



FYI SALEM

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From the Mayor's Desk



Dear Salem resident,

Thank you reading the latest issue of the FYI Salem newsletter!

We're halfway through October, our busiest time of year for welcoming visitors to Salem and this year we've certainly see a lot of interest in our community! Be sure you're aware of planned road closures and other impacts. You can stay informed by doing these three things:

1. Download the My Salem MA app and make sure notifications are on.
2. Follow @CityofSalemMA on Twitter.
3. Subscribe to CodeRED, City News & Announcements, and Urgent Alerts at www.salemma.gov/ subscribe.

October brings with it lots of people and all of the challenges that entails. But it also is a major source of support for the local businesses that we, as residents, all know and enjoy year-round.

Thanks for your patience and I hope you also get to come out to Haunted Happenings to enjoy the festivities in your own town!

On another topic entirely, we've been hearing a lot of concern about increases expected to electricity and heating bills due to cost increases being planned by utility companies.

If you're not enrolled in Salem PowerChoice, our City electricity supply program, consider doing so now at www.salemma.gov/powerchoice. Electricity customers currently enrolled will see no increase in their electricity supply price.

The PowerChoice Standard price will remain at 11.317¢/kWh while National Grid's will be increasing soon to 33.891¢/kWh, which means a savings of \$108 per month compared with National Grid's price for an average Salem household. PowerChoice prices are fixed until December 2024.

We're working with NSCAP, a local agency that provides heating assistance to Salem residents to try to broaden those supports, as well. For now, you can contact NSCAP to find out if you qualify for home heating assistance on those bills by calling (978) 531-0767 extension 136.

Lastly, the November 8th state election is quickly approaching. The deadline to register to vote in the election is October 29th by 5pm. If you wish to vote by mail, you must apply for your ballot before November 1st. Early in-person voting will be held from October 22nd through November 4th at City Hall Annex and at Salem High School.

On November 8th polling places around Salem will be open from 7AM to 8PM. You can find more details about voting in Salem at <https://www.salemma.gov/city-clerk-elections> or by calling the City Clerk's office at (978) 619-5611.

Thanks again for reading the FYI Salem newsletter and have a Happy Halloween!

Kim Driscoll
Mayor
City of Salem

Free Bluebikes in October



Salem residents may claim a free one-month Bluebikes membership including unlimited 45-minute rides for 30 days. Riders will be charged \$2.50 per additional 30 minutes. Passes are limited and will be provided on a first come, first served basis while supplies last.

“Bluebikes gives Salem residents another way to get around our community and is an especially important service during October, traffic is heaviest and parking demand is at its highest,” said Mayor Kim Driscoll. “To help lessen the impact of October traffic on your commute around Salem, I encourage residents to take advantage of this free month of Bluebikes membership.”

Bluebikes came to Salem in 2021 with funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Salem State University, and the MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces program. The City grew the system this fall to 98 bikes at 15 stations located throughout the community. As a convenient and affordable transportation option for residents, workers, students, and visitors, ridership has expanded substantially since the program’s launch.

To claim a free 30-day pass, Salem residents should email Transportation Planner Brendan Linard at blinard@salem.com with your name and address for verification. Please allow up to 24 hours during regular business hours for a response. Residents will receive a code to claim the offer when signing up on bluebikes.com or the Bluebikes mobile app. A valid credit or debit card is required and the program is limited to riders age 16 and up. The pass is effective for 30 days from the time of activation. A limited number of passes are available.

Finance Award

The City of Salem has once again been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for the City’s annual comprehensive financial report. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of government accounting and financial reporting. Its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. This is the 17th year in a row that the City of Salem has earned this Certificate of Achievement.



“This award is a reflection of the value we have placed on transparency, professionalism, and financial responsibility in government operations,” said Mayor Kim Driscoll. “It is also a credit to the hard work of our Finance Department, led by Finance Director Anna Freedman.”

In awarding this recognition, GFOA stated that Salem’s annual financial report “has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive ‘spirit of full disclosure’ to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report.”

Reporting Parking Violations

As traffic volume increases in October in remember that to report an illegally parked vehicle call the Salem Police at 978-744-1212 at the time it is taking place. Do not use SeeClickFix to report an illegally parked vehicle.

New Property Tax Exemption

A new law grants homeowners in Salem the option of exempting the value of an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on their property from their property taxes, so long as they are renting the ADU, including utilities, for a monthly amount that does not exceed 70% of the fair market rent. Salem homeowners who may be eligible for this property tax exemption should contact the Assessor's Office at (978) 619-5608. Applications for the exemption must be submitted annually.



“This landmark law will further incentivize the creation of affordable housing units by enabling homeowners to benefit doubly from creating an accessory unit at their property,” said Mayor Kim Driscoll. Not only will they generate a second stream of revenue from rent, but now they can capture further savings on their property taxes by doing so. For our renters, this measure will help stimulate the creation of more affordable units, helping in our on-going work to right-size our local housing supply.”

