



FYI SALEM

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From the Mayor's Desk



Welcome to the first FYI Salem newsletter of 2017!

The year ahead promises to be one of positive, balanced growth for Salem, with a focus on improving quality of life and maintaining our community's forward momentum as an economically vibrant, diverse, and welcoming City.

On January 5th I delivered my twelfth State of the City address to the City Council. This annual event takes place at the start of each year and offers opportunity to both reflect on the accomplishments of the past and lay out a vision for our City's future.

I invite you to read excerpts from my remarks in this newsletter, or find the full

text online at <http://www.salem.com/mayors-office/pages/mayors-speeches>.

The latest episode of the FYI Salem podcast is a special edition with the audio from the State of the City update I delivered to the City Council at their reorganization meeting on January 5. You can listen to the podcast at <http://www.salem.com/mayors-office/pages/fyi-salem-podcast> or subscribe on iTunes or your preferred podcast service. Simply search for "FYI Salem" and sign up.

We are getting right back to work for Salem as January picks up, with Kindergarten Information Night, a public presentation of the design alternatives for Lafayette Park, a public hearing on CDBG priorities for our low and moderate income populations, and the resumption of the City Council's regular meetings.

We expect that 2017 will be a busy, but productive year. From the Canal Street roadway improvement project, to the groundbreaking of

the Mayor Jean Levesque Community Life Center—from the launch of the "Imagine Salem" City Visioning initiative, to Footprint Power coming online and opening up over 40 acres of open space along our waterfront—from expansions at PEM and NSMC, to new public infrastructure investments—from continued progress in our public schools, to strengthened commitments to public safety and community policing efforts.

None of it is possible without the positive relationship we share with the City Council, our legislative delegation, the School Committee, our neighborhood associations, our local business community, and our institutional partners.

Working together, I know that 2017 can be a year of growth and progress. A year that strengthens our bonds as a community, continues to lift up our local economy, and maintains our reputation for honest, inclusive, and professional government.

Kim Driscoll, Mayor

Lafayette Park

In 2016 the City began a public planning effort to develop a community vision for improvements to Lafayette Park, a public park that sits at the intersection of Washington Street, Harbor Street, and Lafayette Street.

After public feedback was collected, the City's landscape architect developed a number of potential design alternatives.

These alternatives will be presented to the Park and Recreation Commission at their regular meeting on January 17 at 6:45 p.m. at 5 Broad Street.

The meeting is open to the public and those interested in the upgrade of this centrally located pocket park are encouraged to attend.



Kindergarten Information Night



The Salem Public Schools will hold their annual Kindergarten Information Night on Tuesday, January 10 at the Collins Middle School in the auditorium and cafeteria. Information sessions will take place at both 6:30 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.

Parents of children starting kindergarten in 2017 are invited to attend either information session to learn more about Salem's schools and to pick up registration packets.

CDBG Hearing

The City of Salem will hold a Public Hearing on the development of its FY18 Action Plan for Community & Economic Development for the period of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. The Action Plan will outline Salem's housing and community development needs and funding priorities for the expenditure of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds, which are used to benefit low and moderate income persons.

The public hearing will be held on Thursday, January 19 at 6pm, 120 Washington Street, 3rd floor conference room. The hearing will give citizens the opportunity to comment on the housing and community development needs of Salem's low to moderate income residents and on the types of activities that should be undertaken to meet these needs. In the event of a meeting cancellation due to inclement weather, this meeting will be rescheduled to January 24 at 6:00 p.m.

State of the City

Read the full remarks at <http://www.salem.com/mayors-office/pages/mayors-speeches>.

On January 2, 2006, 11 years ago almost to the day, I was fortunate enough to address an over capacity crowd in Old Town Hall with my first Inaugural Address. City crews had worked tirelessly to prepare Old Town Hall for the festivities. I was a new Mayor in an old building that had great historic bones, but was in need of attention. I touched upon that fact during my remarks and made an analogy between the building, a historic landmark, and our city. Both were historic and beautiful, but struggled to meet their full promise and potential. On that day, I vowed to provide an administration that would be based on professionalism - not politics, that would be hard-working and creative, and that would be inclusive and open to all.

