



CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Salem City Council & Mayor Strategic Planning Retreat Meeting Minutes

**January 6, 2024, 9:00 am
Salem State University, Viking Hall, Room 123**

Present: Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Councillor-at-Large Kyle Davis, Councillor-at-Large Alice Merkl, Councillor-at-Large Ty Hapworth, Councillor-at-Large Conrad Prosniewski, Ward 1 Councillor Cynthia Jerzylo, Ward 2 Councillor Caroline Watson-Felt, Ward 3 Councillor Patti Morsillo, Ward 4 Councillor John Harvey, Ward 5 Councillor Jeff Cohen, Ward 6 Councillor Meg Riccardi, Ward 7 Councillor Andy Varela, Chief of Staff Lisa Peterson

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Council President Hapworth called the retreat to order at 9:05am.

Mayor Pangallo welcomed the new councillors and laid out his hopes for the day, including identifying common goals and priorities for 2024, and strategizing how to make City government work better for the City Councillors, the City, and the residents. The “strategic plan pillars” for 2024 are livability, improving services, and transparency. The “strategic plan core values” for 2024 are affordability, equity, safety, sustainability/resilience, and vibrancy.

2. Discussion of 2024 Priorities

The City Council and Mayor discussed shared goals and areas of focus, such as housing and homelessness, the FY2025 budget, infrastructure, and schools, and how to work together toward them. The following sample list of upcoming projects and policy work was discussed (and it was emphasized that this is not a complete list and is in no specific order). It included Housing and Economic Activity such as housing policies, October operations, and the Salem Wind Terminal project, as well as Transportation areas such as corridor projects, the South Salem MBTA station, and the Safe Streets for All study and critical safety projects. It also included Infrastructure priorities such as parks and open space projects, facilities projects and sustainability projects.

The Mayor provided the Council with a FY2025 budget preview that covered rising cost centers (such as CBAs, utility costs, capital needs, interest rates, and other fixed costs, including

employee benefits, insurance, etc.), as well as diminishing revenue opportunities due to limited state aid, elimination of some cannabis revenues, and meals/room excise being at maximum. The city anticipates a challenging fiscal environment for the near future. There are opportunities for growth, grants and good practices, including conducting comprehensive fee analysis, and identifying cost off-sets and non-tax revenue opportunities. The Council should anticipate some changes to the budget document format, reflecting feedback from GFOA about making it more transparent and reader-friendly.

Goals for the FY2025 budget calendar timeline are:

- Late April/early May: Budget retreat.
- May 9th: Budget filed.
- May 13th – June 13th: A&F Committee budget hearings.
- June 13th: Budget voted by Council, first passage of rate ordinances and bond orders.
- June 27th: Second passage of rate ordinances and bond orders.

3. Improving Workflow & Communications

The Mayor explained the ways that residents interact with the city, and how the City Council is a part of that process. The Mayor's Office and the city are working to improve outreach and accessibility of services, with initiatives such as the Mobile Mayor's Office, City Hall to Go, Wednesday Walks, Housing Stability Service and Departmental translations and interpretations. He reviewed SeeClickFix and digital work orders, as well as calls to Salem 311 and the website chatbot. The group reviewed that there are 19 regular City Council meetings per calendar year, and how to make the most of them, and finally how to work collaboratively as a team.

4. Adjourn

The retreat adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

Minutes prepared and respectfully submitted by:

Lisa Peterson, Chief of Staff, Office of Mayor Dominick Pangallo