

MAYOR'S MESSAGE – AUGUST 26, 2020

On Monday night, August 24th, our Hallowell City Council passed the Fiscal Year budget, July 1, 2020 through June 30th, 2021. As you might expect, this was a long process with many considerations and Yes, many challenges! COVID-19 certainly impacted our deliberations and planning for the next budget year.

Here are some of the factors leading to the final budget as approved:

- Revenue Sharing from the State of Maine wasn't certain until July and was down from the prior year;
- Municipal revenue would be down in certain areas;
- The RSU School District budget went up by a fair amount; and,
- The County budget went up, with a one-year increase of nearly 10%, one of their largest in recent years;

However, Hallowell's TIF (Tax Increment Financing) revenue continues to increase; and after several years we had new properties in Hallowell generating new tax revenues. Stevens Commons produced new property tax revenues from recent developments there.

Beginning in February through July and August, our City's Finance Committee, City Manager and City Treasurer, Tax Assessor and Council members and with public input, the City was able to pass a new budget with minor increase, less than a full mil rate or approximately an increase of .3%. For the average homeowner, this translated to a tax increase of \$36! Please recognize, the actual municipal expenditures portion of the budget (Not County, Not School) were lower than the prior year! This despite some increased expenditures from COVID.

Thank you to all involved in this process – as mentioned above it was an exceptional team accomplishment.

Moving to the latter half of 2020 – Tuesday evening was the first meeting of a newly formed Parking Advisory Committee. The Mission of this Committee is to assess current parking availability and look forward 5 years to needs and how to fill them. There may be options available to the City that were not there 2-4 years ago as we planned for, and then suffered through, the reconstruction of Water Street.

You will also find a Pocket Park trial right now along Water Street, by the Berry and Berry building running to Central Street. Vision Hallowell has prepared a survey asking for your input as to what you'd like to see at this location – it is a City owned lot that for decades has been used for parking. Please let us know – go to:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeU03SC3dxsrCdsMX2tyDbIYiXw4_uxpcUIYJ9PWr2n2FNqNw/viewform