By that time, we knew there would be challenges and pledged to face them by communicating with straight talk and open dialogue. Those of you who were with me either on the stage that day or in the audience, will remember we faced a bruising fiscal crisis. Weeks before being sworn in to office, the city had depleted virtually all of our reserve accounts to pay past due bills and for the first time in memory, we had to borrow money to be sure that we could pay teachers, police officers, firefighters and other city employees. In short, we were broke and I'm not just referring to the balance in our financial accounts. We had poor budget practices, for sure. But, more than that was broken. At that point in time, governing at the local level too often consisted of settling scores and "gotcha" games, with regular sparring between branches of government. It felt like we would take two steps forward as a city and then one step back.

With my background in city management, on that day, we talked of working collaboratively, in particular with the City Council to address the fiscal crisis – closing a \$3.5m deficit involved many hard choices in a short period of time, from layoffs to reorganizations and lots of saying 'no'. We talked about working hard to realize our potential of a thriving downtown; of our need for an upgraded MBTA Train Station and our desire to retain the legal community here with a new judicial court complex. I was overjoyed to serve as Mayor in a city that I love and was brimming with optimism and a strong commitment to helping Salem realize our full potential.

Fast forward 11 years, I'm still brimming with optimism and commitment. I'm still madly in love with the City of Salem – still focused on doing this work the way we set out to 11 years ago, by providing services based on professionalism, not politics. By bringing both hard work and creativity to the job every day and working to instill values of inclusiveness and openness in all that we do – now, more important than ever. And by the end of that first fiscal year we had closed our deficit, began the revival of our waterfront, including the start of a new ferry service, strengthened partnerships with our non-profit institutions, and had tapped hundreds of residents to participate in a new, open government. While that year was trying, it set the stage for much of the success we have seen over the past decade.

From having virtually nothing in our rainy-day stabilization fund upon taking office, today we have almost \$6 million in that account thanks to our work instilling prudent fiscal practices and policies. From having an absolutely dismal bond rating, today we've had the highest bond rating in our City's history, for three years running.



Over the last eleven years we have secured over \$100 million in state and federal funding, and this figure excludes large scale formula grants – meaning these are the funding applications we competitively sought and received. This work is very intentional and we were and are pro-active and aggressive in seeking grants, because we know that we can't expect homeowners to foot the bill for some of our large-scale projects and we know that every dollar we earn in outside funding is one fewer dollar that we have to ask Salem residents for.

From having unbalanced budgets that lacked transparency, today I'm extremely proud that for the last nine year we have received

the Government Finance Officers Association's highest accolades for fiscal transparency – one of only a handful of communities in Massachusetts to claim both a Certificate of Excellence for Financial Reporting and a Distinguished Budget Award. We never want to find ourselves in the financial circumstances we faced just 11 years ago, and following GFOA standards will ensure that never, ever happens again.

In a city that's nearly 400 years old and still growing, we've worked hard to keep pace with needed investments in public infrastructure and public safety. We've increased our investment in public works, growing our DPW team by 20% and funding a laundry list of neglected maintenance needs and repairs. When you dial 911, you expect a rapid response by well trained and well equipped personnel. 11 years ago, we were understaffed in both these areas. Today, we've seen our Police force grow by 15% and our Fire Department ranks by 20%, bringing our combined public safety personnel complement from 170 men and women to nearly 200 today.

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We've also invested in public safety technology and equipment, spending over \$4 million to replace and upgrade police, fire, and harbor-master apparatus. Our public safety personnel need to have modern, functioning equipment and we remain committed to that goal.

In the past eleven years, we invested over \$14 million in our roads, repaving 277 streets across our City, over 44 miles in all. And that does not include major corridor projects on North, Bridge and Canal Streets, and upcoming projects on Essex, Derby, and Boston Streets. By leveraging private development in Salem, we were able to receive over \$8 million in MassWorks funding to improve corridors in Blubber Hollow and Riley Plaza. We've leveraged \$3.4 million in eight, separate state PARC Improvement grants to overhaul much of our green space – funding that is in addition to regular City capital and operational funds, CPA grants, and other sources. After more than 20 years of jockeying, work on a long overdue new senior center has finally begun. The Mayor Jean Levesque Community Life Center is expected to open in the Summer of 2018 at the corner of Boston and Bridge Street. This comes on the cusp of our recently completed age friendly action plan, Salem for All Ages, designed to help our city with meeting the needs of our aging baby boomer population.

