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**CONTACT:** Toby Fallsgraff, 202.478.6184-o  
202.374.9769-c / [tfallsgraff@mrss.com](mailto:tfallsgraff@mrss.com);  
Lisa Parker, 207-283-3303 / [lparker@sacomaine.org](mailto:lparker@sacomaine.org)

## **City of Saco Releases “Citizen Centric” Fiscal Report to Assess City Performance Honestly, Clearly**

*Easy-to-Read Fiscal Snapshot the First Report in a National Initiative to Increase Citizen Understanding and Participation in Debates on Fiscal Priorities*

SACO, Maine—The Association of Government Accountants (AGA) launched a national initiative today to bring clarity to fiscal reporting in municipal, county and state governments in a campaign to bring more citizens into local debates over fiscal priorities. The Citizen Centric project kicked off at a Saco City Hall briefing, where it released a four-page fiscal report.

The Citizen Centric initiative asks municipal, county and state governments to publish honest and straightforward reports about their fiscal condition – and, most important, to keep them short and easy to understand. These fiscal snapshots would provide a clear answer to the question “Are we better off today than we were last year?”

“Government fiscal assessments generally read like a telephone book and have more pages of footnotes than any layperson knows what to do with,” said Relmond Van Daniker, AGA executive director. “We need to get back to what accountants are meant to do – crunch the numbers and make them easy for everyday people to understand.”

The Saco report measures the city’s performance in Fiscal Year 2006, as well as the challenges and objectives facing the city in the coming years. It lays out in easy-to-read charts breakdowns of the city’s revenues by source, the city’s expenditures by function and even the median contribution each household makes to each individual city service. The statistics included range from how much water the city treats daily to the number of parking tickets it issued. Also included are the results of a 2005 citizen survey. The full report is available at [www.agacgfm.org/citizen/downloads/SacoMaineCitizenReport07.pdf](http://www.agacgfm.org/citizen/downloads/SacoMaineCitizenReport07.pdf).

“We know that governments have a reputation for being good at collecting taxes but not necessarily as good at being accountable for how those tax dollars are spent, Saco wants to change that,” said Saco Mayor Mark Johnston. “This report has both the good and the bad. And while I’m glad to say there’s more ‘good’ to report in Saco these days, this report is chock full of challenges coming down the pike. We’re hoping to inform a thoughtful debate on these issues.”

The city reports that the issue of managing community growth continues to loom large on the horizon – a concern that was echoed by the results of the citizen survey. Still, more than 80 percent of Saco residents said the city’s overall image is “good” or “excellent,” an improvement from a similar 2004 survey. The city departments also listed a number of accomplishments from the past year:

- Ongoing road improvements that have brought 86% of all roads to a satisfactory rating;
- Emergency services response times clocking in at under five minutes in 64% of all incidents;
- Stability of sewer user fees in 2006; and
- Restoration of 73% of city records as far back as 1796.

“Saco reminded us today that bringing citizens into the discussion about city priorities is what American government is all about,” Van Daniker said. “That’s a lesson so many of our local governments can learn from.”

*The Association of Government Accountants is a 15,000-member professional Association that serves government accountability professionals by providing quality education, fostering professional development and certification, and supporting standards and research to advance government accountability. For more information about the Association, call 800.AGA.7211, or visit AGA’s website at [www.agacgfm.org](http://www.agacgfm.org).*

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