



SACO CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 22, 2025 - 6:30 PM

CITY HALL AUDITORIUM

Joint Meeting with Planning Board

Planning Board members present: Jeff Brochu, Jim Molleur, Matthew Provencal, and Katharine Paolini.

Interim City Administrator Emily Cole-Prescott provided a recap from June 2024 - September 2025 and review of the Housing State Statute Updates and Draft Ordinance Amendments.

A. Housing State Statute Updates - Maine Legislature LD 1829 has impacts for housing lot sizes, how many units can go on one lot, the definition of subdivision, and some other provisions as well including Planning Board training and how we look at ADU's and sprinkler systems. LD 1498 has to do with the impact fee statute and how impact fees can be encumbered going forward. Currently there's a long period that you can have impact fees before the improvement has to be made that the impact fee was set aside for. This will change that so that the impact fee has to be encumbered for certain projects within one year of the impact fee being collected. The question that we've had or the way that we're interpreting that is it's going to be impact fee encumbered within one year to the capital fund and we're working on that and tracking that as staff. Other redline ordinance amendments that we were previously drafting as a result of these 12 plus workshops, some of which will be redrafted to reflect these law changes that we've been working on and as we get a new City Planner pulling them into that process as well. We did also share with the Planning Board as well as the Long-Range Planning Committee a list of bills that we were tracking that affect housing. These are probably the primary 2 but there's a whole list I can show you after this that we can send the links out and make sure that you have.

B. Forthcoming Draft Ordinance Amendments - Chapter 179 - Site Plan Review: Updates - Design Guidelines, Application Submissions, and Urban Greenspace standards; Chapter 188 - Subdivision of Land: Updates - Application Submissions (financial & technical capacity), and Conservation Cluster Subdivisions provisions; Chapter 230 - Zoning: In process of re-drafting to appropriately conform to new state housing laws.

1. CALL TO ORDER

On Monday, September 22, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. a City Council Meeting was held in the City Hall Auditorium

2. RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jodi MacPhail recognized the members of the Council and determined that the Councilors present constituted a quorum. Councilors present: Douglas Edwards, Joshua Parks, Joseph Gunn, Michael Burman, Philip Hatch, Tricia Huot, and Nathan Johnston. Interim City Administrator Emily Cole-Prescott was also present this evening.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. GENERAL

Mayor MacPhail invited State Senator Donna Bailey, Representative to Legislature Dist. 129 Marshall Archer, and Representative to Legislature Dist. 130 Lynn Copeland up to provide some legislative updates.

A. Legislative Updates

- State Senator Donna Bailey - Housing & Zoning - I would just like to say first of all that kind of the overarching themes were twofold. As far as bills that were passed as well as ones that are carried over, those two themes are first and foremost to do whatever we could to incentivize and increase affordable housing stock. So, a lot of the bills had to do with looking at impediments to developers or others putting forward affordable housing. The other theme is to try to preserve the affordable housing we already have, and a lot of that was focused on preservation of mobile home park communities. Ironically enough, I think you'll be hearing from our neighbors in a mobile home park community tonight. It wasn't planned this way, but sometimes those things just work out. But just keep in mind those are kind of the two overarching themes that I picked up on when I kind of looked at the bills that we passed. So, first in regard to keeping what affordable housing we do have and in particular preserving housing in mobile home park communities. We passed a lot of laws. A lot of them had to do with either giving money to or finding ways to give money in the future to the mobile home park preservation

