

City of Fall River Massachusetts
Office of the City Clerk

ALISON M. BOUCHARD
CITY CLERK

INÊS LEITE
ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MEETING: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.
Council Chamber, One Government Center

PRESENT: President Joseph D. Camara, presiding;
Councilors Shawn E. Cadime, Michelle M. Dionne, Paul B. Hart,
Bradford L. Kilby, Linda M. Pereira, Cliff Ponte, Andrew J. Raposo,
and Laura-Jean Sampson

ABSENT: None

IN ATTENDANCE: Mayor Paul E. Coogan

President Joseph D. Camara called the meeting to order at 5:41 p.m. and announced that the meeting may be recorded with audio or video and transmitted through any medium.

The following School Committee Members were present at the meeting:

PRESENT: Mayor Paul E. Coogan, Bobby Bailey, Thomas Khoury,
Michelle "Mimi" Larrivee, Shelli Pereira

ABSENT: Kevin Aguiar and Sara Rodrigues

President Joseph D. Camara introduced Mayor Paul E. Coogan and stated that the purpose of the meeting was for the Mayor's State of the City address, a copy of which is attached hereto and made a part of these minutes.

On a motion made by School Committee Member Shelli Pereira and seconded by School Committee Member Thomas Khoury, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the School Committee meeting at 6:05 p.m., with School Committee Members Kevin Aguiar and Sara Rodrigues absent and not voting.

On a motion made by Councilor Andrew J. Raposo and seconded by President Joseph D. Camara, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the City Council meeting at 6:05 p.m.

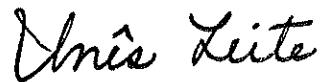
List of documents and other exhibits used during the meeting:

Agenda packet (attached)

DVD of meeting

Mayor's State of the City Address

A true copy. Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anis Leite". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Assistant City Clerk

In City Council, March 26, 2024

Approved.



City of Fall River Massachusetts

Office of the City Clerk

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CITY CLERK
FALL RIVER, MA

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ALISON M. BOUCHARD
CITY CLERK

MEETINGS SCHEDULED
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ONE GOVERNMENT CENTER
MARCH 12, 2024
AGENDA

5:30 P.M. JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Mayor Paul E. Coogan's State of the City Address

5:55 P.M. PUBLIC HEARINGS (OR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE IF IT RUNS PAST 5:55 P.M.)

Curb Removal

1. Kilburn Place, LLC, 425 State Road, Dartmouth, MA, 02747, for the removal of curbing as follows:

	Existing Opening	Curbing to be Removed	Curbing to be Added	Combined Opening Proposed After Alteration
379 Kilburn Street and King Philip Street	200'	16'	0'	216'

The parcel is currently serviced by six curb openings totaling 200 feet on Kilburn, Charles and Tripp Streets. The applicant proposes to create a new 16-foot opening on King Philip Street. The total opening for this location will be 216 feet.

Capital Improvement Plan

2. Five Year Capital Improvement Plan

6:00 P.M. CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE MEETING (OR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC HEARINGS IF THEY RUN PAST 6:00 P.M.)

1. Citizen Input
2. *Resolution – Convene with the Administration and the "For Youth Initiative" Coordinator to discuss current and future use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding as well as updates on the program overall (adopted, as amended, 2-27-2024)
3. *Resolution – Convene with the City Administrator, representatives from One SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce and Viva Fall River to discuss how ARPA funding has been, and will be, utilized going forward and a presentation be made of all ARPA funded projects by the Administration (adopted, as amended, 1-23-2024)
4. Transfer and appropriation

ADA Coordinator: Gary P. Howayeck, Esq. 508-324-2650

7:00 P.M. REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL (OR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE MEETING IF IT RUNS PAST 7:00 P.M.)

PRIORITY MATTERS

1. *Mayor and confirmation of the reappointment of Mario Lucciola to the Planning Board
2. *Mayor and confirmation of the reappointment of William J. Walker to the Council on Aging
3. *Mayor and confirmation of the appointment of Paul M. Sousa to the Sewer Commission
4. *Mayor and confirmation of the appointment of Nicholas L. Christ to the Fall River Contributory Retirement Board
5. *Mayor and notification of the Planning Board's appointment of Michael Farias as the Planning Board designee to the Community Preservation Committee
6. *Mayor and order to accept a donation of lumber and materials from the Appalachian Mountain Club, Southeastern Massachusetts Chapter, for four (4) picnic tables at the Watuppa Reservation Headquarters and the Bioreserve Loop Trail trailhead at the Blossom Brook Parking Area
7. *Mayor and order to accept a donation of a 40" x 30" painting of the Fall River Carousel Horses from Lincoln Park by Sheila Oliveira to the Fall River Public Library
8. *Mayor and proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Enterprise Fund budgets for Water and Sewer Divisions and proposed ordinances for Fiscal Year 2025 Water and Sewer rates
9. *Mayor and proposal for Bristol County ARPA funding in the amount of \$10,000 to support veterans and their families by providing behavioral health outreach through forums, presentations, and resources
10. *Mayor and order transferring the sum of \$149,000 from the EMS Stabilization Fund to EMS Expenses

