

Inaugural & Reorganization of City Government
Monday, January 5, 2026
Wiggin Auditorium 7:00p.m.

THANK YOU. GOOD EVENING, RABBI SHEINHAIT,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. I AM HONORED TO BE
HERE WITH YOU THIS EVENING.

HOW ABOUT THOSE PATRIOTS?! IT WAS SUPPOSED
TO BE A REBUILDING YEAR. NOW WE'RE IN THE
PLAYOFFS AND POSSIBLY LOOKING AT A RETURN
TO THE SUPER BOWL! HERE IN PEABODY, WE
SHARE THAT SAME OUTLOOK—FOCUSED ON
WHAT'S NEXT AND READY FOR BIG THINGS.

LET ME START BY RECOGNIZING MY FAMILY:

IT IS MY PRIVILEGE TO RECOGNIZE OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE TONIGHT INCLUDING SENATOR JOAN LOVELY, REPRESENTATIVES TOM WALSH & SALLY KERANS, DISTRICT ATTORNEY PAUL TUCKER, SHERIFF KEVIN COPPINGER, AND REGISTRAR OF DEEDS EILEEN DUFF.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP, FRIENDSHIP AND FOR YOUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO OUR CITY AND OUR STATE.

THANK YOU TO OUR CITY DEPARTMENT HEADS, STAFF, AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES FOR DEDICATING THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIVES TOWARDS IMPROVING OUR CITY.

OF COURSE, I WANT TO RECOGNIZE OUR MILITARY VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES AND SAY THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY. OUR TRUE HEROES.

THANK YOU AS WELL TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY AS POLICE OFFICERS AND FIREFIGHTERS. WE ARE FOREVER GRATEFUL TO YOUR COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SAFETY AND FOR YOUR SACRIFICE ON OUR BEHALF.

CITY COUNCIL REORGANIZATION

CONGRATULATIONS TO MY GOOD FRIEND MIKE HIGGINS ON HIS ELECTION AS COUNCIL PRESIDENT. MIKE IS A STRONG VOICE FOR THE RESIDENTS OF WARD SIX AND BRINGS A THOUGHTFUL VISION FOR MAKING PEABODY AN EVEN BETTER CITY. THE COUNCIL WILL BE IN GOOD HANDS IN 2026.

THANK YOU TO OUTGOING COUNCIL PRESIDENT JULIE DAIGLE. DURING HER TERM AS PRESIDENT, JULIE MADE SURE EVERY MEETING WAS ACCESSIBLE AND FRAMED DISCUSSIONS IN A WAY THAT WAS EASY FOR CITIZENS TO GRASP – ENSURING NO ONE FELT LEFT OUT OF LOCAL ISSUES.

AND I WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO THANK THE CITY COUNCIL, THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE, AND ALL OUR CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS FOR THE COLLABORATION AND CIVILITY THEY HAVE DEMONSTRATED OVER THE PAST YEAR.

IN A TIME WHEN PUBLIC DISCOURSE CAN BE SO DIVISIVE, YOUR ABILITY TO WORK TOGETHER RESPECTFULLY AND CONSTRUCTIVELY HAS SET AN EXAMPLE FOR OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

CIVILITY AND COLLABORATION ARE THE FOUNDATION OF EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT. OUR SHARED COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SERVICE KEEPS THE BEST INTEREST OF OUR RESIDENTS AND TAXPAYERS AT THE CENTER OF EVERY DECISION.

PLEASE KNOW HOW DEEPLY I APPRECIATE THE TONE AND TEAMWORK THAT YOU HAVE ALL BROUGHT TO THE TABLE.

AS WE LOOK AHEAD TO THE COMING YEAR, I FEEL BOTH A DEEP SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND GENUINE OPTIMISM. THIS YEAR IS NOT ABOUT MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO—IT'S ABOUT DELIVERING ON THE GENERATIONAL PROJECTS ALREADY IN MOTION WHILE CONTINUING TO PLAN FOR TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES.