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and assistance fund. That's the fund that is housed at Maine State Housing but allows mobile home park communities that want to purchase their park where residents want to purchase their park. It helps them financially to be able to do that. We put \$3 million into that fund, but we also passed a number of laws that assess per lot fees that also assess some capital gains taxes and that money would also go into the preservation fund. So, trying to keep that going. As well as there is a bill on the special appropriations table to put more money in that fund should we find that it's needed with the number of mobile home park communities where the residents are trying to buy their park. It may very well be that that fund will be depleted. And so there is a bill on the appropriations table to allow us to add to that. Again, we also updated the law having to do with residents buying the mobile home park and making it so that they in fact do have a true right of first refusal. You may remember the law that we passed last session last year didn't have a true right of first refusal, they just had to be given an opportunity to make an offer, but the sellers could refuse that. Now, the law is going to be should the residents match the offer of the pending sale that in fact the residents would have that right of first refusal and be able to purchase the park. So, that was an important update. We also tried to give some incentives to sellers to sell to residents as opposed to what we're seeing often are out of state equity and hedge funds and big corporations coming in and buying these parks. One of them, for example, is to exempt from the real estate transfer tax a sale to a resident owned community which can be considerable considering that sometimes these parks sell for \$20, \$30, \$40 million. So, that both saves money for the purchasers, the residents, but also the seller has to pay half of that. So, it's kind of I call it kind of a carrot, you know, just saying, "Well, you don't have to sell to the residents, but boy, you're going to save a buttload of money if you do. So, here's a little incentive for you to do that." We also extended the rent to own protections to mobile home purchasers. Currently, we have a lot of consumer protections for rent to own rent to own situations for real estate and we just made sure to extend all of those for those buying mobile homes as well. We also strengthened the notice requirements and protections for owners if they attempt to increase rents and fees. I think you're going to hear a lot about that from the residents at Blue Haven because they got one of these notices. We have discovered that as much as we did, we probably have to do more and we are looking at that for the second session, but it is a start. And we also passed a law to improve the data collection around mobile home park communities so that we can get a better handle on what's going on for example the lot rents, you know, what is being charged for lot rent and other fees across the state. In addition, speaking of the real estate transfer tax, we also increased the real estate transfer tax on portions of property sales over \$1 million and that money again is going to go into a fund for new first-time home buyers. We also eliminated the real estate transfer tax for who first-time home buyers. And that is again for both the buyers and the sellers to both help first-time home buyers purchase a property and get into the housing market because we all know that's the hardest thing is getting that first house right. But again, also adding that incentive to sellers to say, "Well, if you, you know, sell to these first-time home buyers, we know you have a choice, for example, of who you sell to you'll save a little bit of money because you won't have to pay the real estate transfer tax. So again, kind of using that carrot approach wherever we can. Then on the other side of trying to offer incentives and make it easier to build affordable housing, we did pass a number of bills to cut unnecessary red tape, amending zoning regulations, and updating development and financing laws to facilitate faster housing production. You heard about LD1829, which is probably our biggest and most comprehensive bill that I can go through the highlights if you want me to. I don't know how much briefing you've had on that, but that really did look at it from many angles. And again, the idea is to make it easier for folks to build affordable housing. We also passed a law, it's a resolve to look at categorizing and standardizing different building types and that is due to report back on 11/4/2026. So that's a ways out. That's LD 546. We also updated the site location law other than LD1829 making it clear that if you do new construction on a pre-approved plan that that doesn't trigger a new site location law application. There was some uncertainty around that. So, we clarified that. We also updated in 1783 the affordable housing tiff. I don't know if the city has been using that yet. But we did update that and allow for a little carryover of the monies to make it a little more user friendly, if you will, and again incentivize municipalities to use the affordable housing tiff. We also increased the amount for the Maine Historic Property Rehab Tax Credit for those who use that and sometimes that can be used again for affordable housing. So, we increase that amount. It hadn't gone up for quite some time. We established a working group to examine the types of red tape that may be unnecessarily slowing down production of housing. That is with the GOPIF Office of the Governor and they're due to report back at the end of this year. So that may trigger some legislation once they do their report. Although I think a lot of what they were looking at was covered by 1829, but we'll see what else they might come up with. As far as other things that were carried over or kind of looking to the future, we did establish a real estate property tax relief task force. You may have read about that in the paper. And that's due to have its interim report in January 2026. So, we may have some legislation out of that. And then its final report is due in December 2026. So, that's going to be kind of ongoing, and you may want to keep up with that and monitor that. We also have on the special appropriations table 1167 which is a pilot program for nonprofit housing developers to rehabilitate existing aging stock and that's a mainstay housing authority grant program. So, we'll see if that gets funded but that would be interesting. As far as other carryover bills, there are a few in the Housing and Economic Development Committee, a lot of them I think again were actually covered in 1829. So, I'm not sure what's going to happen with them, but three that I noted you might want to follow. And just as an aside, if you want to be on the interested parties list for the housing and economic development committee, you can just go to the committee's web page and you go to mailing list and then you can subscribe. Emily's looking at me. She's probably already subscribed, but all of you can as well. And so that you can keep track of what they are doing. That's probably the primary committee that's going to be dealing with housing and zoning issues if that's what you're interested in. But 3 bills that are on their carryover list that may be of interest to you. One is 1806, an Act to Create a Residential Renter Unit Registry, and that would be set up that either a municipality could do it or it would be housed at the Secretary of State's office if a municipality doesn't want to do it. So again, that hasn't been acted on yet, but I expect it will be acted on next session at the beginning of next year. Next is 1921, an Act to Create a Statewide Housing Resolution Board. This is a bill that is based on something that they set up in New Hampshire in 2020 and they've had pretty good success with and this would be to set up an own special board as opposed to going to court for reviewing decisions of municipal reviewing authorities such as the planning board for example to kind of streamline that process. So, that's an interesting bill that you might want to follow. And then 1926, an Act to Require Increased Housing Density or Lower Minimum Lot Sizes for Workforce Housing. And workforce housing is defined as being under 220% of the medium income for the area. So, that's another one you might want to just keep an eye on.

