

**Ask Bangor: Community Town Hall Meeting  
October 8, 2015  
Summary**

1. I would like to see more police presence in my neighborhood. Why aren't police patrolling neighborhoods more?
  - a. It is a staffing issue. Unfortunately, we aren't able to hit all the neighborhoods as much as we want. We do have some ideas on how to push officers into the neighborhoods but we haven't been able to implement them yet. In the interim, we will do our best.
2. Why hasn't an ambassadors program that appoints one person as the point of contact for all neighborhood been implemented?
  - a. The Council has considered this but fortunately, Bangor is small enough where staff are accessible by all citizens, including the Councilors. We can readdress this at a later time, if necessary.
3. The concert area with the fence is an eye sore and the concerts are too loud, especially the bass. What is being done? Who pays to maintain the area?
  - a. There is a balance to concert noise levels. Its great entertainment and by nature it's loud but we are looking into ways, including technology that will help. Specifically, we are looking into a second set of speakers that will deliver a more direct sound to the audience. There is a curfew for concerts- 11pm on weekends and 10:30pm Sunday through Thursday night. We understand that is a bit late if a concert falls on a school night but if we restrict the curfew too much, we won't be able to attract high selling performers. We are having conversations about implementing different types of solutions as early as the next season. As a result, we expect that our improvements will help address these concerns.

Long term goals include better fencing and a roof structure. The City will continue to have concerts and we will continue to look into improvements.

The City receives money from each ticket sold. For the 2015 concert year, the City received \$112,000. Who pays for what and how much the City receives in revenue is part of a contract that was negotiated. The ticket revenue is straight money with no restrictions. Services provided such as fire and police, are paid for separately and do not take away from the ticket money the City receives. They take care of facility charges/ maintenance, which is not something the City is paying for.

Councilor Faircloth pointed out that not only to we receive money directly from the concerts but there is an increase in other benefits as well, including money spent in local restaurants, hotels, and store.

4. There is an increase in traffic going up Essex Street. There is more traffic on Grandview from people trying to avoid Broadway. Is there something that can be done?
  - a. We haven't looked at that intersection but we certainly can. Engineering will look at it to see if there are any possible/reasonable improvements that can be done.
5. At Broadway and State Street- people step off curbs and walk across the street without paying any attention to traffic or crosswalks. Is there enforcement on that?
  - a. Jaywalking is not something we generally enforce. As far as police priorities and things citizens would like us to be paying attention to- jaywalking is considered a lower priority. Everything has to be prioritized and it would be unrealistic to expect that we would be able to stop it from happening. However, PD will take a look at it and try to curb it in the "problem" areas. Right now, officers don't usually write tickets for it but if they do, its downtown.
6. Enforcement of parking restrictions isn't uniform. Vehicles on French Street get ticketed but not on Broadway. Why?
  - a. We will check into these concerns. Generally speaking, Broadway and nearby streets in that area are a priority, especially given the high school. We try to curb it quickly in that general area because we realize it is a big deal for some people. We do give students a week grace period at the beginning of the school year but John Bapst High School is very good about working with us to address our concerns.
7. Is it possible for PD to write and newsletter in order to publicize these sorts of things so everyone can be more aware? Not everyone has a computer. Perhaps the City could publish it?
  - a. There are lots of ways we try to push information out to the public. PD has a huge presence on social media. We have a dedicated public information officer who has enough on his plate. Not sure we have the time to take on a newsletter. However, PD will be putting their stats online.

The City is working with the University of Maine to look into ways to better communicate information to the public. We send information out so many ways already. The problem is people pick up the information differently. People can sign up to receive emails on a number of different topics. Unfortunately, there is already lots of junk mail out there so things get ignored. We just don't have the resources and staff to do a newsletter.

8. We understand that PD is understaffed. Have you considered reserve police officers to do community work without carrying guns?
  - a. Some Police Dept. have modified training programs but those, along with reserve programs are going away due to mandates that state police officers must be fully certified to do pretty much anything. Smaller towns that have relied on reserve police officers to supplement their force, will have to think of different ways to that moving forward.

Now volunteers are different and we do have a group interested in taking a citizen's policy academy. We aren't sure what the program will look like right now but there are two in the state that have had reasonable success. We just don't have the staff to manage it, it would have to be run by volunteers. If you are interested, please contact Chief Hathaway or Deputy Chief Johnston.

9. Is there a way to shut down the methadone clinics here in Bangor? It seems like there are better ways to help people.
  - a. The short answer is no. There appears to be a misconception about what the City has voted on in the past as far as the clinics go. How the law is written you can't say no, only where they go via zoning. Therefore, cities/towns can regulate where they go but can't keep them out.

