

Hello everyone and thank you for tuning in for a City update.

Today, I plan on explaining what has been accomplished in the last 10 months and some of what we will continue to diligently work on in the year ahead.

My apologies in advance as this is detailed and LONG. We will have these updates available on our website and social media for those who want to skip around between topics or read even more detail on certain issues.

First, it goes without saying that 2020 has been anything but what we expected.

This is certainly not what I envisioned my first year in office and I am sure not what you envisioned for your 2020.

Yet the challenges we have faced have just reinforced what I already knew: that this community is resilient, dedicated, and strong. Residents and businesses have come together to support one another, worked together to come up with creative solutions to keep Medford safe and healthy, and have made me proud to be Mayor of this amazing community.

My biggest promise to you has been and will always be to listen, to use your feedback and concerns to drive this city forward, and to be transparent every step of the way. So today I want to give you a status update on the plans and projects we have and will continue to work on.

Just one year ago, working with the community through a transition committee leading up to taking office in January, I committed to improving City services, and to create more transparency and accountability. While our response to the pandemic took a lot of our

time and attention, the hard work of building a more responsive and responsible City Hall never stopped.

My approach to governing is to include residents and businesses in our decisions. I believe that the core function of municipal government is to provide efficient, high quality services for our citizens with the well-being and values of the entire community in mind. To do that we also have to be accountable to the residents and businesses we serve. We need to maintain a professional approach to City government by using data to report on how we're doing, why we're doing it, and what steps we may need to take to do even better.

Today, I am proud to report that we've already reached many of our goals, and for others, we have laid the groundwork for many more of the city's longer-term needs.

By the end of this year, we are relaunching SeeClickFix to make sure we can better respond to residents' requests, track issues, and use the data we collect to hold ourselves accountable as we strive to deliver high quality services. We took a step back and reviewed the program with all department heads to capture the community's needs. We also plan to formalize processes for staff to respond to requests as quickly as possible.

Beyond the day-to-day city services, we need to have strategic plans to guide implementation of development and infrastructure projects, and to determine how we prioritize longer-term projects. To do that, we are developing three critical master plans:

- By the end of 2020 we will have a **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)** in place that will lay out a 5-year plan for renovation, addition, or replacement of City infrastructure, including buildings, vehicles, recreation facilities, and emergency response.

- The Engineering Department began work this year on a formalized **Pavement Management Program** that will help us identify and prioritize roadway and sidewalk improvement projects. We hope to announce the details of the program early in 2021.
- And, just a few weeks ago, we officially launched the City's **Comprehensive Master Planning Process**. The Office of Community Development issued a Request For Qualifications to select a consultant to lead an 18-month process which will include significant opportunities for community engagement. In fact, we are requiring that the consultant has proven experience in community engagement because we want to be absolutely certain that our comprehensive plan is based on the true needs and input of *everyone* who lives and works in this city and bring together studies the City has done before. This process will set a vision for Medford for years, but that only happens when everyone is able to share their vision for a better city.

Using each of these plans we will create community-driven solutions for the issues and goals we identify together.

Having strategic plans is a critical first step. Before we take action, we have to be sure we can appropriately budget for these projects, work with residents and businesses to develop specific goals and set us up for long-term success rather than to meet a short-term need.

Through all three strategic plans we will address a number of top concerns I have heard from the community and that I have been a proponent for in my almost 20 years of service in Medford. We will create a path for reviewing and modernizing zoning ordinances, addressing zoning loopholes and creating more opportunities for the kinds of development the City of Medford wants and needs. We need to grow our commercial tax base by supporting our local businesses, by making our city a great place to do business, and by creating new opportunities for residents to find jobs and job training within our city.

To accomplish these goals, we need to have a strong organizational framework within our City Charter to back it up. However, Medford's City Charter has not undergone a substantial review in nearly forty years. We need to undertake a thorough Charter review to be sure we are guided by modern policies that meet the needs of a modern city. (For example, a Charter that does not only refer to the Mayor using he/him pronouns.)

In September, I submitted a formal request to the City Council to send a Home Rule Petition to the state. The Home Rule Petition will allow us to create a Charter Commission to review and make recommendations for potential changes, if necessary, to the City Charter. I want to thank the City Council for their support of our request for a Home Rule Petition. While there are still several steps to take in this process, I am hopeful that we can work together to get this Commission established in the upcoming year.

In the meantime, we have made progress on many short-term goals.

On roadways and transportation projects:

- We re-committed to the City's **Complete Streets Program**, and recently submitted an application for a grant for road safety improvements in Haines Square. We are making sure that our roads accommodate all users by supporting and expanding options for a variety of transportation modes.
- Using existing funding and new grant funding, we are creating safer options for walking to school by slowing down vehicle traffic. At the same time, these new road markings better define travel paths for drivers.

- With the support of FOUR grants from MassDOT's Shared Streets Program, we are adding to the City's bike network with a dedicated bike lane over the Wellington Bridge, and this fall we will add a dedicated bus lane (pilot) along Mystic Ave.

