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LePage defends budget to challenging Biddeford crowd



ALAN BENNETT/Journal Tribune

Republican Gov. Paul LePage discusses his budget proposals and his disapproval of citizens' referendums at a rowdy town hall-style forum at Biddeford Middle School on Wednesday.

By ALAN BENNETT Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD — In his first town hall meeting in months, Gov. Paul LePage defended his budget proposals to slash income taxes and make alterations to voter-approved referendums before a heated crowd in Biddeford on Wednesday

“What I’m trying to do is make Maine more prosperous.”

Gov. Paul LePage

evening.

More than 100 people showed up to the meeting at Biddeford Middle School’s performing arts center, during which LePage, a Republican, continued to address his belief that, in order to be prosperous, Maine must lower taxes, cut energy costs and reduce what he called “unreasonable” regulations.

“In order to be prosperous

as a nation, a society, you’ve got to make sure that people are able to earn their money, and keep their money and not have the government take it all,” LePage said. “We should be able to find ways — and there are ways, inexpensive ways — to lower the cost.

“What I’m trying to do is make Maine more prosperous,” he said.

A noticeably subdued LePage discussed his proposal to alter two voter-approved ballot initiatives, which drew sharp and, at times, vocal criticism from the audience.

LePage said he did not agree with a measure to raise the minimum wage from \$7.50 an hour to \$9 an hour because — although close to 6,000 people saw their wages increase as a result of the approved measure — he said more than \$350,000 elderly residents living on fixed incomes would see their

See LePage Town Hall PAGE A2

Homeless count today in Biddeford

Most Sanford homeless counted are couch-surfers

By TAMMY WELLS Senior Staff Writer

SANFORD — The 27 year-old said he left home at 17, and has been homeless for a decade. Recently, he’s been couch-surfing, staying with friends for a few nights and then moving on to stay with other friends.

The man didn’t want reporters to use his name. He said he’s been working part-time in a customer service job since September and was looking for more hours to bolster his pay, which he said works out to about \$600 a month. More hours have not been available. He’s working on getting his driver’s license, he said, and eventually hopes to get his commercial license, so he can drive a big rig.

The 27 year-old was one of about 20 people who stopped by the Napa parking lot on Main Street Wednesday to drink a little hot coffee, enjoy a slice of pizza, perhaps pick up some toiletries or a blanket and other supplies, and fill out a short survey about their



TAMMY WELLS/Journal Tribune

Volunteer James Bachelder displays a bag of toiletries, among the items given to homeless folks who stopped by the Napa parking lot in Sanford Wednesday to take part in the Point in Time count. The count continues today in Biddeford — until 7 p.m. at Seeds of Hope, 35 South St.

situation. The mobile veterans center was there, where folks could step in out of the cold.

It was part of the nationwide Point in Time count of the homeless. The count is a program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and administered in Maine by the Maine State Housing Authority. Being counted is important, proponents say, because the counts are used by the federal government

when making decisions about funding services to assist the homeless population.

The count continues today in Biddeford until 7 p.m. at Seeds of Hope, 35 South St.

The count is also important, say volunteers with the Maine Military and Community Network, the group conducting the counts in York County, because it gives them a chance to speak with folks,

and to offer them aid — a blanket, some food, a link to some resources.

Amy Marcotte, of the MMCN and The Vet Center, as of 3 p.m. Wednesday said about 20 folks had been counted — around 18 were couch-surfers and two were literally homeless. She estimated four or five were veterans, and had made follow-up appointments to talk about

See Homeless Count PAGE A2

‘Grandparent scam’ targets Arundel woman

Velma Hayes didn’t fall for it, but is warning others

By TAMMY WELLS Senior Staff Writer

ARUNDEL — It didn’t take Velma Hayes long to figure out that “Captain Johnson,” who said he was calling from the York County Correctional Facility, wasn’t telling the truth - that instead, he was attempting to get her to send him money — \$4,000 to be exact.

