

Town Hall Meeting
September 25, 2015

Questions Received/ Answered Summary

1. When will the house on the corner of Patten Street be demolished? What about the motor home, it is illegal.
 - a. Monday, September 26. However, the motor home is off limits. We will follow up on the legality of the motor home.

2. What is being done about the vacant homes in our neighborhoods?
 - a. There are a number of vacant homes in Bangor. The majority of them are bank owned and this is an issue that neighborhoods are facing everywhere. There is a significant process to take homes and it should be hard to take people's homes but we understand that it seems awful when they just sit. If you have questions about a vacant home near you, call the Code office and they will be happy to let you know where they are in the process.

3. Will the rickety hurricane fence along Main Street remain all winter?
 - a. We don't have a removal date, it is typically left up between seasons. However, staff are looking into ways of improving it.

4. There is a "black hole" at the intersections between Third St. and Fifth St.
 - a. Dana Wardwell, Public Works Director, will take a look at this.

If you have issues- please let us know by filing a service request online either through the Go Bangor App or our website.

5. What is the turnaround time on requests? A neighbor filed one about a pot hole and didn't see any results. What is the process?
 - a. There has been a transition period to this new system and some people were still running complaints through the old system. Sometimes things are fixed but notification wasn't sent out. However, most kinks have been worked out now.

For issues like pot holes, the turnaround time is typically about 24 hours. For larger issues- it is around 30 days. Issues like street lights- Public Works will wait until there is a group of lights in the same area need attention before sending out a crew is sent out. This is for efficiency reasons. They are usually taken care of within a couple of weeks.

6. The flashing pedestrian lights downtown- will we see those pop up elsewhere? What do they cost?
 - a. They cost about \$5,000 for a pair (one on either side of street). There are six pairs that will be installed throughout Bangor in the near future. They are

prioritized for upcoming year. If you have suggestions for the following year- please let us know. Below is the list of those that are planned to be installed in the upcoming year.

State St @ Bus Stop to Bellview (EMHC purchased-PW installing)
Main St @ Cross St
Union St @ Second St/High St
Third St @ Vine St/ Sidney St
Union St @ Thomas Hill/Sliding are/Pancoe pool
Broadway @ Somerset St
Fourteenth St @ Ralph St/ Fourteenth St School

7. During the summer time on Fairmount there are barrels that get placed on the roads as acting as temporary “speed bumps” and they get beaten up. Is there a plan to address the concern residents have for children at this park?
 - a. City staff will take a look at this area. We would conduct a traffic calming study, per policy, to see if the area meets the guidelines for installing speed bumps. We will look at crash data, speed of drivers, etc. We generally do these studies through the engineering dept. at the request of citizens.
8. With the barrels, it is a tight fit and little room for error. Can the barrels be moved a bit?
 - a. We will take a look at this and reevaluate the placement.
9. What if the Fairmount Park area doesn't meet the criteria you've listed? What does the City plan to do?
 - a. The policy was established to provide guidelines for staff to follow when determining whether traffic calming measures are necessary. Everyone wants people driving slower on their street even if drivers aren't going as fast as you may think. We would have them everywhere.

What we have done in the past and could do if it doesn't meet the criteria is create a strong police presence in the problem area around Fairmount Park that will deter speeding. We've had success doing this in other areas. Doesn't take long before the word gets out not to speed in an area because of police presence.
10. When an area is lacking the criteria for a traffic calming measures, what's the missing factor? There is a lot of traffic on Norway Rd and we think it is a big safety concern, does a child have to be hit? Can the policy be changed?
 - a. The missing factor is usually crashes. The criteria states there should be three crashes within a one year period. We do what we can within the parameters of the policy. We rely on signage and warning lights. Speed bumps are not always the answer, they are unpopular and can be controversial. This is part of why the policy exists. Norway Rd likely does not meet the criteria, however, the City will

do a study. What we have seen is there's not as much traffic as you might think. For example, we did a study on Cottage Street due to complaints of cars cutting through and speeding. We found that it has about 500 cars a day, which is not considered high volume for our area. Additionally, PD spent four days on Cottage and they struck out. People were driving under 30.

We will take another look at the policy.

11. I've seen school buses speeding in our neighborhood.
 - a. We will contact the bus company and ask that they slow down.

12. On either side of Fairmount Park, on Royal Rd. and Norway Rd. people park everywhere including on the ends. Perhaps, we can take a look at restricting parking to one side?
 - a. We will take a look at the current parking situation and see if there is a reasonable solution.

13. There is a large concern about parking around Fairmount School. The curb is yellow, indicating no parking, but people do anyway. Even the areas posted "No Parking" are ignored. Kids dart out between vehicles and it seems like someone will end up getting hurt.
 - a. We will talk with the schools and see what can be done.