On affordable housing:

- Within the first few months of taking office we worked across departments to quickly and accurately reflect the City's General Land Area Minimum, known as (GLAM). This qualifies Medford for Safe Harbor status and gives the City a voice and a seat at the table with respect to large-scale residential developments, otherwise known as 40Bs.
- Earlier this year we established a Housing Production Plan Committee to look at current housing needs in Medford and brainstorm ideas for creating housing for different income levels. Thanks to the hard work of the Committee members this summer they received almost 900 responses to their community survey. We will continue working to establish a minimum of 10 percent of year-round affordable housing stock in Medford.

On parks and open spaces:

- I am committed to undertaking projects at as many parks and playgrounds as possible. This year, with the Recreation Department and the Parks Department, we applied for Community Preservation Act funding to support 6 parks and recreation renovation projects. With the Office of Community Development, we are exploring additional eligible funding through Community Development Block Grants for an additional 3-5 parks. It is my sincere hope that within the next year we can start to see some

necessary and meaningful improvements at many of our parks and open spaces for residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy.

In our business districts:

- We are also actively working to beautify other City spaces like our business districts, by partnering with the Chamber of Commerce, the Center for Citizenship and Social Responsibility (CCSR), and local artists. The West Medford Square beautification was completed with the guidance of local businesses. We have been working with the other squares to install benches, flower planters, bike racks, and additional trash barrels, adding fresh paint and artwork and planning for wayfinding signage. This summer, with the help of the Medford DPW and volunteers, we completed 8 mini cleanups around Medford.

The bottom line is that we are committed to not only maintaining but improving City services and access to those services for all residents. We need to be more creative in finding solutions, whether that means utilizing existing opportunities like CPA funding for eligible City projects or restructuring City operations to meet the needs of all members of this community.

Every policy, decision, opportunity, program or resource should be available to every resident regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, language spoken, economic situation, or immigration status.

We are taking action to address barriers to health equity, access to affordable housing, stable employment, access to healthy foods and quality education, starting with providing a Social Justice Roadmap which we published in September. We know that for persons of color, these barriers are far greater, and we are committed to addressing that. That's why in June, I declared racism a public health crisis in Medford.

It's also why we published a comprehensive Social Justice Roadmap last month to help guide this work.

The Social Justice Roadmap is available on our website at www.medfordma.org/mayor, and it includes action steps we have taken or that are currently under review to address racism, reports compiled, questions we have received from the community, and more. Over the next year and beyond we will continue to work across departments and with external organizations and agencies to address equity in all areas.

Connecting individuals and families to jobs, healthcare, housing, and other essential services and resources within Medford as well as in surrounding communities is so important for residents' health and well-being, and safe and accessible transportation is just one piece of the puzzle.

In addition to improving service delivery and operations we are also updating internal policies and procedures.

One of the first things I worked with department heads on shortly after taking office was to identify how certain department organization could be more efficient. Over the last 10 months we created several new positions and we restructured other department organization to increase efficiency and transparency:

- One of my first priorities was to create an Office of Human Resources, separating the role of Personnel Director from the role of Chief of Staff. If we want to attract and retain employees from diverse backgrounds and maintain professional standards, we need to have an office dedicated to recruiting, training, and providing resources for a professional workforce. By coordinating these efforts with the expansion of the Office of Diversity, we are also

increasing our focus on recruiting and retaining candidates from diverse backgrounds.

We've also steadily increased training opportunities for staff, like anti-bias training, manager training, and professional development opportunities around addressing systemic racism. I have participated in at least 4 trainings myself so far, and I am looking forward to working with HR to add even more trainings for staff.

Finally, we are instituting a Performance Evaluation process for staff, starting this fall with department managers and expanding to all non-union staff next year.

- We created a new Economic Development Director position, and we plan to have that position filled before the end of this year. A dedicated Economic Development Director will play a large role in the Comprehensive Master Planning process and will create a dedicated staff resource for our business community.
- We added two new positions in the Mayor's Office to expand communications and outreach: a Director of Communications and a Director of Community Affairs. Both roles have been filled since spring 2020 and have expanded our public outreach efforts in more effective ways, like creating a new, more user friendly municipal website, which is already underway and will be implemented in several stages beginning this fall.
- We filled vacancies on existing Boards and Commissions and created six new Commissions to explore important topics like parking policy, fire department facilities, a welcoming committee, school curriculum, and the Tufts University PILOT agreement.

If you are interested in serving on a board or commission, please let us know! We are always interested in hearing from residents looking to be involved, and we are continuing to create new task

forces to address numerous issues. Thank you to all who have volunteered to serve. You are part of why we have accomplished so much.

We have also strategically restructured several other key roles, like combining the Offices of Community Development and Energy and Environment. By doing so we are adding a focus on environmental and energy-efficient policies in all aspects of planning, development, and sustainability.

In addition to staffing updates we are modernizing our permitting and financial systems. We are moving away from paper-based financial management, procurement, and permitting systems to online or electronic processing, focusing valuable staff time and resources and saving taxpayer money.

Within the next 6 months we will complete an audit of our IT and cyber security infrastructure to identify other potentially needed upgrades.

