



SACO CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 12, 2026 - 6:30 PM

Mayor MacPhail started the Workshop at 6:32 p.m.

Joint Workshop Meeting with Planning Board

Planning Board members present: Jeffrey Brochu, Katharine Paolini, Matthew Provencal, Joyce Leary-Clark, and Jim Molleur. Deputy City Administrator Emily Cole-Prescott and City Planner Charles Tetelman were also present.

LD Review

Phil Saucier Esq., from Bernstein Shur presented an overview of LD 1829 and LD 1498. LD 1829 - An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses by Amending the Laws Governing Housing Density, which provided amendments to affordable housing density, amendments to up to 4 dwelling units on a lot, amendments to accessory dwelling units, and additional changes. LD 1498 - An Act to Address Maine's Housing Crisis by limiting Municipal Impact Fees on Housing Development, adds additional requirements if municipalities choose to adopt an Impact Fee Ordinance. Other Planning related laws enacted in 2025: LD 1246 - Establishes a Working Group to Review the Process of Setting Impact Fees; LD 1184 - Requires municipalities with more than 4,000 residents to report building permit data and c/o data, including for affordable units - reporting must begin January 31, 2026; LD 1428 - Child care and family care providers are permitted use in areas zoning for residential properties; LD 1655 - Municipalities cannot prohibit people from keeping chickens on their residential property.

Attorney Saucier addressed Councilors and Planning Board members questions.

Section 4-34 Discussion

Discussion ensued on the recommendation from the Saco Citizens Grievance Review Committee to add/modify the language contained in Chapter 4 Administrative Code Article VII, Section 4-34 Planning Board organization.

Workshop: Wave Gauge Before and After the Camp Ellis Jetty Project

David Plavin, Chairman of the Shoreline Commission noted that he and Will Kochtitzky have been talking for a while about how they are going to monitor the effect or ineffectiveness of the Spur Jetty that the Army Corps is going to build. I think it's pretty evident from just Army Corps dialogue and things in general that they're not going to be the most reliable source for creating measurements or data from the jetty that we will definitely need to determine its effectiveness. So, we've come up with a proposal where the city would buy 2 wave gauges. We put 1 in front and 1 in back of the proposed jetty site and we would like to get it in there sooner rather than later so we can do some comparison before, during, and after. Will Kochtitzky runs the geographic information systems lab at the University of New England. He's a great partner has provided all sorts of data for us, and I think the city is going to need to have as many data sources as it possibly can. There's already a few. There's a webcam mounted on my house that's pointed directly at the Jetty site, and we have other parties that are interested, but this would be a great opportunity.

Will Kochtitzky from the University of New England presented the wave gauge for jetty measurements. Currently there is a spotter buoy in Camp Ellis between Ram and Eagle Islands which shows you the waves in real time. The proposal tonight is for the city to purchase 2 wave gauges from Ocean Sensor System. We want to quantify how much of the wave energy is dissipated by the spur jetty and also need to quantify the wave height and period. Cost is \$4,575 per sensor and \$110 per battery (\$9,370 Total). The challenge is shallow water and no mounting structure. They would be deployed attached to a mooring with a line and buoy for retrieval. Processing to happen at UNE. The US Army Corp of Engineers provided a slide showing a 10-year storm condition showing significant wave height along the shoreline and what they expect to happen without the project and with the project.

Plan going forward: City of Saco to draft MOU with UNE; Jetty construction could happen as soon as February, likely late; UNE will deploy sensors as soon as they arrive; Initial deployment until jetty installation, if possible; secondary deployment for at least three months post-construction, then deploy for another year to monitor jetty 2027 to early 2028.

Mr. Kochtitzky, and Shoreline Commission members David Plavin and Kevin Roche addressed Councilors questions.

