



City of Salem, Massachusetts

Fiscal Year 2022

Annual Operating Budget & Capital Plan 2022 - 2026

General Fund & Enterprise Funds

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

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Thank you to everyone who sent us pictures to use in this year's budget.

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CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Kimberley Driscoll
Mayor

Office of the Mayor

May 27, 2021

Honorable Salem City Council
Salem City Hall
Salem, MA 01970

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Council:

Enclosed please find the proposed FY2022 operating and capital budgets for the City of Salem and the Salem Public Schools. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our community, our Commonwealth, and our country to an unprecedented degree. The virus has taken lives, disrupted work and school, and forced all of us to adapt to ensure the health and safety of our community. Through it all, our dedicated City workforce has endeavored to continue providing the critical government services upon which our constituents rely every day.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, also triggered an unforeseeable financial crisis. With economy activity coming to a near complete standstill for much of FY2021, City revenues were substantially impacted. Income to the City from meal and room excises, parking fees, and even permits and licenses, diminished immediately and slowly has been recovering. Last year we made difficult decisions to put off certain expenditures, reduce budget requests, hold vacant positions open longer than we normally would, shorten City office hours, and implement wage freezes and furloughs, all with the goal of managing the unpredictable fiscal situation.

I am proud to say that those steps worked. Our revenues are rebounding, and our local economy is coming back stronger than ever. Over the

past year Salem had a net zero loss in businesses and our storefront vacancy rate decreased to 4%. Three of every five residents who lost their job at the height of the pandemic recession are now working again and the pace of our drop in unemployment is double that of the nationwide pace. We weathered the fiscal challenges without having to draw down substantially from our reserve funds or tap heavily into our levy capacity.

All of this is thanks to large part to the professionalism of City staff and leadership, the early actions taken to support businesses and embrace investment in our city, as well as our thoughtful approach to managing municipal finances. Our collaborative partnership with the City Council and our neighboring municipalities in the region has helped us to weather this pandemic and fiscal storm.

The proposed FY2022 Salem general fund budget is \$160,410,557, a change of 4.6% over the FY2021 adjusted general fund budget. Fixed costs, such as health insurance, pension and retirement payments, insurance, debt payments, and state assessments, will increase by about \$2.2 million in F2022, accounting for about one-third of the general fund budget increase. Our schools' budget is set to increase by \$2,296,177, or 3.6%, over the FY2021 adjusted school budget. This does not include school-related costs that appear elsewhere in the budget, such as school employee health insurance increases, unemployment costs, debt for school building projects, and so forth. The enterprise fund budgets will increase by \$426,967, or 2.2%, over the FY2021 adjusted enterprise funds budget, due to increases in assessments for these services and the need for infrastructure maintenance and upgrades. Ordinances have been submitted to you establishing the water and sewer rates necessary to fund these budgets.

The FY2022 budget does include two new items of significance that I would like to highlight. The first is an added investment in our climate change and resiliency efforts, specifically the establishment of a new Sustainability, Energy, and Resiliency Department (SERD) largely composed of existing personnel or new grant-funded roles. Salem's commitment to preparing for climate change has spanned many years, from the development of our hazard mitigation plans and climate vulnerability plan several years ago, to prior capital investments in stormwater management, flood measures like seawalls and living shorelines, our current thoughtful approach to revising our flood zone ordinance, and the joint Salem-Beverly climate resiliency plan.

We have also made meaningful steps toward reducing our own carbon footprint through expanding electric vehicle infrastructure and fleet composition, conversion of our streetlights to LED fixtures, installation of rooftop solar on schools and buildings, solarize and efficiency discount programs for residents, our municipal electrical aggregation program, our forthcoming green building ordinance, and our efforts to grow micro-mobility and alternative transportation options. The new investment in SERD will help us to tackle the many action items arising from our work with the City of Beverly on a joint climate Resilient Together plan.

The second new addition is the creation of a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) to carry on the important work started in this past year by the Race Equity Task Force (RETF) and, prior to that, by entities such as our No Place for Hate Committee. This spring,

building on the recommendations of the RETF, we will propose the establishment of a permanent Race Equity Commission, to implement the action plan developed by the RETF. The DEI director will lead this work and take on many of the other components of this shared agenda, including working in collaboration with the Latino Affairs Coordinator to advance our Welcoming City application, our Government Alliance on Race and Equity certification process, and more. Salem is an inclusive place, but we still have work to do to improve in these areas and ensure that we remain a welcoming community for everyone.

The FY2022 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is also included as part of this budget, as are the associated bond orders to fund these capital investments. I am proud that we instituted a practice of including a forward-looking capital plan in our budget each year as a responsible and transparent way of planning for future obligations while meeting present-day needs to best serve Salem residents.