PRIORITY COMMUNICATIONS

11. *Traffic Commission recommending amendments to the traffic ordinances

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee on Health and Environmental Affairs recommending:

Referral to Corporation Counsel:

12. *Resolution – Discussion of public health concerns regarding homeless encampments

Committee on Public Works and Transportation recommending:

Grant Leave to Withdraw:

13. *Communication – Water bill and request for review re: 57 Duke Street
14. *Resolution – Convene with Administrator of Community Utilities to discuss solutions to flooding issues on Anderson Street
15. *Resolution – Discuss flooding issues re: 50 Anderson Street

ORDINANCES

Second Reading and Enrollment:

16. *Proposed Ordinance – Mattress disposal fee amendment

RESOLUTIONS

17. *Capital Improvement Plan be approved by the City Council
18. *Committee on Public Works and Transportation and the Administrator of Community Utilities convene quarterly to discuss updates regarding the progress of the South Watuppa Pond Quality Restoration Program

ADA Coordinator: Gary P. Howayeck, Esq. 508-324-2650

CITATIONS – None

ORDERS – HEARINGS

Curb Removal:

19. Kilburn Place, LLC, 425 State Road, Dartmouth, MA, 02747 – Removal of 16 feet at 379 Kilburn Street/King Philip Street

ORDERS – MISCELLANEOUS

20. Police Chief's report on licenses:

Taxicab Drivers

Anthony J. Camara, Jr. David Eastman Lyndsey Pacheco

21. Fall River Taxi Service, Inc. – New Taxicab Vehicle Applications for License Nos. 1, 18 and 19

22. Auto Repair Shop License Renewals:

Antonio DeCouto d/b/a Tony's Towing and Auto Repair – 69 Napoleon Street
Joseph Silva d/b/a Supreme Auto – 421 Third Street

COMMUNICATIONS – INVITATIONS – PETITIONS

23. *Claims

24. *Assistant Corporation Counsel Response to Open Meeting Law complaint filed by Patrick Higgins re: February 15, 2024 alleged violation by the Committee on Ordinances and Legislation

25. Drainlayer License – LAL Construction, Co. Inc.

City Council Minutes

26. *Joint Meeting of the Committee on Finance and Board of Park Commissioners – February 15, 2024

27. *Committee on Finance – February 15, 2024

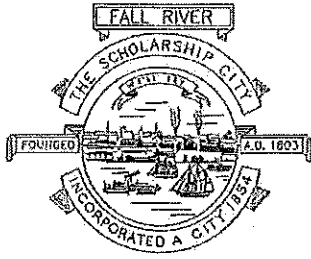
28. *Regular Meeting of the City Council – February 15, 2024

BULLETINS – NEWSLETTERS – NOTICES

29. *Dept. of Public Utilities Notices of Public Hearings and Requests for Comments re:

- a. Petition of Liberty Utilities (New England Natural Gas Company) Corp. d/b/a Liberty for authorization and approval: (1) to issue long-term debt in an amount not to exceed \$165 million pursuant to G.L. c. 164 § 14; and (2) for an exemption from the competitive solicitation and advertising requirements of G.L. c. 164 § 15
- b. Petition of Massachusetts Electric Company and Nantucket Electric Company, each d/b/a National Grid, for Approval of a Mid-Term Modification to its 2022-2024 Three-Year Energy Efficiency Plan
- c. Petition of Boston Gas Company d/b/a National Grid for Approval of a Mid-Term Modification to its 2022-2024 Three-Year Energy Efficiency Plan


Assistant City Clerk



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Office of the City Clerk

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CITY CLERK _____
FALL RIVER, MA

JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024 AT 5:30 PM

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ONE GOVERNMENT CENTER

AGENDA

The purpose of the meeting is to allow the Mayor to deliver the
State of the City Address


Alison M. Bouchard

ADA Coordinator: Gary P. Howayeck, Esq. 508-324-2650

MAYOR PAUL COOGAN

CITY OF FALL RIVER- STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Good evening, Council President, honorable members of the Council and school committee, State Auditor DiZoglio, members of our state legislative delegation, Sheriff Heroux, and Register of Deeds, BJ McDonald. It is my pleasure to be with you this evening as I deliver this year's State of the City.