FIRST, LET ME HIGHLIGHT THREE PROJECTS UNDERWAY THAT WILL HELP SHAPE PEABODY'S FUTURE.

OUR CITY WILL SOON BE HOME TO A NEW PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY THAT HOUSES THE PEABODY POLICE DEPARTMENT AND SERVES AS ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AND OUR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES.

THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF POLICE CHIEF TOM GRIFFIN, FIRE CHIEF JAY DOWLING AND THEIR TEAMS, A FULL TRANSITION PLAN IS ALREADY UNDERWAY TO ENSURE A SEAMLESS MOVE. THE PROJECT IS ON BUDGET AND IS EVEN RUNNING A BIT AHEAD OF SCHEDULE FOR A GRAND OPENING THIS FALL.

IN 2024, WE EMBARKED UPON THE CENTRAL STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, WITH \$20 MILLION IN STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDS TO COMPLETELY REBUILD THE CORRIDOR. BEGINNING AT ITS INTERSECTION WITH WALNUT STREET NEAR DUNKIN DONUTS AND CONTINUING THROUGH THE INTERSECTION OF ENDICOTT STREET AND ROUTE 114 AT WILSON SQUARE.

WHEN IT STARTED, I SAID THIS PROJECT WOULD BE A MONSTER AND IT HAS CERTAINLY LIVED UP TO THAT EXPECTATION. REPLACING WELL OVER A CENTURY-OLD DRAINAGE AND ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE WITH MODERN SYSTEMS IS COMPLEX WORK, AND IT'S CREATED REAL INCONVENIENCES FOR RESIDENTS, BUSINESS OWNERS, AND DRIVERS.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT WE HEAR YOU, ARE WORKING ON IMPROVEMENTS AND WE APPRECIATE YOUR PATIENCE. THESE SHORT-TERM HARDSHIPS WILL LEAD TO LONG-TERM BENEFITS THAT WILL GREATLY IMPROVE DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC FLOW, ACCESSIBILITY, AND THE SAFETY AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF COUNTLESS PEABODY RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS.

THE NEW PEABODY VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL WILL BE THE LARGEST CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN OUR CITY'S HISTORY. WE HAVE WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THIS, AND IT IS GOING TO BE AN ABSOLUTE GAME-CHANGER FOR OUR STUDENTS, PROVIDING THE MODERN FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES THEY DESERVE.

TO HELP ENSURE ITS SUCCESS, I HAVE APPOINTED A SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE COMPRISED OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS WITH DEEP EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATION, CONSTRUCTION, AND THE SKILLED TRADES. THIS TEAM INCLUDES EXPERTS WHO UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITIES OF MODERN SCHOOL DESIGN, THE PRACTICAL REALITIES OF BUILDING SYSTEMS, AND THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS. THEIR COMBINED KNOWLEDGE ENSURES THAT EVERY DECISION—FROM CLASSROOM LAYOUT TO INFRASTRUCTURE—REFLECTS BOTH BEST PRACTICES AND THE LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF PEABODY. WE ARE COMMITTED TO DELIVER THIS PROJECT THROUGH CLEAR, PHASED MILESTONES, MAINTAINING FULL TRANSPARENCY ON COSTS, AND PROVIDING REGULAR PUBLIC UPDATES EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. THIS YEAR THE SCHOOL

BUILDING COMMITTEE HAS HAD SEVERAL PLANNING AND ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS, BUT IN 2026 THE EXCITING WORK BEGINS TO HAPPEN. LATER THIS WINTER WE WILL BE SELECTING OUR CITY'S OWNER'S PROJECT MANAGER AND THIS SPRING/ SUMMER WE WILL BE SELECTING OUR ARCHITECT AND DESIGN TEAM. I CAN'T WAIT TO TAKE THESE NEXT STEPS.

