



150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702
Ph: 508-532-5437
www.framinghamma.gov

**State of the City 2019
Framingham
Mayor Yvonne M. Spicer**

Good Evening!

Welcome to Framingham's State of the City address.

Thank you to all the residents joining us tonight and those that are watching at home.

I'd like to welcome to the City of Framingham our state and local legislative guests and other elected officials:

- Lt. Governor, Karen Polito
- Treasurer and Receiver-General of Massachusetts, Deborah Goldberg
- Massachusetts State Auditor, Suzanne Bump
- Our Representatives –Carmine Gentile; Jack Lewis; and Maria Robinson
- District Counsel from Congresswoman Katherine Clark's office, Wade Blackman
- Mayor Marty Walsh and other Mayors from around the Commonwealth
- Representatives from the offices of U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey, Congresswoman Katherine Clark, Senate President Karen Spilka and Sherriff Koutoujian.
- Framingham City Councilors; Chaired by Dennis Giombetti
- Framingham School Committee; Chaired by Adam Freudberg
- Framingham School Superintendent Dr. Robert Tremblay;
- Framingham Boards and Commissions Members;
- As well as local spiritual leaders
- Last but not least, division heads, department heads and all our city employees, THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE TONIGHT!

We have just completed our first year as a city. And what a year it has been!

We became the newest city in Massachusetts on January 1, 2018. You elected a Mayor, 11 City Councilors and 9 School Committee members.

You also voted for change. With your vote, you embraced Framingham's potential, and I thank you!

I wake up every day with one focus and that is moving the needle forward for our City. In the words of author James Baldwin, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

I acknowledge the challenges that have long existed in our community, and I am facing them head on with deliberate action to resolve them. And we have just begun.



You may remember that when I came into office just twelve months ago, I committed to a smooth transition from a town to a city. It wasn't always a smooth ride. We had some bumps along the way, but with each bump, I got up, dusted myself off, learned from every situation and kept moving!

In my 100-day address, I committed to excellence in education. I wanted to:

- invigorate our economy;
- preserve our assets;
- And of course, invest in our people.

I'm proud of what we've accomplished this past year and what we will accomplish moving forward together.

When I walked through the doors of City Hall as Framingham's first elected Mayor last January, I went straight to work. With residents always at the forefront of my mind, transitioning from a town to a city was more than just changing our name and logo.

It was about establishing our new identity, broadening how Framingham is viewed internally AND externally. It been about building relationships within our City, our state and our country.

The fact that we have so many significant elected officials who took time out of their busy schedules to be here tonight is indicative that they are invested in Framingham's success and our voice is being heard!

In 2018, the City of Framingham was busy! In the Mayor's Office:

- We created a forum to engage residents through Community Conversations - on topics ranging from Economic Development to the Opioid Crisis. We instituted community coffee hours, as well as City Hall office hours for the public.
- We established regular office hours for City Councilors, and I have standing weekly meeting with the Chair of the City Council to keep the channels of communication open and consistent.
- We created an on-line portal to apply for positions on boards and commissions.
- We signed on to Employers Against Domestic Violence, and our HR Department led an effort to provide Domestic Violence Prevention Training for our City's employees.
- We reinstated the Flag Day Parade after a 14 –year hiatus, and planning for 2019 is underway.
- We conducted events like the first-ever City Hall and Downtown Business Halloween celebration and trick-or-treat night. It was a huge success and brought many families into downtown for a night of fun with City Hall employees and local merchants.
- We supported a healthy Framingham through programs like the Brazilian Health Fair at St. Tarcisus and the Community Health Fair at Nevins Hall.
- We championed transgender rights and LGBTQ Rights in our work place and established our first ever policy for gender neutral Athletics in Framingham schools.
- We conducted Framingham's second gun buyback program, taking 150 guns off the street, including five assault rifles.
- As Mayor, I filed a lawsuit against the opioid manufacturers on behalf of the City to address the devastating impact of opioid dependency on our community.



- I joined with other Mayors from across the nation in signing resolutions including Net Neutrality, Gun Violence and Equal Pay for Women.
- I also joined with other Mayors in a collaboration with the Equal Justice Initiative, signing a Resolution for Inclusive and Compassionate cities and attending the inaugural summit to address this.
- In order to jumpstart re-development in our downtown, I applied for an opportunity zone designation and was accepted by Governor Baker's administration and the U.S. Department of Treasury.

