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3-15-1948

03/15/1948 Louis-Philippe Gagné Public Address

Louis-Philippe Gagné

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March 15, 45

LOUIS P. GAGNE
LEWISTON, MAINE

My fellow citizens:

At the very outset I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the citizens of Lewiston for ^{my} ~~their~~ re-election, without opposition, as their chief executive for the second ~~anniversary~~ time.

A year ago I pledged I would do my utmost to be worthy of the confidence you had placed in me. I have done my utmost in placing the welfare of the city above any political or personal interest.

It would be selfish for me not to stress the wonderful cooperation I have received from the members of the City Council and the members of various boards or commissions.

This last administration has been progressive. It has enacted the Zoning Ordinance; it has banned the sale and use of fireworks on the fourth of July; it has set in operation more than 600 parking meters; it has fixed more equitable license fees; it has regulated parking on the newly-paved Main Street; it has built or maintained 14 to 15 skating rinks in the City during this Winter season; and it has done the best job ever in snow removal work and in installation of new services.

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Of course, we have had to increase the tax rate. City workers, as all others, have had to face a higher cost of living. Cost of building materials, equipment and supplies has increased for municipalities as it has for any individual who wants to build a home, use telephone, gas, or oil.

This year municipal departments definitely have asked for too much money. These requests must face drastic reductions. Some city departments have forgotten too easily that taxpayers cannot afford any additional increase in their tax bills.

The time has come to realize that spending and wasting are two different things. Any unnecessary item must be eliminated from the budget, and I earnestly urge the members of the Board of Finance and of the City Council to reduce or cut freely departmental requests wherever there is not an absolute necessity.

Let's be frank about it. Our city is faced with a situation where retrenchment has become imperative. I realize budget cuts will hurt some but the taxpayers cannot afford more. If action is not taken immediately the city will be in a very dangerous financial situation in six or eight years and could even be entirely out of bonds.

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Pensions alone represent an average ~~increase~~ of \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year increase in expenses and they bring no financial revenue to the city. This means that in ten years ~~mmmm~~ from \$80,000 to \$100,000 will be spent for this item alone. The Board of Aldermen should vote those pensions on a contributory basis as soon as possible.

If our city is to keep its present form of government something must be done before it is too late. I don't believe I am a pessimist, but I must speak frankly and give you the alert now. This community does not belong to any individual, nor to any city official but to ^{all} ~~anyone~~ who pay for its maintenance, its upkeep, and its services.

There is another strange situation in the city's financial affairs which I believe is my duty to call to your attention now. The Board of Finance had ~~discovered~~ that some departments spent four, five and even as much as six times more than the sum allocated in their budget for certain items without asking for any transfers of money.

This must be corrected immediately. It is in open violation of our city charter and cannot be tolerated any longer.

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From now on all departments should spend only whatever money is allocated them for specific items unless their money becomes exhausted and they get a fund transfer approval from the Board of Finance.

The problem that confronts us for this coming year is quite puzzling and yet very simple.

The various city departments ^{requested} ~~manumant~~ \$715,000 more than they did last year. The most the city can expect in additional revenues for next year is about \$125,000. It is obvious the only solution for the Board of Finance and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen will be to cut about \$600,000 from the estimates given by the various departments. Personal feelings or friendship have no place in a public budget.

I am opposed to any increase in the present tax rate and I am convinced the Finance Board feels the same way.

And now I take this occasion to thank the different committees I have appointed during this past year. The Zoning Board, the Freedom Train, the Fire Emergency Committees and others have all done a good job.

I am also very grateful to the War Memorial and Civic Center Committee whose members have been so active for the past ten months. On their behalf I can promise that the first part of our project, the new football field--with lights-- will definitely be ready for this coming Fall. I urge every citizen to subscribe as soon as possible to this community project which will also include a baseball field, and, of course, an arena.

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Now I would like to say a few words about the recent referendums on the police and fire commissions. These groups have been increased from three to five members by the approval of these questions at the last election.

Since I became Mayor I have attempted to appoint citizens who are known to be out of politics. Some police officers may have been under the impression that a five-man commission would mean the downfall of the very good police system which we now enjoy. They may change their minds after they know who I have selected as their new commissioners.

