

Gardiner Economic and Community Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 9, 2026 @ City Council Chambers

Present: Alex Monahan, Carrie Arsenault, Debby Willis (chair), Jay Simanski, Doug Baston, Tamara Whitmore, Shawn Dolley, Ken Holmes, Melissa Lindley, and Thomas Hill (City Manager)

1. Introduction by Thomas Hill, new City Manager (started June 5th)
 - a. Background is in international economic development - locally focused initiatives
 - b. Expertise is in emergency management
2. Minutes: A motion was made to approve as presented by Ken; seconded by Jay. The motion carries.
3. Project Updates:
 - a. Kennebec Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
 - i. KVCOG develops 5-year plans which are approved by the Economic Development Administration. 2027-2032 plan is in development and feedback from the community is needed.
 - ii. [Community Stakeholder Survey](#) – for residents, businesses and employees of the area. Please complete and share by Sept. 1.
 - iii. Priority Projects – several projects/initiatives are detailed in the report as having significant impact to the region. To be considered for the new plan, a project must be submitted for review by the CEDS committee. The current plan lists Libby Hill Business Park and Waterfront Park for Gardiner projects.
 1. Projects to consider submitting:
 - a. Waterfront Park improvements (highest priority)
 - b. Cobbossee Trail
 - c. Merrymeeting Trail (Richmond/Bowdoinham/Topsham are not within the same CEDS region as Gardiner)
 - d. Projects can be submitted by anyone on [this form](#) by 9/1. The info will be shared with council and department heads and we can revisit this at the August committee meeting.
 - b. Business Consulting: Alex is offering a volunteer service of business advising for new and existing Gardiner businesses. This is an independent service, and he makes no claims to represent the City of Gardiner. He has a write up that can be shared with those who might be interested or could benefit. Melissa will send it in a meeting follow up email. Some services/questions might include:
 - i. Developing/reviewing a business plan. Many plans don't include why decisions are made: Why did you choose your hours, target audience, pricing, location, etc.
 - ii. Looking at data that they might not have access to for decision making:

1. Want profit margin to be X.
 2. Issues identifying busiest times.
4. Gardiner Main Street/Downtown update: New businesses opening soon:
 - i. Plum Bakery
 - ii. Pink Crow
 - iii. Benedetto Café & Gelateria (fall/winter opening)
5. Strategy & Priorities Discussion
 - a. How do we compare to other communities?
 - i. Gardiner is smaller and more welcoming than Augusta. Community based.
 - ii. Gardiner Area Thrives - youth mattering
 - iii. Feeling you get being in Gardiner
 - iv. Hallowell - is a drive through town so it's different
 - v. We are a waypoint to the downeast
 - vi. Gardiner is a "real" town
 - vii. People already want to live here. Feels like the town that you grew up in. Re-wind.
 - b. What are our strengths? What would 2050 look like in Gardiner.
 - i. Most visible jewel is downtown
 - ii. Affordable and "Easy" (45 – 60 minute) commute to the coast, Portland, etc.
 - iii. Welcoming, friendly community - "feel like you've moved to Maine"
 - iv. Opportunity - by the highway
 - v. For boaters, so many services close to the boat launch
 - vi. Full city services
 - c. Problems/Needs
 - i. Pool Hall needs to be addressed
 1. Brownfield assessment includes a light structural analysis. First floor was rebuilt after 1987 flood. Upper stories have structural concerns and holes in the floors.
 2. No significant hazardous material concerns. Mold/roof issues.
 - ii. Balancing of rural character with room for development/growth
 - iii. Brunswick Ave highway corridor mixed with residential
 - iv. More attractive gateways to downtown
 - v. Need for more housing
 - vi. Portland is moving this way (urbanism/sprawl)
 - vii. Climate resiliency – mitigation measures
6. Adjourn at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted, TAW