BEFORE I LEAVE THE TOPIC OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS, WE'VE DELIVERED ON TWO MAJOR INVESTMENTS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS, TWO SCHOOL BUILDINGS WELL OVER 50 YEARS OLD. THE WELCH SCHOOL NOW STANDS AS AN ALMOST COMPLETELY NEW FACILITY, PROVIDING MODERN CLASSROOMS AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS YEAR-ROUND.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE CENTER SCHOOL HAS BEEN REVITALIZED, ENSURING THAT IT REMAINS A VIBRANT, WELCOMING PLACE FOR LEARNING. THESE COMPLETED PROJECTS REFLECT OUR COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION AND TO GIVING EVERY CHILD IN PEABODY THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED.

OUR COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT TO OUR SCHOOLS IS CLEAR AND EVIDENT AND OUR ABILITY TO HANDLE CHALLENGING AND DIVERSE PROJECTS, A TESTAMENT TO OUR TALENTED CITY AND SCHOOL TEAMS, IS TRIED AND PROVEN. WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY BUILT NEW WITH OUR HIGGINS MIDDLE SCHOOL OPENING 8 YEARS AGO. AND WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY EXTENDED THE LIFE CYCLES OF TWO IMPORTANT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN A COST-CONSCIOUS MANNER AND

WITH CARE AND COMPASSION. NOW WE AS A COMMUNITY ARE READY FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL.

IN 2026, WE WILL CONTINUE LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEABODY TO PROSPER.

WE ARE WORKING TO FINALIZE AN AGREEMENT TO PURCHASE 164 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE FROM ROUSSELOT. THIS LAND PURCHASE INCLUDES SIGNIFICANT WATER WELL SOURCES THAT WITH PROPER INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE, WILL PROVIDE PEABODY RESIDENTS WITH MILLIONS OF GALLONS OF *ADDITIONAL* DRINKING WATER.

THE PURCHASE COULD FURTHER LESSEN OUR CITY'S RELIANCE ON EXPENSIVE MWRA WATER

AND MAY PROVIDE THE CITY WITH A SIGNIFICANT NEW REVENUE SOURCE GOING FORWARD.

I WANT TO CLARIFY THAT THIS ACQUISITION DOES NOT INCLUDE THE ROUSSELOT FACTORY SITE. THAT PROPERTY IS CURRENTLY BEING MARKETED BY ITS OWNER TO PRIVATE DEVELOPERS. WHILE THAT PROCESS CONTINUES, WE WILL MONITOR THE SITUATION CLOSELY.

IF THOSE EFFORTS DO NOT MOVE FORWARD, WE WILL CONSIDER OTHER OPTIONS—SUCH AS POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS OR ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES—TO ENSURE ANY FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IS THOUGHTFUL AND CREATES NEW REVENUE, JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEABODY.

OUR VISION 2035 MASTER PLAN IS NOW COMPLETE AND READY TO BE PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL AND THE PUBLIC.

THIS PLAN REPRESENTS MANY MONTHS OF COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, OUTLINING A CLEAR ROADMAP FOR PEABODY'S LONG-TERM FUTURE— ADDRESSING LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, AND OPEN SPACE IN WAYS THAT REFLECT OUR SHARED VALUES.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE *CENTENNIAL PARK* MASTER PLAN FOCUSES ON TARGETED GROWTH, MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS, AND DESIGN STANDARDS TO STRENGTHEN ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC HUBS.

CENTENNIAL PARK IS THE REGION'S MOST ACCESSIBLE BUSINESS PARKS, AND ITS FUTURE IS BRIGHT, INCLUDING THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE ANALOGIC SITE—A PROJECT THAT INCLUDES 700,000 SQUARE FEET OF NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH WILL GENERATE NEW REVENUE FOR THE PEABODY AND JOBS FOR OUR RESIDENTS.

