

**City Council Workshop
Monday, January 12
Council Chambers, City Hall, 73 Harlow St.
5:15 p.m.**

- 1. Finalize Council Priorities**
- 2. Discussion of Board of Ethics Written Findings and Conclusions Re: CO 25-270**
- 3. City Solicitor Update**
- 4. LD 435: An Act to Improve the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit**

To: City Council
From: Carollynn Lear, City Manager
Date: January 12, 2026
RE: City of Bangor Council 2026 Priorities

Bangor City Council met on December 10 to begin the process of establishing the Council's priorities for the upcoming year. After an initial brainstorming session and straw poll, Council identified the following top priorities.

A description of those top priorities is below along with a framework of draft strategies anticipated for implementation. We are seeking two things:

- (1) Confirmation that these priorities should be formally adopted via the attached Council Order; and
- (2) Input on the draft implementation strategies below.

Establish a Comprehensive Plan to Address Homelessness

The creation of a comprehensive strategy that leverages both outside regional and nationwide experts alongside local stakeholders to craft a comprehensive plan for how the City supports organizations addressing homelessness in the City and considers the effectiveness of past strategies and recommends new strategies to decrease the incidence and impact of homelessness in Bangor.

- *On January 6, 2026, the Council discussed a draft proposal for a short-term task force model and a permanent standing committee model and provided the City Manager input. Council opted for a permanent standing committee model and City staff are drafting the required ordinance.*
- *City staff are crafting a final draft ready for Council review at the January 19th BED Committee, which will lead to a final Council vote on February 9th.*
- *City staff will seek to have identified Committee members within a month of approval and have scheduled the first Committee meeting.*
- *Subsequent deliverables to Council will be dictated by the work of the Committee; however, City staff will support the Committee to act expeditiously.*

Continue to Address Housing Needs

Several housing projects are in various stages of completion around the City including the completed Theresa's Place project, and in progress projects such as Sunrise Senior Living, a recently approved tiny home project, and a supportive housing project led by BangorHousing. Council intends to continue to focus on housing by focusing on gaps and unmet needs. Ideas considered include a standing committee focused on housing and/or housing bonds.

- *On January 6, 2026, the Council coalesced around a permanent standing committee to address homelessness and housing.*
- *City staff are crafting a final draft ready for Council review at the January 19th BED Committee, which will lead to a final Council vote on February 9th.*
- *City staff will seek to have identified Committee members within a month of approval and have scheduled the first Committee meeting.*
- *Subsequent deliverables to Council will be largely dictated by the work of the Committee; however, City staff will support the Committee to act expeditiously.*
- *The timeline for the Committees work is expected to prioritize the creation of a strategic plan for the City's homelessness, which will be built upon by broadening the discussion to include housing availability and affordability.*

A Fairer Share of Regional Costs & Participation

As a service center, Bangor proudly hosts a number of businesses, non-profits, educational organizations, and medical service providers that are of broad regional importance. However, there are attendant costs associated with being a service center that are born by Bangor alone. At the same time, many of these institutions are exempt from property tax and Bangor shoulders a disproportionate impact from those property tax exemptions. City Council would like to explore creative and innovative ways to encourage broader regional participation and cost sharing.

- *Over the course of the last several months, the City Manager has participated in the Real Estate Property Tax Relief Task Force as the Governor's appointee representing larger cities and towns. Throughout these meetings, the City Manager has prioritized highlighting the disproportionate burdens borne by service center communities – which has led to an interim report with a finding acknowledging this disproportionate burden born by service center community taxpayers. The City Manager will continue this work when the Task Force reconvenes following the upcoming legislative session.*
- *The City Manager participates in the Maine Service Center Coalition, a group made up of Maine's service center cities and towns to advocate for their interests – during the upcoming legislative session, the City Manager will prioritize opportunities to leverage this group to influence legislative and spending decisions to reduce burdens on service center communities and their taxpayers.*
- *Council will explore the creation of a regional working group to address issues of mutual interest between Bangor and surrounding communities.*
- *Council will identify opportunities to advocate for a fairer distribution of state and federal funds to service center communities and Bangor specifically.*



CITY COUNCIL ACTION

01/26/2026

Council Meeting Date: 01/26/2026

Item No:

Responsible Dept: City Manager



Requested Action: Order

Map/Lot: N/A

Title, Order

Establishing the City Council's Priorities for 2026

Summary

During City Council's annual priority-setting session and subsequent workshop, City Council established the following 2026 priorities:

(1) Establish a comprehensive plan to address homelessness. Council will spearhead the creation of a comprehensive strategy that leverages both outside regional and nationwide experts alongside local stakeholders to craft a comprehensive plan for how the City supports organizations addressing homelessness in the City and considers the effectiveness of past strategies and recommends new strategies to decrease the incidence and impact of homelessness in Bangor.

