



SACO CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 14, 2026 - 6:30 PM

CITY HALL AUDITORIUM

Mayor MacPhail started the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Joint School Board Meeting

School Board present: Beth Johnston, Sarah Truman, Kevin Roche, Carolyn Woronoff, Jennifer Preble, and April Kidder.

Superintendent Jeremy Ray and Assistant Superintendent Margaret Parkhurst reviewed the Saco Schools Academic Outcomes, Grants & Partnerships, Finances, Demographics, Partnerships, and a Building Project Update.

Workshop-Pepperell Park Design

Mayor MacPhail called for a recess at 7:13 p.m.

Mayor MacPhail reconvened the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

Parks and Recreation Director Ryan Sommer provided an overview of the history of the Pepperell Park which was donated to the city in the early 1800's and outlined the benefactors' restrictions on its uses.

Todd Richardson, Richardson & Associates Landscape Architects, provided an overview of the Pepperell Park background, outline of Steering Committee and public process, public survey, masterplan 3 options and levels of investment ranging from \$3.5 million to \$9 million. committee recommendation and discussion, and next steps.

1. CALL TO ORDER

On Monday, September 14, 2026, at 8:14 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, Sandra Guay, Jeffrey Onnen, William Gayle, Tricia Huot, and Nathan Johnston. City Administrator Ryan Pelletier was also present this evening.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. GENERAL

A. Patricia Quinn - Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Executive Director Patricia Quinn provided an overview of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority priorities, mission, vision, what they do, employees, partnership agreements, performance metrics for FY26 Year End, ridership history, accomplishments, and planned improvements.

5. COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL

- Councilor Huot - I just want to congratulate Dyer Library for a successful summer reading program. They had over 500 participants this summer. I also want to mention they have an art exhibit opening September 19th featuring three local artists, Bob Dunn, Steve Shiman, and Ray Lund. On September 19th from 10 to noon, Age Friendly Saco is working in conjunction with the library for a repair cafe. If you have clothing or items you need repaired, definitely check it out.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

The following individuals chose to speak:

- Gary Prolman, 743 Portland Road
- Katharine Paolini, 94 Beach Street
- Jennifer Cragen, 3 Pheasant Road
- Donna Bailey, 7 Scrimshaw Lane
- Lisa Desrochers, 18 Pine Haven Street
- Sarah Belanger, 5 Sparrow Drive
- Sarah Giles-Gardner, 17 Pine Haven Street
- Linda Libby, 16 Dode Drive
- John Bett, 1 Gallant Drive
- Hope Lambert, 14 Pheasant Road
- Barb Thomas, 2 Meserve Circle
- Kathy Dobbins, 28 Meserve Circle
- Brian Laroche, 19 Meserve Circle
- Mike Garrity, 6 Beacon Avenue

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilor Edwards moved, Councilor Gayle seconded, to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2026 City Council meeting as written. The motion passe with seven (7) yeas.

8. CONSENT ITEMS

Mayor MacPhail read the Consent Agenda items #A - #I into the record.

Councilor Johnston noted that on item #A, in prior appointments for the Historic preservation Commission, I abstained on previous appointments of my mother and business partner Philip Grime. But given that we're reappointing the entire board I'm just looking for confirmation from council that they're okay with me voting on the entire package of consent items.

Mayor MacPhail asked the councilors if any of them had an objection to Councilor Johnston voting. There were no objections.

Councilor Edwards moved, Councilor Huot seconded, to approve Consent Agenda items #A - #I as follows:

A. Confirm Mayor's Reappointments to the Historic preservation Commission - Chris Delano, David Arenstam, Phillip Grime, Diane Huot, Elizabeth Johnston, Nicholas Labelle, Angela Presby and Stephen Ryan - Be it Ordered that the City Council confirm the Mayor's Reappointments of Chris Delano, David Arenstam, Phillip Grime, Diana Huot, Elizabeth Johnston, Nicholas Labelle, Angela Presby and Stephen Ryan to the Historic Preservation Commission, each for a term that would expire on June 30th, 2029. Further move to approve the Order.

B. Confirm Mayor's Reappointment to the Shoreline Commission - Joseph DeSiato - Be it Ordered that the City Council confirm the Mayor's reappointment of Joseph Desiato to the Shoreline Commission, for a three-year term ending on September 14, 2029. Further move to approve the Order.

