

2017 State of the City Address :: City of Revere

Good evening everyone. Let me just start by saying that while we may not always agree on everything, I am confident that we can all come together on this: Tom Brady is the greatest of all time.

Council President Haas, Council Vice President Keefe, Speaker DeLeo, Senator Boncore, members of the city council and school committee, and fellow Revere Residents:

Revere is a city built on pride.

Pride in hard work. Pride in family. Pride in home.

Our city is at its best when we lift one another up. We see it in our neighborhoods when families support one another. We see it in our outstanding public schools. We see it in our houses of worship.

I ran for mayor because Revere deserves a government that works as hard as its people. You deserve a government that is professional and productive. Our employees are evaluated not by the bumper sticker on their car, but on their performance. Setting high standards will help us retain our best while attracting the brightest.

We should have a government that encourages the kind of development and job growth we need, and creates the amenities that we rely on — for all income levels. That means smart planning that utilizes our unique assets. We will not settle for anything less than the highest and best use of properties in our city. And we will ensure that as Revere grows, we will preserve the character of our city and our neighborhoods.

We should have a government that strengthens our neighborhoods and serves our people. That includes everything from properly maintained streets and sidewalks, to fighting the opioid epidemic.

We've already made substantial progress in the last year, on all of these fronts. We have more planned for 2017. But my message to you tonight, to all of you, is that I cannot do it alone.

And today, as your mayor, I ask for your help.

I need you to hold us accountable. A high standard of professionalism at City Hall requires public involvement. Smart planning of our city's future development requires an engaged public. And protecting our neighborhoods and our people needs your vigilance and guidance.

This requires opening previously closed doors. We can't otherwise ask you to hold us accountable, to engage and guide our city. I am opening these doors.

Construction of the new 311 constituent call center is underway, so that you can call, text, tweet, email or Facebook City staff to resolve issues spotted in our community. This will not only open up new avenues of engagement between residents and the city, but will allow us to collect and analyze data to guide best management practices. We are adopting the 21st century tools needed for the city to be more responsive when you report a pothole or a missed trash pickup.

We have built an online database that tracks all Inspectional Service reports. This has reduced response times to resident complaints to less than two business days. Last year 21 blighted and noncompliant properties were brought into full compliance, with 32 additional properties in the process of joining them. We are also actively monitoring the code compliance of nearly 800 properties, having already completed nearly 5,000 scheduled inspections since July.

I am committed to a government that utilizes every tool and technology at our disposal to make it easier for you to interact with us. That means listening to you, and it means improving your customer experience.

After years of delays, my administration got online bill payment up and running within 6 months. You can now go online to pay your property taxes, excise taxes, and water bills. You can also now apply for parking permits online. You no longer have to wait in long lines at City Hall.

In the next few months, our electronic permitting system will be up and running, providing even more online services. From the comfort of your couch or your office, you will be able to request a building inspection, a permit, or a bulk item trash pickup. This software will make life easier for residents and small businesses alike.

We've made it easier to engage with City Hall, and we're establishing professional standards so that every interaction with the City receives a professional response

and result.

When I took office, Revere was the largest community in the Commonwealth without a human resources department. Soon, that will be no more thanks to the support of the City Council. This month, I will be presenting an HR Report completed by UMass Boston that outlines our HR deficiencies, and provides guidance for the future. An interim HR consultant is now in place to begin implementing those recommendations, and a permanent HR director will be hired this year.

I interact with Revere residents every day. And time and time again people question the ethics and the conflicts of interest within city hall. I know that the vast majority of city employees are ethical and hard-working. We must now work together to end any misperceptions. Search the Revere ordinances - you won't find the word Ethics. Not even once. That changes now. I will be proposing a new ordinance to bring the City of Revere into full compliance with state ethics and conflict of interest laws. We are working with the State Ethics Commission, and our first training will take place in March.

Beyond HR and Ethics, we are taking steps to make City Hall more efficient.

We got the city budget under control. We cut unnecessary overtime, unwarranted raises, and unchecked spending increases. These systemic problems are being resolved. We have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in waste by eliminating data lines and software packages that went unused for years.

