Lawrence State of the City
by Mayor Daniel Rivera

February 23, 2015

Making Lawrence Better
Administration Highlights

• A3 Bond upgrade - Moody’s
• $1.3M for police staffing and services
• Received $2M from EPA to clean up Merrimac Paper
• Ordered & installing 138 new downtown LED lights
• Professionalizing City Hall with focus on basic functions of government
• Started to change perception of City inside and out – with 32 positive Lawrence stories in Boston Globe and Boston Herald, and numerous in local media
• Reinstituted weekly & monthly department meetings
• Helped return the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, the largest north of Boston (coming again March 28th!)
• Supported Lawrence’s first Ciclovia
Administration Highlights

• Helped mediate a contract for the Teachers’ Union
• Appointed 58 people to Boards and Commissions
• Helped launch Viva Lawrence! initiative
• Conducted over 200 Business Visits and Meetings
• Attended 42 Neighborhood Association Meetings
• 89 visits with Community Organizations
• Held monthly working sessions with all city’s ESL providers
• Selected as Chair of the MVRTA
• Led the Merrimack Valley mayors and managers coalition to develop regional marketing and development initiative
• Appointed member of Gov. Baker’s Transition Team
Police Department Highlights

• Overall Crime reduction of 4.2%
• Added 10 net new police officers - first net-new officers since 2007
• Moved 4 uniformed officers to patrol from admin
• Instituted morning & mid-day Broadway Walking Patrols
• Ran multiple door-to-door, neighborhood level community outreach efforts
• Increased department diversity
• Enforced noise ordinance city-wide
• Installed 35 iPads to update technology in marked and unmarked police vehicles
• Established monthly review of 911 calls for customer service quality assurance
Police Department Highlights

- Established confidential phone line for citizen complaints and web-based complaints as well
- Revamped process of handling civilian complaints by creating “Professional Standards Unit”
- Installed nationally recognized database to process and track citizen complaints
- Substantial plant maintenance improvement to current Police Station
- Wholesale review and management of PD vehicle fleet
- Replaced 35 bullet proof vests for police personnel
- Built relationship with YMCA to provide free membership for police officers
Fire Department Highlights

- 16 major fires, most notably Merrimac Paper and Kingston Street
- 118 fires extinguished in the incipient stages preventing progression to major fires
- 40 mutual aid responses to fire departments in surrounding communities
- 865 emergency ambulance assistance calls
- 6,000 total incident responses for the year, ranging from vehicle accidents to elevator entrapments
Fire Department Highlights

• Generated $150,520 through 1,074 electrical permits
• Generated $210,000 1,112 fire prevention inspections of private establishments
• 2,000+ prevention/code enforcement issues were handled
• 30 fire safety school presentations were given
Office of Planning & Development

Highlights

- Applied for $15.9M and received $14.4M in grant funding
- Issued 1,185 building permits representing more than $51M in construction cost, 15% $ increase from 2013
- Reorganized Planning, Community Development, Economic Development and Inspectional Services into one entity
Office of Planning & Development: Economic Development Highlights

- Initiated new MVRTA Downtown Shuttle (ridership at 11,000)
- Visited and met with over 200 businesses
- Successfully negotiated TIF agreement with Asahi America, reflecting $17.5M in private investment and 100 new manufacturing jobs
- Initiated Rail Trail Restoration - leased railroad line from MBTA
- Reinstituted the Real Property Task Force
- 24 properties completed or in process of being sold, valued at ~$350,000
Office of Planning & Development: Economic Development Highlights

• Generated more than $54K in revenue at Veterans Memorial Stadium - managed school, sporting and special events
• $400,000 EPA grant for continued assessment of brownfields
• 6 brownfields sites assessed
• Supported entrepreneurship through greater engagement with EforAll
• Collaborative Workspace Project - received seed grant $5,000, and applied for additional $250,000
Office of Planning & Development: Community Development Highlights

• Made 77 units lead safe
• Assisted 21 new homeowners with down-payment assistance
• Created new partnership with Mass Housing that resulted in 6 purchase loans for first-time homebuyers
• Qualified 10 new receivers for Distressed Properties Receivership Program
• Received $80K grant from Attorney General for distressed properties
• 7 distressed properties brought back to use
• Initiated housing study
Office of Planning & Development: Community Development Highlights