“Captain Johnson,” who was calling from a Newfoundland, Canada phone number, told Hayes her granddaughter was in jail and needed help. She didn’t buy it.

Hayes’ first call was to York County Sheriff Bill King. Now, King and Hayes are cautioning folks to be very, very wary, and to report to police if they ever receive a similar call.

“We constantly urge people to report these types of things like Mrs Hayes did and we put a stop to this immediately,” said King. “If we didn’t have victims, (the

perpetrators) would stop this foolishness.”

The call to Hayes came from 709-351-1522 on Wednesday.

Hayes is an Arundel selectman, but the issue she encountered has nothing to do with her municipal role, and everything to do with her being a grandparent.

“First, a girl got on the phone who said she was my granddaughter,” said Hayes. “I made the mistake of asking which one. These people are good. She said ‘you don’t recognize my voice,’ and I named one of my granddaughters and she said she was her, and would I please talk to this man. She gave me a sob story on why she was being held and would I help her.”

The “granddaughter” said the reason her voice didn’t sound quite right was because she was sick.

See Grandparent Scam PAGE A3

Graves Library expansion is under way

By LIZ GOTTHELF Staff Writer

KENNEBUNKPORT — A \$1 million expansion and renovation project to Louis T. Graves Memorial Library is under way.

Work kicked off Monday with a groundbreaking ceremony, said Library Director Mary-Lou Boucouvalas, and the project is expected to be completed in September.

“They’re hammering as we speak,” she said Wednesday morning during a telephone interview.

Earlier this winter, the Perkins House, the building that sat behind the library and was used primarily for

book sales, was torn down.

The library, at 18 Maine St., was built in 1813 as a bank. The project will make some renovations to the library, such as the replacement of a heating system, and adding a 4,500-square-foot wing that will be compatible to the existing building.

“We recognize that the library is a signature structure in the towns of Kennebunk and Kennebunkport,” said George Emery, board of trustees member and campaign

See Gravels Library PAGE A3

Students provide dental care training

UNE students teach health care staff how to care for clients teeth

By LIZ GOTTHELF Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD — Students from University of New England took the knowledge they gained in the classroom to help others with a presentation to St. Andre Health Care Facility staff about dental care for the aging residents on Wednesday.



LIZ GOTTHELF/Journal Tribune

University of New England dental hygiene student Carolyn Dacey demonstrates proper toothbrushing at St. Andre Health Care Facility in Biddeford on Wednesday.

See St. Andre PAGE A2

INDEX: 12 PAGES

- Local/Region A3
Community A4
Opinion A5
Obituaries A6
Sports B1-3
Comics B4
Television B5
Classifieds B6

DEATHS, A6

- Edward Houle, Kennebunk
Robert Paquette, Waterboro
Mary Lavallee, Sanford
Amber Morrow, Saco
Gloriette DesRoberts, Biddeford
Dolores Levesque, Saco



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LePage Town Hall

FROM PAGE A1

costs of living increase. He said he believes the vote to raise the minimum wage to \$12 an hour by 2020 is moving "too fast," and that eliminating the tip credit for tipped workers such as restaurant servers will "devastate the (restaurant) industry."

LePage also said a voter-approved 3 percent surcharge slotted to be added to Mainers earning more than \$200,000, intended to raise funds for K-12 education, will discourage young families and business owners from moving to Maine.

LePage — calling the surcharge "erroneous" — additionally said there currently is enough funding for education, but that it isn't being properly allocated to classrooms, instead going to the pockets of superintendents and other administrative staff across the state.

"The problem is not that we don't have enough money, the problem is we're not putting it where it

belongs: in the classroom," he said.

Some audience members were critical of LePage's decision, saying they believe he didn't trust his state's people to decide what's best for them.

"How can you tell the Maine voters they are too stupid to vote for their own good?" asked Portland resident Cynthia Handlen.