Thank you to the members of our business community, city department heads, division managers, board & commission members and residents who are joining us tonight.

Thank you all for being a part of the extended Fall River team that works day in and day out on common goals and creative solutions to move our city forward.

I am also extremely grateful for my partners in government-

Our federal delegation - Senators Markey and Warren and Representative Jake Auchincloss

Our Governor Maura Healey and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll

Our state delegation- Senator Michael Rodrigues and Representatives Carole Fiola, Alan Silvia and Paul Schmid

And our City Council, School Committee, and, of course, our city employees.

I also want to acknowledge our Public Safety team, Police Chief Paul Gauvin, Fire Chief Jeff Bacon, EMS Director Tim Oliveira, and EMA Director Rick Aguiar. Together, we continue to work to address public safety concerns within our community.

On a personal note, I want to thank all my supporters, my family and of course- my wife Judi- for all her love and support. She is my partner, and I could not do this without her.

As many in this room know, there is a new buzz surrounding Fall River. Over the last several years, we have experienced unprecedented growth and renewed interest in our community. The change is visible- with major residential, commercial and infrastructure projects going on across the city. Fall River is recognized for its potential, and it has been my honor to serve as Mayor during this important time in our history.

We have seen our “rainy day” funds grow from \$10 million when I took office in 2020, to \$26 million dollars today. That is an increase of over 15 million dollars.

Our Moody credit rating is at A3 (stable)- the word stable designates a positive change that reflects our improved financial health.

Working together with our Finance Team our goal is to continue to increase fund balances while paying down outstanding debt to continue to improve our future credit rating.

We know that the cost of living has been steadily climbing in Fall River, as it has across the country, and it is my promise to taxpayers that my administration will continue to do all we can to reduce the burden on them.

ARPA funding has been crucial to improve City services without increasing the financial burden on residents.

Of \$69M received in federal ARPA funding, all has been committed to

- public health initiatives,
- assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits,
- public sector initiatives,
- upgrades in water and sewer infrastructure, and municipal improvement projects.

I would also like to thank the City Council for working together with our administration to create a cohesive and strategic plan for the \$16 million Fall River received in ARPA funds from Bristol County.

Our new growth numbers have remained positive. There are well over 1,000 residential units under construction or in the permitting process. Revenue from building permits to date is over \$690 thousand which puts us on target to surpass last year's numbers.

For years the City has been faced with many abandoned mill buildings and other properties that were public safety concerns. These buildings - like the mills on Howe Street, Alden Street, Chase Street - are now being converted into beautiful new residential units.

In addition, the Community Development Agency has continued their efforts to add to the affordable housing stock with 54 new units that have recently come online. These projects will continue along with private investment to grow our workforce housing stock.

Our economic growth is due, in large part, to an increased interest and investment from developers, both locally and statewide. They see Fall River's potential and are investing in our future.

Investment is not just limited to housing. New and existing companies are seeking space in Fall River to build or expand their current operations.

This is thanks to our city's reputation as an affordable community with a top-notch, dedicated workforce.

For example:

InvaGen Pharmaceuticals - In addition to investing \$5.7 Million in their existing facility, they recently made plans to expand to a second location on Airport Road. This project is a \$20 million dollar investment that will create 30 to 50 jobs over the next 8 years.

Nantucket Sound Seafood officially opened its doors in the fall of 2023. They currently employ between 45 to 55 people at their processing plant.

Ice Cube currently occupies an 80,000 square foot facility on Current Road and recently purchased 24 acres of land to construct a new 200,000 square foot building. This new facility reflects a \$20M investment and will employ about 35 people.

Additionally, other projects in the works include:

SouthCoast Hospitals continued expansion and improvements

Taco, Inc's. expansion on Pleasant Street

As well as a new 100,000 sq ft business condominium complex on Ace Street

The renovation of a mix use building on Troy Street

In addition to, a number of small businesses springing up in all corners of the city.

To meet the needs of our growing community, we must continue to maintain and invest in infrastructure projects:

To that end we have received in the past 5 years almost 70 million in alternative funding from grants, principal reduction of loans or state and

federal earmarks resulting in funds our rate payers don't need to pay back.

We have moved into our new water maintenance building on Bedford Street and have completed the Wilson Rd Drinking Water and Wastewater station.