(2) Continue to address housing needs. Several housing projects are in various stages of completion around the City including the completed Theresa's Place project, and in progress projects such as Sunrise Senior Living, a recently approved tiny home project, and a supportive housing project led by BangorHousing. Council intends to continue to focus on housing gaps and unmet needs. Ideas considered include a standing committee focused on housing and/or housing bonds.

(3) Advocate for a fairer share of regional costs and regional participation in the resolution of regional challenges. As a service center, Bangor proudly hosts a number of businesses, non-profits, educational organizations, and medical service providers that are of broad regional importance. However, there are attendant costs associated with being a service center that are born by Bangor alone. At the same time, many of these institutions are exempt from property tax and Bangor shoulders a disproportionate impact from those property tax exemptions. City Council will explore creative and innovative ways to encourage broader regional participation and cost sharing.

City Council believes that prioritizing these three items in the following year is a strong investment in the continued vitality of the City of Bangor and the wellbeing of the City's residents.

Committee Action

Committee:

Meeting Date: 12/10/2025

Action: Recommend for passage

For:

Against:

Staff Comments & Approvals

City Manager

City Solicitor

Finance Director

Introduced for: New Business





CITY OF BANGOR ORDER

01/26/2026

Date: 01/26/2026

Item No:

Assigned to Councilor:

Establishing the City Council's Priorities for 2026

WHEREAS, the City Council met on December 10, 2025 to establish its priorities for the coming year; and

WHEREAS, after a robust brainstorming session, City Council coalesced around three top priorities; and

WHEREAS, City Council believes that prioritizing these three items in the following year is a strong investment in the continued vitality of the City of Bangor and the wellbeing of the City's residents;

Now, therefore, be it ordered by the City Council of the City of Bangor that, the City Council's 2026 priorities are (1) establishing a comprehensive plan to address homelessness; (2) continuing to address housing needs; and (3) advocating for a fairer share of regional costs and regional participation in the resolution of regional challenges.



CITY OF BANGOR

TO: City Council
FROM: David Szewczyk, City Solicitor
RE: Board of Ethics Advisory Opinion on CO 25-270
DATE: January 7, 2026

Council Order 25-270, passed by the Council on September 8th, referred to the Board of Ethics for an advisory opinion the issue of whether private communications among City Councilors following the May 7, 2025 City Council Budget Workshop constituted violation(s) of the City's Code of Ethics. A copy of CO 25-270 is attached.

The Board of Ethics held meetings, updated its procedural rules to follow, investigated, held a public hearing, deliberated and voted, and made written findings of facts and conclusions which the Board approved on December 17th. A copy of the Board's written Findings of Fact and Conclusions are attached.

The Board of Ethics found that it lacked jurisdiction to provide an advisory opinion regarding whether there was a violation of the open deliberations provisions of §9-22 of the City Code, as that section does not fall within the City's Code of Ethics.

The Board also found that the City Councilors did not violate §33-7 of the City's Code of Ethics regarding disclosure of confidential information.

Currently there are no written rules in place governing the procedure the Council should follow after the Board of Ethics issues its written findings and conclusions on a request for an advisory opinion made by the Council; staff is in the process of preparing a set of procedural rules for future use.

Staff recommends that the Council has at least three options at this point. First, the Council could accept the advisory opinion of the Ethics Board finding no violations and take no further action. Second, Council could direct staff to prepare proposed Council Orders for the Council to deliberate and vote on, that follow the conclusions reached by the Ethics Board in its written advisory opinion. Third, the Council could conduct further (or more accurately, its own) investigation into the facts involved in the matter before any proposed Council Orders are prepared for consideration.



CITY COUNCIL ACTION

09/08/2025 25-270

Council Meeting Date: 09/08/2025

Item No: 25-270

Responsible Dept: Choose



Requested Action: Order

Map/Lot: N/A

Title, Order

Referring the Issue of Private Communications Between City Councilors Following the City Council Budget Workshop of May 7 to the City's Board of Ethics for an Advisory Opinion

Summary

This order would refer to the City's Board of Ethics for an advisory opinion the issue of whether private communications between City Councilors following the City Council Budget Workshop of May 7, 2025 constituted one or more violations of the City's Code of Ethics.

The City's Code of Ethics allows for the City Council to request an advisory opinion from the Board of Ethics as to whether a particular situation constitutes a violation(s) of the Code of Ethics. Upon referral of a question(s), the Board of Ethics may conduct fact-finding, deliberate, and issue findings and an advisory opinion with respect to the question(s) referred.

