



GARDINER CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET



Meeting Date	02/18/2026	Department	City Council
Agenda Item	4.f)Consideration of adopting the 2026 Goals Gardiner City Council		
Est. Cost			

Background Information

Please see the attached draft document.

Requested Action	"I move to adopt the 2026 Goals of the Gardiner City Council as presented."
City Manager and/or Finance Review	
Council Vote/ Action Taken	
Departmental Follow-Up	

City Clerk Use Only	1 st Reading _____	Advertised _____	EFFECTIVE DATE _____
	2 nd Reading _____	Advertised _____ w/in 15 Days	
	Final to Dept _____	Updated Book _____	Online _____



**Gardiner City Council
2026 GOAL SETTING WORKSHOP
FINAL REPORT**

**Saturday, February 7, 2026
8:30 am to 10:30 am**

**Prepared by
Jane Lafleur, Jane Lafleur Consultants
Camden, Maine**

Purpose:

On Saturday, February 7, 2026, the Gardiner City Council, Mayor, and Finance Director, met to discuss the Council's priorities for 2025. Also attending was the City Clerk/Tax Collector. This workshop was facilitated by Consultant Jane Lafleur.

Attendance:

Debra Kimball, District 1

Veronica Babcock, District 2

Shawn Dolley, District 3

Kendall Holmes, District 4

Russell Greenleaf, At Large

Marc Cone, At Large

Timothy Cusick, At Large

Pat Hart, Mayor

Denise Brown, Director of Finance

Kathy Cutler, City Clerk/Tax Collector

Jane Lafleur, Facilitator

Agenda

The following agenda guided the meeting discussion.

10 Minutes	Opening and introductions: Mayor Pat Hart: Welcome and opening remarks
20 Minutes	Review Gardiner Meeting Guidelines and Best Practices for High Functioning Boards and Councils
60 Minutes	Review, Progress Report and Update 2025 Goals, Objectives and Strategies
10 Minutes	Review City Councilor committee assignments
10 Minutes	Additional Ideas

Discussion Summary

I. Introductions and Welcome

Mayor Pat Hart welcomed everyone to the workshop and thanked staff for participating. Consultant Jane Lafleur described the workshop purpose and flow. She noted that this workshop will build upon the previous workshops and is streamlined due to the previous success in identifying Goals, Objectives and Strategies and the interest in building upon this progress.

II. Review of Council Meeting Guidelines and Best Practices (see appendices)

“Meeting Guidelines” Review

The Council reviewed the Council Meeting Guidelines for appropriateness and relevance. The Council noted that agendas are clear and the Council stays on task.

A question was asked about whether Council, after a motion and second, can go back to ask a guest speaker for more information or explanation. It was agreed that they can go back for more information if needed.

It was also clarified that during in-person meetings that public comment is desired. During Executive Sessions it is not allowed.

“Best Practices for High Functioning Boards and Councils” Review

Councilors reviewed the Best Practices for high-functioning boards and councils. Individual Councilors noted how important it was to them to “Get Stuff Done Efficiently”. They also noted that as a group they have a “Group First” and “Community First” attitude, rather than individual interests. They also discussed the importance of “Regional Responsibility” and discussed the difficulty of this.

Denise Brown presented a status report and update on the 2025 Goals. Those slides are shown below.

1. Infrastructure
2. Economic Development & Housing
3. City Charter
4. Comprehensive Plan
5. City Services & Taxes
6. Resiliency Planning & Preparation

INFRASTRUCTURE

This goal received the highest votes of 10 and the objective of City Council is to prioritize new facilities for City Hall, Public Works, and Public Safety



- A contract was signed with Port City Architecture in September of 2022 for a planning study of the City's municipal facilities and received an initial draft finding in February of 2023
 - ✓ The current site is unacceptable for Fire & EMS
 - ✓ Consensus from the committee was to focus on moving Police and Fire off the City Hall site (approx. cost to build - \$15M)
- Many sites were looked at but due to the size needed and the topography of Gardiner options were limited
- Council gave Interim City Manager approval to proceed with purchase negotiations and purchase options are currently being reviewed by the City's attorney
- City Staff continue to work towards the \$4.2M Phase II WasteWater Plant Upgrade Project
 - ✓ A \$1M Northern Borders Regional Commission Grant has been secured
 - ✓ The City has been notified by both Senator King and Senator Collins offices that we will receive \$1.4M in CDS funds
 - ✓ Staff are working towards acquiring a loan/grant from USDA/Rural Development to fund the project

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING

Economic Development staff work with the Economic & Community Development Committee and other local and regional groups (ex: Gardiner Main Street, KVCOG) to address initiatives supporting economic growth, and identifying funding opportunities to support these strategies.