In the fiscal 2018 budget I am again asking department heads to hold the line on costs, while investing in the infrastructure our residents and businesses rely on.

And rest assured: I am still actively exploring options to provide tax relief to homeowners in Revere.

We're setting high standards for our employees, so that they can take pride in their work, and residents will know their tax dollars are being well-spent. You deserve nothing less.

You also deserve the highest standards for the future development of our community.

Revere sits minutes from the epicenter of one of the most economically important metro regions in the world — one of ten “Alpha Cities” in the U.S. that link major economic regions into the world economy. People and businesses want to invest in Revere, because of our easy access to that economic center. They want to buy homes, open offices, and enjoy the amenities Revere has to offer. That, in turn, generates significant tax revenue, creates jobs, and makes our community an even more vibrant place to live and work. We have tremendous opportunities because of our location, and because of our assets.

One of those assets is the Blue Line. Other cities and towns are offering to borrow tens of millions of dollars to expand T access into their communities. Access to rapid transit is critical to unlocking their economic potential.

We already have it!

And yet, this past year a so-called world class developer, thought that the best way forward for this great city was a slot parlor.

Thankfully, Revere voters proved that we are worth more than that. We have more pride than that. We are done chasing a short-sighted quick fix when we have a sustainable vision for our community's future.

We are well on our way to making that sustainable vision a reality.

This past year I attended ribbon cuttings and grand openings for small businesses all across the city. Coffee shops, cafes, bakeries, restaurants — these are the anchors of a neighborhood. It is the small business that makes a neighborhood unique, offers the amenities people seek, and the personalized touch that becomes part of the rich fabric of our community.

This year, the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center is moving its all-inclusive elderly care program to the city, bringing quality medical jobs along with top-notch services for our seniors.

The mixed-use project on Revere Beach Parkway breaks ground this year, creating the first new hotel in Revere in nearly 20 years, along with hundreds of good paying jobs. We leveraged this important economic development into a \$3.6 million grant that will allow us to improve water delivery, sidewalks and pedestrian access for the Beachmont neighborhood. To the Speaker, the legislative delegation, and the city council who helped make this a reality: Thank You.

That is the kind of mixed use approach that we see for the future of Wonderland, which presents an unparalleled opportunity in the Commonwealth — a 34-acre site, 15-minutes from the Financial District and 5 minutes from the airport.

We've seen other communities build entire new and vibrant neighborhoods from

scratch, filled with shops, restaurants, entertainment, homes and corporate anchors.

We have all the ingredients to make that happen here.

And indeed it is happening. The city has waited 7 long years to learn about the future of Wonderland. The work we have done over the last year has led to two exciting announcements about the site. First, the owners have signed an agreement that within 3 months they will either sell the land, get a shovel in the ground to demolish the property, or pay the city \$100,000 in back fines. The more important announcement and the bigger victory for the City, is that a sale is imminent. Once the sale is finalized, the land will be cleaned up as we start working on a master plan for the redevelopment of this landmark property.

But we can't do that alone. We need your engagement and your involvement, to guide the transformation of Wonderland from a decaying relic of a bygone era into a sustainable 21st century economic engine for our community.

We are going to take that same transparent, inclusive approach to the whole city. When it comes to building a future we can be proud of, it cannot only be the loudest voices, or the voices closest to City Hall, that guide us for the decades to come. We must hear everyone's voice.

A comprehensive, community-based visioning process will gather input from the whole community on critical subjects such as open space; transportation; economic development; zoning; and housing. Through your engagement, critique and feedback, we will develop a shared vision for our community. And you will help us realize that vision.

Just as we reject the business-as-usual practices of the past in place of equally applied high-standards, we reject the injection of politics into the delivery of basic city services.

Street and sidewalk repairs should be dictated by need, prioritized by the seriousness and importance of the issue, while respecting your tax dollars. So last year we launched a webpage that shows a transparent, accountable explanation of the streets targeted for reconstruction. This year, we will utilize cutting edge technology to create an interactive map of the wear and tear on all our streets, and will create a fair, transparent and comprehensive plan for street repair.

