



FYI SALEM

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From the Mayor's Desk



Dear Salem resident,

Tonight the City Council will vote on the FY2021 City budget. As you can imagine, this is a very different budget and very different budget message than the ones that had been originally prepared for the coming fiscal year.

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 in order 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, has also triggered an unforeseeable financial crisis. With economy activity coming to a near complete standstill since March, and the prospect of a slow and difficult economic recovery ahead, our typical revenue streams have been significantly negatively impacted.

Adding to this challenge is the truly unknown nature by which they will be impacted going forward. Income to the City from meal, room, and cannabis excises, parking fees, even permits and licenses, diminished immediately and it will be difficult to accurately forecast how and when they will fully recover. Similarly, we know that there will be a substantial reduction in aid from the state; however, given the timing of the pandemic, we still do not yet know what that level of reduction will be.

Throughout the budgeting process, my priority was ensuring that we do not diminish the level of service that Salem residents expect and deserve. In doing so, preserving the positions of those public servants who deliver those services was of foremost concern. Needing to make budget reductions, at a time when so many of our City employees

have been working harder than ever, was a difficult move, but a necessary one, in order to meet a budgetary crisis that we did not expect but must work together to overcome. The unemployment rate in Salem sharply increased from 3.1% in March to 18.7% in May. With nearly one in five of our friends and neighbors seeking unemployment assistance, we are doing all that we can to save jobs and retain employees. In turn, City staff are working in partnership toward this same goal.

The FY2021 budget represents a strong commitment to the people I am fortunate to have been elected to serve. It continues a balanced and responsible approach to City finances. It invests in the critical services that make Salem a vibrant city, a welcoming city, a city with schools in which we can all take pride – in short, a forward-looking and livable city for all.

I invite you to read the budget for yourself by visiting www.salem.com/FY21 and contact me at mayor@salem.com with your questions and thoughts.

Kim Driscoll
Mayor

Race Equity Task Force

Mayor Kim Driscoll has announced that the City of Salem is establishing a new Race Equity Task Force to make recommendations for immediate and long-term actions to improve racial equity in all aspects of city life. The Task Force will be chaired by Salem resident Shawn Newton.

The Task Force will include a diverse array of City residents and leaders, including members of the City Council and School Committee, the heads of key Salem institutions, and organizers of recent marches and actions in the community protesting police brutality and racial injustice. The full membership of the Task Force will be announced later this week. The Task Force will carry out a thorough review of City policies, services, and ordinances, as well as inequities in community systems and will report out clear recommendations, including ways in which success will be measured, in an Equity Action Plan specifically concentrate on identifying disparities in City services, education, health, housing, health, jobs, law enforcement, and youth programming.

"We have an opportunity and an obligation to listen, learn, reflect, and understand as we address the legacy of systemic racism in our society and to be a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming city," said Mayor Kimberley Driscoll. "Forming this task force, which includes a dynamic group of leaders and community members of color, is the first step in that effort. I'm grateful to the members who are volunteering their time and energy in this important endeavor and am ready to engage with them, and all of our community, to thoughtfully undertake the critical work ahead."

Shawn Newton is a resident of Salem and is the Associate Dean of Students at Suffolk University in Boston, where he oversees, among many other offices, the University's Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion. Newton is the co-founder and Executive Director of Urban Echo, a nonprofit that organizes fundraisers, youth-building events, and in-depth training sessions focused on social justice. Additionally, he also serves on the board of 1Race, a Salem based non-profit that coordinates high school workshops to educate youth on issues of race and on the Board of Trustees for Plummer Youth Promise.



He has previously served as Assistant Dean of Students at Salem State University and adjunct professor where he taught courses including Undoing Racism and Human Diversity & Social Work Practice. Newton earned a BS in Criminal Justice from Salem State University, a MS in Community Economic Development from Southern New Hampshire University and is currently enrolled at the University of Southern California where he is working on his doctorate in Organizational Change and Leadership in the Rossier School of Education.

"I'm looking forward to working with other community members to address this important issue," said Newton. "I think this is a step in the right direction in order for us to hold each other accountable for the type of community we would like to live, work, and go to school in."

The City is in communication with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for local governments across the country, about providing guidance, technical assistance, and professional expertise in carrying out the Task Force's work. Mayor Driscoll will propose to the City Council that the work of the Task Force be funded through a transfer of funding from the Salem Police Department's FY2021 budget.

Arboretum at Greenlawn

The F. Carroll Sargent Arboretum at Greenlawn Cemetery in Salem has been awarded Level 1 Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum, for achieving standards of professional practices deemed important for arboreta and botanic gardens.