Objectives:

1. Create an economic development plan and include in Comp Plan
2. Maintain allocation for and support of Johnson Hall, Boys and Girls Club, Gardiner Main Street. This is dependent on Council vote during the annual budget process
3. Request reports from Johnson Hall, Boys and Girls Club and Gardiner Main Street. Financial reports were provided during the FY26 Budget process
4. Support affordable housing projects and developers

Awarded grant funding to support economic development:

- Dearborn Park Improvement: \$100,000 CDBG / \$37,800 Northern Border JH Grant
- Arcade Improvement: \$300,000 CDBG for construction
- Climate Vulnerability Assessment: \$50,000 Community Resilience Partnership

Affordable Housing TIF created for Iron Heights 32-unit affordable housing development. Brownfields grants supported soil disposal.

Implemented new state housing mandates into land use code.

Continuing progress in Implementing new State housing mandates into Land Use Code.

CITY CHARTER

The City Charter was last revised in 2002 and needs updating for many reasons; not the least of which for State Statute compliance.

This will be a done once a new City Manager is hired.



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is a guide to the City's future, giving insight into the direction that the residents want.

An approved Comprehensive Plan is also a requirement for some grant programs and other funding mechanisms.

- Gardiner's current Comprehensive Plan was approved in 2014 and is up for renewal for 2027.
- Gardiner started the review/update of the Comprehensive Plan with a kickoff meeting in September 2025.
- The committee contracted with KVCOC to get the state required information updated.
- The committee is following a monthly meeting schedule that will cover 12 required chapters.
- The goal is to submit a final plan to the State of Maine for review in spring of 2027.
- To date the committee has reviewed the Community Profile, Historic and Archeological Resources, and Transportation sections.
- With the help of Heart and Soul, a community session was held in October to meet with interested community members who wanted to voice their intentions about Gardiner's future. The event was well attended, and valuable information was obtained.

CITY SERVICES & TAXES

Grow and maintain a strong tax base:

- Consider regionalizing fire and public safety services
 - ✓ While we all know it offers long-term efficiencies, regionalization is much easier said than done.
 - ✓ Fire companies are often proud, historical institutions and members resist mergers that threaten their unique company name.
 - ✓ Gardiner is moving forward with a new public safety facility which could lead this initiative in the future.
- Forge relationship with School Board
 - ✓ Even without direct authority over the School Board, Mayors, City Councilors, and Managers can build better relationships through attending meetings, two-way communication, transparency, and trust & respect. This is an ongoing initiative.

RESILIENCY PLANNING & PREPARATION



Kennebec County EMA is currently in the process of updating their county-wide emergency plan and the final plan will be reviewed by City staff. Chief Sieberg will give an update to City Council at a future Council meeting.

NIMS (National Incident Management System) training is crucial for elected officials, such as mayors and council members, to understand their leadership role in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. If you did not get the opportunity to take the January training, I will forward the next round of trainings to you.

2026 Goals, Objectives and Strategies

The Council reviewed the top 2025 Goals, Objectives and Strategies. After discussion, the Council agreed to the following set of Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Lead Committee for 2026.

2026 Goals	Objectives	Possible Strategies	Lead Committee
Infrastructure & Transportation	Prioritize new facilities for City Hall, Public Works, Public Safety, Police and Fire	Fund a study of current conditions of these facilities; galvanize public support; activate a facilities committee; use grants, federal money, TIF funds and bonds to fund new facilities	City Council
	Create a walkable and bikeable city	Develop a city-wide sidewalk and trail plan; add to Comp Plan and implement plan	City Council
	Explore Water and Sewer District efficiencies	Explore Water and Sewer District Merge	City Council
Economic Development & Housing	Expand tax base beyond residential taxes	Create an economic development plan and include in Comp plan	City Council/ Economic Development Committee/ City Manager
		Maintain allocation for and support of Johnson Hall, Boys and Girls Club, Gardiner Main Street	City Council
		Request reports from Johnson Hall, Boys and Girls Club and Gardiner Main Street	City Council
		Support affordable housing projects and developers	City Council
City Charter	Update the City Charter to bring into compliance with State Statutes; address recall; address roles and expectations	Assign priority to new City Manager	City Manager
Comprehensive Planning	Update the Comprehensive Plan	Continue the Comprehensive Planning Process	Comprehensive Plan Committee
		Obtain robust community input into Comprehensive Planning Process	

