



## 2017 State of the City Address

*As Delivered By Her Honor, Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken*

---

Dear Citizens of Gloucester,

In January of 2015, I took the oath of office to be Gloucester's Mayor and I promised to represent all of our citizens and to work with you to keep our city moving forward, together. Over the past two years, we have strengthened our city government through honest and transparent policies, meetings and forums. We have also worked with our state and federal delegations to ensure relief money is received and high value grants are awarded. While we have new businesses helping expand our seasonal tourism, we have also embraced new initiatives designed to benefit our workforce. As we reflect on the efforts this administration has made, I want to assure all of you that the **state of our city is strong and our future is brighter now more than ever.**

Much progress has been made in the short time that we have been in office. We work as a team and we are committed to operating within a balanced budget while limiting the use of one-time revenue for salary increases and unsustainable budget policies – **for the first time in a decade.** Financial stability is the foundation in which a city can grow and under the leadership of Chief Financial Officer John Dunn and returning Chief Administrative Officer Jim Destino our fiscal policy is one that guarantees that we live responsibly today, maintain our existing assets, and save for the needs of tomorrow. Our approach has been praised by Standard & Poor's Rating Group, with Gloucester receiving another 'Double A' bond rating for the third straight year, and by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, for providing a solid path for future projects and investment in our community.

Our planning efforts are led by a talented Community Development team. They are innovative, forward-thinking and action oriented. They have energized strategic planning so that we can capitalize on new ideas being generated across the city. From the Fuller School site, which will bring in new tax revenue, additional housing and a state of the art YMCA facility; to a renewed Maplewood School project and a Housing Production Plan which will help us with our housing needs; to significant financial assistance for future schools through the Massachusetts School Building Authority, helping to ensure that another landmark school like the West Parish School may be built in our community in the near future – we are moving Gloucester forward.

Our waterfront is one of our most important assets. In order to take care of it, we have hired a new Harbormaster and Assistant Harbormaster who continue to excel in their roles. Whether it was dealing with unexpected vessels washing ashore, finding new revenue for moorings, working with our Waterways Board to establish best protocols and seasonal boating pricing, or finding partnership opportunities within the Coast Guard, our Harbormaster's Office continues to help our citizens navigate our waters in the most professional manner while providing a consistent benefit to boaters and citizens alike.

Our Human Resources Department has successfully completed negotiations with multiple unions that have resulted in the signing of fiscally responsible contracts. We have completed agreements with AFSCME A, AFSCME B and GMAA and we are in varying stages of negotiating contracts with our police and fire unions. The HR team has rolled out "Workplace Safety" initiatives using employee input to create policies that will benefit our employees' overall well-being and attract new job candidates to our city. Performance standards and management training are being introduced across the city to ensure we have the highest standards and that they are always being met.

In our Inspectional Services department, we continue to expand our services in order to keep up with the demands of our citizens. We unveiled a brand-new online permitting system so that our process is easier to understand and we can respond more quickly and easily. We also launched a new public records system to continue to realize our goal of transparency across all functions of city government. These online systems join our popular reporting site and app “SeeClickFix” which continues to help citizens report potholes, power outages and other related matters right from their smartphones.

Our Department of Public Works team continues to provide superior results while maintaining an aging city infrastructure. Their hard work is felt across the whole community, from beach parking, to snow plowing, to custodial services, to coastal repairs, the team operates at the highest levels despite a limited budget and an ever-expanding scope of work. They continue to find innovative ways to deliver services to our residents through regional partnerships and shared services that will benefit Gloucester. We are also working with dedicated volunteers within our city boards and commissions to improve open space areas, ensuring that we have extra funding dedicated to enhance Lucy Davis Walkway, Stacey Boulevard, and the Legion Hall. Additionally, efforts to improve the bandstand at Stage Fort Park will continue, while FEMA and MEMA funds will contribute to the repairs at Lane’s Cove Seawall, proving that our beautiful beaches and historic parks are in great hands.