Councilor Civiello has pushed the legislature to listen in an effort to bring more services to other areas in order to cut down on high traffic to our city from people seeking treatment. We have been working at this for about three years. It is an uphill climb but we are seeing it get some traction.

We actually need more treatment, not less. We are working to try to expand treatment in doctors offices as an additional resource. Different things/treatments work for different people. There are lots of ways to recover. As a City, we have been meeting for over a year, focusing on a strategy that will encourage doctors to be more accepting of treatment in their offices. These efforts could potentially lead to the closures of clinics. People could heal in their own communities. Recently, Director Public Health & Community Services Patty Hamilton has recently been appointed to a task force to try and help with these initiatives. So, there is a lot going on to try and address this. Things aren't going to happen overnight but these things give us hope that things will get better.

10. We are concerned about the condition of our roads. This is supposed to be a vibrant city but the roads are terrible. Citizens on French street have asked for years to have their road fixed. What about the surrounding area? Isn't there a program that is based on how bad the actual roads are?
  - a. We are working on this. We know that French Street is terrible but we hope that you hang onto those thoughts while all the work is done. Next year, we will be doing the whole works for that street, including sidewalks.

It doesn't make sense to ignore what's underneath and fix the top. We have to wait and it has to be planned, which takes time.

Center Street from Montgomery to Cumberland- work on the sewer and catch basins has begun and we are hoping it is paved soon, before snow falls.

Park Street has recently had some emergency work done but there work needed on the retaining wall which may be a big restoration project.

Sewer pipes are in bad shape in many areas. We know other areas where the streets are bad but it has to be planned out so we are using money effectively. We don't want to pave a street before the other work is done, only to dig it up. It is a struggle to catch up on the roads, especially after we backed down mid-decade due to the slow economy but we are doing what we can. We are not intentionally ignoring any street.

11. The oil prices are down- why aren't we doing more streets?

- a. We are really at our capacity this year. However, the byproduct from oil is now being used in other projects, other than asphalt, so that cost has actually risen. The price has fluctuated and may not be as low as you might think.

We have secured Federal and State funding for some main arteries, here in Bangor but the funds won't come through for another year or two. We have the financing to complete Broadway from Stillwater to where they ended the new pavement this year. We just have to patient for the funding to come through.

12. The debris signs for things left outside. How long to they stay before something is done?

- a. We check back usually within two weeks and then they are picked up. We have been trying this on an experimental basis and it appears to be more helpful.

13. Last week, debris signs went up but it looks like the "easy to pick on" places were targeted. It seemed like unfair placement. How is it decided?

- a. We operate largely on complaints, so we may not see it all. We can assure you that it is not based on neighborhood bias. If you see it, let us know and we will ticket it.

14. There is a large amount of people going the wrong way on Columbia Street. Is there a way to fix the signage?

- a. Engineering will look into this.

15. What will the City be offering for Senior Citizens give that the Senior Center will be closing until it relocates?

- a. Right now, we have a program that meets a few times a week for seniors. We have done special events in the past. Staff is already looking into what we can do to pick up any slack.

16. Essex street wood- The entry way looks demolished, like they did work but didn't pay any attention to how bad they made it look. Why? Can you also comment about what is happening with the end of the trail where access has been blocked?

- a. The section you are referring to is where a sewer line runs underneath the trail and in order to service/ improve it- it was necessary to dig up. We are looking to improve that area moving forward.

A portion of the trail that connects part of the woods is private property. Recently, the property owners have had legitimate concerns and frustrations that not everyone was being respectful of that section of trail. The short term remedy was to place signs to close that section while staff works on a long term solution. We

are working to resolve it in order to continue the long history of use that citizens have enjoyed.

17. What's happening with the Airport?
  - a. There are major renovations under way at BIA. We are working to upgrade an old tired terminal. We are looking to improve customer flow and a better customer experience. We have the room for growth and are looking to take advantage of that. We want the airport to feel like you are in Maine. We are working with concessions to help with this. We want Bangor citizens to be proud of our airport.
  - b. You may also notice that in the lobby there is a huge monstrosity of a structure. We are working in partnership with TSA to have a more efficient check baggage system.
  
18. Are there any more additions? Will we get the Boston connection back?
  - a. Two years ago we got United back with the help from great staff. Boston traffic used to have more business with an increasing market, at the time which helped us but through the mergers, things have changed. However, Boston is on our list to get back, along with Charlotte and Atlanta.
  
19. What about Manchester, NH?
  - a. Any place within a few hours of us is more of a drive market. It would not be profitable.
  