"I will tell you I don't think I ever said that," LePage replied. "I don't believe that you, ma'am, have read the 32 pages behind the minimum wage ballot. ... Do you want me to harm the economy?"

"This is a budget we call a budget to do no harm," he said.

LePage remained calm even as audience members became unruly, with one man being escorted out of the theater after continuing to interrupt the governor, calling for his resignation.

"We are Mainers. Governor LePage, please resign," the man chanted before being escorted out by police.

This was the first town hall-style forum LePage has held since August, when he canceled a trip to Westbrook after leaving one of the city's representatives, Drew Gattine, a crude voicemail because he thought Gattine, a Democrat, had called him a racist.

LePage is now scheduling forums in towns and cities across the state to garner public support for his two-year, \$6.8 billion budget that includes tax cuts, welfare reform and significant reductions in government employment.

LePage also repeatedly denounced newspapers, saying that in recent months they misquoted him regarding his stances on a proposed casino in southern Maine and on those seeking asylum from foreign countries, a topic LePage addressed head-on as he took questions from a rowdy crowd.

LePage was accused by audience member Emma Burnett of, "cracking down on refugees who are bringing lifeblood into this state."

"Young people care about

refugees, and we care about climate change," she said.

LePage responded, saying he has "never, ever" challenged refugees who have come to the state through legal means, to laughter from the audience.

"I challenge the asylum seekers that are here illegally," he said, to shouts of "They are not illegal!" from the crowd.

LePage said he is concerned about people who may be undocumented receiving General Assistance or other welfare who he said could take those services away from the elderly and the disabled.

"Most everybody in this room — whether you're American or not — you came from immigration of some sort. But we came through legally," he said. "That's fine, nobody's questioning that."

"As far as climate change, who's against climate change?" he said.

The governor also defended his controversial mandate to remove people deemed able-bodied for work from welfare benefits, which is again included in his proposed budget.

"Everybody that's come off welfare on my administration we are tracking, and they are on average today earning 114 percent more than they ever have in their lives," he said. "If they're

able-bodied, they need to work.

"Free is going to be expensive to somebody," he said.

— Staff Writer Alan Bennett can be contacted at 282-1535, ext. 329 or abennett@journaltribune.com.

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St. Andre

FROM PAGE A1

The group of dental hygiene, occupational therapy and pharmacy students, with help from an Interprofessional Education Collaborative grant, have made presentations at a number of assisted living facilities.

Team Leader Regina Arey, a dental hygiene student, has a personal connection to the work the group is doing.

She said her great-uncle, who she was very close to, was living with Alzheimer's in an assisted living facility. Though the staff was very compassionate, Arey

said, one area of care that was lacking was oral care.

There have been studies that show there is a link between poor oral hygiene and Alzheimer's disease, Arey said, as oral bacteria can travel through the blood stream and impact the brain.

"Hopefully, through education, (health care) staff will put more priority on dental hygiene," she said.

Arey and the students gave advice on the proper way to brush teeth as well as an overview of common oral conditions and the effects of some pharmaceuticals on dental health.

They also gave tips on

helping patients, such as putting a foam hair curler on a toothbrush to make it easier to grip for patients with limited manual dexterity or using gauze and mouthwash to swipe clean a patient's mouth when they refuse tooth brushing.

Sue Gagnier, infection control practitioner at St. Andre Health Care, said she thought the presentation was helpful for staff and it was a good refresher and a way to bring awareness to the issue of dental health.

— Staff Writer Liz Gotthelf can be contacted at 282-1535, ext. 325 or egotthelf@journaltribune.com.

Homeless Count

FROM PAGE A1

services available to them. She said some others were housed, but were lacking some services, and Nasson Health Care, which had volunteers at the site, were able to help.

