

**CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP AGENDA**  
**June 10, 2026 @ 5:15 pm**  
**Council Chambers, City Hall, 73 Harlow St.**

*The City's Proposed Budget is available here:  
[FY27 Budget Proposal.pdf \(bangormaine.gov\)](#). The Table of Contents, page 3, is  
hyperlinked for ease of access. Click on the section you'd like to view to be brought to that  
section.*

**1. Assessor Valuation Update**

**2. Review of City Budget**



# OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

## CITY OF BANGOR

**Carolynn J. Lear**  
City Manager

To: City Council  
From: Carolynn Lear, City Manager  
Date: June 10, 2026  
RE: Follow-Up Questions from Department Overview Budget Workshops

Over the course of the last many weeks, Council has participated in numerous Budget Workshops where the various City Departments discussed their budget and new program requests with you. Council had numerous follow-up questions, some of which required additional research from staff. The answers to those questions are below:

### **I. City Solicitor New Program Request – Attorney to Focus on Vacant Buildings**

The City of Bangor's current vacant building registration fees are as follows:

- First 6 months - \$500
- Second 6 months - \$1000
- Third 6 months - \$2000
- Every 6 months thereafter - \$4000

If a vacant property owner complies, the City will, at minimum, collect registration fees of \$1,500 in year one, \$6,000 in year two, and \$8,000 each year thereafter on a vacant building. However, what is more likely is that when a property owner encounters the building registration fee requirement, they are incentivized to improve and then occupy or sell the property. The City Solicitor's Office works with Code Enforcement to enforce these registration requirements.

To exemplify the potential impact of having another attorney focus on issues related to Code Enforcement and vacant building registration, we use a recent case of a property located at 147 Randolph Drive:

If the vacant building fee operates as intended, the fee will incentivize the current owner of 147 Randolph Drive to occupy or sell the property, both of which will require improvements and renovations to make the property habitable. The current assessed value of the property is \$195,400. If the vacant building registration fee prompts renovation and habitation of the property that leads to a 10% increase in the property's value, the City will collect an additional \$350 per year in taxes (based on the current mill rate). That amount is \$700 if the renovation increases the property's value by 20%. If the property is brought to the average property value of a residential property in Bangor, the additional taxes collected would be just under \$1000 per year (for many years to follow).

What is more difficult to quantify is the impact that reactivating vacant properties has on the surrounding property values and also what impact a City-wide reduction to the number of vacant and unkept buildings has on the willingness of buyers to purchase homes in our City

73 HARLOW STREET, BANGOR, ME 04401  
TELEPHONE: (207) 992-4205  
WWW.BANGORMAINE.GOV

and businesses to locate to our City. But undoubtedly the direct property tax impact of resolving vacant properties combined with the larger impact on surrounding property values in our community, make it easy to imagine that this position could pay for itself.

## **II. Forgone Interest Due to Check Processing**

Council expressed interest in understanding the amount of interest the City loses when checks go unprocessed for prolonged periods due to high volume. The periods of highest volume and the total amount received for the last applicable period are listed below:

August/September Utility = \$1,642,015.26

August/September Taxes = \$27,215,677.56

February/March Utility = \$1,515,341.19

February/March Taxes = \$26,265,952.56

The City's normal processing time goes from 2 weeks to 4 weeks during these busy periods and we estimate the City loses approximately \$75,000-\$110,000 in interest (at 2.47%) just during these four months. There can also be delays at other periods during the year due to staffing, for example a long-term medical absence that would further add to this cost. Fluctuations in interest rate, check amounts, and timing of payments could also impact this estimate.

Additionally, rental car registrations are a substantial revenue source for the City – approximately \$3 million per year. Rental car companies typically require a quick turnaround time for the registration of their vehicles to quickly get them into rotation and if we are not able to meet their timing expectations, they will choose to register them in a different municipality (Portland). Having additional staff to prioritize registering rental cars would be expected to generate additional registrations for this reason.

## **III. Community Connector Ridership Increases**

From January through April of this year, the Community Connector has seen an almost 23% increase in ridership. Route A (Capehart) saw the largest increases, but this is likely due to the transition from two routes to a single route. Route O (Black Bear Orono Express), Route U (Hammond Street), Route W (Stillwater Avenue) and Route V2 (Old Town) saw the most significant increases during this period.

This ridership trend is generally consistent with the timing of higher fuel prices. Ridership rose modestly from January to February, before the largest fuel-price spike occurred. The strongest alignment appears between February and April, when fuel prices rose sharply and ridership also continued upward. This suggests that higher gasoline costs may have contributed to increased transit use, particularly among riders with greater sensitivity to transportation costs.

However, the ridership data do not prove that fuel prices were the sole cause of the increase. Some route-level gains may reflect service changes, routing changes, or seasonal demand patterns.



# OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

## CITY OF BANGOR

**Carolynn J. Lear**  
City Manager

### **IV. Library Social Worker Position**

During Council's conversation regarding the Bangor Public Library's Director, Council heard a request for the City to fund the Library social worker role. The social worker is currently funded through the end of this year with ARPA funds, 1/3 from Penobscot County ARPA funds and 2/3 from City of Bangor ARPA funds. The Library's budget request sought City funding for the social worker role in the following year. Council asked to explore whether Penobscot County would be willing to continue to fund the social worker role, in part.

The Library Director and City Manager met with the Penobscot County Administrator to discuss the County's possible ongoing financial support for the Library social worker role. The County is unable to commit to funding any portion of the Library social worker role because the Penobscot County budget is already finalized and does not have space to assume that cost. However, the Library Director committed to seek funding in the County's next budget process for the following budget year. With that said, no commitment of funding from Penobscot County was made and therefore, the Library Director's request for the City to fund the social worker in the coming year remains unchanged. The Library would reduce their request in future years should the County pick up some portion of the role's salary.

### **V. Emergency Management Position**

During the Fire Department budget workshop, Council discussed the need for a dedicated emergency management position within the City. Currently, the Fire Chief serves in a dual role as the City's Emergency Management Director. This structure presents challenges in sustaining long-term planning cycles, training and exercise coordination, EOC readiness activities, corrective action tracking, and ongoing interagency coordination efforts. The City has a need for dedicated emergency management capacity to sustain Bangor's compliance with planning and training requirements and preparedness for emergency events.

Since our last discussion on this topic, the City has continued to explore options including hiring a staff-person to perform these functions for the City and/or opportunities to collaborate with Penobscot County EMA. We also continue to explore grant funding opportunities.

Penobscot County EMA has offered a pilot partnership at an annual cost of \$145,000 per year. Under the proposed model, Penobscot County would provide dedicated emergency management planning and preparedness support services including: (1) Emergency Operations Plan maintenance and updates; (2) hazard-specific annex development; (3) training and exercise coordination; (4) EOC readiness assessments and preparedness support; and (5) interagency coordination and improvement planning support. The Bangor Fire Chief would retain operational authority, emergency management leadership, and incident decision-making responsibilities.

We are not yet ready to make a recommendation to Council on whether to pursue a collaboration with Penobscot County or alternatively hire an internal resource to perform this work. However, given Council's clear interest in supporting this work, one option would be for Council to appropriate \$150,000 to support emergency management within the City and staff could come back to Council with a final recommendation later this summer.

## **VI. Public Bathrooms**

The City of Bangor piloted a public bathroom program using ARPA funds that led to the deployment of four public bathrooms around the City (Harlow Street (Abbott Square), Broad Street, Coe Park, and Cascade Park). In this budget, Parks & Recreation is requesting \$200,500 for yearly maintenance of these restrooms based on current level of cleaning and repair services. Council has requested staff's recommendation regarding whether to continue with the public restroom program or to modify the program.

The City Manager and Director of Parks & Recommendation have worked together to craft the following recommendation:

- Keep the public restrooms at Coe and Cascade Park. The unit at Cascade has seen significantly less damage and fewer instances of additional maintenance and cleaning. Although we have had several fixture replacements in the unit at Coe Park, the number of replacements and additional maintenance is less than the Broad Street and Abbott Square locations.
- Remove the units on Broad Street and Abbott Square. Since July 1st, we have replaced approximately 170 hand sanitizers in both units, 8 paper dispensers, and 5 doors. In addition, the frequency of additional cleanings, graffiti removal, and trash/debris in these units is higher. These two locations are also the most frequently reflected in SeeClickFix and Police call data.
- The initial public restroom project was to address concerns about a lack of public facilities in the downtown area specifically as well as City-wide. Public forums were held to determine the best locations which led to the five current locations. Rather than pursue options for redeployment of the current units in the downtown district, we would recommend engaging in a public process to determine the appropriate next steps. Options could include a consistent staffing plan for current City owned facilities such as the transit center, City Hall, or the harbor master building as well as additional directional signage. Other options to explore include creating another permanent restroom near downtown, or pausing the concept altogether. The current approach with the downtown units was not as successful as hoped and we anticipate continuing this approach will have the same challenges.
- Locate the remaining two units in the Rolland Perry City Forest and Essex Woods. Currently there is one facility at the Rolland Perry City Forest for an approximately 700 acre space with thousands of visitors. Essex Woods has the dog park, biking trails, and birding opportunities. We receive requests annually for additional restroom facilities in each of these spaces.
- Because we are requesting deploying the remaining units, we would not recommend a reduction to the \$200,500 budgeted amount for repairs and cleaning. If the Rolland Perry City Forest and Essex Woods location are more successful than the Broad Street and Abbott Square locations, this budget line could be reduced in future years.