14. During evening events at Fairmount School, people park on both sides of street and the crosswalk empty directly into driveways. We were told years ago that it would be moved but it never happened, why?
 - a. The crosswalks can certainly be moved to better locations. There is an ordinance that prevents people from parking within a certain distance of driveways.

15. Also, some sidewalks in this area are in disrepair. We've been told they would be fixed but again, it hasn't happened yet. It also seems like some roads are being paved before others that are in worse condition.
 - a. We evaluate our roads and try to work with utility companies because there may be other work that is due. For example, Court Street hasn't been paved because there is a sewer project that is scheduled to happen next year. We certainly don't want to use the resources to pave a road only for it to be torn up. There are a lot of factors that are considered when determining when a street is paved.

As for sidewalks, they are typically paved when the road is, if at all possible. We are averaging about 4.5 miles of sidewalk a year. We are working hard to catch up with sidewalks because there was a period when it was allowed to fall behind but it will take more time. The harsh winter/ climate hasn't helped. There is a replacement plan that covers 29 years. The council has done a lot toward addressing this including issuing a \$2 million bond.

16. What was the reasoning behind the recent decision to turn Clinton Street into a one way street? It was an easy way to reach downtown and it seems like the City has created a problem. Why wasn't the suggestion of an experimental period not considered?

- a. The reasoning behind why it was changed was because of the five leg intersection. Five legs adds conflict that aren't typical for people to expect. Taking the fifth leg out of an intersection reduces conflicts and increases efficiency. We evaluated the traffic and we got rid of the low volume direction. The volume of traffic going down Clinton Street toward Hammond Street was under 50 vehicles in peak hours. This is very low volume. We received money from Maine Dept. of Transportation to improve the intersection. It would have been another 20 years before we saw money for that intersection again. We took the opportunity to make it safer and more efficient.

There are alternate routes available but there will be a little bit of a learning curve. This was not done to hurt people but to make the area safer, as the city, and therefore traffic, grow. The plans were evaluated by many engineers. The area is real close to reaching the amount of accidents to make it a high crash area and we decided to address the problem, proactively. That way, years down the road, we won't be asked why we didn't fix it before it became a big problem. Our approach always considers two big factors- safety and efficiency. This is why we use our existing policy to evaluate areas, so there is data and rational behind all of our decisions.

17. The utility companies have come through and butchered our trees on 14th and 15th streets. They did such a bad job that some of the trees will need to come down. Can the City address this?

- a. Unfortunately, the City is partly to blame because 25-30 yrs ago we planted trees that shouldn't have been placed below lines. Now, we only plant the small ones. They have begun an aggressive program to cut trees to prevent outages in the wake of last winter. They have standards on how to prune but they don't care if they are pretty. We do work with them but we don't have the authority to tell them not to do it. If you believe it is a city tree (and not a personal property tree)- give us a call might be able to clean it up a bit. If we have to take a tree down, we do try to plant a new one, unless resident doesn't want it.

18. We used to have spring clean ups. We don't anymore but people are putting their junk on the streets anyway. Are the landowners responsible?

- a. If you see it on private property- call Code or file a service request through the Go Bangor App or our website. If it is on City property (such as sidewalk or esplanade), call Public Works or file a service request through the Go Bangor App or our website. What we have been doing is placing signs to the junk we see asking that it be removed or they will be fined. This seems to be helping.

As for spring clean ups- it was discontinued because it cost a quart of a million dollars to do and takes 6-8 wks to pick everything up. This means, there is trash out on the curb for those 6-8 wks.

19. Can we have a program that would allow people to pay a fee to have it picked up?
People could make appointments and there would be a certain number of slots available. A lot of people don't have trucks. Often times, it ends up in the woods. Couldn't this service be put out for bid? Are there options for people for to call to have it picked up?
 - a. These are great suggestions. It ultimately comes down to resources and it would cost a lot of money. It would need to be added to next year's budget. However, we can add a list of vendors to the website that citizens can call for private disposal. If it is left out there and nothing is done after it's been posted, you will be fined for the removal.

20. Can the airport prevent jets from coming in while people are sleeping?
 - a. We don't have a lot of control about this but we try to work with the Guard and ask that they don't until after 6am. However, they do what they need to.

21. There is a big issue of properties that look bad, that landlords don't take care of, etc. Is there an incentive for homeowners to clean up their property?
 - a. The City's Community and Economic Development department has rehabilitation loans for façade work for investment properties. We send out dozens of notices every week. There are lots of procedures that have to be followed and so it results in lots of waiting times.

There are a lot of people in Bangor who may not have a lot of money. The targeted use of resources with the West Side revitalization effort has really helped move things along. Individual volunteers are going out and offering to help out. They have really stepped up which is wonderful. It's much easier to have neighbors helping neighbors than it is for the City to try and force people to mow lawns or paint their house.