Final approval of the law comes just weeks after the City of Salem also announced a grant program to help homeowners interested in creating an ADU at their property. Grants of up to \$47,500 are available to homeowners to assist with the design and construction of permitted ADUs on the condition that the new unit is rented at 50% of fair market rent. The grant program is intended to help homeowners invest in the creation of deeply affordable ADU rental units by covering a portion of the costs associated with the unit's creation. This allows homeowners to capture the benefits of the ADU – additional income from rent – and keep the rent substantially affordable at the same time. To review program guidelines and requirements and to apply, visit www.salemma.gov/adu.

“ADUs are an essential part of our age-friendly efforts,” said Dominick Pangallo, co-chair of [Salem for All Ages](#). “They provide older homeowners with a greater ability to age in place and to generate additional income, which can be especially helpful if they're living on a fixed income. Because of this, ADUs can help maintain neighborhood stability, enabling older residents to continue to be part of the city where they've lived and raised their families. As an added benefit, by requiring low rents for grant-funded ADUs and incentivizing them through the tax break announced today, we can help to create even more deeply affordable rental units for everyone.”

School Solar Projects



At a ceremony at the Collins Middle School on October 11, Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll, Superintendent of Salem Schools Dr. Stephen Zrike, and representatives from Solect Energy and PowerOptions gathered with members of the school community and others to celebrate the upcoming rooftop solar installations at two Salem schools - Saltonstall K-8 School and the Collins Middle School.

Salem expects to save about \$673,000 and avoid more than 5,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions with these two projects, while demonstrating the City's fiscal responsibility and commitment to sustainability. The combined size of the systems is 463.6 kilowatts with a projected first year annual production of 551,662 kilowatt hours. The systems will be developed and installed by Solect Energy through PowerOptions Solar & Storage Program. The pre-negotiated PPA allows the solar to be installed at the schools at no cost to the City of Salem, and also includes monitoring and maintenance throughout the 20-year term. The electricity generated by the arrays will be purchased and consumed by the schools at a significantly discounted price versus electricity delivered through the grid.

Salem City Academy



Earlier this fall Mayor Kim Driscoll's office launched a new program called *Salem City Academy (SCA)*. SCA, being run in partnership with the House of the Seven Gables, provides an educational opportunity for Salem residents to visit municipal offices and learn how local government works. Program participants get the opportunity to see municipal government at work up close and meet one-on-one with department heads and other City staff. Salem City Academy is intended to increase civic participation and engagement among residents who may not normally access local government or who wish to better understand how City Hall functions.

To that end, the first SCA class is intentionally providing an opportunity for students of a local ESL (English as a second language) class from the House of the Seven Gables to connect with and learn about City departments. The first three Salem City Academy participants – Juana Canela, Keysi De los Santos, and Martha Caro - recently met with Mayor Driscoll and City Council President Patti Morsillo on their first night of the program.

“The City has long made efforts to include our community’s Spanish speakers and immigrants,” said Constituent Services Director Julio Mota, who oversees the SCA. “This program adds to that work by being deliberate about bringing more people from those communities into the fold. This first session has been fantastic. Our participants have been so enthusiastic and are eager to learn more.”

“This was a magnificent idea, getting to be so close to the city and mayor's office,” said Juana Canela, one of the first session participants and a Salem resident and longtime employee of the Dominican Republic. “More so for us who are arriving here from all over the world. Here is where we're building our lives, working, getting into local culture. They've offered their services, which we deserve to know about and are very, very grateful.”



“Salem City Academy is designed to help residents, especially new residents and those who come from historically underserved communities, connect to and understand their local government,” added Dominick Pangallo, Chief of Staff in the Mayor’s Office. “Working with the House of the Seven Gables and with City departments, we’re striving to better connect these residents with their municipal government, so they’re able to access all of the services, programs, and information that we provide.”

“We work hard and intentionally to open doors to City Hall for everyone in our community,” said Mayor Driscoll. “Salem City Academy is another measure in that ongoing effort to improve transparency, accessibility, and equity in the delivery of City services and the operation of Salem’s local government. I’m grateful to Julio Mota for his leadership in getting this new program underway and to our partners at the House of the Seven Gables for their collaboration in making this possible.”



Through October, SCA participants will meet with several City departments, including visits to the Department of Public Services, Park & Recreation, Planning Department, Building Inspectors, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Engineering, Traffic and Parking, and more. If you are interested in applying for a future session of SCA, please reach out to the Mayor’s Office at (978) 619-5601 or jmota@salem.com. Applications for future sessions will be available at www.salemma.gov/mayor as they are scheduled.