Plus- we have completed the replacement of 481 lead services last year, with an additional 600 planned for this year.

Approximately 18,000 ft of water mains have been replaced, that also includes at the same time we are reconstructing the street and sidewalks.

For 2024, my administration has committed \$3.9 million for road reconstruction projects and \$624k to complete sidewalk replacement.

We have also committed 2.5 million in ARPA funding to transform Oak Grove Ave and Jefferson Street, two streets in need of much repair.

Also, with ARPA funding we have added street sweepers, a graffiti removal machine, and infrared hot boxes to repair potholes and trenches in our roads.

And over 300 tree stumps have been removed from parks and neighborhoods throughout the city. The project will continue into this year.

Our parks have seen much needed improvements. The Coogan Administration and CDA will be adding new playground equipment to Columbus Park, and have already constructed new tennis, pickleball, and volleyball courts at Kennedy Park. Britland Park now has new basketball courts, pickleball courts and a brand-new fitness court.

Two of the biggest infrastructure projects in Fall River's recent history are the South Coast Rail Project, and the \$135 million Route 79 - Davol Street project, which will transform our waterfront and bring even more new investment into the community.

Except for the East Taunton Station, South Coast Rail construction will be substantially completed this month. The Fall River line construction has been done for some time but there remains testing to be done to ensure safe and reliable service. The summer of 2024 is the target for service to start. This project has been a catalyst for economic growth and renewed interest in our city.

The Fall River Redevelopment Authority received a planning grant from the state to help support the development of a master plan for 19 acres on the waterfront, created by the removal of Rt 79. The master plan will include proposals for housing, commercial and retail development, as well as parking.

We are already witnessing growth on our waterfront with two additional restaurants coming online this summer.

We are taking steps to improve the availability of transportation on our waterfront with the addition of trolley service and a water taxi. This will allow visitors to travel the waterfront and connect to downtown. The trolley service was made possible by funding from the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism and ARPA funding. The goal of the trolley service is to boost tourism in Fall River by highlighting the different historical, cultural, and recreational attractions that make our city so unique.

On the Waterfront, improvements continued at Norton City Pier; a dock system has been constructed that will accommodate up to 14 boats and that was funded in part by a grant from the Seaport Economic Council. The docks will be open for transient dockage in May.

The addition of three mooring fields at Northfield Point, also part of the City Pier property, will offer informal walking paths, places for recreational fishing and opportunities to sit and relax by the water.

The redevelopment authority is working on plans for expansion of the downtown historic district to include South Main Street. Documents have been submitted to the State Historical Commission to propose this expansion. A task force continues to work with our consultant to create this district.

A draft Urban Renewal Plan and Roadmap for Neighborhood Revitalization in the Flint has been in the works since 2022 and will be submitted to the City Council and state agencies for approval. Recommendations will be provided for addressing vacant properties, improving streets and sidewalks, new stores, restaurants, and improved housing opportunities on Pleasant Street.

The plans have begun with a major facelift for several storefronts on Pleasant Street through a storefront improvement program administered by Fall River's Community Development Agency. Rehabilitation of properties in the Flint are expected to yield over 200 additional housing units.

Of course, everything mentioned thus far matters little if our residents, business owners, and visitors do not feel safe within our community. Public safety must be a top priority and making certain that our public safety officials have the necessary state of the arts tools to perform their jobs is critically important.

I am pleased to say that the Fall River Police Department received the 5th Award for National Accreditation in November 2023.

In reviewing, the overall crime data for 2022 and 2023 crime has gone down 23.61%.

The FRPD have added 51 new officers to their ranks since 2021. In order to assist with the recruitment, the city in 2023 began to offer an incentive to cover the cost of training and equipment for recruits.

The FRPD has seen the full implementation of the "Body Worn Cameras". This initiative has resulted in the number of complaints being filed against members of the department reduced by 50% since 2022.

ARPA was used to purchase body worn cameras, tasers, camera systems and cell phone technology which has allowed the FRPD to keep our 10-year murder clearance rate at 100%.

Thanks to the federal (FR-CARA) grant the City has created the first ever co-response program (FAST) that provides a full-time mental health clinician and a recovery coach to work alongside the police when dealing with mental health or substance abuse calls. This has proven to be a very effective way of responding to mental health and substance abuse incidents. Having a professional to handle mental health and substance abuse issues has been essential in giving our officers more time to patrol.

The FAST Team has received 558 referrals for mental health or substance issues and provided services for 448 individuals.