- Received $2 million grant for Mayor’s Health Task Force
- Started Phase III of Campagnone Common Improvements ($800K)
- Completed Oxford Paper Site Park ($1.8M)
- Began work on park at Ferrous Site ($2.75M)
- Spray Park at E. Haverhill & Newbury Streets
- Designed and advertised improvements at Union and Canal Streets
Office of Planning & Development: Inspectional Services Highlights

• Restored ISD Director position and added a 3rd Local Building Inspector
• Improved customer service by relocating Licensing Dept. to 2nd floor and Nurse to 1st floor in Hall
• Deployed dumping camera surveillance - 1643 tickets issued
• 406 criminal complaints filed at Housing Court
• Issued 1,185 Building Permits, 434 Certificate of Inspections, 372 Plumbing Permits and 804 Gas Permits
Office of Planning & Development: Inspectional Services Highlights

- Additional permitting activities include:
  - 461 Food Permits
  - 347 Milk Permits
  - 94 Temporary Permits
  - 432 Burial Permits
  - 138 Tobacco Permits
  - 1,402 Codes & Occupancy Permits
  - 270 Foreclosure Registrations
  - 32 Weights & Measures
  - 8 Swimming Pools
  - 7 Lead Determination
  - 250 RN’s Department TB visits

- Performed 160+ liquor license inspections
- Instituted regular rooming house inspections
- ISD offices were painted, cleaned and reorganized
Office of Planning & Development:
Planning Highlights

• Applied for and received a $3.9M MassWorks grant for roadway improvement on Merrimack Street
• Developed the MassWorks Downtown Alleyway project ($900K)
• Undertook feasibility study for a new Regional Public Safety Center ($400K)
• Park/Lawrence Streets infrastructure improvement projects ($1.2M)
• Completed Downtown West Planning Study to identify areas of improvement ($40K)
• Provided professional training for boards & commissions
Office of Planning & Development: Planning Highlights

- Coordinated interdepartmental development activities for better oversight of all land use activities
- Processed 59 applications with the ZBA for Special Permit and Variance requests
- Processed 23 applications with the Planning Board
- Supported the newly reformed Lawrence Redevelopment Authority
- Provided administrative support to 5 Boards and Commissions
Department of Public Works Highlights

- 252 aerosol cans of JELL-STRIP XTRA used (graffiti removal)

- 90 gallons of GRAFFITI BUSTER used (graffiti removal)

- 80 gallons of regular paint used (different colors)

- 565 tons of curb-line litter was swept

- 31 streets repaved utilizing 6,996 tons of HMA totaling 111,982 SY
Department of Public Works Highlights

- 8,200 potholes filled
- 604 signs installed
- 4” Double yellow line - 249,994 LF
- Thermoplastic striping - 34,246 LF
- 4” White line paint (water based) - 28,800 LF
- Crosswalk and stop line paint - 15,293 LF
Department of Public Works Highlights

- Clean Lawrence Initiative – hired 25 temp. laborers to clean city and educate residents about recycling
- City-wide recycling percentage rate peaked at 13%, up from 2013’s average at 9%
- Partnered with LPS to initiate recycling in the schools
- Diverted 40% of LPS school trash through recycling efforts
- Awarded $6,400 in grant funds from the Department of Environmental Protection
Water & Sewer Department Highlights

- Rehabilitated a total of 18,671 feet of water mains ranging from 6 inches to 16 inches
- Replaced 28 fire hydrants and 136 valves in the water system, increasing the City’s firefighting capacity
- Inspected, televised, and cleaned 91,536 feet of sewer main ranging from 8 to 60 inches, inspected 683 manholes, and inspected 22 outfalls along the City’s riverbanks
- Replaced approximately 5,000 water meters, reaching >95% project completion
- Placed 300kW solar array online and replaced 4 water pumps, resulting in annual net energy savings of over $100,000
Water & Sewer Department Highlights