We can't be a great city without great public schools and we are committed to ensuring that all our students, and I do mean ALL – students who come from great wealth or those who have great need, those that were read to each night before bed since birth to those who have not had as loving and supportive of an environment – ALL our students must have a chance to thrive. Our school district and in deed, our city, is focused on ensuring that our comprehensive education system is one that enables all children to succeed. It is not easy. In fact, it's the hardest work we must undertake as a community and as a society. It's also the work that will reap the highest returns and that's just one of the reasons we are so committed to it.

Our district has shed our Level 4 status and I am especially pleased that schools that once were the last choice for many families, are now often the first pick. Both Bentley and Carlton have achieved Level 1 designations from the state Department of Education and they both have waiting lists for access. In addition to our work in those schools, we have added expanded learning time in several of our buildings, increased the use of tutors for students and coaches for staff, set more rigorous curricula and higher expectations, and broadened our use of technology. We are also grateful for a close collaboration with the Salem Teachers Union and feel fortunate to have such a committed group of educators working in our buildings every day, focused on not only improving the educational success, but the care and wellbeing of all our students. Our commitment to our district is paying off in the educational successes we are seeing among Salem's kids and we have no intention of slowing down in this effort.

Other evidence of success can be found in our strong local economy. Eleven years ago there was a fraction of the restaurants and businesses that make our downtown so vibrant today. No multimodal MBTA station or new garage, no ferry or cruiseport. A state college, instead of a state university. No J. Michael Ruane court complex. No Footprint power. No activity on the brownfields along the North River. No Blaney Street wharf and marina. No comprehensive marketing of our City and little to no management, guidance or coordination of October's Haunted Happenings events. Our economy is strong and vibrant, with new restaurants and entrepreneurs opening up exciting new ventures in our downtown, on our waterfront, and along our entrance corridors. Our unemployment rate is the lowest it's been since 2002. In the last eleven years Salem saw nearly 700 new jobs created, an increase of 3%; over the same time period, the state saw a 2% decline. In the last eleven years, we've added \$18.5 million in new growth - critical funding that helps us sustain our most important city services.

Standing still isn't a good or realistic option for Salem and likely for any city where people want to be—and people want to be in Salem. As a community, it hasn't been our habit to sit back and wait for something positive to happen. We're action oriented. We focus on what we need and go after it. Or as I'm fond of saying, "Plan the work, work the plan."

Our first job will always be delivering high quality services to our residents. But, what are the longer term priorities that we should be thinking about adding to the list and what's the best way to do that? In nine years, Salem turns 400 years old. Of course, as the third oldest city in Massachusetts, we'll plan for an incredible year-long celebration of our history, our community, and our future. But, frankly, that's the easy part. More important, however, is how we use our 400th anniversary as a catalyst for answering the question of what kind of city do we want to be in 10 years?

Through funding provided by a state grant, we have launched an effort entitled 'Imagine Salem' a visioning process that will bring together people, organizations, and businesses to have a conversation together about what we want our community to look like in 2026. What kind of City do we want Salem to be by then? What legacy will we pass on to the next generation of Salem workers, entrepreneurs, parents, and leaders? In what state will we hand off our schools, not just to our children, but to their children? Can we make it easier to access services or get around Salem? How will we preserve our character while being open to new industry? How do we make sure that prosperity has a wide impact? We will answer these questions, together, through the Imagine Salem Visioning Process.

What makes a city great are the people who live here and the influence they bring to bear on the things you use and rely on every day, how they make a meaningful and positive difference in your daily life. I feel fortunate and humbled to be in a position to help with answers to the question of what makes OUR city great. I'm as excited and optimistic about our future as I was 11 years ago and pledge to continue providing services based on professionalism, not politics, by bringing both hard work and creativity to the job every day, and working to instill values of inclusiveness and openness in all that we do. As we chart our course for the future, I'm looking forward to working with members of the Council, our state and federal legislative delegation, as well as our active and engaged citizenry on a plan that addresses our challenges, builds on our strengths and seeks to enable every member of our community to share in our success.

I like to say that Salem is hip and historic. That means we embrace both who we were and who we aspire to be. And I wouldn't want to be Mayor in a City that believed or behaved any differently. Thank you for your shared interest, your best efforts, and your faith in our collective abilities.