



THE CITY OF AUGUSTA

WILLIAM R. BRIDGEO
CITY MANAGER

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Bill Bridgeo
RE: Administrative Report
DATE: January 9, 2017

Meetings:

There will be a meeting of the Planning Board on Tuesday, January 10, 2017 beginning at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Agendas are included in your council packets.

The City Council will meet at on Thursday for an Informational Meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers. Agendas are included in your council packets.

On Tuesday, January 17th, the newly formed Historic District Review Board will hold its first meeting. The agenda is also enclosed.

City of Augusta Administrative Offices will be closed on Monday, January 16th for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Other Items:

The first item under consideration at this week's informational meeting is a proposal by City staff, including me, to authorize the expenditure of \$375,000 out of the Hatch Hill Landfill enterprise fund for the provision of three-phase power (by Central Maine Power) to the landfill. The immediate impetus for this improvement is the emerging possibility of generating electricity from the methane gas naturally produced at the landfill as organic material there decomposes. Currently, that gas is captured through a system of collection pipes buried within the closed cells and then it is burned (flared off) as it hits the surface. This system is intended to lessen the carbon emissions allowed into the atmosphere but it fails to take advantage of the energy capturing potential that exists. Last fall, we commissioned an engineering study by CES Consultants (enclosed) that establishes a positive payback if we invest in the infrastructure to capture and convert the methane gas to electricity. The first step of the process is to get three-phase power to the landfill site from the intersection of North Belfast Avenue (Rt. 3) and the Church Hill Road. As the enclosed summary memorandum from DPW Director Lesley Jones indicates, even without an energy conversion project, Hatch Hill will benefit from the presence of three-phase power and at this time there are sufficient funds in the enterprise fund to cover the \$375,000 that CMP will charge us to install it. We have had our eye on the possibility of tapping into the potential for methane and solar energy generation at Hatch Hill for some time now and the CES study suggests that it is a good time to move forward. Our own energy consultant, Brent Dudley, as well as representatives from CES will be at Thursday's meeting to discuss the project.

Also up for discussion Thursday evening is the Howard Hill land conservation project that the City has been supporting in conjunction with the Kennebec Land Trust. Back in August of 2015, Council gave its preliminary approval of an arrangement whereby KLT would seek funding to purchase this important 164 acre parcel for approximately \$1 million and then deed it over to the City with an accompanying perpetual conservation easement. At that time, a key component of the KLT's funding was about \$340,000 in Land For Maine's Future grant money the LMF Board had approved. Notwithstanding the disappointing lack of support from the LePage Administration for this project and a subsequent backpedaling on the LMF grant to half what was originally approved, the KLT has scrambled to identify alternative funds to backfill the lost LMF money and gone ahead with the purchase of the property and is prepared to turn over ownership (with conservation easements) to the City as originally planned. Their funding challenges do require that they ask us to modify the terms of an endowment for ongoing maintenance of the parcel they initially proposed would be \$100,000 up front. They now ask that they be allowed to put \$25,000 into that fund immediately and the remaining \$75,000 over the next several years. (They also request that the City count \$7,500 recently spent by KLT on a forest management plan for the parcel as part of the balance of \$75,000 due, which I think is a reasonable request as we would otherwise have done that with those funds once we took possession of the land). City staff believes that is manageable particularly given the generous in-kind support that KLT has been able to muster for the development program they have crafted. Representatives of KLT will be at the meeting to explain all of this. Draft documents are included in this package for your review. They are also undergoing review by the City Attorney.

The third item on the agenda for Thursday evening is a recommendation for Council to appropriate \$18,000 from the Alumni Field improvement account for replacement pole-vaulting equipment as the existing equipment has been determined to be unsafe and we can no longer host regional and state track meets without it. Veteran Councilors will recall that several years ago Council appropriated \$180,000 to rebuild the athletic field and that proved not to be necessary (Cony won the state football championship on the old field ☺) and those funds are available to underwrite this new needed work if Council approves it.

Also with this package, you will find a "Year in Review" summary that I have written both to summarize highlights of 2016 and to help you set the framework for our upcoming 2017 goal-setting set to begin with the Saturday, January 28th retreat. As Mayor Rollins said in his remarks last week, 2016 was a productive and encouraging year for our City and 2017 holds great promise.

Copy: Department and Bureau Directors
Augusta Legislative Delegation