C. Confirm Mayor's Reappointment to the Conservation Commission - Matthew Hokanson - Be it Ordered that the City Council confirm the Mayor's reappointment of Mathew Hokanson to the Conservation Commission, for a three-year term, expiring on September 14 2029. Further move to approve the Order.

D. Emergency Operations policy Update - Be it Ordered that the Saco City Council acknowledges receipt of the York County EMA Director's approval of Saco's Emergency Operations Plan Update. Further move to approve the Order.

E. Underground Line Easement from the City of Saco to Central Maine Power (CMP) at the Saco Transportation Center - Be it Ordered that the Saco City Council authorizes the City Administrator to sign the easement to Central Maine Power Company. Further

move to approve the Order.

F. Council Schedule for October 5th, 19th, and 26th, November 2nd, 9th, and 16th, and December 7th, 14th, and 21st - The City Council approves the October 2026-December 2026 meeting dates.

G. Annual Report Filing Extension - I move to grant Staff an additional forty-five (45) day extension for filing the Annual Report.

H. Combined Massage Therapist and Establishment License - Nicholas DeForest - Be it Ordered that the City Council grant Nicholas DeForest d/b/a Convalescent Massage a Combined Massage Therapist and Establishment License in accordance with the Codes of the City of Saco, Chapter 138. Further move to approve the Order.

I. Combined Massage Therapist and Establishment License - Angela Poisson - Be it Ordered that the City Council grant Angela Poisson d/b/a Cloud Nine Wellness & Massage a Combined Massage Therapist and Establishment License in accordance with the Codes of the City of Saco, Chapter 138. Further move to approve the Order.

The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

9. ACTION ITEMS

A. (One Reading) Purchasing Policy Update

Councilor Johnston moved, Councilor Gayle seconded, Be it Ordered that the Saco City Council approves the Purchasing Policy Update. Further move to approve the Order. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

B. (One Reading) Housing Action Plan

Councilor Parks moved, Councilor Edwards seconded, Be it Ordered that the City Council hereby approves the Saco Housing Action Plan. Further move to approve the Order. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

C. (One Reading) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the City of Saco & Dyer Library Association (dba Dyer Library Saco Museum)

Councilor Huot moved, Councilor Johnston seconded, Be it Ordered that the City Council authorizes the City Administrator to sign the Memorandum of Understanding Between the City of Saco & Dyer Library Association (dba Dyer Library Saco Museum). Further move to approve the Order.

Councilor Guay - I do want to disclose that I'm on the board of directors at the Dyer Library Saco Museum. If any of the council has any issue with me voting on this MOU matter, just please let me know.

Mayor MacPhail asked if the councilors had any objections to Councilor Guay voting. There were no objections.

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

D. (Final Reading) Mobile Home Park Lot Rent Stabilization Ordinance (Proposed to be Chapter 145 in City Code)

Councilor Parks moved, Councilor Edwards seconded, Be it Ordered that the Saco City Council hereby ordains the Mobile Home Park Lot Rent Stabilization Ordinance (proposed to be Chapter 145 in City Code) as presented in the September 14, 2026 meeting packet. Further move to approve the Order. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas.

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Overview of Venture Forward Program

Deputy City Administrator Emily Cole-Prescott and Economic Development Director Tracey Desjardins provided an overview of the Venture Forward program.

Deputy City Administrator Cole-Prescott - I wanted to share with you where we're at looking at an opportunity to help with economic development specifically for small business is and we had a good meeting with City Administration about potentially signing on to this program and working with The Roux Institute to bring some really good expertise to the City of Saco specifically to help small businesses grow. When a small business grows in Saco, they keep growing at times, not all times, but they can keep growing. It's a concept called economic gardening that Tracey spends a lot of time doing with our businesses, especially in the downtown area. Our plan is to have Chris

Torino, who we met with, Director of Entrepreneurship and National Security Innovation Hub at The Roux Institute to come in and give you a presentation if you're interested in learning more directly from them.

Director Desjardins - Venture Forward Saco, they had approached me last year and it was at a time where they had kind of was just starting this program as a pilot program and I had suggested that they kind of get the program off the ground, see how it's working in other communities and then come back and meet with administration especially when we were going through new administration, and they did. So far, they've been very successful within this is an 8-week program it's an entrepreneurship program. It is utilizing the tools and the expertise that they have at The Roux Center and is helping businesses grow. These could be startup businesses. These could be businesses that are looking to as Emily has stated to expand and basically help them kind of go through that process. We would have the opportunity as far as in working with these companies or potential companies and then hopefully that they would come into Saco and open up their own business here. Some of the communities that they are working in now that have already done the program. Yarmouth was one of the first ones to sign on, Kennebunk, South Berwick, Augusta, Rockland, and Bath and I do know that there's also other communities that they are looking at. This has just really has taken off. If you haven't had the opportunity to visit The Roux Center, it's just a phenomenal place and the projects that are coming out of there are just amazing and what they're doing um within the communities.

