

Councilors,

As we approach a new year, it is always a good time to reflect where we have been, where we are and where we are going. I think that all of you would agree that the past month or so we have not been in a good place and we need to turn that page for the benefit of our community.

I have heard from numerous members of the public that we are not doing a good job when it comes to professionalism, respect and understanding. We are being watched and we are being scrutinized. Our actions and how we handle issues are directly impacting how the public responds. We set the tone and we need to set a more positive tone Councilors.

We are all different and I plead with you that as we proceed as a council, that we understand the fact that we are different, different with beliefs and different with approaches. These differences should be advantageous to any team and we must turn these differences into a positive, enabling us to work more effectively together. A team working together can accomplish great things.

Please, let us respect each other. Instead of criticizing or questioning each other and our citizenry, let us funnel our energies into finding workable and positive solutions to the problems that face us. We are community leaders and we must rise above our differences for the benefit of community. All of our citizens do have good intent and they do indeed deserve better.

We have a responsibility to be civil, to respect all, and to work together. Let us rise above any name calling and accusations. Let us listen to the public and work with them as well as with each other. Our actions are hurting staff as well as our residents. If you have any issues with staff or operations of our city, please deal directly with Jim Gailey. He is our manager and the only person we should deal with regarding staff and day to day operations.

If any one of us have an issue with our standing rules, our processing or how we do business then we have a process in place to discuss and potentially resolve your concerns; our workshops. On the second Monday of every month we examine our future workshop list. We can add and subtract any issues as long as there is another councilor agreeing with you. Please utilize this process that has worked well for several years now.

I believe it is unprofessional to argue with staff or member of the public in an email or in public. We, as trusted public officials, must rise about this and strive to be positive, professional and productive.

We are fortunate to live in the wonderful city of South Portland. We are also fortunate to be able to represent our residents and businesses. We have been given a tremendous responsibility and I plead with all of you to work together for the greater good of all. We must always look at the bigger picture. We have a wide variety of issues to deal with and we cannot get bogged down on any one issue, regardless of the importance of that issue. Our goal setting workshop clearly showed us the scope and the multitude of challenges facing us.

You do not need to respond to this email but I am more than willing to meet with any of you individually if you would like to chat about this matter or any others. As Chair of our meetings and as Mayor of South Portland, I for one will try harder to be more respectful and understanding of Council members and citizens alike. I only ask that you join me in this renewed effort. We can and we must do better. Let us use our differences and our individual skills to our advantage by being a team, a team dedicated to the betterment of South Portland.

So, let us reflect and move forward.

Happy New Year to you all!

Tom