

Auburn City Council: What you need to know

By **Andrew Rice, Staff Writer** - November 7, 2017

Auburn Business Development Corp.

What happened: The City Council agreed to the terms of a memorandum of understanding with the Auburn Business Development Corp. after roughly two years of discussions in executive sessions.

What it means: The terms of the understanding were negotiated by the corporation, a nonprofit working toward business recruitment and expansion, and the city, which is specifically focused on the Auburn Enterprise Center industrial park project.

Councilors, and the mayor, shared mixed feelings about the corporation agreement after such a complicated history. But, City Manager Peter Crichton said he “was hired to be a consensus builder.”

“I can not imagine moving forward and being successful in economic development without the assistance of an entity like the Auburn Business Development Corporation,” he said.

Mayor Jonathan LaBonte, however, disagreed. He urged future councilors and the future mayor to not “feel beholden to the ABDC.”

He said he’s watched the city spend millions in taxpayer funds for “no return” for the industrial park.

What’s next: City officials are hoping the agreement will help foster more business activity and further collaboration in economic development with the corporation.

Troy Street housing project

What happened: The City Council approved \$110,000 for a workforce housing project on Troy Street.

What it means: The funding comes from the HOME Investment Partnerships program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and will be earmarked toward the workforce housing project that is in development.

What's next: City staff is still working with the developer of the project, as well as looking into the possible discontinuation of a section of Troy Street in anticipation of the project.

Auburn joins opioid lawsuit

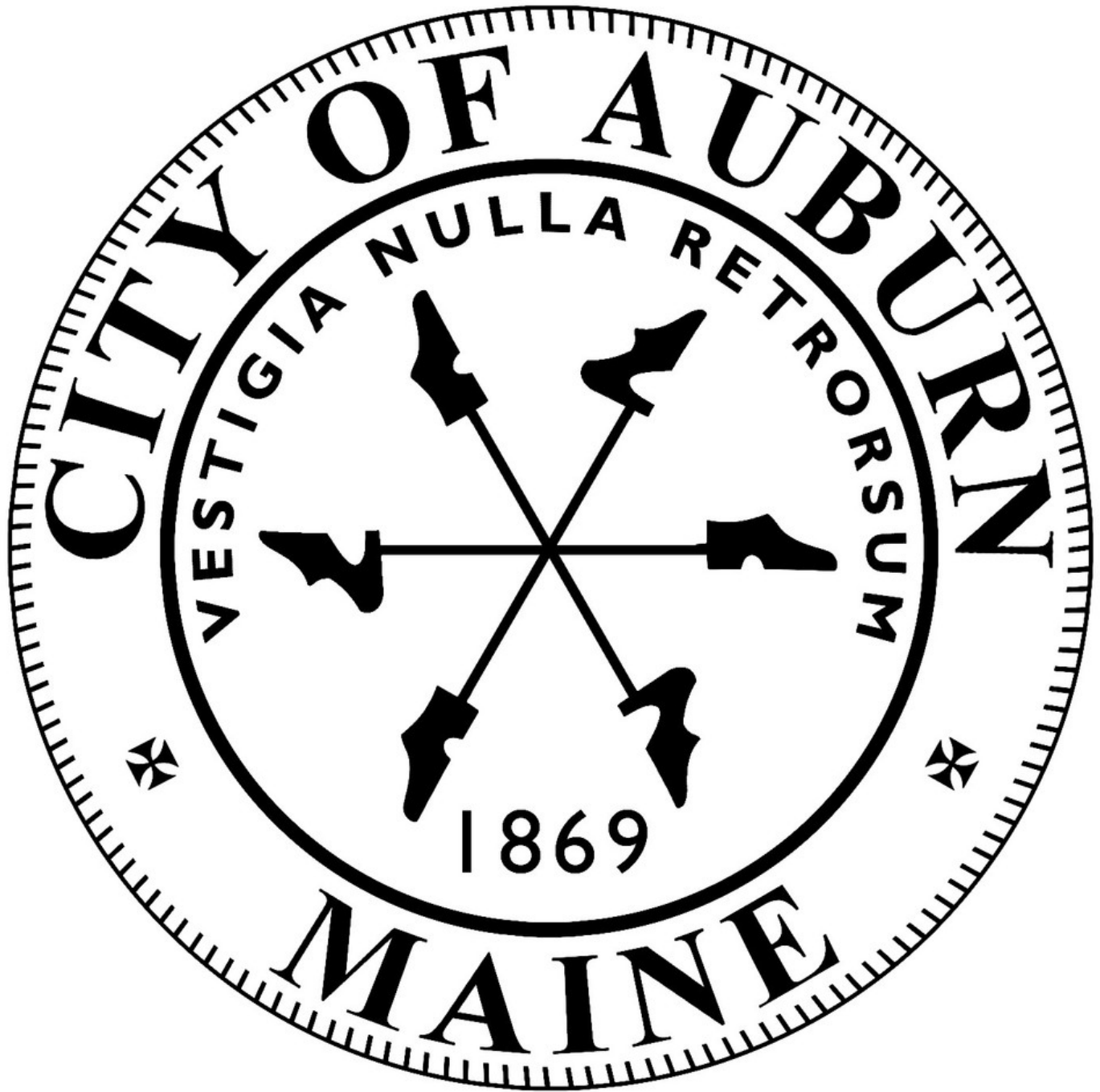
What happened: The City Council voted to join a national lawsuit against the manufacturers and distributors of opioid painkillers.

What it means: Auburn joins Lewiston and Portland as municipalities included in a lawsuit forwarded by national law firm Napoli Shkolnik, which seeks damages from the manufacturers of prescription opioids, which have been blamed for the nationwide opioid crisis for the "fraudulent and negligent marketing and distribution of opioids."

Councilor Jim Pross, an Auburn attorney, said there's "a good deal of evidence to suggest" that opioid companies knew about the addiction risks associated with the drugs while actively marketing them.

What's next: Any damages received will most likely be used to pay back expenses incurred by the city to deal with the crisis, in law enforcement and other services.

Councilor Grady Burns said the cost in the Twin Cities has "been immense."



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