2026 Goals	Objectives	Possible Strategies	Lead Committee
City Services & Taxes	Grow and maintain a strong tax base	Consider regionalizing fire, public safety and services	City Council
		Forge relationship with School Board	City Council/ City Manager
		Collect data on fire calls regarding resources committed to calls to open discussions with neighboring communities.	City Council/ City Manager/ Fire Chief
		Continue to forge relationships with County to have input into County budget	City Council/ City Manager
		Research a guidance document for City Manager search.	City Council
Resiliency Planning & Preparation	Better prepare City for emergencies and roles of elected officials and staff	Complete Federal requirements for Emergency Preparedness	City Council
		Build and maintain a list of businesses and contact information to emergency preparedness.	City Manager/ City Clerk

IV. Committee Assignments

Ambulance Advisory Committee

Tim Cusick
Rusty Greenleaf
Mayor Ex Officio (PH has never attended)

Budget Committee ad hoc

Tim Cusick
Ken Holmes
Veronica Babcock

Economic Development

Shawn Dolley
Ken Holmes

Facilities Committee – ad hoc

Rusty Greenleaf
Ken Holmes
Pat Hart

Library Board of Trustees

Mayor, Ex-Officio

New Mills Dam Committee

Denise Brown
Rick Sieberg
(does not require councilor)

Ordinance Review Committee

Rusty Greenleaf
Zack Montell

Parks and Public Spaces

Veronica Babcock
Shawn Dolley
Debbie Kimball

Public Works (has not met)

Tim Cusick

Solid Waste Committee

Tim Cusick
Marc Cone

Union Negotiations – ad hoc

Tim Cusick
Pat Hart

Local or Regional Representatives

First Park

Marc Cone

Gardiner Main Street

Board of Directors

Shawn Dolley

KVCOG

Melissa Lindley
(We could add a councilor)

Please note: Councilors, like the public, are welcome at any committee meeting. Members noted on this list are voting members.

V. APPENDICES

Gardiner City Council Meeting Guidelines

Revised by City Council on February 18, 2023, February 3, 2024, February 8, 2025 at Goal Setting Workshops.

Meeting Format

- *City Council and City Committee meetings will be held in-person*
- *City Council, Planning Board, and Board of Appeals meetings will be live-streamed*
- *Council and Committees will allow for public comment as appropriate*

Honor Roberts Rules of Order

Following past practices, City Council will seek to follow the spirit of Roberts Rules of Order

- *Council will take up one motion at a time*
- *There must be a motion on the floor before beginning discussion*
- *Discussion should be limited to the motion on the floor*

Clear and swift agendas

- *Meeting agendas will be available the Thursday before the City Council meeting.*
- *Questions about the agenda items that require research should be shared with the City Manager by Sunday before the meeting. The City Manager will prepare written responses by Tuesday before the meeting.*
- *The Chair should move efficiently through the agenda allowing focused discussion and limiting digressions.*
- *At the Mayor's discretion, the meeting may be ended by 9pm.*
 - *Any agenda items started before 9pm will be completed*
 - *Undiscussed agenda items may be taken up at a future meeting.*
- *For roll call voting, the Mayor will vote last.*
- *Councilors can make comments on any topic at the end of each meeting.*

Each view heard, once

- *Hearing the same fundamental point of view, even if expressed differently each time, is inefficient. If you develop a new view, share it, but no need for repetition.*
- *Be self-restrained.*
- *Signify agreement with a point of view with nods, thumbs, and "hear-hear."*
- *If Councilors become repetitive in their remarks, call for a vote or otherwise move on.*

Public participation expectations clear

- *Council encourages public input.*
- *The beginning of each meeting has time for the public to speak on topics that are not on the agenda.*
- *Public comments should be no more than 3 minutes and should not be repetitive.*
- *Public input is not a time for discussion with Council members. There will be no immediate response to the public comment.*

Handle conflict professionally

- *Councilors will keep comments focused on the topic and avoid making personal or disparaging comments.*
- *If a Councilor feels attacked or if comments seem to disparage others, call for a point of order. Resolve conflict in private.*

Open-minded attitudes

- *Seek to understand all information and points of view before forming an opinion.*
- *Ask questions with an interest in hearing the answer, not as a means to make a point or intimidate.*
- *Councilors are encouraged to keep an open mind and be willing to change opinions based on changing circumstances or new information.*

Committees

- *City Committees will follow these guidelines.*

Best Practices for High Functioning Councils and Boards

Why it pays to be a good leader:

High functioning municipal leaders, boards, and committees aren't that way by accident, they work at it. They invest in themselves. They are continually looking at their behaviors and attitudes and deliberately making improvements. And the investments pay off.