Deputy City Administrator Cole-Prescott - So just to expand on a little bit on what Tracey's saying is we would partner with The Roux institute to offer training and cohort opportunities. They would offer it for 15 businesses. The businesses would be based in Saco, and they would have to apply to the program and be selected to the program to work with the mentorship opportunities and the cohort. They create a cohort with this municipal partnership. They work with the businesses. They give them to the tools and resources to help them grow especially in today's changing environment. They help the small businesses have flexible learning environments like Tracey said that there's 8-week programs available. They connect them with resources who are mentors in the community. So, I'm looking at some people that if we did do this program could potentially be mentors for the small businesses. Then they build relationships with those and keep them moving forward. They build relationships with the business owners and continue to give them resources through The Roux Institute and move them forward not through the same program but keep the communications and the connections going long term. So that when you tap into this cohort, it seems as though you tap into a broader network of people who are coming out of The Roux Institute that could help each other with innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives in their businesses.

City Administrator Ryan Pelletier - The only thing I'll add is it is truly a private public partnership between the city and The Roux and I think in addition to there's a private investment that would be made by a local bank to help underwrite some of this. So, it's truly a private public partnership here for Saco.

Deputy City Administrator Cole-Prescott - The cost would be \$30,000. It's \$30,000 because \$10,000 would be from a local bank as part of the partnership piece of that. We do have a Workforce Development Grant initiative. We if the council was amendable to that, we could use funding that is already in the budget for workforce initiatives. Participants go through a screening process and an application process that The Roux would help us manage so that these people wouldn't be selected by Tracey and by me or by the city administration or the council. It would go through a very formal vetting process to assess readiness and make sure that these businesses and these owners are in a state where they could do this program and they could succeed and take a lot out of the program.

This item will be brought back at a future meeting for more discussion.

B. Draft Updates to Chapter 230 Article IX Signs

Deputy City Administrator Emily Cole-Prescott - We are working on a draft Sign Ordinance update. Please send any questions or comments about our current Sign Ordinance. Tracey and Dave did a good job putting together an initial draft of updates to that ordinance. And we are really focused on what the councilors have asked us to look at, which is really the temporary signage provisions, but we want to make sure that if we're opening an ordinance, we capture anything else that you may have questions about.

11. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

City Administrator Ryan Pelletier provided administrative updates.

12. COUNCIL DISCUSSION AND COMMENT

- Councilor Gayle - Just a quick note that on the consent items, I just wanted to highlight a correspondence between the York County EMA director Art Cleaves to Chief Hamel and Saco Fire Department that I'm going to quote him from the correspondence that the EOP is textbook and I would like to use it as an example at an upcoming meeting and that this is an excellent document. So, I just wanted to give a shout out to the Fire Department and the team that put that together and just highlight that awesome work that they did and glad that was in there.
- Councilor Edwards - I don't need an answer tonight. But I'm going to just read what I have. It is clear that the economy will continue to experience high food and fuel prices going into this fall and winter. I would be very surprised if prices fell. I have heard from my constituents that it's getting tougher all around and I'm sure as many of you have. I feel that we did a good job with the budget, but I'm wondering if there are any triggers we have if diesel/heating oil go up much more. Do we have procedures in place to cut back and stay within budget? City Administrator Ryan Pelletier - We will get that information to you, but certainly we will not go over budget one way or the other.

- Mayor MacPhail - I'd like to give a shout out to Tracey and our Economic Development team, the Biddeford Saco Chamber of Commerce and Saco Main Street for an amazing Thursday night first Annual Bites and Beats community block party. The attendance was amazing. Every person that I spoke to said how much fun it was, how much they enjoyed it, and they used the word community event. It was a great way to get out and show some support for our local downtown businesses. Businesses that usually may have closed early, stayed open late. People that don't traditionally come down to Pepperell Square area actually got down for a change. So, everybody had a great time and we're looking forward to next year.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Edwards moved, Councilor Guay seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with seven (7) yeas. Time: 9:41 p.m.

Attest: _____

Michele L. Hughes, City Clerk

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