

BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, September 9, 2026 @ 5:15 PM

Council Chambers, First Floor of City Hall

MEETING MINUTES

City Councilors Present: Leonard, Faloon, Mallar, Fish, Carson, Hawes, Beck, Walker, Deane

City Staff Present: Krieg, Hernandez-Smith, Vologina, Collette

Chair Leonard called the meeting to order at 5:45 P.M.

1. Presentation from University of Maine – Orono Students on their Assigned Economic Development Projects

Chair Leonard introduced the agenda item.

Economic Development Officer Hernandez-Smith provided an overview of the internship program and its value to the department. She introduced Economic Development Specialist Veronika Vologina and the Economic Development Interns Elle Prescott, Isabella Gaudio, and Ashley Wilson.

Economic Development Specialist Vologina and Economic Development Interns Gaudio and Wilson presented on their internship projects, including: Bangor Central Kitchen documents, Foreign Trade Zone 58, Tax Increment Financing and Credit Enhancement Agreements, and City properties and leases. They reflected on their growth and provided feedback on Gen Z retention and pipeline development.

Economic Development Officer Hernandez-Smith introduced the new director of the University of Maine's School of Policy and International Relations, J. Alexander Hamilton, as well as the incoming Economic Development Intern, Anna Wallace.

Chair Leonard asked the Committee for questions.

Chair Leonard commented on his appreciation of the use of whimsy, as well as the responsibility to create a path forward for the next generation in the workforce.

Councilor Beck asked about the process for bringing a project from brainstorming stages to an official document -- Economic Development Officer Hernandez-Smith described an example of evaluating whether drafted Foreign Trade Zone documents are better suited for internal training or for public facing information as a component of zone growth. Beck asked about the process for creating Tax Increment Financing and Credit Enhancement Agreement "cheat sheets" -- Hernandez-Smith described tasking Economic Development Intern Wilson with dissecting the policies from an outside perspective with the intention of transforming what was found challenging into broken-down and readable information. Beck asked for the use of this document for incoming Councilors.

Councilor Beck asked if the project dashboard is public facing -- Economic Development Officer Hernandez-Smith discussed that while its intent is to serve as an internal project management organizer, pieces will be utilized publicly on the City webpage as well as at Lunch and Learn sessions with Council.

Councilor Beck noted the importance of institutional memory, asking if the onboarding guide is something that could be implemented in other departments. Economic Development Officer Hernandez-Smith discussed that the implementation may depend on the role, but she believes such guides help with efficiency.

Councilor Beck asked about Gen Z recruitment and retention -- Economic Development Officer Hernandez-Smith discussed the importance of succession plans and the ability to allow young people to interact with municipal government.

Councilor Carson congratulated the interns and noted that he does believe all of their projects will contribute a lasting difference.

Councilor Fish thanked the interns and appreciated the thought into simplifying forms to make them easier for both consumers and Councilors.

Councilor Faloon thanked the interns and applauded their presentation skills.

Councilor Carson thanked the Economic Development team for leveraging anchor institutions.

2. Bangor International Airport Report

Chair Leonard introduced the agenda item.

Airport Director Saavedra discussed growth at the airport, stating that 2025 provided the busiest year on record. He shared the statistic that three out of every four arriving passengers rent a car in Bangor. Saavedra discussed that the 2025 and 2026 summer season trends, along with feedback from airline partners, means the airport can expect growth to continue.

Councilor Leonard asked how the upcoming El Nino may impact the upcoming season projections for the airport and runway – Airport Director Saavedra discussed the airport's federally-required winter operations plan.

Councilor Fish expressed that with increasing fuel charges and tariffs, she is surprised each month still experienced growth compared to last year. She asked what may be causing the uptick in tourism. Airport Director Saavedra discussed that although geopolitical dynamics impact the industry, the Bangor airport has continued to see growth and has experienced a moderate to small impact on operation.

Airport Director Saavedra discussed an emergency runway closure due to Alkali-Silica Reaction that required major repair and provided an unbudgeted expense.

Airport Director Saavedra shared that the connector project is expected to be completed in mid-October. He provided updates on projects Taxiway Alpha and Mike as well as the TSA Checkpoint expansion.