SPEAKING OF NEW REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES, WE ARE ALSO CONTINUING TO EVALUATE OPTIONS FOR THE CITY'S LANDFILL. THIS SITE REPRESENTS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF SIGNIFICANT NEW REVENUE, AND WE ARE APPROACHING IT WITH

CAREFUL, STRATEGIC DUE DILIGENCE—ENSURING FULL ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND PRIORITIZING COMMUNITY BENEFITS.

OUR GOAL IS TO MAKE ANY FUTURE USE OF THIS SITE THOUGHTFUL, RESPONSIBLE, AND BENEFICIAL FOR PEABODY.

IN ADDITION TO THESE MAJOR INITIATIVES, WE'RE FOCUSED ON PROJECTS THAT ENHANCE EVERYDAY LIFE FOR OUR RESIDENTS. THE EXTENSION OF THE BIKE PATH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RIVERWALK WILL CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION AND CONNECTIVITY, MAKING PEABODY MORE VIBRANT AND ACCESSIBLE.

THIS SPRING, I WILL PRESENT A COMPREHENSIVE MUNICIPAL BUSINESS PLAN TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

THIS PLAN MODERNIZES OUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, UPDATES JOB DESCRIPTIONS, AND ALIGNS ROLES WITH PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY—ENSURING CITY GOVERNMENT OPERATES EFFICIENTLY, TRANSPARENTLY, AND WITH A CLEAR FOCUS ON RESULTS.

WE MAINTAIN A DISCIPLINED PIPELINE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, PRIORITIZING INVESTMENTS IN PUBLIC SAFETY, SCHOOLS, WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE, ROADS, AND PARKS—ENSURING THAT EVERY DOLLAR

STRENGTHENS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR COMMUNITY.

LAST MONTH, I PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL AN UPDATE ON THE STATE OF OUR CITY'S FINANCES. ONCE AGAIN, THIS YEAR, NON-DISCRETIONARY BUDGET OBLIGATIONS ARE PUTTING EXTREME PRESSURE ON OUR BUDGET AND INCREASED BURDEN ON OUR TAXPAYERS.

BUT THE NEWS IS NOT ALL BLEAK. THAT'S BECAUSE IN PEABODY, OUR LOCAL ECONOMY CONTINUES TO SHINE. WHILE HOME VALUES KEEP CLIMBING, UP ANOTHER 5.8% THIS YEAR, IN FACT I READ THIS WEEKENED A REPORT FROM BOSTON 25 NEWS THAT LISTED PEABODY IN ITS TOP 10 HOTTEST REAL ESTATE MARKETS IN MASSACHUSETTS. I'LL BE GETTING MORE

INFORMATION OUT SHORTLY BUT IT'S ANOTHER TESTAMENT TO THE WORK WE ARE DOING HERE IN PEABODY.

BUT THIS YEAR IT'S OUR COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL BOOM THAT'S REALLY STEALING THE SPOTLIGHT WITH AN IMPRESSIVE 11.7% LEAP FROM LAST YEAR. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN DECADES THAT PEABODY'S COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL GROWTH HAS SURPASSED ITS RESIDENTIAL.

WHILE RISING COSTS REMAIN A VERY REAL CHALLENGE, WE HAVE ENCOURAGING ECONOMIC NEWS THAT HELPS EASE THE BURDEN. I'M CONFIDENT THAT PEABODY WILL NAVIGATE THESE CHALLENGING TIMES SUCCESSFULLY— AND EMERGE EVEN STRONGER.

CAREFUL OVERSIGHT, PLANNING, AND OPPORTUNITY—THESE WILL DEFINE OUR WORK IN THE YEAR AHEAD, AND THEY WILL DEFINE THE LEGACY WE LEAVE FOR THIS CITY.

THIS IS OUR MOMENT. I CAN’T WAIT TO CONTINUE THIS MEANINGFUL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL WORK. THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT AND I’M PROUD TO WORK WITH ALL OF YOU TO CONTINUE TO SECURE PEABODY’S FUTURE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME!

THANK YOU.