

City of Biddeford

City Council

February 4, 2025 at 6:00 PM

1. Roll Call

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Adjustment(s) to Agenda

none

4. Appointments

4.a 2025.13 Mayor Appointments to a Committee-Citizen

Motion: Councilor Beaupre

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

5. Public Addressing the Council

One citizen spoke about the sewer bills and the upcoming budget season

Abby Leibowitz from the Heart of Biddeford spoke about the Art of Biddeford Event this weekend

6. Consideration of Minutes

6.a Council Minutes 1-21-25

Motion: Councilor Beaupre

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

7. Orders of the Day

7.a Update - Riverwalk Repair Bid at Overlook

City Manager Jim Bennett said that they will have finance information available at the next meeting with choices for projects including these two.

Code Enforcement Officer Roby Fecteau said they are just receiving bids on this project and will work to bring it back to the Council at the next meeting.

Councilor Lessard asked about the categories and the expected savings.

7.b Update - Riverwalk Construction Bid from Laconia Plaza to Pearl Street

COO Brian Phinney gave an update on this project, they have received DEP approval and can now move forward with bids. They will have more detailed financial information and options by the end of March.

8. Committee of the Whole *8.a Condo Conversion Ordinance*

Councilor Belanger – motion to allow public comment at the beginning and end of the discussion.

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

Public Comment – One person commented that condos and townhouses are helpful at the beginning and ending stages of home ownership, they should be part of the mix.

One person spoke about the importance of transparency and tenant's rights.

Motion to enter Committee of the Whole at 6:41 pm by Councilor Lessard

Second: Councilor Belanger

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

Councilor LaFountain commented that the purpose of this discussion is to give feedback to staff on the current ordinance. It will go to the Policy Committee for changes, then back to the Council, the Planning Board for their review and then two readings at the Council to finalize the changes.

The Councilors discussed the balance of tenants' rights and developers.

Suggested changes included:

- clarifying the language around serving notice like the Notice to Quit language
- clarifying the definition of developer
- review the conversion fee and create a sliding scale based on the size of the project
- create incentives to include affordable units
- improved notice to tenants and the public for proposed conversion projects, maybe include a sample of the required notice.
- clarify the dates for each phase of the conversion
- use the language from the recent conversion agreement as a model
- consider commercial conversions at some point

Public Comments:

Two people encouraged the city to develop tools to measure vacancies/fees.

One person commented that the recent agreement was very generous and reminded the Council to act in the best interests of everyone and not just a few.

Motion to exit Committee of the Whole at 7:23 pm by Councilor Belanger

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion passed.

9. Public Addressing the Council

One person spoke about rising rents in a 5-year period and the need for a database.

10. City Manager Report

City Manager Jim Bennett did not comment at this time.

11. Other Business

Councilor Lessard thanked the City Manager for the summary of the JFK Committee work. It will be discussed at the Council workshop next week.

Councilor Gross asked for more notification methods on parking bans during snowstorms.

Councilor LaFountain suggested using more of the moveable signs.

City Manager Bennett said they were willing to look at all suggestions.

12. Council President Addressing the Council

Council President LaFountain did not comment at this time.

13. Mayor Addressing the Council

The Mayor's Night Out is tomorrow, there are 16 restaurants participating. There are many ways to support the Wolterbeek family and the Trooper Black Foundation.

There are many exciting activities at Winterfest this Saturday including free pizza and bell tower tours.

14. Executive Session-MRS 405(6)(d) Labor Negotiations

Motion to go into Executive Session at 7:43 pm by Councilor Belanger

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:26 pm by Councilor Belanger

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

15. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 8:26 pm by Councilor Belanger

Second: Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous in favor

Meeting adjourned