

Administration

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Doyle and City Council
FROM: Kevin L. Sutherland, City Administrator
DATE: December 16, 2019
RE: Administrative Update

DOL inquiry of Saco's Senior Tax Write-off program

A few months back, a member of the public brought our senior volunteer program into question with the State of Maine Department of Labor (DOL) over whether the stipend program should be at the minimum wage. The DOL did an investigation working closely with staff to gather information and review our program. They have decided not to take further action for prior years. This decision was based in part on the fact that the City changed the rate to be consistent with minimum wage going forward.

Representatives from the DOL recognized they need to work together with the Maine Revenue Service to come up with some guidelines on how to administer this program around the state and that our legislative representative could work with the DOL to amend the wage and hour laws to include this program as an express exemption from minimum wage.

I would like to thank our Human Resources team for putting in the time to work with Administration to clear this item up with the State.

Recording of City Council Meetings

With the modification to four City Council meetings a month, we've inquired the intent of minute taking that is written in our Charter. While the administrator is expected to "Journal" the votes of the items on the agenda, the City Solicitor has determined that the Communications Department's video record of the meetings will satisfy Charter requirements without requiring a representative from the City Clerk's office to be in attendance.

The reliance on technology (computers and video production equipment) to create the sole record of a meeting does introduce the possibility that software and hardware malfunction could lead to the inability to capture this video record. To avoid this potential pitfall, the Communications Department will implement a pre-meeting system check and continue to record redundant copies of the meetings. The footage will be

saved to two different local locations, independent of each other so that if one fails or corrupts, the other will be available. Video live-streams are also automatically saved to our primary streaming location (currently Facebook), which gives us a third redundancy so long as the computer does not fail.

While we are recording redundantly, the Communications Department does not currently have hardware redundancy. To achieve this, the department would need the following backup hardware available: Computer, AV.io HD video capture device, Blade recording device.

If the system check identifies a failure in our ability to record the meetings digitally, we will notify the City Clerk's Office immediately so that they may have a representative physically attend the meeting, or we can use an audio recorder to capture the business conducted during the meeting.

Lastly, this places new importance on the Council's voting procedure. Since the Clerk will be relying on the video record, it's paramount that all votes by councilors are spoken clearly into the microphone and that voting takes place in a manner where there is no overlapping. The Department discourages votes by raising of hand as this could create an environment that is harder to accurately perceive through video recording.

School Board Meetings

The Communications Department is also working with the Saco School Department to ensure consistency and uniformity in our meeting streaming process. Andrew Dickinson, the city's Communications Coordinator, has prepared a standard operating procedure guide and is training three members of the Saco Schools IT Department, with an on-site training component happening tonight. The Communications Department has offered to be on-site to assist with any school department streams during the launch of their live stream capabilities. Andrew will work with the School Department staff to ensure they are running systems tests prior to their meetings as well.

Fire Department - use of Ambulance Fund for stretchers.

Saco had applied for funding for these items in the FY 2018 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program and we were notified in October of this year that our request, regrettably, was not funded.

Here is language from that notification letter:

On behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate, I would like to thank you for applying for assistance under the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program. Regrettably, and after careful consideration and review, your application was not funded and did not receive further consideration through the panel review process. We regret that the news could not be more favorable.

As you are aware, the AFG Program is among the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) and FEMA's most competitive grant programs. In FY 2018, FEMA received 8,439 AFG applications, requesting more than \$1.8 billion in federal assistance. The large number of applications received, and the finite amount of available funding, resulted in many commendable applicants not being funded and accentuates the highly competitive nature of this program. FEMA encourages your organization to apply for the FY 2019 AFG funding opportunities.

Given the high number of applications received, the AFG Program is unable to provide your organization with an individualized comprehensive review of your application at this time. However, we offer a webinar to assist you in understanding our decision and to help you in preparing future applications.

City Staff are moving forward with Power Cots and Power Load Systems for the new ambulance as well as the retrofitting of the two 2016 Ambulances that we are currently operating. This will be paid for out of the Ambulance Fund, no additional money needs to be allocated by Council, as its use matches the requirement of the fund and we wanted the Council to be aware. We are also hopeful it will reduce our risk of on the job injuries.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank firefighter Cliff Whitten for assisting in putting together the original grant application. While we weren't successful, it shows the dedication our staff have for assisting one another and looking for funding outside the organization to achieve those goals.

North / Garfield Street intersection

The North Street/Garfield Street intersection was identified as the highest crash location in the Saco Route 112/ Exit 36 Area Traffic Study conducted in partnership with Maine DOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority. On September 12, 2019, Saco's Traffic Safety Committee voted unanimously to implement "No Left Turns at Garfield Street", which was recommended as part of that study. We are happy to share that since eliminating left-hand turns at the intersection of Garfield Street and North Street (Route 112), zero accidents have been reported at this intersection. You can view additional observations from this traffic pattern change on our website by visiting www.sacomaine.org/route112. We will be sharing this information on the Saco Police Department's Facebook page tomorrow.

Strategic Planning Exercise with Council

The date for the Strategic Planning Exercise with the Council will be moved to the second meeting of January. (January 13, 2020) This will provide your new City Administrator some time to meet with staff and be better prepared to partake in the discussion. We will look to further review the rules and order of business at the January 6th meeting.