

**Remarks of Mayor Andrew B. MacLean
Inauguration Ceremony
January 13, 2010
Gardiner City Hall, Council Chambers**

Good evening and Happy New Year Everyone! I extend a special welcome to the newly elected or re-elected Councilors and their families. Congratulations on your election. Councilor Hart, welcome back for another term as the longest-serving member of the Gardiner City Council. To the new Councilors, I look forward to getting to know you and your vision for the City of Gardiner during the next year.

Next, I would like to recognize outgoing Councilors Giberson, Nickless, and Rambo. Thank you for your service to the City of Gardiner. I have really enjoyed working with each of you, and to the two “Richards” who were seasoned veterans when I arrived, thank you for giving me a chance to lead the Council, despite a certain, legitimate skepticism of a newcomer. We will miss your depth of knowledge and I hope that you will use your expertise to benefit Gardiner in the future.

To our city staff, I say “thank you” for your continued exemplary efforts to provide great service to the citizens of Gardiner under continuing budget pressure and, this year, with such uncertainty about the City Manager position. Gardiner is lucky to have a terrific workforce.

2009 certainly was an unusual, tumultuous year for the Gardiner City Council. Our schedule was very erratic and the issues we faced resulted in some emotional, even painful, sessions. The transition in city managers will be remembered by all of us as the topic that preoccupied most of the Council’s time and energy in 2009. We are negotiating an employment agreement with a candidate and I hope to be able to announce a new Gardiner City Manager very soon. I thank the Council for its cooperation and

perseverance during this transition in the professional leadership of our city government.

I also would like to extend my deep appreciation to Anne Davis for her service as our Interim City Manager during this period. With the help of her senior leadership team, Anne has guided us through the annual budget, labor negotiations, development initiatives, and all of the other routine work of the Council – all with patience and good humor! She also did it while overseeing a major renovation project at the library.

Although the city manager position was the matter that dominated the Council's agenda in 2009, obviously it was not the only matter. Continuing a decade-plus-long tradition of fiscal restraint, we adopted an annual budget that maintains a reasonable level of services to the community while not adding substantially to the property tax burden.

Working in partnership with the Savings Bank of Maine, we adopted a plan to complete our waterfront redevelopment that will make Gardiner the envy of communities along the Kennebec River and we are making progress in implementing that plan. Beginning with the Depot Square entrance, we are seeing this plan come to life.

Last fall, we witnessed the completion of an important element of the Common Master Plan, the replacement of our aging playground with a modern, aesthetically appropriate version. From the ribbon cutting in October until snow came in December, the playground was packed with children enjoying themselves every time I drove by the Common. The *Citizens for the Common Good*, the community group that demonstrated the power of grassroots activism in its advocacy for this project, deserves the most credit for this project.

Finally, despite the difficult economy, we also witnessed a number of new businesses coming to downtown Gardiner this year. I was happy to join Planning &

Development Director Jason Simcock and representatives of Gardiner Main Street and the Gardiner Board of Trade for a ribbon cutting to welcome a number of new or relatively new businesses to Gardiner.

In comparing our economic development with other Maine communities, I think we are "holding our own" in this struggling economy. Recently, a Gardiner resident commented to me that, having returned from a trip to Portland, he thought Water Street actually looked healthier than Exchange Street. I remain very optimistic about the City of Gardiner's future as an attractive community in which to live and work.

The Council faces a challenging budget season in 2010. According to the Maine Municipal Association's analysis, the Governor's current supplemental budget proposal (L.D. 1671), now before the Appropriations Committee, cuts more than \$100 million, or approximately 25% of the funding gap to be filled, from state funding for local government. For the City of Gardiner, the combined impact of the natural reduction in state revenue sharing and an additional cut of \$12 million in revenue sharing in the budget for the current fiscal year is estimated to be \$136,049. Our Finance Director Sandy Runyon and his assistant Denise Brown have done a superior job in managing our finances. Jeff Kobrock, Anne Davis, and our department heads have a track record of producing budgets that maintain current services for our citizens with increases below the inflation rate. But, I anticipate that maintaining current services in this environment will be very difficult.

Councilors Leake, Liberatore, and Thompson, I welcome you to the Council. To the entire Council, I look forward to our work together this year. Tonight we will talk about the schedule for our city manager contract negotiations and our upcoming business

meetings. In early 2009, we conducted two successful, facilitated workshops, addressing our governance practices and our goals. Once we have a new city manager in place, I anticipate that we will schedule similar workshops and complete a Council Goal Statement, hopefully before we get into "budget season."

Thanks to everyone for coming tonight and I wish everyone in Gardiner all the best in 2010.