• Completed final items of 2007 and 2009 MassDEP Administrative Consent Orders
• Revamped the Department’s website to offer customers up-to-date project information, as well as allowing for customer outreach campaigns
• Received the 2014 MassDEP Public Water System Award for our energy efficiency efforts.
• Water System was profiled by the New England Water Works in its quarterly Journal magazine
• Purchased new vacuum/flusher combination truck to provide increased service to sewer customers
School Department Highlights

• Lawrence student growth percentiles (SGP) at historically high levels in both ELA and Math
• ELA SGP at highest recorded level in the district
• Math SGP remained at historic levels this year
• LPS has risen sharply among Gateway Cities in student growth in both ELA and Math
• LPS saw a significant increase in the % of students achieving at Proficient & Advanced levels from 2013 to 2014
• Graduation and dropout rates continue trajectory of strong improvement
• LPS has added new Level 1 schools each year of the turnaround - Level 1 schools are those meeting their state performance targets
Council on Aging Highlights

- Provided over 65,000 units of services / 396 new members were welcomed to the Senior Center... all while having FUN!!!
- New downtown bus route #85 inaugurated, aiding in the safety and easier accessibility to the center for the elder population
- Improvements - Finally, the hot room became the cool room.... “Dominoes with Cool Heads” with a new air conditioner
- Improvements – Thanks to Timberland, minor repairs were made throughout the building, a new case for the bingo board, beautified bathrooms and upgraded fixtures
- Provided over 18,180 bags of food (181,800 lbs.) to our community, 504 Farmers Market Coupons, delivered 37,600 meals to homebound elders and served 11,750 congregate meals at the center
- 188 people participated in Citizenship classes, assisted 125 people with completing the requirements to become US citizens over a 2 year period
Council on Aging Highlights

- Hosted a variety of health & wellness fairs throughout the year to help educate elders and the community about the risks & preventions of chronic diseases, mental health forums, and flu shot administration
- Hosted Congresswoman Niki Tsongas and her Immigration Forum at our Center
- Expanded our ESOL classes to integrate conversational English and more advanced English classes
- Continuously building community partners in order to help fund the many different programs and services we offer, awarded a grant from the Rotary Club to help expand the ESOL and citizenship classes
- Welcomed and increased the number of Asian elders and their family, with our open door, safe haven atmosphere
- Participated, hosted & partnered with other community agencies in order to bring the community together
Veterans Highlights

- $919K in benefits accessed for Lawrence Veterans (up from $914K in 2013)
- Number of Referrals
  - 200 - New England Veterans Liberty House
  - 100 - Valley Works
  - 50 - Bedford VA
  - 50 - DAV
  - 30 - Northeast Veterans Outreach
  - 25 - Career Resource Corporation
  - 10 - 20 Veterans Shelters
- Online Access
  - 60 National Archives Record Administration Requests
  - 50 New Email Accounts
  - 50 New e-Benefits Accounts
  - 4 Social Security Access Accounts
- 2000 Veterans/Families from Lawrence visited office
- 150+ Veterans/Families from other communities visited office
Finance Department Highlights

• $9.5M Free Cash certified for FY14 (fifth consecutive year of positive results)
• FY14 Independent audit completed
• FY14 Year End Schedule A timely filed with DOR
• FY15 Budget updated with enhanced financial data and approved in record time
• Successful implementation of School Department transition to City’s ERP system (MUNIS)
• Electronic banking implemented in Treasurer/Collector’s office
• Treasurer/Collector taxpayer payment agreements updated
Finance Department Highlights

- 178 warrants issued
- 29,203 invoices processed and paid
- 11,674 checks issued totaling $91,714,126
- 96.34% of FY14 net tax levy collected
- $27.4M original deficit bonds now at $24.0M
- Long-term debt reduced from $110.9M to $101.4M
- New Treasurer/Tax Collector hired
Assessor Highlights

**Triennial Revaluation Certification**
- Valued over 12,000 parcels of taxable real estate
- Valued over 1,200 taxable personal property accounts
- Total value over $3.1 billion for FY15
- Received certification from the Commissioner of Revenue for Fiscal Year 2015 values

**Certified New Growth**
- Record-high new growth added to tax base at $1.6M
- FY15 property values increased by $56,438,410 because of new construction and other property improvements
- Data collectors reported 139 new personal property business accounts

**Mass GIS Parcel Enhancements**
- Awarded $14,000 grant from Mass GIS to convert new GIS-based product and web-based GIS application
Assessor Highlights

**Tax Rate Set** - Provided valuation information to the Council for the annual classification vote. The Fiscal Year 2015 tax rate was certified by the DOR and real estate tax bills were mailed on time.

