Meet Daniel Emery, recently elected to the Augusta City Council as a Councilor, At-Large

Dan can be contacted at daniel.emery@augustamaine.gov

The last three months have given me an opportunity to get to know and appreciate the city of Augusta on an entirely new and different level. I feel very fortunate to live, work and volunteer in a community that means so much to so many. We have a beautiful city with great potential and a tremendous number of opportunities. The continuing revitalization of Downtown, the Libby Library expansion, a new hospital and a new courthouse and dozens of other initiatives prove that even in tough economic times we have the talent and resources to get things done. There is no doubt that we will face a few challenges this year, but with the leadership and dedication of our council, city management, city staff and the citizens of Augusta we will succeed. As we move through 2012 I urge you to reach out and get involved. Whether you serve on a committee or board, volunteer with a community group or program, become a mentor for a young person, or offer ideas and solutions on how to make our hometown of Augusta a better place for everyone, your effort will make all the difference. We can, and will achieve great things, and our collaboration is the key to success. I look forward to working with you. Have a wonderful and satisfying 2012.

Go to www.augusta-maine.gov to view more Mayor's Notes.
City Manager’s Message...

As Mayor Stokes references in his article, he and the City Council held a very productive day long goal-setting session with me and members of the senior administrative team. All nine of your elected municipal leaders (as well as your School Board Chair and Superintendent and the Chair and General Manager of your utilities district) gave up a Saturday to plan and prioritize for the City for the year to come. For my part, I tried to provide the Council with an overview of the key issues and challenges facing our City at this time. As reinforced by what my department heads presented, my most urgent concern has to do with what looks like a very difficult financial picture for the coming fiscal year (July 2012 to June 2013). All indicators point to a reduction in non-property tax revenues (the State of Maine alone supplies about 37% of the City’s $50 million City/School budget) of a magnitude that will make our spring budget process as tough (or worse) than any I’ve addressed in my fourteen years in this job. One thing that came up quite a lot that Saturday was the need to ratchet up our frequency and methods of communicating with you, our constituents and customers. That is something that we can accomplish without necessarily overtaxing our financial resources. All of us — elected officials and City staff — are committed to improving the flow of information to you, through traditional media sources like this newsletter and with more creative vehicles (like Facebook and Twitter) as well. I also think it’s time to conduct a statistically valid resident survey (the last time we did one was for the 2007 Comprehensive Master Plan) and we’ll hope to get that out by late spring.

We’ve had something of an odd winter so far this year. It began with a freak October snowstorm and in the interim we’ve seen some very icy conditions and a January storm that dropped six inches of snow in just a couple of hours (just before the morning commute began). Our Public Works Department is doing its best within the budgetary constraints placed upon them but we appreciate that sometimes that can seem insufficient. Please know that those folks are passionate and dedicated to doing a first class job and in my opinion are about as good a crew as can be found anywhere. Another item of interest that came out of the Council goal-setting session was School Superintendent Connie Brown’s report on recent benchmarks in achievement in our school system. I’ve asked Dr. Brown to add a piece to this newsletter so you can share that good news as well. Please keep in mind the great winter recreational resources we enjoy here in Augusta, including the new Bond Brook area where the snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing opportunities are terrific (go to the City’s website at www.augustamaine.gov for more information). Bill Bridgeo can be contacted at william.bridgeo@augustamaine.gov or at 626-2141.

The City’s Newsletter is designed...

to better inform the community about the City’s services, programs, activities and opportunities for participation.

AUGUSTA SCHOOL DEPARTMENT
SHARES SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, GRADUATION RATES AND ELEMENTARY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Augusta Public Schools improved the student achievement at the elementary and secondary levels during 2010-11. Notably, at Cony High School, the dropout rate for the class of 2011 was reduced to 3.25% from the prior year of 7.45%. The dropout rate is different from the graduation rate, which also improved. The graduation rate for Cony High School, which is the four year, on time graduation for students improved from 71 to 81%. Student acceptance to post-secondary education also improved with 80% of the class of 2011 accepted to a two or four year college. This is a trend that continues upward. Approximately a decade ago, only 50% of students were accepted at a post-secondary institution.

Student achievement at the elementary level also was improved. Hussey Elementary School with its student literacy performance at nearly 90% was one of the top performing schools in the State of Maine. Notably, elementary achievement also improved significantly. A decade ago, elementary literacy was in the 30th percentile as compared to what it is now, in the 75th percentile.

Jeffrey Bilodeau, Councilor, At-Large

As a City Councilor, my goal is very simple: to work with others in supporting both the residents and the businesses of our community and set the conditions that allow for growth and balance. I am a lifelong resident of Augusta. I am a Cony High School, “Class of 86”. My wife Sara and I have been married for 23 years and we have two wonderful children. I began my military career in 1987 when I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. It was while in the service that I met Sara who is a native of Nebraska. At the completion of our active duty tour, Sara and I returned to Maine, enrolled in college, started a career, and began to raise a family. I joined the Maine Army National Guard in 1994 and am today, the Deputy Operations Officer for Mobilization and Readiness at Camp Kears.

I answered our country’s call and deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan shortly after 9/11. I deployed as the Commander of the 120th Tactical Air Traffic Service Company. I have served the people of Maine and our country in many leadership positions throughout my career. I have real, on the job experience as a national policy maker, facilitator and leader. I was the Army National Guard’s Chair for Mobilization and Readiness in Washington D.C. from 2008-2011. As the Chair, I developed policies and procedures concerning mobilization and readiness for our 358,000 Army National Guard Soldiers and their families stationed throughout the United States. I have led soldiers during very challenging times. Now, I want to put the leadership skills that I have learned to use for the City of Augusta. I am excited and look forward to my term as Councilor At-Large.

If you would like to contact Councilor Bilodeau, please email him at jeffrey.bilodeau@augustamaine.gov

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