This year we will cut through the three year backlog of sidewalk repair requests. Potholes will be fixed in a matter of days, not weeks or months. We're already seeing good progress.

While we fix our streets and sidewalks, we're also tackling our parking issues. We have begun to crack down on illegal parking of commercial vehicles in residential neighborhoods. We will end the abuse of the visitor parking permit program.

A full-time parking clerk will be hired later this year to lead these efforts, and I will soon announce the formation of a Parking Committee that will guide a major overhaul of residential parking. If you want parking rule changes on your street, this will be your resource.

Meanwhile, beneath our streets lies perhaps our most pressing financial issue. You've been hit with shocking water and sewer bills because decade after decade, our city failed to repair our water and sewer infrastructure. We are now saddled with a multi-million dollar EPA consent decree for violations of the Clean Water Act.

My administration is seeking to extend the consent decree term to alleviate future rate shocks. We can never afford to fall behind on this critical work again.

City government must go beyond basic services like these, as important as they are. Building a community isn't only buildings, pipes, sidewalks and streets. Building community is about lifting people up. You make our community.

It is important that all residents feel welcome and well-served in our community.

The long-dormant Commission on Disabilities has relaunched. My office partnered with dedicated local residents to bring more services to children with disabilities. That includes a successful partnership with Revere Public Schools and the Revere Police Department to bring the Special Olympics back to Revere.

And last year I launched a new Substance Use Disorder Initiatives office to reduce the impact of opioid addiction on Revere families. Initial reports show that overdose calls went down 24% in 2016. That's a good start, but not good enough. The SUD office takes a data-driven approach and works with our police and fire departments, city staff and medical professionals, knocking on the doors of each and every person we can identify that may need help battling addiction.

To be even more effective in our battle against addiction we must start in our schools. This year, we will secure funding to pilot a school-based strategy that will educate our middle schoolers about the dangers of prescription drug abuse.

With so much promise in Revere's future, we cannot allow the opioid crisis to fall

off our radar. It will remain a top priority for me and my administration. I am committed to these data-driven approaches to improving the lives of all Revere residents.

2016 was a year of great progress for Revere. A solid foundation has been laid for the city's future success.

It is upon this foundation that we continue to build for 2017 to make this city even stronger.

We will increase and improve online services and open a new 311 call center.

We will implement the recommendations of the HR report, continuing to set high expectations for city employees, and ensuring compliance with state ethics laws.

We will tackle our backlog of needed sidewalk repairs and lay out a transparent, data-driven plan for street repair.

We will overhaul resident parking and crack down on violations.

And we will continue to build a thriving, sustainable local economy, creating jobs and amenities where residents and visitors alike can make money and spend money.

Revere's public schools will continue to be a shining example of what a great public school district can be: inclusive, innovative, and award-winning. We can all be proud of our students' continued success.

In 2017, we will make sure the rest of the city lives up to the high standards set by our teachers, students, and parents -- especially how our schools welcome everybody.

Two centuries ago, waves of Irish, Canadian and German families came to Revere. Then Italian families came. And Dominican families, Vietnamese and Cambodians. Families from Brazil, El Salvador, Colombia and Morocco.

This is a city that has always thrived on immigrants. For new immigrants to Revere and to your families, my message to you is this: We are richer for your presence. We are proud that you have sought to make a better life for yourselves in our community. You should remain proud of your heritage, and also be proud of your new home here. We are a resource for you to grow and thrive in our community. Do not let anyone -- and I mean anyone -- lead you to believe otherwise.

My message to all Revere residents is this: I'm not interested in getting in the middle of a national political debate that pins neighbors against one another. What I am interested in is making sure that each and every one of you, whether here by birth or by choice, is treated with dignity and respect.

I am proud to be the Mayor of this diverse, vibrant community.

My goal is to make you proud to call this city your home.

Together, we will make it happen.

Thank you.