

State of the City Address

January 25, 2021

Hello and thank you for joining me today for this unorthodox State of the City.

2020 will always be known as the year of COVID-19.

I look forward to the day that we can take our mask off and put COVID behind us. We all know what a toll it continues to take on our lives, our families and businesses. Some much more than others losing loved ones or knowing friends who have. As of yesterday, we have lost 95 of our Marlborough neighbors.

We started immediately, having discussions with local and state health professionals, our emergency team and daily calls with the Marlborough Hospital that has done an amazing job in supporting us thru this. Gathering information to determine what precautions should be taken and how quickly.

Our health department led by John Garside has done a fantastic

job working tirelessly with state officials, Marlborough Hospital, testing facilities, pharmacies and keeping abreast of the daily and weekly changes. They've transformed their office to support and prioritize COVID initiatives.

The pandemic has caused the City to change the way it does business. With City Hall and other municipal buildings open for appointment only, our employees have stepped up to the plate and have done a great job giving us the extra effort, it has taken us to get the job done. We have encouraged you to pay bills online when possible. We installed drop boxes in the front and rear of City Hall where you can leave bill payments, permit request or other City business you would be coming in to drop off. All offices are and have been fully staffed to answer any questions you may have by phone and we announced a new non-emergency phone number available 24/7 for general information.

All City committee meetings are now virtual and are recorded and they are available to you to watch anytime on the Cities website.

With our first responders and healthcare workers receiving the first vaccine over the past couple of weeks, we are hopeful the State will start to provide the needed vaccines to move forward as fast as possible to the our over 75 years of age population which we will be starting any day. Again, based on availability from the state. We have a plan and the infrastructure in place to move quickly. We have partnered with the Marlborough Hospital and Bouvier's Pharmacy to roll this out as quickly as possible. Please keep in mind the State determines who and when we can vaccinate. Community collaboration will continue to help get us through these tough times. And I want to thank all of you for your patience and understanding much of this is out of our control. I want to thank the City Council for all their support and expedited decisions in helping make this happen.

Despite our 2020 challenges, I can tell you the City of Marlborough is still operating at its highest level.

I'd like to highlight some of our accomplishments over this past year and share what's instore for 2021:

Our IT department has deployed new equipment and continues to monitor the required virtual landscape for all meetings. This allows the public to be part of the process and listen and/or watch all public meetings using technology from home.

Over the course of 2020, the Marlborough Fire Department hired six new firefighters and heads up our emergency response team.

Our Police department has passed the re-accreditation process and the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission ratified the designation for another 3-year period. Marlborough PD is one of 94 accredited departments in the entire State and has been since 2017. The City has hired 4 new officers who graduated from the Police Academy in December 2020. In addition, our investments have included the purchase of four new police cruisers and two new mountain bikes for our Community Policing Officers.

We hired two new department heads. Sean Divoll filling the big shoes of John Ghiloni who started a well-deserved retirement

in 2020, officially took over as the City's new DPW Commissioner in October. His career included stints working for the towns of Concord and Oxford, as well as several years in the private sector.

Patrick Jones, our new Finance Director also began in October and brings a fresh set of eyes from the private sector. In a short period of time, he's already made plans to implement new ideas to make his department run more efficiently.

Once again, I'm proud that we have maintained our triple A bond rating for the second consecutive year. This allows the City to borrow at a lower interest rate that ultimately saves you, our taxpayer's money. Marlborough is one of the few AAA communities in the Commonwealth.

In September, we opened our first new school in decades, the Goodnow Brothers Elementary School which cost \$56 million dollars, over \$11 million under budget. We look forward to a proper grand opening soon. Many of you have asked for a tour and when the time is right, we will make that happen.

Superintendent Bergeron has been tasked with trying to get students back into the classroom while keeping staff and students safe. It's been a delicate balancing act converting from remote to hybrid learning and back again, quarantining and answering daily internal and external concerns. It's been no easy feat, but he has done an exceptional job.

The school cafeteria staff could not have done a better job over the past year. Superintendent Bergeron put a plan in place. And although at this past city council meeting Councilor Oram thanked them for their preparing 65,000 meals, at this point they have actually prepared over 325,000 meals for our students and their families, our seniors and residence in our public housing. On behalf of the City, a big thank you!

We are continuing our efforts on sustainability and green initiatives as outlined in the City's Sustainability Action Plan. The plan completed several years ago is now being updated. This past fall, we completed our LED Streetlighting Retrofit Project that replaced 2,711 streetlights, reducing a projected 800,000 kWh for an annual savings of \$80,000 through National

Grid's energy efficiency program. These lights use less energy and last much longer.

Currently, 60% of the City's municipal electricity is purchased through solar net metering agreements. This spring we will begin City wide solar installations. We will be installing solar panels on four schools including the new elementary school to be completed this year, we anticipate we'll be up to 80% renewable energy use after the installations.

In addition to solar power, we completed the upgrade of the HVAC system at City Hall and plan to continue with additional upgrades in municipal buildings for more efficiency and energy savings.

Additional lighting efficiency upgrades are planned at the schools, transfer station, and the water treatment plant for 2021.