The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program is the only global initiative to officially recognize arboreta at various levels of development, capacity, and professionalism. With this designation, the F. Carroll Sargent Arboretum at Greenlawn Cemetery is also now recognized as an accredited arboretum in the Morton Register of Arboreta, a database of the world's arboreta and gardens dedicated to woody plants.

While the desire for accreditation had been percolating for months, the pursuit began in earnest in 2019 through a collaboration between Christine Lutts, President of the Friends of Greenlawn Cemetery, Inc., Robert LeBlanc, arborist and Superintendent of Cemeteries for the City of Salem, and Lisa Delissio, Professor of Biology at Salem State University.

"I am very grateful to the Friends of Greenlawn Cemetery, Prof. Delissio and her students, and Bob LeBlanc and his team for all of their hard work to make this distinction possible," said Mayor Kim Driscoll. "This accreditation recognizes the important ecological and scientific value of the F. Carroll Sargent Arboretum and makes possible further efforts to preserve and improve this remarkable gem in our community."



Healthy Babies Grant

Healthy Babies Bright Futures (HBBF) and the Mayors Innovation Project have announced that the City of Salem is one of ten winners of their joint grant program and will receive \$5,000 to operate a free weekly mobile farmers' market this summer at three affordable housing sites where hundreds of Salem children reside.

The market will distribute produce grown at the Mack Park Food Farm, a new municipal farm in one of Salem's City parks. Using organic farming methods, the Mack Park Food Farm has the potential to grow up to 10,000 pounds of produce each season. The Salem YMCA will partner with the City of Salem and assist with the mobile distribution.



"The need for a resilient local food system has become even more pronounced during the COVID-19 crisis," said Mayor Kim Driscoll. "Salem recognized the value of using vacant municipal land to grow food before the pandemic, but this funding will allow us to make locally grown produce even more accessible to families and children who live in areas with low-access to healthy foods. We believe this program will help to improve the health and well-being of Salem children and their families. I'm very grateful to our partners at the Salem YMCA, to the many volunteers who made the Mack Park Food Farm possible, and to our City staff who have worked on these initiatives."

COVID-19 Updates

- Step Two of Phase II of the Massachusetts reopening plan began June 22. The following were eligible to reopen on that date: Indoor table service at restaurants; close-contact personal services, with restrictions; retail dressing rooms, by appointment only; offices, at 50 percent capacity. More details and required safety protocols can be found at www.mass.gov/reopening.
- Friday, June 26th will be the final day that Waste Management will pick up extra bags of trash left outside of trash toters in Salem, unless they are official orange trash overflow bags.
- The latest newsletter from the City of Salem's Economic Recovery Task Force can be found at https://bit.ly/0619_EDRR.
- The City is no longer suspending ticketing/towing of vehicles parked on street on sweeping days. Please note when your street is posted for street sweeping and move your vehicle in order to avoid being towed and to allow the street to be more completely swept clean.
- The City is providing free personal protective equipment (PPE) to businesses located in Salem. To get a kit of the PPE, businesses must register for a pick-up time at www.salem.com/PPE. Pick up will take place at Salem High School on Friday, June 26th.
- There will be a free distribution of face masks for Salem residents on Sunday June 28th from noon to 2:00 p.m., thanks to the efforts of the members of Highrock Church. Distribution will take place in the former Universal Steel parking lot located at 297 Bridge Street.
- The temporary homeless quarantine site at Salem High School was closed on June 21, having served 31 individuals in the course of its operation. None of those individuals ended up testing positive for COVID-19.

Find the most recent COVID-19 update from the City of Salem by visiting www.salem.com/covid19.

School Updates

Superintendent Transition

Thank you to interim superintendent, Kathleen Smith for leading Salem Public Schools over the last year. She has led us through an unprecedented school year, and we are grateful for her care and guidance during this time. We wish you the best in your retirement. We welcome Dr. Steve Zrike, who officially joins us as superintendent on July 1st.

Updates on Food Distribution Sites and Times

Starting 7/01/2020 there is a slight change of time to one site as well as a couple of site closures.

Bentley will be closed for the summer, due to ongoing repairs at the school and the Salem Common site will be closed due to poor attendance. The hours at the Salem Heights location will be changed to 9-9:30 a.m. (instead of 9-10 a.m.). We will be still serving on multiple meals on Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays at the other sites with no time changes and Farm Boxes will be also available on Fridays at the school locations. As of now, this will continue through August 31, 2020

School is out for Summer!

The school year has officially ended. We'd like to thank everyone, from teachers, to parents, to students, to building crews, food services, administrators, nursing staff, and more, for navigating this unique school year. As a team, we can do anything and we have proven that together.