Our Veteran’s Services office has been a strong leader for veterans advocacy. We have expanded partnerships across the Cape Ann region, all sharing the same goal: to provide the best services for our heroes. They have launched a regional clinic on Main Street that will help support the roughly 4,000 U.S. veterans living in Gloucester as well as another nearly 200 from our community serving on active duty around the world. **Offering resources and affordable housing to our**

**veterans and active-duty military will remain a top priority of this administration.** We continue to receive generous private donations and support from non-profit groups who have stepped up to ensure our city can meet these demands and provide the necessary resources and housing to all those in Gloucester residents in the armed services community.

In our Health Department, our new director has met and exceeded expectations. From the recent undertaking of educating, monitoring, improving and removing lead traces within the city's drinking water, to an A+ perfect rating on our tobacco compliance checks, to the installation of new sharps container boxes throughout the city, the public health team has provided positive results to our community. By researching and discussing all aspects related to recreational marijuana, Gloucester is clearly ahead of the curve in presenting accountable solutions within this rapidly changing industry. Their educationally based outreach has provided support for addiction and recovery efforts, our first ever "Vote and Vax" campaign to help fend off the flu, and deeper coordination between emergency teams, local non-profits groups and - for the first time ever - the National Medical Reserve Corps to ensure that our seniors, homeless and our most vulnerable get the support and care when they need it, especially during emergencies. The department has even improved dental and medical service access for our children, demonstrating that our administration cares about the well-being of all of our citizens.

Our Fire and Police Departments consist of dedicated professionals who serve our city diligently. Both departments are always there for us and we depend on their life-saving services, but they do more than what you see. They volunteer, they get involved in our community and they help all of Gloucester - across ALL of our people - in our time of need. This past October, City Hall brought back the annual Halloween event and both fire and police volunteered their time to help, showcasing a true community spirit. Additionally, our Gloucester Night Out

program was expanded and included events that promoted our stand against homophobia, against domestic violence and to help end the plague of addiction. The City's ANGEL program initiative remains strong and actively helps those who need it the most. Our public safety departments serve and protect all of our citizens no matter who they are or how they arrive here, and for that, we salute our professionals.

This administration believes that we must not just look internally, but externally to continue to succeed. We have engaged in discussions across the region and the state in order to explore innovative ways to remain competitive. Both Discover Gloucester and the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce saw new leaders joining their ranks. We have returned to the New England Food Show, North of Boston Travel Expo, as well as the National Seafood Expo. We have created new concierge workshops conducted by locals to help create meaningful connections across the service industry. The newly launched state license plates are helping to return money back to the Cape Ann community, which is especially important as we continue the Gloucester 400th anniversary planning, expanding our art colony programs with assistance from the Mass Cultural Council, and growing the young, yet passionate Tourism Commission Board which is helping manage our busy event calendars, providing cruise ship itineraries and a deeper promotion of seasonal events. Tourism continues to blossom thanks to the hard-work from so many people.

Our offices always remain open and accessible to all and we proudly work with our colleagues on the School Committee and the City Council – thank you, everybody for all that you do. From our board and commission members, to our volunteers, to the local non-profit groups, we are all working to move Gloucester forward.

We are extremely grateful for the continued guidance from our new City Clerk who has taken extra time to provide assistance to the administration, the City Council and the

public at large. The clerk's office is crucial to all of the hard work happening across the city and we extend our gratitude again to their department.

I am committed to an open city with open communications, so I want to hear your thoughts – not just online or over the phone but in person as well. Our recently created constituent services director position has proved to be invaluable in helping me get answers to your questions and provide direction when needed. I am always available – I am YOUR Mayor – and I look forward to working WITH you to strengthen our beautiful city.

My administration is a team; we work for you. But I believe that we are much more than that - we are a family, a Gloucester family. I am humbled to serve as your mayor and I am confident now - more than ever - that Gloucester's best days are ahead of us. Why? Because I see all of us, from every Ward and every neighborhood coming together and solving problems. In a world that feels divided at times, our community pride sends a strong message to all that we will stand together and help everyone enjoy the best that life has to offer.

I am honored to continue my leadership as your Mayor, but this journey isn't about me. This is about **all of us** - achieving so much over the past year. We did this by working together as a team; by working as that Gloucester family. That's who we are here and that's why I will always love Gloucester. I know our city will shine even brighter in the months and years ahead with this love, dedication, passion and perseverance.

As I end the 2017 State of the City address, I want to thank you all for making me a very proud Mayor and to truly thank you for all the good that we share, together.