Members of some boards who have done a good job will be replaced. On behalf of the citizens I express my thanks to them for their devotion to duty,

Before appointing the new members of various boards and commissions may I say that ^{all} ~~everyone~~ of them have been chosen of my own free will despite pressure of all kinds from all sides. I alone am responsible for all of them and I am proud to give them a chance to serv~~ice~~ their city.

Now let me read from two letters which I have received. One is from Dr. Paul R. Chevalier. I quote 'This is to notify you that I hereby tender my resignation as a member of the Health and Welfare Commission to become effective March 15, 1948.'

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The other is from Maurice B. Cloutier. He said and I quote
"I hereby tender my resignation as a member of the Board of
Health and Welfare." Unquote

To these two who have served on the Board of Health and
Welfare I offer my most sincere appreciation. Their work
is worthy of commendation.

Now I ~~will~~ will ask all appointees to come on the stage
as soon as their names are announced so they can be ~~sworn~~ sworn
in.

Corporation Counsel Fernand E. Despins. I am proud to
appoint Mr. Despins, one of Maine's most ^{capable} ~~ablest~~ attorneys
for another year as the city's lawyer.

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS---Bertrand A. Marquis, democrat,
for a term of five years. Mr. Marquis has been on the board
~~from~~ since December 1946 and is the group's present chairman.

BOARD OF EDUCATION---Armand San^scousy, democrat. For a
Term of five years. Mr. San^scousy is ^a former Alderman of Ward
Four and is now self-employed as a public accountant. He has
been interested in school work for many years and I believe
his membership on the Board of Education will help Lewiston to
continue being one of Maine's leading cities in the educational
field.

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BOARD OF HEALTH AND WELFARE----FIRST a young Lewiston man who served his country for five years during the recent World War. He left here with the 103rd Infantry in 1941 and fought in all major battles in the South Pacific. He is Maurice Fontaine, age 29, of 95 Fairlawn Avenue. His term is for one year. He is a democrat.

For a term of three years Prof. R.R.N. Gould, one of Lewiston's most prominent citizens and retired educator. Prof. Gould is a Republican.

And now the Police Department has its own social worker. ~~Shamshammanwoman~~ I believe another woman could well serve the interests of the city so I have decided to appoint a member of the opposite sex to the Board of Health and Welfare. She has been secretly doing welfare work in Lewiston for many years and I am sure the city's unfortunates will find her a real companion and one who will listen to their problems with an understanding ear. She is Mrs. Alberte Gastonguay Sasseville the daughter of a former police commissioner. Mrs. Sasseville is a democrat. Her term is for five years.

NOW THE POLICE COMMISSION---Because of his invaluable experience I have decided to reappoint Winworth W. Warren for a term of one year. Mr. Warren is a Republican and begins his third term on the police commission.

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For a term of two years Cyrille Labranche, Junior.

Mr. Labranche has been manager of Atherton's Furniture store for many years and is considered one of the best business executives in the city. He is a democrat.

The ~~minimnew~~ fifth member of the commission is a member of one of Lewiston's most prominent families. For many years he has operated the Triangle Filling Station on Campus and Sabattus Streets. He is Dominique Dumont, democrat. His term is for four years.

BOARD OF FINANCE----The new member of the Board of Finance has already proven his ability to serve the city. He has served on a municipal board for two years and is an executive of a well-known local firm. He is Maurice B. Cloutier, whose resignation on the Board of Health and Welfare I accept as of now. Mr. Cloutier's term is for five years. He is a Republican.

NOW THE FIRE COMMISSION---For many weeks I have been watching the actions of this commission. Some members of this board, I believe, have not done their duty in the best interests of the city. The commission has been a sore spot in municipal affairs and this has caused me great anxiety.

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I believe the men I have chosen to serve on the fire commission will remedy the situation which has been existing for a time.

They are:

Walter Haynes, Republican, one year. Mr. Haynes has been the manager of the Stover Broom Company for 15 years.

Alfred Dutil, democrat, retired Lewiston police officer. He is appointed for a term of two years.

Joseph Norton, Republican, automobile salesman, and a veteran of World War II. He is appointed for three years.

Dr. Paul Chevalier, democrat, whose resignation as a member of the Board of Health and Welfare I hereby accept, His term is for four years.

Robert W. Bonenfant, democrat, Mr. Bonenfant was appointed last year for a term of six years. I appoint him for five years.

In appointing this new fire commission I am acting under a legal opinion stating that it is my prerogative to appoint a new commission.

Thank you.