Here are just some of the rewards that come from professional, competent, deliberate leadership.

Attract and keep good people: Good leaders attract good people. Highly competent leaders attract good thinkers and doers. Good leaders and high functioning groups attract good staff and have low staff turnover. Dysfunctional leaders and committees repel good people and attract people with, well, nothing better to do.

Get stuff done efficiently: One reason good leaders attract good people is because they don't waste people's time. "Want something done? Ask a busy person." Busy people who get stuff done hate inefficiency and don't have time for it. Leaders and groups who invest in self-improvement don't waste time and money, or cause frustration.

Valued and praised by constituents: It's fun when you are getting positive encouragement. When people see you trying hard – trying to implement best practices for the good of the community – they are not so inclined to throw stones "from outside the circle." Good leaders and competent boards and committees are not always "in battle" with constituents and defending their actions.

Fun and rewarding to be part of: When a team gets good stuff done – when a team is winning – it's a fun team to be on. Participating or "having to go to meetings" is not a burden, a dread, a source of tension,

Make good decisions that serve their people well over time: Isn't this really why we are serving? To help our communities? We want to make good decisions that will work well over the long run. Decisions aren't always being revisited when they are made well in the first place. Good decisions reduce conflict and increase efficiency.

Serve as a good example for other groups: Good leadership is contagious. People in the community are watching community leaders; and copying their behaviors and attitudes. High functioning leaders and groups are not modeling, promoting, condoning unhelpful behaviors and attitudes. Rather they are modeling good behaviors and attitudes.

What good municipal leaders do

Clear roles and responsibilities: High functioning leaders and groups establish well defined roles and clear responsibilities. Each person knows what they are supposed to do and what not to do, who the got-to person is for each topic, and the next step in every process. The best way to ensure shared understanding of roles and responsibilities is to 1. Write them down, and 2. Enforce them. Enforcing them means paying attention, calling things out, and when things are out of alignment: either correct the behavior or amend the role or responsibility.

Do what you say: The most effective way to build trust is to say that we will do something and then do it. The most effective way to erode trust is to act in ways that are out of alignment with our words. For policies to have any effect, they need to be acted on. All talk and no action is just talk. Good leaders can be counted on to keep their word. And they are extremely careful about the commitments they make; what words they use.

Transparency: In a high functioning organization each participant knows how things work. Each person has access to information. Knowledge and information is not used to have power over you but rather used to empower you to be more effective at helping the group. Things are written down and available. When information can't be available, an explanation is provided.

Group first attitude: Good leaders are more interested in the success of the group than in personal success. My job as a good team member is to help my teammates look good. A simple test for integrity? Is my behavior or attitude good for the group or is it good for me? If I act in self serving ways I am likely acting without integrity. Good leaders are not so concerned with credit or blame, only with what's best for the group or community. And it is the special leader who goes beyond assuming that "because I think it's good, it must be good for my community."

Respect: Good leaders demonstrate a basic amount of respect for every person in every situation, no matter how strong the disagreement or dislike. When I show respect, I get respect. And without a basic level of respect, we can't work together. And just because I disagree with you on one thing doesn't mean I won't work on another thing.

Humility: Good leaders are not afraid to call out a good idea when they see it; even if it's not theirs. Good leaders are not afraid to say "I don't know" rather than fudge an answer with what they do know or sort-of know. Good leaders are not afraid to admit mistakes and/or apologize. It's rarely the mistake that gets a leader in trouble; it's the cover up.

Think strategically and regionally: Good leaders, boards, and committees get stuff done day-to-day, but they also take time to think long term and big picture. They recognize that their community is part of a larger community and so although it takes time, they meet and make collaborative plans with other leaders and other communities. They also recognize their role as "stewards" in a long line of stewards who came before them and who will come after them.

Development: Good leaders, boards, and committees take time to invest in their own development. They take time to do strategic planning. They take time to learn new things about the economy, the environment, demographics, and social trends. They take time to learn new techniques for meetings, conflict resolution, and communication. They ask their constituents about how they can do better, and they pay attention to the answers.

The board acts as a whole: Members of high-functioning boards recognize the limits of their individual authority and recognize that true authority lies with the board as a whole; the corporate board. Members give individual opinions but do not speak for or decide for the board as a whole. Town and city managers and administrators report to boards, not individuals.

Craig Freshley, 2023 Gardiner City Council