Committee Action

Committee:

Meeting Date:

Action:

For:

Against:

Staff Comments & Approvals

City Manager

City Solicitor

Finance Director

Introduced for: New Business





CITY OF BANGOR ORDER

09/03/2025 25-270

Date: 09/08/2025

Item No: 25-270

Assigned to Councilor: Leonard

Referring the Issue of Private Communications Between City Councilors Following the City Council Budget Workshop of May 7 to the City's Board of Ethics for an Advisory Opinion

WHEREAS, the Bangor Code of Ordinances, Chapter 33, § 33-21, provides that a City Councilor may submit a written statement in the form of a Council order to the City Council describing the nature of a matter to seek advice on whether a situation constitutes a violation of the Code of Ethics; and

WHEREAS, following the City Council budget workshop of May 7, a series of private communications occurred among City Councilors regarding potential disciplinary action against Councilor Joseph Leonard, whose comments prompted the resignation of the City's Finance Director; and

WHEREAS, these private communications included, but were not limited to:

A May 8 text message exchange wherein Councilor Dan Tremble asked Council Chair Cara Pelletier whether the Council could strip Councilor Leonard of his speaking, voting, and committee privileges, to which Council Chair Pelletier confirmed the Council had the power, and Councilor Tremble indicated his agreement to proceed.

Text messages from Councilor Carolyn Fish to Councilors Susan Deane and Susan Hawes immediately following the May 7 meeting to deliberate on the nature of Councilor Leonard's conduct.

A subsequent "flurry" of text messages and requests for phone calls among councilors to arrange a private meeting to discuss the matter further.

WHEREAS, this pattern of serial communication and private deliberation to build consensus on official Council business appears to be a direct contradiction of Chapter 9, § 9-22 of the Bangor Code of Ordinances, which states the Council's intent that its "deliberations be conducted openly" and that "clandestine meetings" shall not be used to defeat this purpose; and

WHEREAS, the discussion of a sensitive personnel matter with potential legal ramifications for the City via non-secure, private communications may be in conflict with the principles of Chapter 33, § 33-7, concerning the handling of confidential City affairs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BANGOR THAT,

The City Council hereby refers this matter to the Bangor Board of Ethics. The Board is directed to:

Make findings of fact regarding the private communications between City Councilors from May 7 onward concerning the actions of Councilor Leonard and the resignation of the Finance Director.

Render an advisory opinion to the City Council as to whether this series of actions constitutes a violation of the Bangor Code of Ordinances, specifically the provisions for open deliberations and the handling of confidential information as cited herein.

**CITY OF BANGOR BOARD OF ETHICS,
FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW
COUNCIL ORDER 25-270**

**Referring the Issue of Private Communications Between City Councilors Following the
City Council Budget Workshop of May 7 to the City's Board of Ethics for an Advisory
Opinion**

I. Background and Procedural Matters

On September 3, 2025, the Bangor City Council requested an advisory opinion from the City of Bangor Board of Ethics regarding various text message communications by and between Councilors Dan Tremble, Cara Pelletier, Carolyn Fish, Susan Deane and Susan Hawes following the Council's May 7, 2025 City Council Budget Workshop. The subject matter of the text messages related to possible sanctions which could be imposed upon Councilor Joseph Leonard. The Council directed the Board to make findings of fact regarding the above-referenced text message exchanges and render advisory opinions on two issues: 1.) Whether the actions referenced above violated City of Bangor Ordinances regarding open deliberations; and 2.) Whether the actions referenced above violated Ordinances regarding the handling of confidential information.

The Board of Ethics met on two occasions to consider the Council referral. On November 19, 2025, the Board (Members Shane Leonard (Chair), Michael Mayberry, Stephen Brough and John King (remotely) present) met and determined the following:

1. The Board requested a voluntary statement from Councilor Leonard;
2. The Board determined it did not need to review additional records from the City or any other public agency;
3. The Board noted no other pre-hearing issues or concerns; and
4. The Board set the public hearing on the matter for December 5, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

The Board met again on December 5, 2025 to consider the record before them (Members Shane Leonard (Chair), Stephen Brough and John King (remotely) present) and make findings of fact and conclusions of law. Councilor Leonard did not submit a voluntary statement and no members of the public spoke during the public hearing. Edward W. Gould, Esq. was present at both meetings to advise the Board.

II. Record

The following materials constitute the record:

1. Council Order 25-270;
2. City of Bangor Code of Ordinances § 9-22, Chapter 33, including, but not limited to §§ 33-21 and 33-7 and the Board of Ethics Procedural Rules;

3. A texted screenshot from Councilor Beck to Councilor Leonard from the Bangor Daily News titled “Bangor City Council Chair Cara Pelletier worries that Councilor Joe Leonard’s comments may have violated state law;
4. Thirteen pages of text messages by and between Councilors Dan Tremble, Cara Pelletier, Carolyn Fish, Susan Deane and Susan Hawes;

III. Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

1. The jurisdiction of the Board of Ethics to provide advisory opinions is limited to the matters set forth in its authorizing ordinance, Chapter 33;
2. Chapter 33 contains no provision regarding ethical considerations applicable to open deliberations by City Council members;
3. Due to the lack of any provision in Chapter 33 relating to open deliberations, the Board declined to issue any conclusions of law regarding violation of any open deliberation provisions of local, state or federal law;
4. The Board did find that all of the text messages in the record between any of the Councilors were between only two City Councilors and no text message in the record contained any more than two participants;
5. Section 33-7 prohibits disclosure of confidential information concerning the property, government or affairs of the City, and further prohibits use of such information to advance the financial, special or personal interest of a City Councilor or others;
6. Section 33-7 defines confidential information as any information, oral or written, which comes to the attention of, or is available to, a City Councilor only because of their position with the City and is not a matter of public record;
7. All of the information referenced in the text messages in the record were matters of public record and not obtained by any Councilor by virtue of their position with the City.

IV. Conclusions and Decisions

1. Chair Leonard moved (Member King seconded) that the Board find it lacked jurisdiction to provide an advisory opinion regarding any violation of any open deliberation provision of local, state or federal law. Approved 3-0.
2. Chair Leonard moved (Member King seconded) that the Board find that Councilor

Tremble did not violate the confidential information provisions of the Code of Ethics. Approved 3-0.

3. Chair Leonard moved (Member King seconded) that the Board find that Councilor Pelletier did not violate the confidential information provisions of the Code of Ethics. Approved 3-0.
4. Chair Leonard moved (Member King seconded) that the Board find that Councilor Fish did not violate the confidential information provisions of the Code of Ethics. Approved 3-0.
5. Chair Leonard moved (Member King seconded) that the Board find that Councilor Deane did not violate the confidential information provisions of the Code of Ethics. Approved 3-0.
6. Chair Leonard moved (Member King seconded) that the Board find that Councilor Hawes did not violate the confidential information provisions of the Code of Ethics. Approved 3-0.



CITY OF BANGOR

TO: City Council
FROM: David Szewczyk
RE: Solicitor's Update
DATE: January 8, 2026

The City Solicitor will be providing some highlights to the Council at Workshop of some of the matters that have required a good deal of the Legal Department's time and energy lately:

- Vacant Building Registration Ordinance Enforcement Update (spreadsheet attached)
- Property Maintenance/Illegal Junkyard Enforcement
- Contracts for the Development of Affordable Housing
- Board of Ethics Procedural Rules
- Freedom of Access Act Efficiency
- Annual Legal Training for Boards, Commissions, Committees

Vacant Property Activity Report

Report Date	Properties No Longer Vacant	Properties Newly Identified by Code Dept.	Properties on Vacant Property List	Properties Registered and Current	Properties Not Registered		
12/31/23			58	14	44		
04/28/24		-5	53	17	36		Resolved by Default Judgment (not yet registered) 1
05/09/24	-13	49	89	14	75		Resolved by Consent Judgment (registered) 1
06/02/24		1	90	22	68		Resolved by ACA (registered) 3
06/30/24	-6	-6	78	29	49		Processed ACA (to be executed shortly) 1
07/16/24		1	79	30	49		Drafted Complaint (not yet registered) 1
07/30/24	-1		78	33	45		Communicating with Owner (not yet registered) 3
09/01/24	-1		77	40	37		
09/06/24	-1		76	41	35		
09/10/24			76	42	34		
09/19/24			76	44	32		
09/26/24	-1	1	76	48	28		
10/02/24			76	48	28		
10/07/24			76	49	27		
10/16/24	-2	1	75	50	25		
10/17/24			75	47	28		
10/21/24		1	76	49	27		
11/04/24		1	77	50	27		
11/12/24		1	78	46	32		
11/17/24		1	79	47	32		
11/24/24	-1	-2	76	49	27		
01/06/25	-1	4	78	43	35		
01/30/25			78	49	29		
02/20/25	-4	-3	75	47	28		
Sub-total	-31	45	75	47	28		
03/05/25	-6	2	72	43	30		
03/18/25	-2		70	38	33		
04/02/25		1	71	37	35		
04/04/25			71	46	26		
04/15/25	-1	3	73	46	28		
04/23/25	-1	1	72	45	29		
06/01/25	-3	1	70	50	22		
06/17/25			70	52	20		
07/07/25	-1		69	53	16		
07/10/25	-1		68	53	15		
Sub-total	-15	8	68	53	15		
08/25/25	-4	2	66	30	34		
09/16/25	-1		65	30	35		
Sub-total	-5	2	65	30	35		
11/09/25	-2	1	64	24	41		
11/18/25	-2	1	63	25	40		
12/10/25	-3	1	61	31	30		
Sub-total	-7	3	61	31	30		
01/08/26			61	33	28		
Sub-total	0	0	61	33	28		
Total	-58	58	61	33	28		