

City of Lewiston Press Statement March 23, 2021

The Lewiston City Council voted to establish the Lewiston Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) on October 16, 2001, and that decision has stood the test of time! Twenty years later, LYAC is still going strong, and the City of Lewiston is seeking new members for the 2021 – 2022 year of service (July 2021 – July 2022). The charter group first met in September 2002, and LYAC has since received local, state, and national recognition. The LYAC enables youth to undertake initiatives/projects that enhance the community, work towards goals to empower youth community-wide, and to serve as a liaison between youth and the City.

Those interested in serving for the 2021 – 2022 term may apply online at www.lewistonmaine.gov/lyac21-22, and the deadline for submission is **May 14, 2021, at 4:00 p.m.** Copies of the application can also be printed from the web link & mailed to Lewiston City Administrator's Office, 27 Pine Street, Lewiston, ME 04240. To be considered for membership on the LYAC, an applicant must be in grade 9-12 (or will be in the fall) at either Lewiston High School or St. Dominic Academy **or** a Lewiston resident at the time of application. Homeschooled students who reside in Lewiston are also welcome to apply for membership. Current members may also re-apply for another year of service.

The current LYAC has utilized their tenure via social media to address isolation and mental health concerns during the COVID19 pandemic. In addition, LYAC recently debuted a **"A Light in the Dark"** photo/narrative exhibit in the window front of Lewiston's Rinck Advertising to remind people they are not alone amidst the public health state of emergency. Throughout LYAC's 20 years of existence, it has focused on a *Bullyproof Lewiston* campaign, Lewiston's image, Lewiston as a food/dining destination, diversity, park revitalization, recycling, homelessness, college going, *U Booze U Looze* underage drinking/driving, posting 1,400 uplifting messages on Lewiston High School lockers, the city's All-America city distinction, arts & culture, posting homes/businesses to aid emergency responders, noise pollution, siting an 1891 E. Howard timepiece as a multi-level presence at City Hall, and much more.

When applications for the 2021-2022 year are received, a Selection Committee will review all submitted LYAC applications, conduct interviews, and appoint up to fifteen (15) youth. Going into the new LYAC year, there will be at least 7 openings, as 7 senior members are graduating from high school.

The committee will make its selection by the last Friday in June, and selected youth will be subsequently notified & then officially appointed during a July 2021 Lewiston City Council meeting. Orientation will occur in August of 2021. Community Relations Coordinator Dottie Perham-Whittier serves as the group's Advisor, and City Councilors Zachary Pettengill and Luke Jensen serve as Council Liaisons. The youth council is currently annually sponsored by the Lewiston Firefighters Association.

Background on LYAC's Establishment: Prior to LYAC being established, a review of youth councils in Portland, Maine; Torrance, California; and Boston, Massachusetts was facilitated by municipal staff, and a community forum was also held to discuss the youth council idea. Youth and adults respecting each other's viewpoints set the wheels in motion for the establishment of Lewiston's youth council. Community input was key regarding what the youth council would "look like," and meeting with Boston's youth council advisors/youth proved insightful. Lewiston's elected officials also participated in the process, and media coverage was helpful in gaining attention for this undertaking. With community support evident, a St. Dominic's Regional High School student and a Bates College intern developed by-laws to launch the concept, with the understanding that the charter group could modify them. An application process was publicized, school presentations made, and interviews and orientation held. The charter group met for the first time on September 9, 2002, and their first project focused on noise pollution within city limits. LYAC's original members were: Tarrah Bowen, Katie Lauze, Lisa Kimball, Jonathan Isacco, Ryan Reed, Erin Feely, and Tim Williams.

For more information on the Lewiston Youth Advisory Council, interested individuals may visit www.lewistonmaine.gov/lyac Inquiries/questions: 207-513-3018 or dottie@lewistonmaine.gov