From having nothing in our rainy-day stabilization fund when I took office in 2006, we today have over \$7.8 million in that fund thanks to permanent, prudent finance policies that we have worked collectively with the Council to put in place. This past year especially we can be grateful for the diligence of the past, as we needed to apply some of those emergency funds to the COVID-related budget crisis.

Despite the past financial difficulties we faced, Salem remains dedicated to policies that foster economic growth, to stable financial management practices, and to sustainable and transparent budgeting. Since 2006 we have implemented professional financial management standards and our debt payment as a share of the budget has been reduced by 42%. We have been able to accomplish this by leveraging hundreds of millions in grants, as well as PILOT, SILOT, and other tax agreements, and by being responsible, thoughtful, and prudent with tax dollars. Over the last 15 years, the average single-family tax bill in Salem increased by half as much as it did in the 15 years before 2006.

In our budgeting practices, the taxpayers of Salem have always been foremost in mind, and FY2022 is no different. This budget recognizes and respects the impact of property taxes on our residents, especially as many are suffering from the financial hardship afflicting many Americans today. Salem's average tax bill change over the last decade has been well below the average for our region and bolstered by the adoption of as many exemptions and abatements as practical, particularly focused on our neediest taxpayers, including lower income residents, seniors, veterans, and those living with disabilities. Salem has never sought a Proposition 2-1/2 override and we continue to tax below our allowable levy limit. For FY2022, our excess levy capacity will increase by 32% to \$6,104,855, the highest that it has ever been and a further demonstration of our prudence and care with taxpayer dollars.

Despite the overwhelming impact of the pandemic on our budgetary decisions, it does not diminish the other external influences with which we still must also contend. Whether it is housing needs, fears about growth, the opioids epidemic, changing demographics, or a changing climate, our community is facing many challenges that require strategic and sensible leadership. Indeed, in some respects the pandemic and ensuing economic downturn only exacerbated some of these challenges, such as the need for affordable and available housing.

On the financial side, we continue to see challenges with the state not fully funding their obligations for charter school reimbursements and the existing PILOT with the South Essex Sewerage District failing to adequately compensate our community for hosting this regional facility. Rising health care costs are impacting both the public and private sector and we continue to face the challenge of OPEB and pension liabilities, not to mention costly sick-leave buybacks, agreed to decades ago, but impacting our retirement stabilization fund now.

We have worked hard to tackle these challenges by allocating funds to reserve and stabilization accounts to plan for the future and by taking actions like entering into the Group Insurance Commission, and annually reassessing the cost-effectiveness of that choice. However, the financial challenges presented by these fixed cost centers are still very real and have a real effect on our budget. Despite those pressures and despite the economic setbacks of the past year, the FY2022 budget maintains our dedication to fiscal responsibility while strengthening our community. I am proud of our collective efforts to limit impacts on Salem taxpayers while also providing much needed services to constituents. This is possible due to our joint attentiveness to City finances, as well as our ongoing efforts at identifying efficiencies in the delivery of services. Our fiscal practices have resulted in not only affirmation of our historic high AA bond rating for the last eight years in a row, but also our regular receipt of recognitions and awards from the Government Finance Officers' Association, a national agency that provides professional guidelines for government budgets and fiscal practices.

Lastly, another key factor in enhancing our local economy and contributing to new revenues to help meet the projected budget deficit are the public and private investments we continue to see in our community. These projects enhance our short- and long-term economic growth, create much needed housing, add to our tax base, and generate jobs. We are projecting the value increase of new growth for FY2022 at \$1.5 million; that is \$1.5 million less burden on existing Salem taxpayers. Without responsible new growth we cannot provide the services and improvements that our constituents rightly demand and deserve. Given the reliable increase in fixed costs to the City and the financial challenges of the past year, a reflexively anti-growth position is equivalent to endorsing substantial tax increases on Salem homeowners and reduction in critical City services like public safety and public works. With appropriate new growth comes much needed housing, commercial enterprises with jobs, and new revenues to support the needs of Salem taxpayers and local government.

In FY2022 we will continue to strive to exceed the service level expectations of our constituents, while simultaneously ensuring fiscal prudence in all expenditures. The mission of City government in Salem is to provide open, honest, and pro-active services effectively and efficiently, focusing on the needs of today, with a vision for the future. In order to accomplish this, the proposed budget aligns operations with short-term and long-term strategic goals and objectives, while maintaining necessary fiscal controls and a careful attention to our financial forecasts in our budgeting.