Our City departments have ALSO been busy.

- The Framingham Public Schools launched their Strategic Plan in September. This road map will provide strong, meaningful guidance as we move into the future.
- The Library reached its Bookmobile fundraising goal in 2018. Be on the lookout for this mobile learning center, which hits the road in April.
- Over 850,000 items were borrowed from the library. Our libraries provided 152,500 hours of free Wi-Fi.
- The City of Framingham's financial footing is solid. We continue to implement many financial best practices, including creating and properly funding reserves, addressing our pension and OPEB liabilities, creating financial forecasts, and creating and implementing long-range capital investment plans. We have an excellent credit rating and competition for our bond offerings is robust.
- Both our property value and the income of our residents has increased substantially. City-wide taxable property value is certified by the state at \$9.8 billion, representing growth in value of \$1.3 billion. \$132 million of that increase is from new development within the city.
- We closed the last fiscal year with a modest positive balance, living within the voted budget. The City's local revenue remains stable. We continue to advocate for revenue sharing equity at the state level and have benefited greatly from the stewardship of our legislative delegation with regard to education aid.
- We continue to invest in the highest priorities for our residents: education, public safety and utility infrastructure.
- In 2018, Framingham applied for and received nearly \$6 million dollars in grants. These grants helped to fund transportation and utility design projects; improvements in fish and wildlife habitats, and storm resiliency; reduction of overcrowding in our schools; emergency aid for residents; and much more for our City.
- We established an internal framework for communicating and sharing data across divisions. The goal is to foster collaboration. We intend to post real time stats from all the divisions to enhance transparency to the community.
- The sanitation department collected 18,440 tons of recyclables and trash. Over 30% of that were recyclables!
- We had a number of snowstorms last season, but none compared to the one in March, which brought down limbs and trees, and knocked out power for much of the city. The Department of Public Works did a special brush collection just for that storm, resulting in the removal of 6,000 cubic yards of debris and nearly 3,000 tree limbs.



- The fire department responded to 19,192 incidents, which is up 5% from 2017.
- Inspectional services processed over 9,000 permits in 2018, collecting approximately 4.2 million dollars, an increase of 1.3 million dollars over 2017.

Phew! And we have only just begun!

While the City was running, I needed to establish my leadership team. The fact that I had a completely clean slate was exciting and daunting. I strategically built a team that would help execute my vision for Framingham.

I have built a mayor's office that reflects an investment in talent that is diverse and mirrors the city in which we live. My office is diverse in race, language, gender, age and culture, and collectively has talent and expertise in a broad range of areas. Most importantly, my team is committed to working side by side to build a brighter Framingham.

I relied on my experiences as a leader, executive and teacher to establish a framework for our leaders in city government.

This framework has a targeted focus on communication, collaboration, commitment and cooperation. With the hire of Thatcher Kezer III as our City's first Chief Operating Officer, I have an experienced senior leader at my right hand to help guide this work.

I was fortunate to have a well-established cadre of 11 division heads who give Framingham their very best every single day.

As your new Mayor, I had to earn the division heads' trust, confidence and respect. I believe that mission has been accomplished, and the pendulum swings both ways! I'm also proud to call the 692 City workers and 1,595 school employees my co-workers!

While I was setting up my leadership team, I also needed to establish two brand-new commissions, Licensing and Traffic. In addition, I appointed approximately 160 residents to Framingham's 31 existing boards and commissions!

I'm proud to say that we've increased both diversity and newcomer participation. Every single member is motivated by one thing - to do their very best in serving Framingham.

Currently there are just a few slots still open on Boards and Commissions. I'm looking forward to working with our City Council to get those slots filled.

Our City consists of the executive branch, which is the Mayor's office, and the legislative branch, which is our City Council. We worked to lay the foundation of our new form of government, implementing the tenets of the Charter while finding our respective roles as the Executive and Legislative branches of government.