Marcotte said she's hearing that there is a lack of resources — that is it hard to get housing vouchers. As well, she said some couch surfers tell her that they find themselves in circumstances that aren't safe because they need that couch, out of the cold. The 27 year-old said he

wished there was a shelter in Sanford.

"There's not enough housing for everybody," he said. "I know people on the housing list for two years."

Volunteer James Bachelder said he stopped by early before the 8 a.m. opening to make sure the volunteers had everything they needed, and to set up a tent to hold supplies. A man stopped by and wondered what was happening.

"I said 'we're trying to find the homeless,'" said Bachelder.

"I'm homeless," the man told him, and proceeded to

help him set up the tent.

Marcotte said what struck her the most during the hours she'd volunteered was how reluctant those with little were to accept a pair of mittens, a hat, some food, or other items to keep out the cold. They tell her someone else dropping by might need those items more than they do.

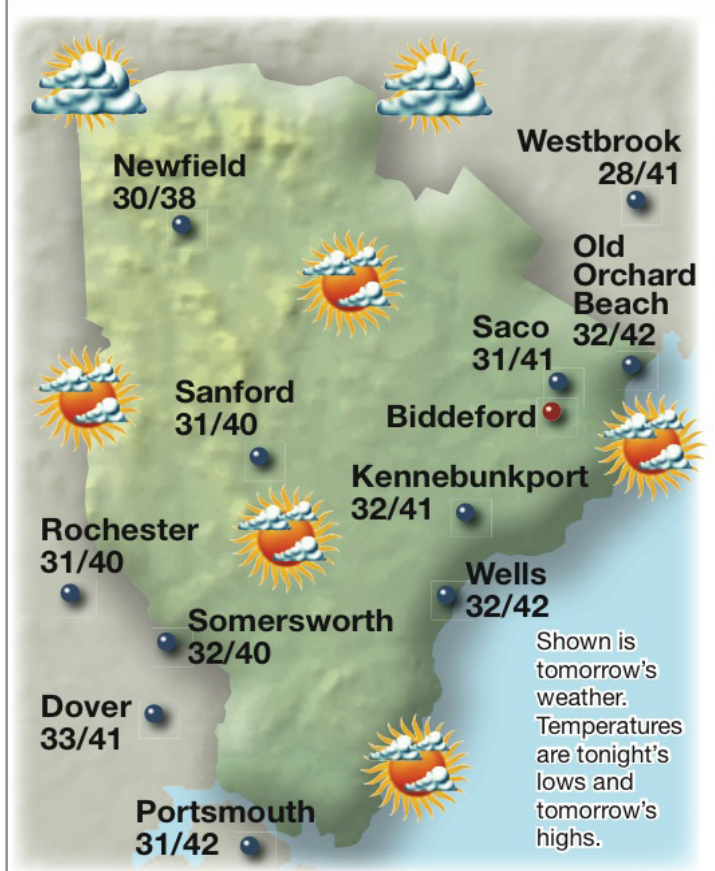
"We've had to arm twist to let us help them," she said.

— Senior Staff Writer Tammy Wells can be contacted at 324-4444 (local call in Sanford) or 282-1535, ext. 327 or twells@journaltribune.com.

BIDDEFORD AREA FORECAST AccuWeather.com

Table with 4 columns: TONIGHT, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY. Includes weather icons and temperature ranges.

Today's Forecast



Tide Report

Table with 4 columns: Day, Time, High, Low. Includes data for Kennebunkport and Old Orchard Beach.

Marine Forecast

Eastport to Merrimac River Wind west 12-25 knots tonight. Seas 3-5 feet. Partly cloudy. Wind west 25-35 knots tomorrow. Seas 3-6 feet. An afternoon shower. Wind west 12-25 knots tomorrow night. Seas 3-5 feet. Partly cloudy. Saturday: Wind west 10-20 knots. Seas 2-4 feet. Visibility clear. Saturday night: Wind west 10-20 knots. Seas 2-4 feet. Water temperature: 42.

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