Chair Leonard expressed support for the growth approaches.

Councilor Carson asked whether the expansion includes brining outside businesses into the space -- Airport Director Saavedra responded no, the TSA Checkpoint expansion is limited to the screening area.

Councilor Beck commended the progress with Taxiway Alpha and Mike.

Airport Director Saavedra discussed new proposed terms of the GE Vernova temporary land lease.

Councilor Carson moved that the Committee recommend the lease change to full Council for approval. Seconded by Councilor Fish. Roll call vote conducted – all in favor, none opposed. Motion passed.

Airport Director Saavedra discussed the recommendation to accept and appropriate the Airport Improvement Grant.

Councilor Carson moved staff recommendation to accept and appropriate the Airport Improvement Grant payment. Seconded by Councilor Faloona. Roll call vote conducted – all in favor, none opposed. Motion passed.

3. Electric Vehicles and Heat Pumps Follow-Up

Chair Leonard introduced the agenda item.

Planning Officer Collette provided follow-up responses to Councilor Fish's questions from a previous presentation about electric vehicles, discussing battery longevity, insurance costs, and fuel sources of the energy grid.

Planning Officer Collette discussed heating efficiency, cost of cooling, and the value of heat pumps. She expressed that heat pump efficiency can be informed by evaluating how it is being used.

Councilor Fish and Councilor Carson thanked her for the response and additional information.

Chair Leonard expressed appreciation for opening up a larger dialogue surrounding energy use and efficiency in the city.

Planning Officer Collette discussed the exploration of grant opportunities to help support the cost to install solar. Councilor Carson asked about what infrastructure upgrades may be needed. Councilor Fish discussed the option of town-owned electric companies. Councilor Carson shared an experience with a city-owned power company.

4. Potential Chicken Regulations Follow-Up

Chair Leonard introduced the agenda item.

Planning Officer Collette discussed previously presented regulations and the feedback to look into other options, such as to reference the City of Auburn's regulations

Planning Officer Collette recommended allowing up to four hens on lots 0.49 acres or less and up to 12 on lots 0.5 acres or larger, prorated on actual lot size. She discussed proposed coop setbacks along with the requirement to receive a Certificate of Occupancy for coops to ensure Code Enforcement and Animal Control can evaluate compliance.

Councilor Carson asked whether issues with rodent prevention measures within a coop could constitute as evidence relating to increased rodent presence.

Councilor Beck asked about the enforceability process. Planning Officer Collette discussed that the timeline will depend on Code Enforcement, and that once staff receives a report, they go to inspect the complaint. Beck asked whether the recommendations would go to a public hearing – Collette responded it will be included in the Land Development Code updates and associated public hearings.

Councilor Deane expressed concern surrounding what occurs if the chickens are not being well taken care of. Planning Officer Collette discussed uncertainty of how to regulate care levels, and shared staff will explore potential provisions further.

Councilor Carson discussed the additional workload that the Code Enforcement team may incur. Councilor Beck asked about the ability to deputize the inspections.

5. Executive Session: *Consultations with legal counsel 1 M.R.S.A § 405(6)(E)*

Councilor Carson moved that pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A § 405(6)(E), consultations with legal counsel, the Committee enter Executive Session. Seconded by Councilor Faloona. Roll call vote conducted – all in favor, none opposed. Motion passed.

6. Possible Actions on Executive Session Item

Chair Leonard discussed the end of the current moratorium on data centers expiring in October. He asked the Committee whether the moratorium should be continued to provide staff more time to develop potential regulations.

Councilor Fish discussed that she is in favor of extending the moratorium, but would like to weigh the legal risk of challenges associated with the moratorium. She expressed interest in strict ordinances that would discourage data centers while limiting legal risk for the city.

Councilor Carson asked for an estimate with time required to continue developing a regulatory framework – Planning Officer Collette discussed that potentially within six months, and noted the priority of public engagement in forming regulations.

Councilor Carson moved that the Committee recommends extending the data center moratorium for six months to full Council. Seconded by Councilor Fish. Vote unless doubted, no doubt.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted,

Kayleigh Rienas
Development Assistant
Community & Economic Development Department