150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702
Ph: 508-532-5437
www.framinghamma.gov

The last year has been marked by some highs and lows. And honestly, it's sometimes been challenging. But when it really mattered, we united for a better Framingham. After all, you elected us - each City Councilor, School Committee Member and me - for the sake of change and to make Framingham better.

One example of how Framingham's governmental branches came together for excellent results is the Fuller Middle School opportunity.

On December 11, everyone's hard work produced a victory as 84% of the votes approved the debt exclusion to pay for the City's share of the estimated 98.3-million-dollar school building.

Fuller Middle School is a STEAM school. Thank you to Governor Baker's administration for leading the way nationwide in STEM education through the STEM Advisory Council. I appreciate the chance to work with Lieutenant Governor Polito on this Council.

Because of decisive and united action, Framingham will receive funding from Massachusetts to pay for 40% of the new Fuller Middle School! 39.5 million dollars will come from the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Thank you MSBA and Treasurer Deb Goldberg!

The new school will be a game changer in how we educate children and will make Framingham more appealing for families for decades to come.

And we have only just begun!

Sometimes our City's successes are not as visible. They might be challenges that are resolved before they become real problems.

If this story had a title it would be "How a Mobile Phone and the DPW Saved the Day."

On October 13th, the Water Department responded to a potentially disastrous failure of a major water pipe on Grove Street. The pipe developed a leak during the dark of night.

Our DPW team was immediately alerted via their mobile phones and were able to respond quickly because of our state-of-the-art monitoring and communications network.

Armed with real time data and the proper emergency response training, these Framingham heroes bypassed the failed main and were able to make the repair without impacting residents. Without all of this, there would have been a significant loss of water service to the entire Northwest Quadrant. Thank you, DPW!

So, while we are managing current challenges, I remain present and focused. Last year, one area that I promised to focus on was Excellence in Education.



150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702
Ph: 508-532-5437
www.framinghamma.gov

The Framingham Public Schools believe that learning takes place everywhere, not just in the classroom. Instructional learning platforms have been expanded, and the introduction of “No Homework Nights” encourages students to connect with new ways to learn.

The School Department has been focusing on improving communication and increasing outreach. Upgrades to the district website and more consistent use of social media have been highlights of connection.

Framingham Public Schools work hard to meet the needs and interests of a wide range of students.

2018 saw the exciting expansion of the Bilingual Two Way Language program to now include Portuguese. And next school year will see both the Spanish and Portuguese programs being offered at twice as many schools. What a gem this is for Framingham families!

Our schools offer enviable electives and extra-curricular activities. Our students can participate in NATIONAL award-winning TV productions, internationally acclaimed performing arts programs, and world-class Robotics programs. This makes Framingham Public Schools a draw for families.

We are proud of our 8500 + scholars!

As promised, another area of my focus has been invigorating our economy through planned growth and balanced development.

I’m proud to report that we managed a pipeline of large projects downtown, furthering the transit-oriented development plan and adding nearly 900 housing units within walking distance of the Commuter Rail Station.

I believe our downtown will thrive with new investments and businesses that offer additional jobs and opportunities.

To support our efforts to revitalize Downtown, Framingham was selected to participate in the prestigious Mayors’ Institute of City Design. We received free expert advice on urban planning, landscape architecture, innovative design and transformation of underutilized spaces. I expect to receive our final report by early spring and look forward to implementing these ideas.

On Inauguration Day, I told you I was putting out the shingle that Framingham is open for business. I have done just that! The city has seen increased interest from new businesses, across a variety of sectors.

A sampling of the businesses that opened in Framingham in 2018 include: Saxonville Mills Café & Roastery; MetroWest Medical Robotics; a new Route 9 X-finity office; MiniBites bakery; and C’mondz and Pollo Royal restaurants!



150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702
Ph: 508-532-5437
www.framinghamma.gov

In June, Framingham, along with other MetroWest partners, hosted a tour for Life Sciences executives from around the world to highlight all we have to offer.

Framingham is already nurturing a cluster of Life Sciences companies, like Sanofi, Berg, and Alira Health; startup companies like Kephera Diagnostics, Alzheon and Qura and growing biomanufacturers like Replimune.

Combining the Arts with businesses is the kind of community-focused thinking I like to see. When Exhibit A Brewing Company hosts performances by Mass Ballet and events with Centre Music House, it is the kind of synergy that benefits the entire community.

