject to this increase because under PUC regulations they were allowed to independently negotiate long-term fixed rates. Although the deals for the hospital and other private companies are not public information, the agreement between MNG and the State is public and in that instance the cost of gas was set at a very discounted rate. I appreciate that there may be some understandable reluctance on Councilors' part to have the City weigh in on this rate case (either challenging the "Augusta only" thinking of the PUC staff or the broader question of whether ratepayers instead of stockholders should pay for the decisions to offer large discounted contracts for service in the Augusta market) given the long struggle we've recently concluded, but I do think it is worthy of some discussion at Thursday evening's meeting and to that end I will bring it up under the Manager's Report section of the agenda.

Speaking of natural gas and as a follow-up to the discussion at last Thursday's informational meeting, because of the damage that Summit Natural Gas did to the Cony Road they paid a higher permit fee for this road. We will use this money to offset the cost of work we have

planned for this summer for the Cony Road that should resolve any remaining issues there. (From the money collected from both gas companies for street-opening permits, we had underwritten the cost of a third-party inspector who has compiled a punch-list of items that need to be completed or repaired. Lesley Jones and Jerry Dostie are following up on that list later this summer. I will see that you are provided with a status report on how things are progressing.

Tomorrow, I will join folks from the Kennebec Land Trust (Executive Director Theresa Kerchner and board member and Augusta resident Sue Bell) at a regular meeting of the Land For Maine's Future Board as they are scheduled to take final action on the LMF grant for acquisition of the Howard Hill property. I intend to speak during the public comment section of the agenda and thank the LMF staff and board for their past support for this project and reiterate the City's strong support of the project.

There are copies of the Maine Municipal Association ballot for Executive Board and officer elections included in your packet. You'll note that the nominating committee did indeed choose me for an open slot on the board. Ordinarily (unless challenged successfully by a write-in candidate) this would mean my 3 year term would begin in January 2016. However, current board member John Bubier has recently announced his retirement as city manager of Biddeford and MMA Board President Steve Bunker (a selectman from Farmington) has been in contact with me and indicated he would like to appoint me to fill the six months remaining in Bubier's unexpired term and I have indicated that I am happy to do so. The MMA Board is just beginning the process of replacing retired Executive Director Chris Lockwood and they would like me to be able to participate in that process.

As the very nice article in the KJ this past weekend indicated, Chief Bob Gregoire continues to make very encouraging rehabilitative progress (and continues to do a terrific job as Chief). For all interested, there is a benefit golf tournament this Sunday afternoon at Western View Golf Course organized by local resident Tom Connors (my foursome is registered and ready to take on all comers!) See you on the links!

C: Department and Bureau Directors
Augusta Legislative Delegation