

MAYOR'S UPDATE
November 27, 2023
Mayor Sean R. Reardon

Thanksgiving:

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. It was great to have a few days out of the office and see some family and friends. Special congratulations to the NHS Senior Class for winning Color Day and the NHS football team for pulling off a big upset against their archrivals in Amesbury 44-26 finishing their year at 9-2

Santa Parade:

We had a great Santa Parade and Tree Lighting downtown yesterday with a huge crowd. I want to thank the Newburyport Rotary Club for organizing the event along with the Newburyport Chamber of Commerce that also provided the tree. It looks amazing. I also want to thank the Police, Fire and DPS for helping the parade go off without a hitch yesterday and the NHS High School Band under the direction of Steve Cohen that did a great job accompanying the singalong.

Holiday Dates:

Just a few reminders around the holidays. This weekend on Saturday 9-3pm the Newburyport Fire Department will hold its Fill-a-Truck event at Marshalls and the Newburyport Police Department will hold its Fill-a Cruiser event at Market Basket and Shaws. The Greater Newburyport Chamber of Commerce will hold three invitation nights this holiday season on Friday December 1st, 8th and 15th. The Newburyport Fire Department will also hold their Santa Parade through town on Friday December 22nd starting at 4pm.

Joint Meeting of the Council and School Committee:

The annual joint meeting of the City Council and School Committee will be held on Wednesday, November 29th at 6:30 p.m. at the Senior Community Center. This meeting will cover our budget outlook and potential financing for planned capital projects for both Newburyport Public Schools and the City.

Tax Rate Proposal:

The adjusted tax rate proposal is in your packet tonight. We were faced with conditions very similar to last year in which we saw large increases in residential valuations, though this year's 13.6% increase was smaller than the 18.3% increase we saw last year. This year commercial property valuations grew by 6.1%, versus last year's 2.0%, and industrial valuations grew by 16.3% compared to last year's 3.9%. This more robust growth in Commercial and Industrial Property (CIP) makes a split tax rate less advantageous, and my administration is not recommending this approach this year, meaning we are recommending a residential tax factor of 1.0. We now are recommending a single tax rate of \$9.96 per thousand dollars and using \$402,989 in free cash to make this rate possible. The Budget and Finance committee recommended using \$525,000 and I feel that landing at \$402,989 is a good compromise and still helps residents. We recognize that this is a large increase, especially for our residents on

fixed incomes, and we will continue to offer our senior and veteran tax work-off program and any other available forms of tax relief. In addition, the State has passed additional measures that we may be able to use in FY25, and we will continue to look into which of these approaches could be a good fit for Newburyport. We look forward to further discussing the tax rate with the Budget and Finance Committee.

Whittier School Building Project:

There is not a lot of new information on the Whittier front. The Whittier School Committee will take a vote on whether to hold an election on January 23rd at their December 13th meeting. There is still time to reach out to our Whittier School Committee members and voice your concerns around this project. The current hope is that this process gets paused so there could be additional time to advocate for additional funds from the state. If this moves forward Newburyport will be saddled with a \$30M bill for this project with no funding mechanism identify and attached to this vote. Newburyport currently has 29 students who attend Whittier. We are working on setting up a meeting with the 11 cities and towns that feed into Whittier and the Lt Gov. Kim Driscoll.

Mayor Sean Reardon