

STATE OF MAINE

COUNTY OF YORK

CITY OF SACO

**I. CALL TO ORDER** – On Monday, December 5, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. a Council Meeting was held at the Saco Transportation Center.

**II. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS** – Mayor Roland Michaud conducted a roll call of the members and determined that the Councilors present constituted a quorum. Councilors present: Margaret Mills, Leslie E. Smith Jr., Marie Doucette, Philip Blood, Arthur Tardif, Eric Cote and Marston Lovell. City Administrator Rick Michaud was also present.

**III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**IV. MAYOR ROLAND MICHAUD REMARKS**

Mayor Michaud stated that it has been a pleasure and an honor to serve as Mayor of this great community. He noted the accomplishments that were made during this last four year term, which kept Saco moving forward despite one of the worst economies the city has faced in generations. These included a new fire station and waste water treatment plant; community garden; paving projects; downtown improvements and work on various recreational trails. Mayor Michaud also noted that these accomplishments would not have been possible without the support of city staff, dedication of the city council and support from the community.

**V. AGENDA ITEMS:**

**A. OATH OF OFFICE ADMINISTERED BY THE CITY CLERK**

At this time Mayor Michaud requested that City Clerk Michele Hughes administer the oath of office to the following elected officials:

Mayor – Mark D. Johnston

City Council:

Ward One: David L. Tripp  
Ward Two: Leslie E. Smith Jr.  
Ward Three: Marie D. Doucette  
Ward Four: Philip L. Blood  
Ward Five: Arthur J. Tardif  
Ward Six: Eric B. Cote  
Ward Seven: Marston D. Lovell

Regional School Unit #23 Board Members:

Elizabeth C. Johnston  
Roland L. Michaud

**B. MAYOR JOHNSTON PRESENTATIONS TO OUTGOING MAYOR AND CITY COUNCILOR**

Mayor Johnston presented plaques as an expression of appreciation for their public service to:

Roland L. Michaud, former Mayor  
Margaret E. Mills, former Ward 1 Councilor

### C. COMMENTS FROM MAYOR JOHNSTON

This is one of the more rewarding milestones in my life that I am grateful for. Once again, I am given an opportunity to serve my community. Surely in these times of economic and social challenge, it would be acceptable to admit some apprehension and even second thoughts about this privilege. But I can say to all of you that I what I really feel and what we all can feel is an energetic enthusiasm about Saco's future. In addition to 2012 holding the promise of a "Shift in Global Consciousness" for many, 2012 is a significant local milestone for Saco! It is the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saco's founding. The original name of "Pepperellborough" was given to what is now Saco in 1762. Our "Community Pride and Action Organization" SACO SPIRIT, will be providing information and celebrations throughout the year around this historic event.

We are fortunate to have an active and engaged organization such as Saco Spirit in our community. For those of you who may not be familiar with this asset. Saco Spirit is a volunteer driven non-profit organization . Through the involvement and generosity of these volunteers thousands of hours of community service are provided every year organizing and running events such as the Sidewalk Art Festival, Harvest Festival, Holiday Festival and others. They work to beautify our town and enhance its natural beauty and livability. Flowers, our Saco River Walk event banners, decorations are all much appreciated activities of these citizens.

These volunteer citizens who give of themselves for their home community, set a wonderful example. They are trying to "BE THE CHANGE WE ALL WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD!" This spirit is the lifeblood of successful communities and works to attract new business and fosters innovative approaches to old paradigms of city management, planning and development.

Part of the secret of their effectiveness has been their ability to establish fruitful and efficient working partnerships with our various other city departments including: Traffic Safety, Public Works, Parks and Rec., and our planning board. We need more of this kind of personal interest and teamwork in our community and I hope to foster that in any way I can in my Administration.

We are all blessed with an exceptional home here in Saco. We have tremendous natural wealth. We have the gift of a wonderful seacoast location. We have proximity to the mountains and the natural beauty of Southern Maine. We have an abundant supply of clean water, a beautiful river, and many enticements for sportsmen of all kinds. We have a fishing industry which contributes to our community with economic impact and just as importantly, holds promise for independent and sustainable food sources during these uncertain times we are facing.

Our farmland is fertile and abundant. North Saco represents a wealth of untapped agricultural potential. We have begun to promote this vital resource in the establishment of our winter produce market on Saco Island. Expanding the use of our farmland in greenhouses as well as during the normal farming season will contribute to a more sustainable and independent community. Consider the possible cost for a head of lettuce produced in California when energy costs expand exponentially as is projected! I can tell you as a small business owner in this area, I have personally seen the cost of this kind of staple food item increase more than 200% in the recent past! Dependence on outside sourcing and excessive transport looms as a challenge to be overcome in the coming years.