We also installed two electric vehicle charging stations in the city parking garage and an additional four are being installed in the new municipal parking lot on Bolton Street. The City

currently has 5 electric vehicles and several hybrids. We will continue to purchase these while our fleet ages out.

I want to commend our aggregation committee chaired by President Ossing on securing a 41-month program for our Community Choice Power Supply Program. This enables our residence to get a fixed rate at \$0.09390 per kWh versus the National Grid's Basic Service rate of \$0.12388 per kWh. Since November 2019, City residents have saved over \$1,700,000 on their individual electric bills. For more info:

[municipal aggregation 0.pdf \(marlborough-ma.gov\)](#)

Being an active board member of the Massachusetts Municipal Association where we share ideas with other communities, has heightened my awareness on how much more we've been able to accomplish in this arena compared to nearly any other community in the state.

Investments continue as the City is undergoing a \$7 million renovation project at the Pleasant Street public housing facility. The renovations are underway, and residents will be moving back to "A" building this spring while buildings "B" and "C" will begin to be upgraded.

The City received another Community Development Block Grant for \$800,000 that will be used to replace the roof at 240 Main Street, provide housing rehab grants for single family homes and substance abuse prevention programming for youth services at the Boys and Girls Club.

One of the more frequent questions I get from residents is *“when will you be repaving my street?”* I’m happy to report in 2020, our DPW department repaired miles of City roadways, added new sidewalks and installed thousands of feet of water, sewer lines. In addition, they have completed phase three of the lead service replacement project and will start the final phase in the spring.

I invite everyone to visit the city’s homepage and view the “capital projects” link [Marlborough Works for You! 2020 Capital Improvement Projects \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.marlborough.com/arcgis/homepage/capital-projects) to see the ongoing investments we are making to improve roadways around the City.

We will continue our road work in 2021 and it will be another busy spring for road construction this year.

This past summer, when reopening costs overburdened our restaurants and small businesses, the Marlborough Economic Development Corporation launched a small business relief grant program assisting 33 small businesses with grants totaling \$130,000. Funds were utilized to assist for outdoor dining, the purchasing of personal protective equipment and other reopening costs.

To help the restaurant community, the licensing board stepped up and helped expedite their process to help expand outdoor dining quickly after the state rolled back the restrictions. Additionally, MEDC continued a partnership with the Phantom Gourmet, giving Marlborough restaurants unique promotional opportunities such as the Virtual Taste of Marlborough which reached over 23,000 people on Facebook alone.

Although, the daily news reports the high unemployment rate, I can tell you that here, in Marlborough, our employers are hiring. I don't recall a time when we had employers contact

the Mayor's Office for help in filling their staffing needs, but they are doing so now. Check out the Marlborough Economic Development Corp web site [Marlborough Jobs - Marlborough Economic Development Corporation \(marlboroughedc.com\)](http://MarlboroughJobs-MarlboroughEconomicDevelopmentCorporation(marlboroughedc.com)) for job openings at many of our local businesses.

Employers continue to be attracted to our community for the access to major roadways, our talent pool, cost of doing business, assistance in getting through the municipal process and the many amenities that Marlborough has to offer. Most recently, Sartorius, a leading international, life science and research company announced plans to come to the City. They anticipate creating 100 new jobs enhancing our job creation and expanding our tax base.

In November, the City Council approved a TIF for another life science company planning to invest \$115 million in Marlborough, building a new manufacturing facility at The Campus. Revance Therapeutics currently based in California will expand their operations here in Marlborough bringing 76 new jobs to our city, further solidifying our reputation as a life science hub in the Commonwealth.

We started to make real progress in connecting the big companies in our community to the students in our schools. Quest Diagnostics participated in a livestreaming event that was integrated into virtual learning giving our students an inside look at a company right here in Marlborough that is on the front lines fighting the pandemic each and every day.

We've begun work to revitalize the French Hill neighborhood. In 2019, the City received a MassWorks grant to provide infrastructure improvements and upgrades along Lincoln Street from Broad Street to the Assabet River Rail Trail. This is a multi-year project encompassing community planning, parking study, and acquisition of key sites.

Although we had put a pause on spending and capital projects, I look forward to getting the Library project moving forward in the next couple of months. Moving them to their temporary home at the Walker Building and starting construction.

I also look forward to working with the City Council on starting the public process of identifying a location for our west side fire station and purchase the necessary land.

Over the next couple months, I will be announcing a City foundation. This perpetual foundation will initially fundraise to help our city students get the specific training for employment our public-school system does not have the resources to provide. It will continue with assisting in raising the needed funds to support the needs of the library toward their \$2.5M goal. More on this soon. In short, while we recognize and strive to improve services or the way we conduct business, we have a lot going well for us. Marlborough continues to build on its strong foundation due to the partnership with City Council, School Committee and working collaboration between city departments, and numerous civic and business leaders. I want to thank all of you who have been and continue to be part of Marlborough's continued success story. I look forward to getting students back to school, all residents and businesses back to work and get back to being as normal as possible.

Thank you all for your time today.

May God bless the City of Marlborough and United States of America.