



# THE CITY OF AUGUSTA

WILLIAM R. BRIDGEO  
CITY MANAGER

TO: Mayor and City Council  
FROM: Bill Bridgeo  
RE: Administrative Report  
DATE: July 17, 2017

## Meetings:

There will be a business meeting of the City Council at 7:00 pm on Thursday July 20<sup>th</sup> in Council Chambers. There will be a pre-meeting at 6:00 pm in Conference Room "A". The agenda is included in your Council packets.

## Other:

As you are aware, for the past couple of months we have been hosting a team of Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy graduate students and graduates (led by recent graduate and local native Anna Ackerman) who have been engaged in a pilot program to promote integration of recent immigrants into our community. Working with the locally based New Mainers organization, they are exploring the viability of a concept called World to Table, which uses the common medium of food and cuisine to build cultural bridges. The hope is that by being proactive the community can facilitate a mutually positive experience for both the "old Mainers" and "new Mainers".

Today, Mayor Rollins and I hosted a round table discussion at City Hall with the Tufts team and their lead professor, Dr. Karen Jacobson to hear updates from the team, garner input from residents involved with the New Mainers organization and, at noon, share a wonderful meal prepared by some of the newly arrived immigrants under the pavilion at Mill Park. The Mayor and I have invited Anna and her team to make a presentation to Council at the beginning of Thursday's Council meeting. I think you will be impressed with what they have to tell us about what they've learned in their time here and what lessons from other communities we might find of value. Father Frank Morin, pastor of St. Michael's Parish, will be introducing the team Thursday evening.

As we discussed briefly last Thursday evening, with the adoption of the State budget a week ago, the City will receive \$796,135 in new aid to education money in this (FY '18) fiscal year. In order to meet the timeline that allows a property tax commitment to be finalized in time to get tax bills out thirty days before the traditional due date (September 14<sup>th</sup>), Council must adopt an amended 2017-2018 budget resolve this Thursday evening. As best we (Ralph and me) can tell, because the State was late in adopting its budget, the language in the State budget requiring 50% of new education money to be applied to property tax reduction will not go into effect until the 2018-2019 budget year. Thus, it appears that because of the way our school budget validation

referendum was worded, Council has complete flexibility to determine what happens with this year's \$796,185 in new money. That said, it's clear that the Legislature's intent was two-fold: first, to provide some level of property tax relief and second to infuse more money into funding public education. Ralph has prepared a draft amended budget resolve that appropriates enough money directly to property tax reduction (\$151,162) to offset the Legislature's reduction of reimbursement for Homestead Exemption (which they reduced from 62.5% to 50% for this year), appropriates an additional \$398,067 for supplemental School Department funding, and leaves the remaining \$246,906 to be allocated at a future date for either education purposes or remain unallocated. (The \$151,162 meets the minimum local funding expectation of the EPS funding model) It is all pretty complicated, I know, and hopefully we will have some more clarity by Thursday evening. We just don't want to make things any more confusing by delaying the traditional schedule for issuing tax bills and due dates.

Because of statutory notice requirements (and the need to ensure that all potential lien-holders are identified), the condemnation order for the blue house on Civic Center Drive will need to appear on the August Council agenda as opposed to this week's.

Finally, I'm very happy to report that Meghan Cooper, our Muskie Graduate School intern this spring and summer has been selected by the Maine Town and City Management Association to be the recipient of their annual Dr. Edward Dow scholarship of \$1,500 to be applied to the costs of her upcoming final year of her masters' program. Her supervisor, Matt Nazar crafted the nomination at my suggestion. Meghan has been a great addition to our staff making significant contributions to our comprehensive plan preliminary work. She will be presented with the award next month at a banquet held during the annual state managers' conference at Sunday River.

C: Department and Bureau Directors  
Legislative Delegation