Mayor MacPhail stated this item will come back as an agenda item at an upcoming meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER

On Monday, January 12, 2026, at 7:50 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, Jeffrey Onnen, William Gayle, Tricia Huot, and Nathan Johnston. City Administrator Ryan Pelletier was also present this evening.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. GENERAL

5. COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL

Councilor Edwards - Just wanted to make people aware one of the groups that I am a liaison for, Age Friendly Saco, is starting something that sounds actually pretty great on the 15th, which based on my calendar is 3 days away from now. It's called the Romeo Club. They'll be having it at the Lucky Logger Restaurant. The Romeo Club, which is retired old men eating out, is a monthly breakfast gathering designed to encourage social connection, fellowship, and community among retired and semi-retired men. The Romeo Club is part of a national movement focused on reducing social isolation by bringing men together in a relaxed and formal setting. Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 8:00 a.m. at the Lucky Logger restaurant located in the Scamman Street Shopping Center in Saco. So, it's intentionally simple. There are no dues, no applications, no fees, and no formal programming. Participants simply show up, enjoy breakfast, and engage in conversation. I will say though, it's not simply showing up. You do have to register. Space is limited to 30 participants. Though, if you go there for breakfast and you see 30 guys there, you might be able to sneak in. But for more information or to register, you'll want to call 207-710-5029. You'll be reaching Age Friendly Saco.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

The following individuals chose to speak:

- Sarah Gardner, 17 Pine Haven Street
- Kathy Dobbins, 28 Meserve Circle
- Brian LaRoche, 19 Meserve Circle
- Lisa Desrochers, 18 Pine Haven Street
- Daniel Richards, 7 Pine Haven Street
- Hope Lambert, 14 Pheasant Road
- Donna Stevens, 32 Pine Haven Street
- Robert Henry, 24 Pheasant Road
- Gayle Janes, 29 Pine Haven Street

7. ACTION ITEMS

A. (One Reading) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)-CAD/RMS Project

Councilor Parks moved, Councilor Johnston seconded, Be it Ordered that the Saco City Council hereby approves the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Biddeford Police Department and the City of Saco Police Department included in the January 12, 2025, City Council meeting packet. Further move to approve the Order. The motion passed with six (6) yeas.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Draft Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Pilot Policy

Parks and Recreation Director Ryan Sommer - In regards of the Energy Committee, we meet once a month since April of 2025. We installed an EV level 2 charging station at the Community Center. It has been a huge success, but up until this point, there really hasn't been a policy. So, we're looking to move a policy forward which would be to maximize the maximum parking time of 3 hours at the EV charging station. To use the QR code, it will direct the person paying for the Flowbird parking app which we have for the payment process, and the rate would be 2 times the standard rate for electricity per kilowatt hours of charging time to be reviewed and updated every year during budget season. So, it would go on the fee schedule. What we're looking to do, kind of talk about it and whatever the standard is at on January 1st would be brought into the fee schedule for the for the budget season to be implemented on July 1 of that year. We are looking to begin the policy on July 1, 2026. So again, to get some information out to make sure people understand that there will be a fee associated with it and the policy to be taken into effect during the budget process.

Director Sommer addressed Councilors questions.

9. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

City Administrator Ryan Pelletier provided administrative updates.