- Rep. to Legislature - Dist. 129 - Marshall Archer - Student Health and Learning Environments- Several new laws focus on safer and healthier schools: LD 11 - An Act Regarding Temperature Standards for School Buildings (Public Law 2025, Chapter 308). Establishes minimum and maximum classroom temperature standards to ensure safe learning conditions. LD 1887 - Resolve, To Improve Air Quality and Ventilation in Newly Constructed Schools (Resolve 2025, Chapter 56). Requires new school construction

projects to meet higher ventilation and air quality standards. LD 1248 - An Act Regarding Physical Escort and Restraint and Seclusion of Students in Schools (Public Law 2025, Chapter 266). Revises the rules for physical restraint, escort, and seclusion, improving protections for students. LD 211 - Resolve, Directing the Department of Education to Communicate the Importance of Adopting Seizure Action Plans (Resolve 2025, Chapter 72). Directs schools to prepare seizure action plans for students with epilepsy or seizure disorders. Student Support and Stability - The Legislature addressed student homelessness and nutrition: LD 384 - An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness (Public Law 2025, Chapter 453). Creates a framework to reduce student homelessness and improve educational stability. LD 1858 - An Act to Promote Local Seafood in Schools (Public Law 2025, Chapter 301). Encourages the inclusion of Maine-harvested seafood in school meals, supporting nutrition and local industry. School Finance and Governance. We worked to modernize school funding and improve accountability: LD 318 - Resolve, Directing the Maine Education Policy Research Institute and the Department of Education to Recommend Changes to the Essential Programs and Services Funding Formula (Resolve 2025, Chapter 84). Begins a review of Maine's funding formula to ensure equity between communities. LD 1103 - An Act Regarding Unallocated Balances in a School Administrative Unit School Budget (Public Law 2025, Chapter 208). Improves transparency by requiring school districts to report unallocated balances more clearly. LD 1718 - An Act to Establish the Maine Charter School Commission as a Public. Instrumentality of the State (Public Law 2025, Chapter 320). Strengthens the independence and authority of the state's charter school commission. Higher Education and Workforce Pathways - Several measures address higher education and career readiness: LD 98 - An Act to Include School Counselors in the Educators for Maine Program (Public Law 2025, Chapter 58). Expands loan forgiveness eligibility to school counselors, recognizing the importance of mental health in education. LD 375 - Resolve, Directing the University of Maine System to Study the Feasibility of Distance-Learning Programs at the University of Maine School of Law (Resolve 2025, Chapter 46). Commissions a study on expanding law school access through distance education. LD 1327 - Resolve, Directing the University of Maine System to Study Student-Teacher Compensation (Resolve 2025, Chapter 88). Examines whether student-teachers should be compensated for their work. LD 651 - An Act to Codify the Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Pilot Program (Public Law 2025, Chapter 180). Establishes a permanent loan repayment program for healthcare providers, addressing workforce shortages. LD 1653 - An Act to Develop Maine's Credentialed Workforce (Public Law 2025, Chapter 324). Creates pathways to expand credentialed workforce opportunities, connecting education to employment in high-demand fields. Taken together, these more than twenty laws represent a broad investment in Maine's education system. They touch every level, K-12 classrooms, higher education, student health, and workforce development. While the day-to-day implementation of these policies rests with our school boards, it is essential that the City Council remain aware of these changes. Many may have downstream effects on municipal budgets, capital planning, or long-term financial obligations, particularly in areas like school construction standards, funding transparency, and student support services. As your Representative and my fellow delegation of colleagues, we will continue to advocate for Saco's interests at the State House and ensure that our community is well-positioned to adapt to these changes. I look forward to working with the Council and with our School Department to support both our students and our taxpayers. Thank you for your time and continued partnership in advancing education and civic well-being in Saco.

