

The Honorable Mayor Scott Galvin
State of the City Address
City Council Chambers, Woburn City Hall
January 19, 2021

Good evening honorable members of the Woburn City Council, State Representative Rich Haggerty and Members of our State Delegation, School Committee, City Board Members, Department Heads, Staff, Guests and residents at home.

I am grateful and honored for the opportunity to present this year's State of the City address to the good citizens of our great City. Thank you to my wife, Eileen and our children for your love and support over the past year.

The past year has been a year like no other. I think back to last January's Inaugural Ceremony, which seems like light years ago, and the stark contrast to this year's State of the City Address. Last year we had a full house with family, residents, friends and City worker's sitting and standing shoulder to shoulder for the Inauguration of our City's newly elected officials.

Little did we know at the time how drastically our lives would change. A new reality that none of us could have imagined or anticipated. Tragically, the corona virus was growing and spreading in China as we celebrated the City's Inaugural exercise last January—soon to become a worldwide pandemic.

We have lived through some hard times in the past, but this virus has inflicted an unprecedented crisis on all of us. It has claimed the lives of too many of our dearest citizens and has touched every one of us and every aspect of our lives.

Local business owners have suffered devastating financial losses, their operations severely curtailed or forced to close due to State restrictions to protect the health of our residents. Despite Federal, State and local aide, many business owners will never recover.

It has been said that a crisis builds character, but it also reveals character. As I stand in front of you tonight, I have never been prouder of our City, nor have I ever been prouder to be your Mayor. We are a great City because we are made up of incredibly strong willed and caring people.

I have seen neighbors looking after their elderly neighbors; I have seen resident groups forming on social media to support one another and charitable causes for those in need; I have seen residents supporting local businesses and restaurants in an effort to support them in gratitude for their unwavering support of our community's cherished local traditions and charitable organizations; I have seen people painfully staying away from loved ones during the Holiday season in order to keep them safe and healthy.

Across this City, I have seen so many sacrifices being made for the benefit of others in big and small ways, and it moves me as I'm sure it moves all of you.

Our City also remains strong because of our dedicated work force. Our first responders, health care professionals, and City employees have reported to work continuously each day in service of our community—right from the onset of the pandemic and in spite of the personal risk to themselves and their families.

Our Police Department have done an outstanding job keeping our residents and City safe and always with bravery, compassion and professionalism.

The Woburn Fire Department has worked tirelessly and courageously on the front lines, providing leadership in the faithful delivery of EMS and fire safety services to our residents and businesses as the corona virus spread in our households and the community they serve and protect.

Our DPW has also continued to go above and beyond. In addition to paving our streets, repairing and replacing water mains and managing numerous public works and building projects—they serve as vital support to the public safety efforts of our first responders.

City Hall Department Heads and employees have provided uninterrupted service to our residents since the pandemic began. They are dedicated professionals and staff who have been instrumental in implementing innovative best practices that continue to benefit residents and save taxpayer dollars.

The Board of Health staff has worked tirelessly to track Covid cases, follow up with contact tracing, update residents and employees on new CDC guidance, provide support and logistics for free Covid testing and clinics for the administration of vaccines.

Our teachers, administrators, and custodians have met and excelled in the difficult challenge of simultaneously educating our students both virtually and in person. They all deserve a big shout out for their collective commitment to safely and compassionately provide our children with education in the classroom.

With the strong support and approval of the City Council, we have used CARES Act funds to support struggling families and businesses during the corona virus pandemic, including:

- Funding to ensure all students were provided lap top computers to assist with virtual learning; and
- Funding to provide daily free breakfast and lunch for Senior Citizens in need; and
- Funding for assisted learning centers at the Woburn Boys & Girls Club and the YMCA to allow students in hybrid model to receive additional in person learning and help parents continue working; and
- Funding to provide free weekly Covid testing for all residents and City employees; and
- Funding for administrative costs to run free vaccine clinic.

Working together, we were also able to use \$3.5 million of our reserves strategically to lower the tax bill for Woburn residents and businesses providing much needed financial.

Although we are experiencing a surge in new corona virus cases, there is reason to be optimistic and hopeful for better days to come. The approval and rollout of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines will stop the spread of the virus and help us return to our normal way of life. Governor Charlie Baker and the Mass Department of Public Health are building out infrastructure across the Commonwealth to ensure the vaccine is available to everyone in a planned, phased approach.

The City of Woburn was approved to administer the vaccine to our First Responders, which we started successfully last week. In addition, we advised Mass DPH that we will continue administering the vaccine to all Woburn residents and employees, in accordance with the Commonwealths prioritized phased plan.

We continue to expect negative budgetary impacts into FY 22. The Covid-19 global pandemic has created a time of unprecedented financial turmoil for local, state and federal governments. There is significant uncertainty surrounding revenue projections for local and state revenues, as levels for both are expected to be lower than FY 20. In addition, commercial property values are facing strong downward pressure, which will further contribute negatively to reduced revenue.

Although we received federal stimulus funding, distributed by the Commonwealth, those funds could not be used for lost revenue needed to fund the budget. However, they have been helpful in addressing unbudgeted expenses caused by the corona virus pandemic. We are hopeful that the next round of stimulus funding under the Biden administration will provide revenue relief for anticipated reductions in local receipts, State aide and commercial tax revenue.

On a positive note, our solid financial position, strengthened by years of conservative budgeting, increasing our reserves along with growing our tax base, will serve the City well as we navigate through the crisis. We will prepare a budget for FY 22 that serves our residents and businesses to the best of our ability, maintains essential services and programs, supports educational needs, and makes targeted critical investments to move our City forward.

Yesterday, the nation honored the memory of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a day of service, and on a day at the beginning of a new year and a critical moment of necessary reflection to examine where we are as a nation in terms of creating a more just, humane, equitable and peaceful society.

Tomorrow, we will witness the inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. In spite of the unsettling turmoil surrounding this nation's critical peaceful transfer of power, there is plenty of reason to be hopeful that this new administration will provide leadership aimed at meeting the challenge and continued hard work of healing divisions for the greater good of our nation.

No matter for whom you voted, we must come together and do our part here in Woburn by respecting one another, treating each other with civility and kindness, and keeping our focus on working together with great ideas to achieve our common goals as Americans and residents of a truly wonderful community.

In the coming year, we will continue to focus on the important issues that strengthen our community and make Woburn an inviting, affordable and desirable place to live, work and raise a family.

That means strong fiscal management, solid schools and learning opportunities, job opportunities, recreational activities and facilities, safe neighborhoods, energy efficiency, sustainability, smart growth, innovation, continued investments in City infrastructure, fostering culture diversity, support and respect for one another and, as always, an open-door policy at City Hall.

Thanks again to everyone across the City for your strength, compassion and perseverance over the last year. We still have plenty of hard work ahead of us, but there's real light as we move together through the winter months and look ahead to better days ahead.