

MAYOR'S UPDATE
September 26, 2023
Mayor Sean R. Reardon

Preliminary Election:

The City held a preliminary election on Tuesday September 19th. I want to thank Clerk Jones and his staff for a great job executing the election. The election narrowed the field of the Ward 4 Council race to two and also the School Committee race to six. Thank you to all the candidates for putting their names forward and looking for opportunities to serve the community. The municipal election will take place Tuesday November 7th with early voting at the Senior Community Center beginning Saturday October 28th and ending Friday November 3rd. Please check out the City Clerk page on our website for more details.

Brown School:

The city received four responses to the Request for Information that closed on September 8th regarding possible redevelopment options for the Brown School. The council will need to make the final vote on disposition of the property and any changes in the current zoning. I believe we gained some important information from the RFI, and I will work with Planning Director Port to release an RFP for the Brown School that could bring us to a viable proposal. Any viable RFP response recommended by the administration will go to City Council for deliberation and ultimately evaluation.

Short Term Rental Units (STRUs):

Thank you for a productive meeting on Thursday around STRUs in Newburyport. I hope you continue the conversation and come to a compromise. As I said that night, I do not think there is a perfect plan out there but I do think there is a compromise that can be implemented and enforced in the city. From the city perspective, we need something on the books to help with regulation and enforcement.

Streets and Sidewalks Plan:

We completed another successful year of street and sidewalk work around the city. I am having our new DPS Director put his own stamp on this plan since he was not the one to put it together. This is taking much longer than anticipated and I think that just speaks to the thoroughness of the director. The end result will be a five-year rolling plan with accurate numbers and a more realistic timeline, and greater consideration of both sidewalks and traffic safety improvements. Once the plan is complete it will be submitted to City Council and should help facilitate the discussion around the bond order currently sitting in committee.

COA Shuttle:

The parking conversation has quieted down the past several weeks, as we have exited the peak summer weekends. The COA did start a shuttle to the boardwalk for our seniors. We are starting with a 10am shuttle that will leave from the Senior Community Center and drop off at the boardwalk downtown near Tuscan Grille. The COA shuttle will return at 12pm to bring

people back. We are asking residents to sign up for the shuttle at the front desk. If there is a high demand, we will add more days and times.

Solid Waste Contract:

We received bids last week for our Solid Waste Hauling contract, and are reviewing the responses now. We have a committee with City Council, Board of Health, and community representation that will help review our scores of the responses and assist in determining next steps. We are also using resident surveys to gain more community feedback on trash and recycling services here in Newburyport. We look forward to sharing the results and using this data to help inform our decisions around these to trash bids moving forward.

Recreation and Youth Services Department:

The City has submitted an order in this packet to officially establish the Recreation and Youth Services Department. Article 5, Section 5-1 of the Newburyport City Charter, titled "Organization of city agencies," requires that an administrative order be filed with the City Council by the Mayor in order to organize the city into operating agencies. NYS actually pre-dates this Charter provision, and this will be a good opportunity to formally establish the department, which now will include recreation programming for Newburyporters of all ages.

From the Health Department:

The Health department ran a very successful vaccine clinic last week at the Senior Community Center. We are seeing a slight bump in COVID number across the city but our friends at Anna Jaques Hospital are cautiously optimistic at this time and we are not seeing a rise in hospitalizations. COVID tests and masks are still available at City Hall. Check out the health department page of the city website for more details on upcoming vaccine and booster clinics.

Anna Jaques Meeting:

I was able to sit down with new AJH President Dr. Glenn Focht this week and catch up on his transition and other hospital news. We talked about COVID, new CAT Scan and other equipment at the hospital and staffing. I am excited to work with Dr. Focht and look for ways the hospital can continue to partner with the city.

First-Time Homebuyer Program:

Thanks to the hard work of the Affordable Housing Trust and Katelyn Sullivan in the Planning Office, we are pleased to announce the expansion of Home Port, the City's down-payment and closing cost assistance program. Home Port will be available to all eligible first-time homebuyers looking to own a home in Newburyport, and who meet eligibility requirements. The goal is to increase homeownership among low- and moderate-income households. The expanded Home Port program means that both deed-restricted affordable homes and non-deed restricted homes are eligible, and that funds may be used for both down-payment assistance and eligible closing costs. Funds are provided by the City of Newburyport's Community Preservation Fund. The maximum assistance is \$20,000. More information can be found on the Planning Department's website.

MVPC Public Forum on Housing this Thursday:

As a part of their work to update our Housing Production Plan, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is holding a virtual housing information session and forum on Thursday, September 28th at 6:00pm. This is a regional session for several of their communities, but will also include a specific breakout room for Newburyport. Residents are invited to join us to learn about and discuss what work is underway to tackle housing challenges on the local level, as well as the tools and strategies that can be used to create further housing opportunity in Newburyport. Information on registration can be found on the public meeting section of the City's website.

MVP Grant Projects Kicking Off:

A couple weeks ago, I announced that Newburyport has received a state grant that will enhance the City's climate resilience efforts. The "Climate Resilient Newburyport: Community Action Project" is an 18-month project, being led by the Newburyport Resiliency Committee. The project officially kicked off this week. There are several activities which will be happening over the month of October, starting with this Sunday October 2nd at 2pm. The Theater in the Open will be performing Concrete Bouquet: A Day of Dance in Nature. This outdoor show is centered around the resilience of Nature and will include choreography by Contemporary Dance majors at The Boston Conservatory and Exit Dance Theatre. Tickets are available on their website. Stay tuned for more events. There are also several job openings associated with the grant. These can be found on the City's website.

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