- Rep. to Legislature - Dist. 130 - Lynn Copeland - I've got some updates on bills pending or passed into law during the first half of the 132nd legislature related to Saco Shoreline, and I like Representative Archer, we were asked to focus on this past session. Well, this first part of this session, I only have a few. LD 228, which is an Act to Allow Coastal Seawalls to be raised by up to 2 feet in order to accommodate predicted sea level rise, was uh is now Chapter 122 public law. And great thanks to Senator Bailey for getting that going and I think that our whole delegation supports it. The second one I have is an Act to Update the Definition of Coastal Wetlands under the Natural Resources Protection Act and the Mandatory Shoreline Zoning laws. That's LD 65 which is now Chapter 28 public law and there's also LD 560 and this is one that has been carried over to our next session, which is January to April, an Act to Authorize the General Fund Bond issue to Improve Coastal Climate Resiliency. Again, this is led by Senator Bailey and thank you for all the hard work. Back in the 130th Legislature, we're in the 132nd now. LD 946 was made into law under Chapter 85 resolves. I would like to remind you that in 2021, Governor Mills approved this measure regarding Shore Damage Mitigation Project in Saco Bay, and it remains in effect. So, there were people where I was hearing different things from saying that you know it's over when that session is over. Well, it's not. I had the analyst in the state house look at it and I also had a review from one of my neighbors and it is definitely still in effect. So, the beach plantings we still have state resources and there's other things in that as well but I just wanted to let you know that that still is active. All we need is somebody to act on it. There's a lot going on, but I'm going to restrict my remarks to the legislation. And I know that Saco Save our Shores Saco Bay has done a great job in communicating what's going on in that's in their purview and I appreciate their great communication on Facebook which I really go on. They've been fantastic and I applaud their work.

5. COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL

- Councilor Edwards - Age Friendly Saco has been very busy. There's some good news. After a thorough search process, Age Friendly Saco is thrilled to announce the appointment of Rebecca, hopefully I'm getting the last name correct here, Hadiaris, as the new executive director of Age Friendly Saco effective October 21, 2025. Becky brings over 20 years of experience in supporting older adults and caregivers through strategic programs, community-based services, and collaborative advocacy. Her expertise in fostering inclusive, accessible communities aligns perfectly with age friendly Saco's mission to make Saco a welcoming place for all people of all ages. Under her guidance, they anticipate continued growth in the initiatives including enhanced transportation options, health and wellness programs, and intergenerational activities. Also, the Age Friendly Saco will be sponsoring the Wellness Fair and it'll be held again this year at Thornton Academy. The fair will be held on November 8th starting at 9:30 a.m. Free donuts and coffee and lunch is provided in addition to a vendor fair and seminars. Registration is required. They also have a sooner they have a meal on October 9th at the club. You can call to register for either event at their office and that phone number is 207-710-5029. As a as a reminder, it's hard as you're older to make friends. If you have friends, you can bring them along, but if you don't, go to these events. You'll find some. And last but not least, Age Friendly Saco will be hosting the Sand Buckets for Seniors event in collaboration with Thornton Academy on Saturday, November 15th. Anyone interested in receiving a bucket of treated sand should call the office at same number 207-710-5029 to request one.

- Mayor MacPhail - Congratulations to Rebecca. We're happy to work with her and looking forward to that.
- Councilor Johnston - The end of August, Traffic Safety and BPAC had a joint meeting. It was a workshop where we I think it was about 3 hours maybe longer where we built a matrix for the Transportation Master Plan of the areas that ranking the areas that most are in need of infrastructure upgrades. I've personally thought it went well. I don't know about others, but I thought it was highly productive. So, I know I had mentioned that prior. I just wanted to give an update that we did hold it, and I felt it was productive. Then last Thursday we had Traffic Safety meeting, full agenda. I want to say that was close to 3 hours and I mean it the issues or requests really were throughout, you know, rural parts of Saco to the more dense areas. Again, just as an update or information you know we're seeing more and more of these requests and personally it's I view it as the challenges we're facing with a growing community. So, I just increased the budget back in in May for these expenditures but it's looking like we're going to spend that rather quickly, and so just kind of an update that I am anticipating that we'll probably have many more requests going forward as we start seeing some of these things implemented.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

The following individuals chose to speak:

- Kathy, Blue Haven Mobile Park
- Brian Laroche, 19 Meserve Circle
- Rodney Champagne, 17 Clayton Drive
- Linda Babbitt, 5 Robin Street
- Ray Hallczuk, 16 Gallant Drive

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilor Hatch moved, Councilor Huot seconded, to approve the City Council minutes of the September 8, 2025, September 9, 2025, and September 15, 2025, meeting as written. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

8. CONSENT ITEMS

9. ACTION ITEMS

A. (One Reading) City Street Acceptance Request per Chapter 186 standards: Amari Court & Dupee Drive in the Amari Springs Subdivision

Councilor Parks moved, Councilor Edwards seconded, to table the motion until the next meeting on October 6, 2025. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

B. (Public Hearing) Renewal Application for a Special Entertainment Permit-Biddeford-Saco Elks Lodge No. 1597

Councilor Gunn moved, Councilor Parks seconded, to open the Public Hearing. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

There were no public comments.