**Lot splits/Changes/Mergers** - Processed 40 plans recorded at the Registry of Deeds and updated property records and tax maps accordingly.

**Motor Vehicle Excise Taxes** - Granted 1,706 MV Excise abatements.

**Real Estate Tax Exemptions** - Pursuant to state laws, approved 176 Elderly and Veterans exemptions.

**Change of Ownership (sales)** - Processed 837 sale transactions recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

**Real Estate Tax Abatements** - Processed 121 real estate and 17 personal property tax abatement applications for FY14.

**Real Estate & Personal Property Tax Bills** - All four quarters were created, submitted to printing company in a timely manner.
IT Highlights

• 1,611 requests for service, average time for resolution 3 hours and 16 minutes
• Migrated the on-call support duties at the police station from uniformed officers to civilians
• Created software to allow citizens to view their tax bills online
• Created software for vendors to view and download available bids online
• Replaced antiquated failing laptops in police cruisers with iPads
• Converted over 30 forms and licenses from paper to PDF’s that can be filled in electronically
Payroll Highlights

• Encouraging employees to sign up for Direct Deposit (approximately 80% of employees are now enrolled)
• Offer Paperless Direct Deposit (30% of employees have signed up and it’s increasing each pay period)
• Reduction in replacement payroll checks (0 replacements for City Payroll in 2014 - goal for 2015 is to match 2014)
• COL offers payroll deductions for parking (~30% of employees signed up for this option)
• Employee Travel Expenses being paid through Payroll (previously processed through Accounts Payable - processing through Payroll is more efficient and timely)
Payroll Highlights

- 100% Timely Payroll Processing
- 2014 Initiated Projects (to be completed in 2015)
  - School Payroll MUNIS implementation with a go-live date of April 1, 2015 (project remains on schedule)
  - Accrual Table Setup (from a manual process to an automated process)
- Position Control in MUNIS for FY16 Budget
- MUNIS Payroll Data Cleanup
- Review language of CBAs
Purchasing Highlights

- Formally solicited over 83 IFBs and RFPs
- Processed 6,509 purchase orders
- Processed 320 contracts
- Successfully auctioned a decommissioned fire ladder truck for over $6K
- IFBs & RFPs available to download on city website at http://bids.cityoflawrence.com/
- Streamlined city contract policy regarding Statewide Contracts (OSD)
- Amended procurement policies and procedures to match the amendments made to M.G.L. c.30B bidding thresholds
- Teamed with OSD to utilize their COMMBUYS procurement system
Personnel Department Highlights

- Successfully hired a total of 95 permanent & temporary individuals for City employment and processed over 400 election poll workers into MUNIS
- Contracted new Worker’s Compensation Third Party Agent and Legal Representatives for city & school department
- Successful graduation of 15 city managers and supervisors in the “Mayor’s Leadership Academy”
- Activated and maintained the official City of Lawrence Twitter Account
- Advocated and obtained the “Benny” card for the pre-tax flexible health and child care accounts for all city & school employees
Personnel Department Highlights

- Instrumental in the reorganization of the Office of Planning & Development
- Successful Group Insurance Commission and Altus Dental open enrollment for city & school department
- Posted 60 job vacancies
- Received and processed 1,000+ applications for employment
- Developed a tracking system in MUNIS for State Ethics requirements of new and current employees
Airport Highlights

• The airport had 66,150 aircraft operations – averaging 181 operations per day.
• Massachusetts State Police Air Wing conducted more than 700 public safety missions.
• Angel Flight, NE coordinated 2,338 free flights for people needing access to medical care.
• Boston Med Flight provided more than 450 emergency air ambulance flights.
• Congress authorized mandatory funding for contract Air Traffic Control Towers ensuring that our Tower will remain operational for another year.
• MassDOT Aeronautics Division awarded the Airport a $38,480 grant to purchase a new snow removal vehicle, replacing a 1985 vehicle and allowing for more efficient snow removal.
Airport Highlights

• MassDOT Aeronautics Division announced that the Airport’s Administration Building was selected to receive a $3.9 million dollar renovation in 2017.