Not only are all of these efficient business practices, but they were major contributing factors in the City's bond rating agency upholding our strong rating of AA+ with a stable outlook in August. Despite challenges and uncertainties presented by the COVID-19 crisis, our rating agency credited the City of Medford for our good financial policies and practices and strong management.

Having a strong bond rating, especially a rating with a stable outlook, demonstrates the strength of a community's financial planning and policies. In general, having a strong bond rating allows us to keep costs down for our taxpayers and keeps our interest rates low when we need to borrow to fund major projects. What makes this rating exceptional is that our strong financial rating was affirmed despite significant challenges during the COVID-19 crisis and overall budget shortfalls. We

were able not only to maintain our strong financial practices, but to deliver for the first time a detailed, goal-oriented, transparent City budget that clarifies our decisions and details our plans for managing through a crisis without relying too heavily on our reserves.

The new and improved budget is available online at www.medfordma.org/mayor.

Thanks to the incredible work by staff across many departments, we have been able to continue to make progress on many of our goals, despite a spending freeze during COVID-19, through grant funding.

Most of this grant funding provides direct support or benefit to our community.

As an example, throughout the COVID-19 health crisis, we received more than \$500,000 in funding from CDBG and the Attorney General's Office. These grants directly supported small businesses and micro enterprises in Medford with reopening this spring.

Additional grants from MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program helped us set up and expedite our new outdoor dining program and provide additional assistance to local businesses as needed.

And, working with the Chamber of Commerce, we also created a COVID-19 Relief Fund which raised more than \$30,000 dollars and continues to be used to support both local restaurants and residents in need.

With these funds we have been able to continue to support members of the Medford community who are among the most vulnerable. Our staff has also worked tirelessly and sometimes literally around the clock to protect the health and well-being of our residents and businesses through a global pandemic.

- We advocated for, secured, and expended hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal funding for COVID-19 response efforts and related equipment.
- With community partner organizations, we hosted food distribution locations for residents of all ages on a near daily basis. Tens of thousands of meals and groceries were supplied to residents in need. We have also installed 9 micro food pantries over the last 9 months, providing free food items for residents in need, and making progress toward our goal of being a Hunger Free community.
- We increased the City's volunteer and Medical Reserve Corps by more than 100, with a strategic call for MRC volunteers to be able to assist for future events and needs.
- Through the "Are You OK?" Program, more than 100 volunteers placed calls to more than 10,000 senior citizens in Medford, making more than 500 individual connections for social services and other supports during the pandemic.
- Purchased and distributed 20,000 non-surgical masks. Some were distributed directly to first responders, seniors, and others in need; more than 5,000 were distributed at a staff- and volunteer-led drive through event.
- We advocated for, secured, and expanded community testing initiatives through partnerships with local healthcare providers. This includes a recent partnership with Tufts University for testing for teachers and community members abutting the campus.

Believe it or not, all of this is a sample of what we have accomplished over these last 10 months. There is so much more to share, and we will continue to share it with you as often as possible, every step of the way. A long-term vision for Medford can't be successful without the investment of the community and the involvement of each one of you. Thousands of residents have become more involved in their government over the past year by serving on boards, sharing their voice at a public forum, or through emails and phone calls.

I want to make sure everyone not only has a seat at the table, but that everyone feels welcome, heard, and is actively involved in decision-making.

Over the last 10 months we have been working hard to increase public outreach and expand the ways we're communicating.

We are providing more frequent updates in a number of places, including on our Facebook pages, on Twitter, and on the City website.

We recently switched to a new Reverse 911 system to contact residents by phone, email, and text message. We are collaborating with the Medford Police Department but also expanding how we communicate with this system. In the process, we saved \$20,000 dollars of taxpayer dollars.

We expanded programming on Medford Community Media, thanks to Patrick Gordon, and are now showing more City meetings than ever before on TV and online.

Over the next several months we will continue to expand public outreach and community engagement even more:

- We are creating a new, more user-friendly website, which will be implemented in several stages beginning this fall. An essential part

of this upgrade will be using information and recommendations of our brand-new Welcoming Committee, an effort that is being led by the Director of Community Affairs working with residents and businesses.

- With the addition of Zoom meetings to our standard City meetings, we have expanded public participation by as much as 300-400% in some cases. I know that Zoom is not the best platform for everyone, but with it as an addition to in person meetings we hope this level of community engagement continues moving forward.
- By the end of the year we will launch a new biweekly electronic City newsletter. This will be an opt-in newsletter, but it will offer specific, ongoing updates about everything we are doing here at City Hall. We will work with Patrick here at Community Media to make this information available on TV, too!
- Finally, we will be adding to our public outreach in other languages. We are working to add a new line item for translation into our budget, which we will be asking the city council to approve.

The list goes on and on, and I could not be prouder of the incredibly hard work that our staff has put in over these last 10 months. Aside from the regular workload, every department has pushed to find new ways to deliver services despite challenging circumstances.

I want to thank the City Council, School Committee and School administration for also working hard for this community. It's a very busy time work wise, but we are getting things done: together.

I want to thank all City staff, and I want to once again thank every member of the Medford community for your support, your resilience,

and for working with me to make our vision for the City of Medford a reality.

Thank you.