

MAYOR'S UPDATE
April 29, 2024
Mayor Sean R. Reardon

Port Rec at 59 Low Street:

I want to thank the Community Services Committee for a thorough process to evaluate the NRYS Order that is in your packet tonight. The point of this order was to have thoughtful discussion about the project and provide feedback on the design. We are asking you to vote to signal that you support us moving forward with the construction document phase. This will allow us to obtain more definitive numbers for the project. We will submit plans to modify the zoning for this area in the coming weeks, which will allow us to apply for both Site Plan Review with the Planning Board and a Notice of Intent with the Conservation Commission. Both review processes will likely yield more feedback on design, which will inform our final construction documents. While Council approval on this Order isn't required by statute, we feel it would be an important indication to show support for moving on to the next phase. The biggest concern we heard from the Council was about project cost, which is why we would like to finish construction documents in order to obtain final costs. There is also an order in your packet tonight about a debt exclusion. I view this as a proactive measure at this point, which I am sure we will discuss further as plans for the Rec Center are finalized. Thank you to all the residents who have voiced support for this project, we look forward to working together to find the best way to make this project a reality.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds and Community Preservation Act Fund Projects:

Also, in your packet tonight are our recommendations for the City's remaining ARPA funds and the complete list of CPC projects. I appreciate the Council taking the time to evaluate these requests. I want to thank the ARPA Ad Hoc Committee for their work and also the Community Preservation Committee for an exciting list of projects this year. Many of these projects we will be able to start and finish this year, while others move us further along through the process on important community priorities.

Artichoke Spillway Field Trip:

On April 24th, there was a presentation and Q&A at the Senior Community Center that included an overview of the City's water supply and reservoir protection efforts. This meeting was followed with a visit to the Lower Artichoke Dam by around 50 people. DPS staff showed members of the public and the Council the site and described the mitigation work in more detail. In January of this year, we informed you about a minor breach of the Lower Artichoke Dam that occurred during the January 13th flooding. I want to thank Chief of Staff Andrew Levine, DPS Director Wayne Amaral and the Resiliency Committee for setting up the event. A special thank you to DPS Water Superintendent Thomas Cusick and City Engineer Jon-Eric White for a great presentation filled with important information for residents. The takeaway is that the breach showed our current system was able to withstand events of a similar magnitude to January 13th, and we have installed temporary measures that will further strengthen the dam for the short term. We have significant long-term projects that are being planned right now,

and we will bring forward plans for prioritization and funding to the Water and Sewer Commission and City Council in the near future so we can take next steps.

Zoning Advisory Committee:

I want to thank Planning Director Any Port for all the great work that's being done in the Zoning Advisory Committee. There is a memo in your packet tonight with two options to meet the MBTA Communities Zoning requirements. Newburyport is fortunate to be in such a strong position to meet the new state requirements by the end of this year due to the hard work that took place years ago with the forming of the 4OR District. These two options do not include the Storey Ave area which will continue to be looked at for separate zoning updates. As any zoning changes will be ultimately up to the Council, this is an excellent time for the Council to review this information and weigh in on which path forward is preferred.

Streets and Sidewalks Work:

DPS has begun the construction season for the five-year rolling Streets and Sidewalks Improvement Plan. Lime, Middle, Johnson, Eagle, and Willow are a few of the streets currently being worked on. Noble Street is in the final stages of engineering. Street and sidewalk work will continue for the next several months.

Parklets should be all installed by the end of the week and ready for the busy season.

There is a public meeting scheduled for May 22nd at 6pm to look at options for the redesign on the Low/North Atkinson/Colby Farm Lane Intersection for traffic safety improvements.

Universally Accessible Playgrounds:

Our two new playgrounds located at the Bartlet Mall and the Lower Atkinson Common (aka Pioneer Fields) are getting some finishing touches. The playground resurfacing took place last week, with some additional work occurring this week, and we are asking the public to continue to stay off them so the surfacing can cure and final work can be completed. We will continue to update you on when the playgrounds will open.

Clean Sweep:

The Port Parks Alliance (PPA) hosted Clean Sweep this past Saturday. All across the city volunteers came out to lend a hand in our Parks. I want to thank the PPA for pulling it together and for all the volunteers that pitched in. My son Ollie and I were able to help rake close to 30 bags of leaves at Perkins Playground with the help of Newburyport Pickleball.

Mayor Sean Reardon