20. The website previously had multiyear assessment available but now they only have one, so I can't compare. Can that be changed?
  - a. We did limit it this year but if citizens want multiple years back, we can make that happen.
  
21. Is it possible to get Assessing information online rather than coming into office?

-Over the next couple of months, some of that information including tax cards will be available online. GIS platform will be put up that will have it all available with an easy icon. For \$50, you can come pick up a CD that has all the information.
  
22. The windows in City Hall near Council Chambers are in horrible condition. What is being done?
  - a. We don't disagree with that. We have been working to replace those. There is an opportunity with Efficiency Maine's large customer program that would allow us to bundle smaller projects together with up to 50% funding from them. This would help with projects around the City including fire dept. and airport. Please know, that anything we do to the windows at City Hall will have to go through the historic preservation society. We have to go through the same process as everyone else when they want to alter a historical building.
  - b.
  
23. Has there been any progress in making an amendment to eliminate the code that says buildings will revert to single family homes after being vacant for 12 months, regardless of how many units it has?

- a. There are a few buildings that this has happened with and we are aware that investors are not willing to rehab them for a single family home. We have been working on amending that code. However, there are many other high priorities and oftentimes, it is the problem of the day that we must address. We will get back to it but please know that it is a large building that requires a lot of effort from the planning board, council, legal, etc.
  
24. What is happening with all of the foreclosures?
  - a. Most foreclosures are bank owned. There are approximately 150 or so registered vacant homes. Some banks care more than others but we do struggle with getting them to maintain their properties. When the City is able to take possession, we try to turn them around as quickly as possible. Recently, we have been able to demo a couple buildings that were safety concerns. The challenge is really the ones that we don't own. We actually had a bank reach out to us months after we sent a notice telling them to demo it and ask what they need to do. We love when they respond but it is a struggle to get them to.
  
25. Can you add fines to an ordinance as incentive for the banks to comply?
  - a. We know it is a big problem but in reality- in order to actually receive or enforce the fines, we'd have to take them to court. Court is a very expensive and time consuming process, so it wouldn't be as effective as you may think. Additionally, judges do not want to hear cases on property maintenance and other similar issues. They are very busy, as well, and those sorts of issues are not their priority. The other issue is, we go through the whole process to get them in court and they take care of the problem just before so we have no case. Then we are back to square one. We push these issues as far as we can. There is a recent change on the state level that would allow us to do some maintenance but that still translates into us spending money. To put a lien on a property is \$50. That can add up quickly, not to mention the complicated process and procedures must be followed.
  
26. There's a foreclosure near me that's been 12 years in the making. Trees have grown up so much that you can't get in the back door. Why can't the City buy the property and fix it up before selling it?
  - a. We do this with some properties, it depends on the property. But we are working to return as many properties as possible back to the community either through, fixing them up and selling, demolishing the house and selling the property, selling as is for others to fix up, etc. With local banks, we can negotiate a short sale easier than with big banks. We are working with small banks to fix as many as possible, faster. Unfortunately, houses can wait years in foreclosure. If you have a house near you that is a safety concern- please reach out to us either by calling or the Go Bangor app. We will respond.
  
27. There are so many potholes, I'm worried for my car. What's being done about it?
  - a. File a service request via the Go Bangor App or by calling us. We do have crews that go out and fill potholes. There is lots and lots of information on our website, or you can get information by calling us.

28. City Council Candidates at the Candidates forum discussed how they would like to extend the City Bus services. This hasn't happened is it due to the expense? How much money are the talking about?
- a. The simple answer is that it's an expense issue. Each year we go through the budget and discuss people's desire to increase services. However, it's not a money maker and so it is subsidized by taxpayers. There just aren't enough riders to cover the cost of extending services. We cant know how much money because there are too many variables. We are on a regional system and we are one partner. So, even if the City does want to extend hours, not all may want to. It would be a City Council issue and they do the best they can to prioritize all the things that need more money. Everything is important and there is a balance. However, we are all aware there is a need there.
29. The roof at the airport mall is leaky, specifically Ocean State Job lots who have a big blue tarp collecting water. At what point does the City do something about that?
- a. This is news to us. We were not aware of this problem but that would be a code issue whether it's a house or business. Code will look into that. If you see things like this that have you concerned, please let us know!
30. Do restaurants have to have working bathrooms?
- a. Yes, if they don't, let us know. We depend heavily on information received from citizens through our Go Bangor App, website and phone calls. We do utilize the system. Last year alone, we handled 3,500 service requests. If it is an emergency, please call us directly.