We here in Maine are blessed with farming as a part of our successful history. There is no question that this will contribute to an abundant and sustainable future and I intend to do everything I can to encourage and support this very important Saco Resource! We CAN!! Sustain ourselves if we so choose!!

Our infrastructure such as roads and sanitation are in excellent condition and well maintained by our city's maintenance personnel. A new fire station with an outstanding professional force of firefighters is on and a fine police force with a building that will be fully paid for in only 7 years add to the list. Restoration and historic preservation projects such as the town hall, our expanded recreation department with its rec center on Common Street and many more good blessings can be added to our list!

Our educational system combines a talented and motivated school board with an outstanding teacher and administrative force. This administration intends to take a leadership role with the RSU. I will discuss the current challenges surrounding the aging Fairfield regional school unit and negotiate and plan a solution for Young school.

These challenges provide a number of opportunities. We have the potential of restoring the historic community treasure of Pepperell Park to its former beauty. And we have options surrounding the combining of these two units into one efficient, modern "Green" facility.

We have Thornton Academy on our list of resources. Historically Thornton has taken an active part in our community development and I see this continuing and increasing. Their efforts in media developing "TA TV" as a new resource for informing and motivating our community is invaluable. Their programs attracting talented foreign students serves to enrich our community and provides attractive development opportunities. (WE HAVE SOME HERE THIS EVENING)

Our city employees and our citizens offer a pool of talent and potential which is available for our future. I validate their contributions and call for their innovation and participation in achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Saco and Biddeford are blessed to be in the proximity of the University of New England, a premier center for medicine, research and higher learning. It draws talent and jobs as well as supporting our vision for prosperity. Its outstanding Oceanographic program supports our environment and our fisheries as well as opening doors for new development and industry in the region.

Saco and Biddeford are also fortunate to host Southern Maine Medical Facility. This resource offers us advanced medical technology and services and attracts talented medical professionals from throughout the country.

When we consider our town in this light, it is very easy to become enthusiastic about Saco and Biddeford and our future. We can launch out on this New Year with this energetic attitude, or we can choose to emphasize the negatives and add an element of pessimism to the formula. I choose the former.

As many of you know, I am a history enthusiast. I like to reference a story about the initial explorations of the Saco Bay region in the earliest years of our history. In 1602 an exploratory voyage by Captain Pringle recorded a brief exploration of the area which is now Saco. His ship's log recorded that there was "nothing" here? He made no mention of the natural beauty, or the potential of the land. Several years later, in 1605 the famous French explorer Samuel de Champlain recorded that the same land offered abundant resources. Fish, wildlife, two beautiful waterfalls and friendly natives all were noted as assets to the land. We can draw a lesson from history about how we choose to view our community at this time of challenge. Much of our reality is drawn from our attitude and how we choose to view the facts. In this time of trial, I invite you to join me in putting the focus on the gifts and opportunities we have as a community versus the possible shortcomings we could outline.

Yes, there are real challenges in this 21<sup>st</sup> century social and business environment. Yet we have seen such challenges here in Saco many times before and each time we have overcome them to achieve a new level of excellence. The original settlers blazed the trail and dealt with the challenges of taming the land and coming to terms with the natives. ( In non-politically correct terminology, "they scraped out a foothold and fought the Indian wars!" The Industrial age, shifted and our agriculturally oriented efforts and lumber industry led to the mills and rapid changes ensued. Immigration, technical advances, changing values, women's rights, abolition, all these fed into our heritage as a great manufacturing center. Indeed as some of you know, in the 1930's at the time of the first great Wall Street failure and the ensuing depression, the mills of Saco and Biddeford stood as the largest industrial textile mill complex in the world!

This prosperity led us into the depression which we weathered. Many of you will recall the manufacturing slump in the 1950's resulted in much of our work force traveling to more prosperous locations for work. Yet life improved, challenges were met and the enthusiastic energy of the people was harnessed and directed.

In the 60's and 70's we found ourselves in a healthy manufacturing environment once again with "Nike" headquarters joining the Saco Tannery and an array of other local industries to produce successful shoe and textile industries. Jobs were relatively plentiful when the first Arab Oil embargo shook our world in the mid 70's! And yes... we got through that, we boomed with the rest of the nation in the 1980's, participated in the .com revolution of the 90-s and now... now... Well now we find ourselves on the doorstep of challenge and opportunity once again.

Today, in 2011, we once again move forward while we share much of the nation's financial and political turmoil. The nature of the challenge today is unlike that of the past. It is a crisis, global in nature, which involves financial irregularities on an institutional scale never before encountered. Our federal and state governments appear to be broken and dysfunctional.

State cuts to education and other areas pose a serious challenge. Cuts to revenue sharing in particular have been damaging. They seem to pit the northern and southern areas of Maine in a competitive posture which may not be wise. We are challenged to do more and more with less.