22. There are several houses empty on Royal Rd. This has us very concerned about safety, particularly concerning squatters. What is being done?
 - a. This is a challenge. There are 150 vacant homes registered and most are owned by banks that are 5-6 years into the foreclosure process. Unfortunately, banks are handling so many of these all over the country, that Bangor is not high on their priority list. However, we are taking steps to work with them and we've hired another inspector in an effort to be more aggressive. However, if they do not comply, the next step is court. And that is a time and money consuming process. Simply put, judges don't want to hear property maintenance cases because they are considered low priority.

We mainly respond to complaints, we do not go looking for vacant property. Our highest priority is those that present safety concerns, such as squatters in the building. We do go in and empty the building and board it up. We have razed more houses in the last couple years than years previous to that but they have all been in the words for years. If a bank owns a property- so long as they pay the taxes, we can't take it. So it will just sit and then we are back to trying to get the banks to maintain the property.

23. Can some of the bigger one family homes be turned into apartments so they may be more attractive to buyers?
- a. That is a question of zoning. Some apartment buildings were put up without proper permitting. So if we may be investigating poor maintenance and we come across this, we try to address it. However, it is a sensitive issue. For example, say you bought a building 20 years ago that you've been renting for years. Now you want to sell it but there are lots of complaints and through that you've learned that it's zoned for three apartments but there's five, it can be sensitive. We do send notices about it but the property may not be as attractive to buyers now.
24. Can you explain a bit more about the zoning concerns?
- a. Zoning residences may have areas zoned differently than others. For example, there may be 4 or 3 unit house in a single family zoned area. So, if the house were to go up for sale and sits for over a year, it reverts back to a single family home and it can't go back. That means it's unlikely that anyone will want to buy it. Now, if it's within the acceptable time frame- it can be sold as a nonconforming multi-unit. But not everyone in the neighborhood may want it to be a multi-unit. We may not even know there is a problem unless we get a complaint or get notification from an insurance company, which isn't often.
25. How does someone know what a property is zoned as?
- a. There is a GIS zoning map available on our website or you can call the City planning office to find out.
26. Walking on Buck Street, where a person was hit a while ago, one sidewalk disappears and there is no sidewalk on the other side. People going to the fair and other events are walking on the road. Why is there no sidewalk on the side closest to Bass Park? Also, why hasn't the bass park parking lot been paved?
- a. It comes down to money, although we understand the safety concern in regards to the sidewalk.

Citizens recommended giving taxpayers a pass when they register their car to park in Bass Park parking lot for free and those coming from other towns can pay to park. This money could be used to upgrade the lot. City staff will look into this.

27. There is a large concern about parking at the Cross Center and ADA requirements and whether or not they are being followed. Many handicap citizens are being forced to walk long distances to different elevators. How is this allowed?
- a. The City Manager will speak with the manager of the Cross Insurance Center.
28. There has been a rash of burglaries and break ins lately. One house was hit twice. There just seems to be a constant stream of bad people and it's getting worse. Drugs are out of control. We know we are asking a lot of the police but what is the City doing about this problem, particularly with Hammond Street?
- a. This is a concern and we are working hard to address these problems but they didn't happen overnight. There are groups of people working hard to address these concerns. For example, there is a group of local CEO's getting together for a public meeting in December to talk about these issues and make recommendations for things like diversion programs to get people into treatment earlier but things take time. There are working groups between hospitals and providers to come up with protocol for narcotics. Conversations about different forms of additions, how to get people out of their cycles and into clean places to live with support. You will notice that people are really starting to talk as groups. It won't solve everything but we are working on it.

Please know that the Police are hard at work. The person responsible for the east side burglaries has been caught. That was accomplished through an overnight officer that was experience and picked up something and ran with it. Every morning at 9am, PD has a staff meeting. We run reports and focus on the issues to see where the man power should go that day. But creativity is useful and we use it to our advantage. There will be more manpower that will be put on the West Side to catch who is responsible. A lot of us ourselves live on the West side and we are doing everything we can. Those that are responsible are often in drugs and that is their motivation.

The Pines is another area close to Hammond Street where a lot of homeless folks tend to gather. We have worked with the local shelters clean this area out. The bad spots are on our radar and we are all working hard to curb this problem.

Citizens recommended engaging school to help with early intervention to help set kids on the right path. That we should all, as a community, be looking to engage students that slip through cracks. City staff noted that there are some prevention dollars that go toward communities. However, schools like things to be before or after school hours and the kids that would need the outreach most, leave immediately after school. However, its issues like these that is why neighborhood watches have been formed. A citizen pointed out there is a website (westsidewatchbangor.org) that you can visit for the West Side Neighborhood Watch that give tips to stay safe.

29. I see needles all the time on the streets. Are they ever tested for fingerprints? What do I do?

- a. Call PD and they will come take care of them. We do not test them for fingerprints, we don't have the resources or times to tackle something that large.

30. Is the take back program for unused medications still available?

- a. Yes, there is a drop box at PD for pills and they can be dropped off at any time.

If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to staff, our job is to help you.