

City of Biddeford

City Council

April 15, 2025 at 6:00 PM

City Hall Council Chambers & Zoom

1. Roll Call

Council President LaFountain - present
Councilor Lessard - present
Councilor Ortiz - present
Councilor Emhiser - present
Councilor Whiting - present
Councilor Beaupre - present
Councilor Gross - excused
Councilor Belanger - present
Councilor Doughty - present

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Adjustment(s) to Agenda

none

4. Proclamation

4.a Parkinson's Awareness Proclamation

4.b Dispatch recognition

Mayor Grohman read the proclamations

5. Presentation

5.a CAC Presentation

Leah Schaffer of the Citizens' Advisory Committee gave an update on the committee's work.

6. Public Addressing the Council

One citizen spoke about the comprehensive plan updates, requested an opportunity for citizen comments on it, and also mentioned the potential of municipal preferred status.

One citizen spoke about immigration issues and ICE.

Two citizens spoke in appreciation of the Parkinson's awareness proclamation.

Two citizens spoke about the new carry-in carry-out policy for city parks.

Councilor Emhiser commented that a Biddeford citizen has been involved with the Michael J. Fox Foundation which has raised over 2 billion dollars for Parkinson's research.

7. Consideration of Minutes

7.a Council Minutes 4-1-25

Motion: Councilor Beaupre

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

7.b Special Council Meeting Minutes 4-7-25

Motion: Councilor Beaupre

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

8. Second Reading

8.a 2025.34 Approval Vacant Building Registration Ordinance

Motion: Councilor Beaupre

Second: Councilor Belanger

Public comments – one citizen commented on the fees; they should be used for the affordable housing trust fund.

One citizen asked about the hardship language.

One citizen asked about the percentage of vacant units.

Councilor Lessard asked the CEO to comment on the differences between this and the Anti-Blight ordinance. He also asked about the appeals process. He would like to make sure it doesn't infringe on property rights.

CEO Roby Fecteau explained that the Anti-Blight ordinance is just for the downtown district and takes 2 years to resolve; this ordinance will cover the entire city and action can begin much sooner. CEO Fecteau explained the appeals process. He said there are at least 12 properties that have been vacant for over one year. This ordinance will get their attention and force the owners to make a decision.

Councilor Ortiz said that this is progress, will need to take it in steps, the action from seven years ago isn't sufficient.

Councilor LaFountain said he had feedback from both sides of the issue. The Policy Committee looked at similar definitions from tested ordinances in Sanford and Bangor. He also pointed out that it isn't just about housing, it comes under the environment section of the code. It is important to get started and review it again in the future if needed.

Councilor Whiting – motion to refer this matter back to the Policy Committee with two directives. 1. Produce a revised ordinance with redline changes from the last meeting. 2. Consider reviewing certain policies to consider the public comments from this evening.

Second: Councilor Beaupre

Vote: 3 yeas – Councilors Beaupre, Whiting and LaFountain.

5 nays – Councilors Lessard, Ortiz, Belanger, Doughty and Emhiser.

Motion failed.

Councilor Belanger – motion to amend to Sec 34-562 A. remove “within the downtown area”.

Second: Councilor Doughty

Vote on the amendment – Unanimous in favor.

Amendment passed.

Councilor LaFountain – motion to amend 34-562, move F4 to E4.

Second: Councilor Belanger

Vote on the amendment – Unanimous in favor.

Amendment passed.

Councilor Whiting – motion to Table for two weeks.

Second: Councilor Beaupre

Vote 4 yeas – Councilors Lessard, Beaupre, Whiting and LaFountain.

4 nays – Councilors Ortiz, Belanger, Doughty and Emhiser.

Mayor Grohman voted against.

Motion failed.

Vote on the order as amended: 5 yeas, Councilors Ortiz, Belanger, Doughty, Emhiser, and LaFountain.

3 nays – Councilors Lessard, Beaupre and Whiting.
Motion passed.

9. Orders of the Day

9.a 2025.37 Approval Rec Playground RFP

Motion: Councilor LaFountain
Second: Councilor Lessard

Chris Martin from Ultiplay answered questions about the design and the timeline.

Councilor Beaupre said it was approved unanimously by the Finance Committee.

Councilor Belanger – motion to amend “to be funded through CDBG funds.”
Second: Councilor LaFountain
Vote on the amendment: Unanimous in favor.
Amendment passed.

Vote on the order as amended: Unanimous in favor.
Motion passed.

Mayor Grohman commented that it would be a great fit to name the new playground for Sgt. Jacob Wolterbeek.

9.b 2025.40 Approval HOB Fee Waiver

Motion: Councilor Emhiser
Second: Councilor Belanger

Councilor LaFountain asked if all of the events are free to the public.
HOB Director Delilah Poupore answered that two of them have a fee.

Councilor Lessard suggested that they add the amount to the HOB budget request and not open the door to waiving fees.

Councilor LaFountain – motion to exclude Oktober Fest and I Heart Road Race from the approval.
Second: Councilor Beaupre
Vote on the amendment: Unanimous

Vote on the order as amended: 7 yeas – Councilors Belanger, Ortiz, Doughty, Beaupre, Whiting, Emhiser and LaFountain.
1 nay – Councilor Lessard.

Motion passed.

Note: 2025 HOB events are Memorial Day Parade, Pride, Music in the Park, National Night Out, Fringe Fest, River Jam, Oktober Fest, I Heart Road Race, Creepy Crawl, Veterans Day Parade, Merry and Bright Night.

10. Public Addressing the Council

One citizen commented on the second read process.

One citizen commented on news from Augusta that could impact school funding. They requested a proclamation in support of the governor.

11. City Manager Report

Acting City Manager Brian Phinney gave an update on the FY23 audit, the FY24 finance work, the bond rating for the city and said the MFLA process is moving forward.

12. Committee Updates by Council

Councilor LaFountain provided an updated on the Capital Projects Committee – they recently reviewed the facilities and maintenance plans for the Fire and Police Departments.

13. Other Business

None

14. Council President Addressing the Council

Thank you to Public Works and the parks maintenance crews for getting the parks ready for Spring. He was at the Mayfield Memorial Park this past weekend. It looked great and was very busy.

15. Mayor Addressing the Council

Mayor Grohman mentioned the Earth Day activities coming up. He thanked Public Works for their planning and efforts on the Elm Street construction project. He reminded everyone to please support the businesses in that area.

He congratulated the Biddeford High School Marching Band for their New England Championship and the BHS Odyssey of the Mind team for their win, they will be going to the national competition.

16. Executive Session

16.a Executive Session 1 MRS 405 6 (e) Legal Matter

Motion to enter executive session at 8:05 pm by Councilor Belanger

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

Motion to exit executive session at 8:32 pm by Councilor Belanger

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

17. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 8:32 pm by Councilor Belanger

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Meeting adjourned.