Balancing the City's budget in a normal year itself is no easy task and I appreciate the hard work and cooperation our department heads have put into the preparation of this year's budget. I cannot say enough about the efforts made by our Finance Department especially. The

department's work ensured that the budget was ready for submission and in compliance with the high standards we set for ourselves pursuant to GFOA Distinguished Budget guidelines. We are one of only a handful of Massachusetts communities who annually qualify for both a Certificate of Excellence for our Comprehensive Annual Financial Reporting and a Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the GFOA.

The proposed FY2022 budget represents a strong commitment to the people we are fortunate enough to have been elected to serve. It continues our balanced and responsible approach to City finances. It invests in the critical services that make Salem a vibrant city and one with schools in which we can all take pride – in short, a stronger, more livable city for all. I recommend adoption of the proposed FY2022 budget, CIP, and other associated budgetary measures and I look forward to working with you in the coming days to enact this proposed spending plan to continue ensuring that Salem is a City that welcomes and works for everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Kimberley Driscoll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kimberley" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Driscoll".

Kimberley Driscoll
Mayor
City of Salem

cc: City of Salem Department Heads

City of Salem - Long and Short Term Strategic Plan Summary - Fiscal Year 2022

Division	Goal & Objective	Source	Priority*	Schedule**	Division or Department	Status
EDUCATION						
Education	To raise the level of success for all Salem Public School Students to among the top 10% of the Commonwealth's Gateway Cities.	Mayor	1	Short & Medium Term	Executive and School	Ongoing
Education	Successfully implement the school's new Strategic Plan adopted by the Salem School Committee.	Mayor & State	1	Short Term	Executive & School	Underway
Education	To strengthen school-community partnerships in building a culture of high expectations for student success.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Executive & School	Ongoing
Education	To promote academic, social, emotional, and physical development of each student and to empower all students to chart a personalized path to success.	Resident Survey	1	Short & Long Term	Executive & School	Ongoing
GENERAL GOVERNMENT						
General Government	Improve communication and transparency with citizens, including social media and online tools, software, and more.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Executive & CIO	Ongoing
General Government	To maintain a high level of accessibility to and responsiveness by City departments and employees.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	All	Ongoing
General Government	Look for ways to deliver City services more efficiently and effectively through the use of technology and performance management, including development of Salem 311.	Mayor	2	Short & Long Term	Executive & All Departments	Ongoing
General Government	Implement regionalized services where applicable in order to better utilize tax dollars.	Resident Survey & Mayor	2	Medium & Long Term	Executive	Ongoing
General Government	Expand implementation of performance improvement programs.	Mayor & Finance	2	Short & Medium Term	Executive	Ongoing
General Government	Continue efforts to address climate change and plan to mitigate carbon footprint through the Green Communities program, energy efficiency goals, the climate change action plan, and more.	Mayor	2	Medium & Long Term	Executive	Underway
General Government	Improve citizen access to services and information.	Mayor	3	Short & Medium Term	Executive	Ongoing
General Government	Strengthening City's reputation as a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive community for all.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Executive	Ongoing

City of Salem - Long and Short Term Strategic Plan Summary - Fiscal Year 2022

Division	Goal &Objective	Source	Priority*	Schedule**	Division or Department	Status
General Government	Continue implementation of Salem for All Ages.	Mayor	2	Short & Medium Term	Excutive, COA, Traffic and Park, Health, Planning	Ongoing
General Government	Continue Preparing for Salem 400 in 2026.	Mayor	2	Short & Medium Term	Executive	Ongoing
FINANCE - HUMAN RESOURCES						
Finance	Continue to attain GFOA designation by maintaining the highest level of budgetary practices and finance policies.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Executive & Finance	Ongoing
Finance	Continue five year forecasting of capital improvement projects and needs.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Executive & Finance	Ongoing
Finance	Continue conservative budgeting policies to limit the impact on property tax levels.	Mayor	1	Short, Medium & Long term	Executive & Finance	Ongoing
Finance	Re-evaluate existing PILOT/SILOT and other agreements as they expire.	Mayor	2	Short & Long Term	Executive & Legislative	Ongoing
Finance	Limit long-term liability through the City's continued commitment to build reserves in Stabilization and OPEB Trust Funds.	Mayor	1	Short, Medium & Long term	Executive & Finance	Ongoing
PUBLIC SAFETY						
Public Safety	Maintain high level of all public safety services: police and fire.	Resident Survey	1	Short & Long Term	Executive, Police & Fire	Ongoing
Public Safety	Improve traffic and parking enforcement.	Resident Survey	2	Short & Long Term	Police & Parking	Ongoing
Public Safety	Enhance use of technology in public safety.	Mayor	2	Short & Long Term	Police & IT	Ongoing
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT						
Economic Development	Pursue policies and opportunities to add housing to meet demand, stablize rents and prices, grow the tax base, and address housing insecurity issues.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Executive, Planning & CD	Ongoing
Economic Development	Work with Footprint to ensure the successful redevelopment of the Salem Habor Station Power Plant site.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Executive	Underway
Economic Development	Continue revitalization of Salem Habor and the waterfront.	Mayor	1	Planning - Short term, Implementation - medium to long term	Planning & CD	Underway
Economic Development	Encourage responsible private development and new growth opportunities.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Planning & CD	Ongoing