10. COUNCIL DISCUSSION AND COMMENT

- Councilor Johnston - Several things. For starters, we obviously just had the public testimony on the mobile home park and all those issues. So, and I know there's, perhaps things working in the background, but I just wanted to publicly throw my support behind both the 180-day moratorium and some level of stabilization ordinance with the rents. I think we should run them at tandem. We may not have to adopt, the ordinance, but I think having them move together makes sense while they continue to negotiate. So, with that said, see the other thing, so I do have some comments. I was absent last meeting. But I do want to state before I make these comments that my comments are for the record. So, I would like those included in the minutes. Again, I don't want my comments to be misconstrued as criticism of council. They're not, nor are they in hindsight as I sat at home and watched the meeting. I do want to express my disappointment in the deliberations and the results of the issuance of the special entertainment permit for River Winds Farm. My issue has nothing to do with the establishment or the worthiness of the permit. The issue stems from process, the governing documents behind the establishment's ability to operate and desire to protect all parties. Would have liked to see council table the item pending further legal review based on the testimony that was submitted by the public. I personally felt and again had I been here I would have gone right along with what was being presented. I think the questions raised have merit in this overall subject. During the Contract Zone review process, again, I recognize many of you or at least 2 of you were, well, 3 if we count the administrator were not part of that process. But during that process, there was a specific discussion in regards to River Winds Farm and the placement in the 3 so-called status buckets or whatever we ended up with for a title during an executive session. It was during that discussion that I questioned the validity of the August 9th, 2021, River Winds Farm CZA amendment based on legal precedent set by Dahlem vs. City of Saco. Months went by and lacking the political support of council to go my preferred route, which for anybody that had listened to those public meetings was taking up every voided CZA that we had and running them through the process to create again current legal not while maybe they're repealed or not ordinances. Like I said, there wasn't council support from that and the conversations I had had, and ultimately, that's when I moved towards having a council resolution that would kind of put the buckets, so to speak, behind us and we can move forward. But I will say that on 11/17/2025, council acted on that resolution. My comments that evening indicated that there are and will likely be a lot of questions we can't simply predict or answer until they come forward, and that there are uncharted waters that remain. This comment was very much directed at the elements of this very CZA as well as several others. I fully anticipated council to address, clear up the issues as they presented themselves. That was again what I had come to terms with a resolution was that hey we don't need to hold up this entire process but there are things that are going to prop up through future years that we should address at that time. Essentially, I was looking to take up those scenarios as they presented themselves. Perhaps you were all satisfied with what was presented, as information in the packet as well as public testimony. Again, I don't question your vote in that sense, you move forward with your decision. That's how life is. I have, however, was not. I believe we collectively still have work to do. These issues are not simply going to go away. Very likely could lead to future issues. So again, I think that also that evening I made what I felt was advice to council, which was act only when you're ready and satisfied. I don't know. I think that there was a lot that was left that should have been deliberated further on, but again, that's my opinion. I will certainly move forward with the administration on trying to correct some of these issues. Oh, I did want to say I appreciated council enacting the changes to Chapter 4. That was something that was long outstanding. I think it dated back to at least 5 years ago when I first really saw the major issues with Chapter 4. So, I appreciate you all enacting that without me here, and of course, I also owe a thank you to former Councilor Hatch who worked with me on that, and of course, city staff that really did the major lifting there. I think that's it for now.
- Councilor Gayle - I guess I'm just following up on that and some of the public comment. It looked like maybe we had 3 meetings before the current moratorium ends and so I think maybe there's stuff happening behind the scenes but I'm hopeful that we we'll be able to discuss this. Mayor MacPhail - The meeting of the February 9th would be the last meeting prior to the current expiration on the 13th. Councilor Gayle - Yes, at least 180 and I don't know if they necessarily have to be concurrent, but I think the workshop or looking at that ordinance would be a good idea. But I think the priority it sounds like to me should at least be the 180-day moratorium and not to let the ordinance get hung up or delaying that 180-day extension.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilor Parks moved, Councilor Edwards 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)]: (C) Real Estate-Economic Development-Credit Enhancement Agreement Request. The motion passed with six (6) yeas. Time: 8:33 p.m.

EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor MacPhail and City Councilors: Edwards, Parks, Onnen, Gayle, Huot, Johnston, and City Administrator Pelletier were all present.

Councilor Huot moved, Councilor Parks seconded, to exit executive session. The motion passed with six (6) yeas. Time: 9:18 p.m.

12. REPORT FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilor Johnston stated there was no report.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Edwards moved, Councilor Onnen seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with six (6). Time: 9:19 p.m.

Attest: _____

Michele L. Hughes, City Clerk

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