Yet you and I, as concerned and determined citizens and parents within this great city have the same opportunity for a solution as we had in the past. That solution consists primarily of the will to pull together as a community and to invest ourselves wholly in our future. We all should be anxious to "give" (sacrifice) of our talents, our time and our innovation to the task at hand!

Innovation and a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to our current business and social challenges is a necessity in this environment. We have already begun to differentiate ourselves from the old paradigms. This new Transportation complex stands as a bold step into the future by our community. It represents the out of the box style of development which will insure success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century business environment. Community sourced labor, materials and services, clean and sustainable power and a warm and charming environment which respects and honors our past. All of this is represented in this very versatile public space we're gathered in this evening.

Many have questioned the wisdom of some of this innovation. A call is heard for profit over function and direction. Yet I have to differ with this voice of criticism. As we are learning now in our day to day lives, the "American Way" represents much more than just maximum profits in the shortest time frame. In fact, a sound investment in our community demands that we include sustainability, independence and local sourcing in our plan. The initial technologies and industries that may grow up in our community may not return an immediate profit. Indeed, it is now understood by the savviest of business powers that many of tomorrows jobs are not even defined today! And that gap between education and function also needs to be addressed. We may have to invest ourselves into the future to secure our participation and our prosperity.

We can envision the kind of town we create for ourselves and our children as the charming, livable, efficient and productive village environment we have the potential to become. We can choose to back away from the malaise of the bottom line box store mentality which is eating at our towns and our standards of living. We can change the destructive paradigm that government should function for us without our participation. It is our government, our town, our land, our children and our future! Let us all step forward and do our share to improve it.



Volunteerism, concern and action in whatever form we can bring it to the table is desperately needed and I believe it is already among us in spirit! I recognize all of the current volunteer efforts and encourage continued and expanded activities

The vision is always easier to describe than it is to manifest! The achievements which will lead us and our children to fulfillment and prosperity must be forged in the day to day activities of local government. I hope to begin this journey with the following actions.

1. In the Spirit of concerned, responsible community participation, I will have an open door policy always! Either I or city staff will always be available to hear the human side of business concerns and needs. Government will do what it can when it can to support you
2. I call upon Saco Spirit to join us in this new era. As I outlined earlier they actually embody the attitude we all need to adopt in order to move Saco forward. WE ALL need to BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE IN OUR HOME TOWN! Saco Spirit will continue to define the resources they represent and those that they need to unite us in this effort to build support and community we all know Saco can become!!!!
3. I will initiate a round table of local businesses to define and discuss the needs and action the city must address.
4. I call upon the city council to implement a moratorium on all impact fees such as combined sewer overflow fees (CSO's) in the hopes of jump starting development on Saco Island and the downtown housing market. In this area I want to personally recognize the contributions made by Kevin Matsun and Doug Sanforde. Both Matsun development and North Dam Development are working hard to make our mill district development a robust and productive business activity. Well Done!
5. I propose that we evaluate the location and future of our public works garage. There are very real advantages in this task which I will be outlining to the council in the next few days.

6. I am proposing to the council to organize an effort to focus on our blighted areas throughout the community. We need to encourage and emphasize pride in our appearance and our function as well as respect for our history.
7. I will initiate a support program for our valuable public institutions, insuring that government does all it can to support these community enhancing structures. We will recognize our volunteers and encourage Dyer library, and Saco museum, Saco and Biddford Savings and other financial institutions. Our Faith communities and other independent organizations to continue their fine work and to strive to take more responsibility in moving forward.
8. I will introduce the structure for more voluntary participation in vital community activates. Looking at utilizing the efforts and talents of any who currently benefit from town services or who wish to contribute more.

Yes we can cut taxes, lay off people, cut services, cut school programs and even lay off teachers! We can scramble to get the numbers right based on this all too common cry for more of the "Free Market" and less government. But what then is it that we will be accomplishing? Is a balanced budget with lower taxes, fewer jobs, poorer education, and general dysfunction really what we want to leave are children? Or do we want to leave the charm, security and joy that come with a quality community based on fairness and respect? My vision of Saco is the latter. I am certain that we can accomplish it and I invite all of you to join me on board. It is Samuel de Champlain's ship that I wish to travel on, not Captain Pringle's! Which ship would you prefer? History records and highlights Champlain's great vision and accomplishments. Most of us have never even heard of the short sighted dark vision of Captain Pringle's voyage!

Let's set out on this new phase in Saco'

#### **D. SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

- Saco Island Deli Catering for Refreshments
- Music provided by the band "Wetsuits"

#### **E. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Johnston with the unanimous consent of the Councilors declared the meeting adjourned at 7:45p.m.

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Michele L. Hughes, City Clerk