

## Jerry Douglass Interview Notes

Public Works Director, Gardiner ME

### **Planning:**

1. *What is the most useful planning document you have used in your time at Gardiner (or other municipalities?)*
  - a. I don't often review planning documents - more so the design development documents.
  
2. *What is your greatest concern for Downtown Gardiner over the next 5 years?*
  - a. Aging water and sewer infrastructure is a major concern. Overall maintenance issues is a big concern as well, from paving to sidewalks, or any other new project being designed.

### *Other Notes:*

Need for additional policies at the City level. There are no paving policies, construction maintenance policies, or sidewalk policy. The number one concern is funding ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure we do have. We currently don't have a paving budget.

Big Challenges to the City include challenges of everyone working in a silo. I act as a lightning rod in my job, as do many others, rather than everyone working in concert on their own task.

I'm often stuck in a reactive role. The city shouldn't bond as much as it does.

The best parts about Gardiner is the Cobbossee and Kennebec waterfront, and the history here. Its a beautiful area when compared to many other Maine Downtowns.

## Patricia Hart Interview Notes

05.21.2021

### **Best Planning Document: Gardiner's Heart and Soul**

- Directly to the values statements: Gardiner Residents Value:
  - Family Friendliness - We value spaces and organizations available to residents of all ages and income levels
  - Education - We value an education system that prepares students for a global environment

- Connection to Nature - We value outdoor recreation opportunities and the preservation of open space
- History, Arts and Culture - We value history while continuing to develop diverse cultural activities for residents of all ages
- Strong Local Economy - We value a strong economy that welcomes businesses and entrepreneurs while maintaining the character of the community including the historic downtown
- Sense of Community, sense of belonging - we value a community where residents are helpful, caring, and respectful of each other.
- Community Involvement and Volunteerism - We place a high value on volunteering and civic involvement
- Livability - We value preserving the character of the city while ensuring that residents of all ages and incomes have access to family support systems, transportation, and arts and culture opportunities
- Infrastructure /City Services - WE value safe, well maintained roads, sidewalks schools and publi spaces that are accessible and clean in all seasons.
- Unique Physical Assets - We value the city's unique natural and built assets that are at the heart of the community's identity, and believe they should be available to all residents.
- Include, Responsive Government - We value open, two way communication between residents and community decision makers.
- Also went to the Comp Plan Spreadsheet / Implementation guide.

**Concerns:**

- Quality, affordable housing. The challenges of improving the downtown stock.
- Stormwater Infrastructure age and eventual cost of repairs / replacements.
- Drain on capital from the Libby Hill fiasco. (Business park development which cost the city a lot of \$\$)
- Arcade Parking Lot
  - A need and a wish for improvement that is in the ledger, but no progress has been made.
- MaCkay and Dearborn Park redevelopment should happen.
- Issues with maintenance of parks and waterfronts. Good support has come from Gardiner's Gardeners, as well as Rotary Club.
- Public Facilities Building
  - It is an asset to have these services downtown, but the city staff, police, and fire are all outgrowing their current site.
- Flood Issues
  - Flood of 87 was last bad one.
  - Things have changed with dams and dam control upstream
- Challenging times politically, with flashpoints on all sides. Gardiner is a diverse community of viewpoints, but recent BLM / Blue Line conflicts have become challenging.
- Zoning for Marijuana is an ongoing concern - 6 businesses in the downtown area.

## **Assets**

- Gardiner is a “Peninsula”
  - Highway 95 and 295 carry significant Tourist streams from the south.
  - Regional Networks plug into Gardiner
    - East Coast Greenway
    - Tourism for Renny’s
    - Maine Beer Trail

Anne Davis, City Administrator

Tracey DesJardins, City Planner / Economic Development Director

Melissa Lindley, Gardiner Main Street

Perri Williams, Gardiner Main Street

Interviewed 5.21.2021, 9:15am

## ***Planning:***

Consider Gardiner as a regional service center. It offers emergency services, utility services, and more for the 5 town region, but we want to see tourism and commerce come back to us in that same way.

Those 5 Communities are:

- Pittston
- Randolph
- West Gardiner
- Farmingdale
- Litchfield

We’re not a tourist center. We’d like to see that change.

There’s a perception of tax rates being to high here, in Gardiner, and low everywhere else. An ongoing challenge for the city.

This planning document needs to have “tangible results” to be worthwhile.

Zoning Regulations are working as intended in recent rewrite. Some boundary issues are a challenge, and may need to be reviewed further.

1. *Do you feel that there are any regulatory barriers in Gardiner's zoning regulations that limit development in the Downtown?*
  - a. There are enormous barriers to redevelopment downtown -
    - i. Historic district overlay (repairs to many buildings must be historically accurate)
    - ii. Aging and decrepit infrastructure downtown
    - iii. Flood insurance premiums (some owners are self-insured)
  - All this comes together to make reinvestment in downtown extremely challenging.
  - TIF District (Omnibus TIF District) can support with credit enhancement possible for
    - This also contributes to Downtown upper floor utilization issues. A lot of upper floors are in poor repair.

### **Downtown Disasters**

- Basement infrastructure is a real concern in these aging buildings, as its hit first in a flood.
- Flood insurance premiums are getting out of hand.
- See Archives at library for flood frequency.
- Fire has also been major issue - thats what those downtown parks are made from - burned out building sites.
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### **Downtown Assets**

- Waterfront Access and Boating have been great.
- Gardiner is "always at that Cusp" of really taking off as a destination

### **Parking**

- Parking is a perceived Problem, more than real.
- Privately owned parking lots have been a challenge (Hannafords and Camden National, specifically)
  - Conversations on this theme have not been fruitful - Hannafords ownership once indicated that their parking needs to be plentiful for the 1 day of the year where peak shopping occurs.
- [See 2019 Parking Study](#)
- Parking is functional now, but concerns exist about a sold out show with Johnson Hall's future 400 seats
- Could remote parking become a future solution for these high-parking-demand moments?

### **Tourism**

- The river, EA Robinson, Beer trails, and other elements bring community into Gardiner. Main Street Tourism

### **COVID Changes**

- Housing demand going up. Commercial space demand stagnant, Broadband improvements needed to capitalize on remote work possibilities.