

MAYOR'S UPDATE
October 30, 2023
Mayor Sean R. Reardon

Trick or Treat:

Happy Halloween Eve. I wanted to thank everyone who came out to City Hall Trick or Treat last Thursday and Downtown Trick or Treat on Friday. We had about 50 people come through City Hall and our downtown was packed with hundreds. A big thank you to our downtown businesses for participating. The costumes were amazing. City Wide Trick or Treating will be held tomorrow evening from 5:30-7:30pm. If you are taking part please make sure you turn on that outside light so people know you've got candy to give. It's going to be chilly so bundle up and be safe.

Early Voting and Election Day:

8 days to go. Early voting started Saturday at the Senior Center and will be available every day this week starting at 8:30am through Friday. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, early voting will be open until 330pm. On Thursday, it will be available until 6:30pm and Friday voting runs from 8:30am until 11:30am. On Election Day, Tuesday November 7th, polls will be open from 7am-8pm. Check out the City Clerk page on the City website for more details. We have three School Committee seats on the ballot for 4-year terms and most City Council races are contested. I am reminding residents to make a plan to vote, then go out and do it. Thank you to all the candidates for putting your names forward to run, and I am wishing you all the best.

Vigil on Wednesday:

I wanted to voice my grief and sympathy following last week's mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine. The Greater Newburyport Women in Action Huddle will be hosting a vigil to mourn and support the victims on Wednesday, November 1st from 6 to 7pm in Market Square. I hope to see you and many members of our community there.

Streets and Sidewalks Plan:

We have submitted the revamped 5 Year Rolling Streets and Sidewalk Plan as a communication which should help facilitate your conversation around the \$6M bond I have submitted for the next five years of the plan. I want to thank DPS Director Wayne Amaral and his team for doing a very thorough job working through this plan and making it their own. This plan also includes updated costs and it will be very easy for everyone to see where each dollar will be coming from. This plan still shows spending by ward, and has work taking place in each ward almost every year while addressing our highest priority streets. We have also submitted a list of sidewalk, safety, and traffic calming projects we would like to address, and we will be following this up with projected costs and a plan for prioritizing these issues.

New Head Librarian:

The Library Board of Directors voted to appoint Kevin Bourque to be our next Head Librarian of the Newburyport Public Library. Kevin comes to us from Boxford where he served as the town's Library Director for the past 8 years. We are excited for him to come aboard and his first day

will be 11/6. You have a communication in your packet with a resume and more information about Kevin.

Newburyport Recreation and Youth Services Department (NRYS):

The Community Services Committee Meeting took place on Tuesday October 24th and by a vote of 3-0 it was recommended to send this to the full Council for approval. The order to officially establish the Recreation and Youth Services Department, in accordance with Article 5, Section 5-1 of the Newburyport City Charter is in your packet tonight for final vote. We hope to have your support on this and to officially recognize the work this department does for all community members.

Designs for the Newburyport Recreation and Youth Services Department Building are complete and we are now waiting for final cost estimates. I am eyeing January to bring this plan to the Council and we are making plans for a public meeting to present the plan to the community.

Newburyport Recreation and Youth Services is busy recruiting new mentors in the city for our fall mentor training at City Hall on 11/2 and 11/9 from 6-8:30 PM. Newburyport Community Mentors is a wonderful program that matches mentors with local youth to spend some time with them a few times a month for a year. Interested mentors should reach out to NYS directly.

Whittier New School Building Project:

A letter addressed to the Whittier School Committee is also in your packet tonight. Mayor Gove and I assembled the leaders of the 11 districts that feed into Whittier a few weeks ago. We share similar concerns with the plan for the new school and the process of the vote currently scheduled for January 16th. The Whittier School Committee has not voted on the January 16th election yet and we believe there is still time to change the format before their December 13th meeting. Newburyport would be responsible for \$30M up front for this project which would total over \$60M in expenses for the City over the life of the loan. This equals over a million dollars per student. The 11 communities are also working on a joint letter to send along to the Whittier School Committee to voice our concerns and asks for changes in this process.

State Route 1 Rotary Project:

The MassDOT project on the traffic circle continues to move along. This weekend will be the only time that any part of the rotary will need to be shut down and travelers coming from Newbury will be detoured up State Street, to Greenleaf St and back down Pond St to get back on Route 1 at the traffic light. We apologize for any inconvenience and this should be the only disruption of traffic flow through that intersection during the construction of the new rotary.

Global Site

A Late File zoning amendment has been submitted that we expect will be referred to Planning and Development. The zoning amendment is necessary to facilitate residential redevelopment of the former gas station property at the intersection of State and High Street. Global is in a Purchase and Sale Agreement with an interested buyer who is developing plans which appear generally consistent with the surrounding neighborhood and would address many of the

concerns that might be raised with a more intensive development. The Mayor's Office, the Office of Planning and Development, and the City Solicitor are working on creating a Development Agreement with the new owner which will include the site plan and will memorialize the substantive aspects of the development before the zoning is changed. While the Planning Board will still review the design for the Special Permit approval, we are intending to streamline the process with the Development Agreement that will establish an acceptable building envelope and other items, including public benefit.

MCAS Presentation:

Superintendent Gallagher and his leadership team presented their MCAS report to the School Committee one week ago on October 23rd. It was a great presentation where they took a deep dive into the data and various subgroupings. Newburyport saw improvement in many areas and also identified Grade 4 and Grade 8 Math as challenge areas that need to improve. We also recognized about 15 students who recorded perfect scores on the state assessment. I encourage everyone to go to the school district website and check out the MCAS report. The format is very resident friendly.

I also wanted to mention the upcoming budget workshops for the Newburyport Public Schools. This is something we have been talking about on the School Committee for a number of years. We wanted to give residents a chance to chime in at the beginning of the budget process and voice their opinion on what the school district should be investing in. Too often the public only gets to come to a budget hearing and the budget is mostly put together at that point. This gives residents the opportunity to be heard at the start of the budget process.

School-based workshops are scheduled for the following dates:

- Bresnahan School: November 2, 6:00-7:30 PM, Bresnahan Library
- Rupert A. Nock and Edward G. Molin Schools: November 16, 6:00-7:30 PM, Nock Library
- Newburyport High School: November 15, 6:00-7:30 PM, NHS Library

Short Term Rental Units:

Tonight is the night, three years in the making, as you vote on Short Term Rental zoning and licensing ordinances. I want to thank all the residents who have come out to speak on this subject and I want to thank all the councillors who have logged many hours around this issue. I am looking forward to listening to the discussion tonight. I know this is not a perfect solution but it is a good place to start because we feel this issue needs to be enforceable by the city. This will create a Short Term Rental Use in the city and give us a path forward on licensing, which will enable us to enforce rules here in Newburyport. Compromise is how difficult things get done and I am hoping we can have a positive outcome tonight and move forward.

Mayor Sean Reardon