• Permitting for the Airport’s Runway Safety Areas (“RSA’s) broke free from a four year state of pause and is now proceeding on schedule to allow for the construction of all four RSA’s by 2016.

• MassDot Aeronautics Division completed an airport-wide surveillance camera project. The Airport now has 24 hour security camera coverage of the entire airport and its access gates. The cameras are also monitored by the North Andover Police Department.
Workforce Investment Board Highlights

• Served over 12,500 individuals using about $6M and achieved over 2,000 documented job placements. Trained ~250 men, women and youth, of whom 73% got jobs or enrolled in additional college or occupational training

• Achieved the highest youth performance numbers in the Commonwealth

• Mayor Rivera appointed a new private-sector MVWIB Chair and twelve new MVWIB members, most from the private sector

• Successfully applied for grants totaling ~$2.2M in NEG, MA Economic Development, CommCorp Manufacturing, and EPA non-WIA funding
Workforce Investment Board Highlights

- Increased Lawrence Summer Jobs for Youth by 89% (160 to 303) due to Mayor Rivera’s Summer Youth Initiative that included private and public sector donations, and increased Commonwealth funding.

- Received State approval of our revised Strategic Plan; passed 4 fiscal and programmatic monitorings without issues or disallowed costs - all certified.

- Helped support a LFDC School STEM initiative and submitted a nomination that resulted in their lead teacher receiving National and State awards.
Library Highlights

- 123,305 items circulated, 349 classes and programs for children (10,320 attendees) and 136 for adults (1,500 attendees), 1200 internet uses per week.

- Dominican Month in February: Library had the pleasure of displaying the famous Dominican Parade costumes (created by Stelvyn Mirabal) during the month of February in honor of Dominican Independence Day.

- The exhibit was enhanced by a screening of a film on Dominican Independence, *Naciamento de una Nacion*, that was widely attended.
Library Highlights

• The library hosted Literacy Night on November 10th with representatives from dozens of agencies and non-profits in the community informing folks about the services available to them and running workshops and raffles, while special guests read stories to the children.

• Fall Concert Series: Through monies provided by the White Fund, the Catherine McCarthy Memorial Trust and the Friends of the Library, ran annual series that features world recognized musicians performing in our Sargent auditorium.

• Collaboration with GLCAC to present read-aloud sessions 3x/week, featuring Bee Literate. While the reading groups were open to everyone, we tried to emphasize participation by people in our community who are not attached to other programs and are at risk of falling through the cracks.
Cemetery Highlights

• Installed an underground watering system with eight spigots to the New Veterans Section
• The Greater Lawrence Technical School rebuilt the main office counter and map drawers and we repainted the entire office interior and installed new drapes and shades
• Scraped and repainted the interior of the 100 Reservoir Street building
• Cut and cleared 14 overgrown sections of the cemetery of invasive overgrowth and treated stumps with herbicide to minimize re-sprouting
Cemetery Highlights

• Completed 123 burials and removed 11 decayed, damaged, and hazardous mature trees from the cemetery grounds

• Revamped the Department’s website to include copies of forms, maps and an online interment list for genealogy research

• Implemented a much-needed price increase to help generate additional income for the cemetery and city, while keeping us competitive with other area cemeteries.

• Replaced all of the entrance and cemetery regulation signs throughout the cemetery with new durable historic and aesthetically pleasing composite signs
City Clerk Highlights

• Births recorded in Lawrence (including out of town) – 2014 – 1,823
• Death recorded in Lawrence (including out of town) – 2014 – 671
• Marriage Intentions record in 2014 – 573
• Marriage Intentions fee remains at $15 (one of the lowest in the area)
• Excavation Permits for 2014 – 681
• Obstruction Permits for 2014 – 64
• Noise Ordinance fines – roughly 100 collected
• Business Certificates issued for 2014 – 510 (which includes new businesses, amendments, and withdrawals)