With the commitment, compassion and dedication of these hardworking individuals involved in the battle against opioids, I am pleased to inform you that we have seen a decrease in overdoses. In 2018, there were over 1,000 overdoses- in 2023 we saw less than 500. We also have seen a substantial decrease in fatal overdoses, as well.

In July 2023, the city launched the first ever database that joins calls from police and EMS into one location to track the numbers of those suffering from mental health and substance abuse.

The City of Fall River received \$1m in Opioid Settlement funding, and we created a 10-person opioid advisory committee, made up of individuals from multiple sectors throughout the community. This committee will make recommendations to the mayor and city council about how to use the funds. My commitment is that the majority of this funding will stay with Fall River residents to allow them to receive the benefits.

Our Fire Department, like our police department, thanks to ARPA and CDA funding, has been able to purchase a new command vehicle, a new forestry firefighting truck, which will be utilized to fight brush and wildland fires in and around the city, while 2 new apparatus, a pump and ladder truck, are on order. Upgrades to firehouses have also been made to improve air quality.

The Emergency Medical Services has upgraded all ambulances with state-of-the-art cardiac monitors. They have also started an accredited EMT school to engage residents interested in public safety and medicine. EMS' community medicine team has also collaborated with our school department to create a vaccination program for students, the first of its kind in the state. This program has allowed enrolled students to be able to start school at a much quicker timeline than in the past.

Another partner in our efforts to better serve our community has been our school department. They have done a tremendous job adapting to the changing conditions of learning after covid, we are investing in better facilities and better resources to support our students.

First, I want to thank Superintendent Maria Pontes for her many years of dedicated service to the Fall River Public Schools and I want to wish her the very best as she retires at the end of this year.

Today our student enrollment is at 11,001 students, an increase of over 1,000 students since 2021. While other districts are losing students, Fall River continues to grow.

I am happy to report on the progress in our schools, which is all made possible by the hard work and commitment of the staff at the Fall River Public Schools every day. We are seeing:

12% decrease in chronic absenteeism rates

91% teacher retention rate this year.

609 Pre-K seats for the SY 23-24

64 positions added (over the last 4 years) to support the growing social and emotional needs of our students.

PACE Center is offering Parent ESL classes.

Family Academy Series is fostering relationships between families and schools.

Durfee's Early College program has successfully helped students earn over 2,000 college credits from our partners: Bridgewater State University, UMASS-Dartmouth, and Bristol CC.

Most of the students in the Early College program enter college 1-2 semesters ahead of typical students and are more likely to be pursuing higher education than the state average.

With ARPA funding, the Fall River Public Library now has a bookmobile. The goal of the bookmobile is to increase visibility for, and access to, library services. Reading is fundamental to our youth and having a mobile library is crucial to expand access to more of our residents.

Of course, we wouldn't be here today talking about these issues, without the brave sacrifice that generations of men and women have made to protect our freedoms.

The City's Veterans Service Office serves close to 200 veteran families and over 1,000 veterans receive VA benefits. The department has recently revamped the City's van service program, and has doubled the number of rides given, assisting over 1,000 people.

This year we added several events for our veteran community, making sure we memorialize our brave armed forces, and ensure that veterans have what they need around the holidays. We have also connected with veteran's transitional services to help with placement and employment opportunities for veterans.

Using Bristol County ARPA funding the City Council also allocated \$250,000 to create the Veteran's Assistant Program to help veterans in need with utilities, rent, transportation, and food.

The City of Fall River, like many other communities, still faces a whole host of serious challenges like identifying funding for the new Diman Regional, combatting homelessness, creating more affordable housing, and addressing the potential sale of our only for-profit hospital, Saint Anne's. These are a few of the administration's priority matters. But most of these challenges are not unique to our community. We will continue to look for best practices in other municipalities and will continue to collaborate with federal, state, county, and local elected officials to find solutions.

The State of our City is very strong. New businesses, industries and investors are choosing Fall River- bringing well-paying jobs that will sustain our residents for years to come. Our streets and recreational spaces are, one by one, being improved so that we may all live in a city we're proud of. Our recovery from decades of economic trouble is happening before our very eyes, and arts and culture is breathing new life into our community. Our schools are making great strides, and our waterfront along with our downtown and Pleasant St will soon be transformed.

I urge you all to trust in a brighter tomorrow for Fall River and to treat others with dignity and respect.

As we go forward, I once again promise that I will continue to work hard, act out of my deep love for this City and commit my administration to integrity and transparency. I will continue to turn to the tremendous leaders in this room for guidance and support.

I am truly honored to lead the City of Fall River and thank you for your relentless faith in my leadership.

I look forward to another year of growth and progress. Good night and God bless the great City of Fall River.