Councilor Gunn moved, Councilor Edwards seconded, to close the Public Hearing and be it ordered that the City Council grant the renewal application submitted by Biddeford-Saco Elks Lodge No. 1597 for a Special Entertainment permit to be concurrent with the establishment's liquor license to expire on November 6, 2026. Further move to approve the Order. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

C. (One Reading) Follow Up from the Citizen Grievance Review Committee: Planning Board Standard Operating Procedure

Councilor Hatch moved, Councilor Gunn seconded, Be it Ordered that Saco City Council acknowledges receipt of the Planning Board Standard Operating Procedures document revised through September 16, 2025, and further move that Recommendation #2 of the Final Report is now complete. Further move to approve the Order.

Councilor Johnston noted as a friendly amendment, that under item #8 Appointments & Resignation, the updated Charter a couple years back includes City Council on a resignation.

Mayor MacPhail called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Follow Up from the Citizen Grievance Review Committee: City Code of Ethics

Interim City Administrator Emily Cole-Prescott provided a brief summary of the follow up from the Saco Citizens Grievance Review Committee on recommendation #3 from the report regarding reporting a Code of Ethics or conduct concern. This was one of the items that was unclear on how to submit a concern. The other aspect was the training, how to use it in the future. We will be asking our City Attorney to build this into our training when she comes to speak with you when we do training in December.

Human Resources Director Hunter Cox stated this is in the workshop stage right now. Some things that we're considering when we're looking at access is we want to have it easy, accessible by the public without a whole lot of hassle. A template form has been created and would be stored on the website under Council, Boards and Committees, City Code of Ethics & Conduct. It may eventually move to the "How Do I..." section. There are a lot of legal considerations that go into things like this. We're working on who this form will be submitted to, and it looks like HR because we're kind of the guardians of private information. From there it will go to the appropriate parties depending on who the complaint is about. So, we have a little more work to do on this. This complaint form is for ethics violations. There are things we can do to limit superfluous things and work with the IT Department and things like that.

City Administrator Cole-Prescott noted that this form would be put on the website now and we're going to work together to finish up the form. Please provide your comments now and then what we'll do is tweak the form and ask for input on the Code of Ethics and the form itself when the new City Administrator comes on board.

11. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Interim City Administrator Emily Cole-Prescott provided administrative updates.

12. COUNCIL DISCUSSION AND COMMENT

- Councilor Burman - I've been reflecting on the public comments we heard from the people at the Blue Haven Mobile Home Park and the rent increase and some of the facts they provided about the amount of increase and also the actions of some of our neighboring towns and enacting moratoriums. I know very little about this and I'm not sure in my mind after only thinking about it for an hour or so what role the city should play. But I think I would greatly appreciate if the City Administrator and city staff could bring to Council at some future time but before the rent increase goes into effect about what our options are, what our neighboring towns have done, what a moratorium might look like and what effects it would have. I'd be very curious to learn more about what role we might play in this situation to better educate myself on how and whether we might be able to help those residents and what role we should play. So, I'd be really grateful if that could be put on a future agenda.
- Councilor Johnston - Along the same lines, I was just going to throw my support for getting this before council for discussion.
- Councilor Hatch - I'm going to jump on that bandwagon. So, there's three of us.
- Councilor Huot - I just wanted to welcome one of our citizens, Tracy Collins, back to Saco. She biked from Portland, Oregon to Portland, Maine with a dear friend of hers to raise money and awareness for Alzheimer's and did an incredible job and was welcomed back to Portland yesterday.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilor Hatch moved, Councilor Burman seconded, Be it ordered that the City Council enter into executive session, pursuant to [M.R.S. A. Title 1, Chapter 13, Subchapter 1, §405 (6)]: (A) Personnel Matters - City Administrator Position and (E) Consultation between the municipality and its attorney. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas. Time: 8:09 p.m.

EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor MacPhail, and City Councilors: Edwards, Parks, Gunn, Burman, Hatch, Huot, Johnston, and Interim City Administrator Cole-Prescott were all present.

Councilor Hatch moved, Councilor Burman seconded, to exit executive session. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas. Time: 9:43 p.m.

14. REPORT FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilor Burman stated there was no report.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Johnston moved, Councilor Edwards seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas. Time: 9:44 p.m.

Attest: _____

Michele L. Hughes, City Clerk