City of Salem - Long and Short Term Strategic Plan Summary - Fiscal Year 2022

Division	Goal & Objective	Source	Priority*	Schedule**	Division or Department	Status
Economic Development	Continue implementation of the Point Vision and Action Plan.	Mayor	2	Short & Medium Term	Planning & CD	Ongoing
Economic Development	Oversee the preservation and redevelopment of the Superior Court buildings.	Mayor	1	Short & Medium Term	Planning and SRA	Underway
Economic Development	Support the growth of new and existing private businesses, including enhanced recruitment efforts.	Resident Survey	2	Short & Long Term	Mayor and Planning	Ongoing
PARKS AND RECREATION						
Recreation	Launch and carry out Signature Parks program for Willows, Winter Island, Pioneer Village/Camp Naumkeag, Forest River Park, and Salem Common.	Mayor	1	Planning - Short & medium term, Implementation - medium to long term	Planning & Parks, Finance, Capital	Underway
Recreation	Finalize and implement plans for improvements at Palmer Cove, Bertram Field, and Gallows Hill Park.	Mayor	2	Short & Medium Term	Parks	Underway
Recreation	Increase participation in recreation and COA programs.	Mayor	2	Short Term	Mayor & Recreation	Underway
Recreation	Carry out CPA projects, historic preservation efforts as outlined in the historic preservation plan, and other community improvement projects.	Mayor	2	Short Term	Mayor, Planning & Recreation	Underway
TRAVEL AND TOURISM						
Cultural	Continue to improve upon management of Haunted Happenings & other community events.	Mayor	1	Planning - Short & Long term, Implementation - medium to long term	Executive & Tourism	Ongoing
Cultural	Continue development and implementation of cruise port activities and marketing.	Mayor	2	Short & Medium Term	Executive & Tourism	Ongoing

City of Salem - Long and Short Term Strategic Plan Summary - Fiscal Year 2022

Division	Goal &Objective	Source	Priority*	Schedule**	Division or Department	Status
PUBLIC SERVICE- ENGINEERING - TRAFFIC AND PARKING						
Public Services	Reorganize staff to more efficiently and effectively deliver services and respond to requests.	Mayor	1	Short & Medium Term	Executive	Ongoing
Public Services	Improve implementation of SeeClickFix service request and work order system, and integrate it with Salem 311.	Mayor	1	Short Term	Mayor, DPW, Health, Electrical	Ongoing
Infrastructure & Facilities	Maintain and upgrade City water and sewer systems.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Planning & Engineering	Ongoing
Infrastructure & Facilities	Maintain and upgrade City roads, sidewalks, open spaces as reflected by the City's complete streets policy, open space plan, and road and sidewalk master plan.	Mayor/Resident Survey	1	Short and Long Term	Engineering	Ongoing
Infrastructure & Facilities	Continue to advance Essex Street, Derby Street, Highland Avenue and Boston Street improvement projects and the Boston/Bridge intersection project.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	Planning & Engineering	Underway
Infrastructure & Facilities	Improve overall cleanliness of streets, parks and other public areas.	Resident Survey & Mayor	1	Short & Medium Term	Public Works	Ongoing
Infrastructure & Facilities	Continue residential traffic calming program.	Mayor	1	Short & Long Term	DPW, Traffic, PD, Engineering	Ongoing
Infrastructure & Facilities	Study potential reuse opportunities at the transfer station site.	Mayor	1	Medium & Long Term	Mayor, Legal, Engineering	Underway
Infrastructure & Facilities	Continue advocating for South Salem MBTA commuter rail stop.	Mayor	1	Medium & Long Term	Mayor, SSU, NSMC	Underway
Infrastructure & Facilities	Continue implementation of complete streets policy and encouragement of alternatives to car use, including micromobility, on-demand shuttle service, and community car share pilot.	Mayor	2	Short & Medium Term	Planning, DPW, Engineering, Traffic	Underway

Notes: *Priority - 1 - High, 2 = Medium, 3 = Low . This rating is determined by the Mayor's office

**Short Term = 1-12 months, Medium Term = 12 months to 24 months, Long Term = 24 months or more.