We recently completed the Golden Triangle study with Natick and now have a joint vision for a 3-phase project and action plan. It will focus on traffic flow and transportation, urban design, and zoning & regulatory changes. We are ready to get to work with our neighbor on this important area that we share.

Building a strong economy goes hand in hand with investing in our safety.

The Saxonville Fire Station was identified as needing to be replaced 61 years ago. I am proud to say that we are building a new fire station in Saxonville, and it will open this year. This will be our first new station since 1993!

This past year, our fire department instituted an emergency preparedness program called "Stop the Bleed." They taught first responders, teachers and coaches the basic techniques of bleeding control so that they can help large groups of people before additional medical help arrives.

The fire department also added a Social Worker to help Framingham residents after emergency incidents. The goal is to provide wrap around services to families in crisis. This has become a model for the state and the Framingham Fire Department is leading the way!

We hired a new Police Chief, Steven Trask, a 33-year veteran of the Framingham Police Department. Since taking on his new role, Chief Trask has increased police presence with a focus on community policing. He has built a leadership team that is reflective of Framingham demographics by promoting Framingham's first African American and first Portuguese-speaking Deputy Chiefs.

Framingham hired 12 new officers and promoted 3 sergeants and 2 lieutenants. Partnering with our schools, we added 2 new School Resource Officers. Keeping our community safe is a top priority!!

In a collaboration between Police, Fire and Schools, we hired a new Director of School Safety to improve our Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan.

And we have just begun!

Framingham's Public Health Department is also doing some remarkable things!



Like many other communities, we are focused on the opioid crisis. Our Public Health Department was the first in the Commonwealth to offer free Narcan, the medicine used to treat narcotic drug overdose.

The Department also provides complimentary Narcan training and safety kits to local businesses and organization.

A number of the residents of South Framingham experience significantly worse health outcomes than the rest of our City. In response to this, the Public Health Department has launched the South Framingham Initiative, partnering with the MetroWest Health Foundation. The goal of this project is to ensure that access to healthcare is available for our entire community. By engaging individuals who live in South Framingham, we will improve the quality of life for these underserved residents.

Engagement of our residents across all 18 precincts and 9 districts is very important to me. I seek wide participation in government throughout our city with a focus on diversity—racial, linguistic, socio-economic and geographical. I will not be satisfied until everyone in our community feels that they have a voice at the table!

This year, I will launch the 2030 Advisory Council. This Council will be comprised of Framingham residents ages 21-35. The goals are to foster community and civic engagement, facilitate communication with City Hall, and advocate on behalf of the interests of younger residents. I look forward to working with Framingham's Future Leaders!

We hired the City's first Citizen Participation Officer, Alaa Abusalah, to engage residents with Framingham City Hall. She's been working in her new role for about six weeks. I'm excited to announce for the first time here that Alaa will be leading the roll out of a new program called Framingham 101 Citizens Academy.

This program is a direct result of what I learned during my coffee conversations. The program's goal is to engage residents in a variety of municipal functions, while helping them cultivate a better understanding of their community.

In 2018, we redesigned our website to be much more user-friendly and continue to refine it. For instance, you can choose to view our information in multiple languages by clicking at the top of our landing page.

We created a financial transparency center. The goal is to show how our resources are spent in the City, and compare progress year to year.

I encourage you to report problems in the community through See, Click, Fix. I invite you to sign up for *Notify Me* to stay up to date on what is happening in our city.

So, I've touched a bit on education, the economy, safety, health and technology. Those are vital for any community. But everyone wants to love where they live, too. I am working to make Framingham more accessible, livable and enjoyable for everyone.



Our Facilities team is hard at work. In addition to maintaining the City's 19 properties, they've been renovating our historic Village Hall to fix termite and fire damage and to make it accessible to all. The improvements will be completed very soon.

They also managed a \$ 6 million-dollar renovation of Loring Arena. Both of these buildings are community assets that only serve to enhance the quality of life in Framingham!

To support our efforts to be a Green community, we hired Shawn Luz, our first Sustainability Coordinator. He is tasked with finding cost savings and energy efficiencies to reduce Framingham's carbon footprint.

The Parks and Recreation team also had a busy year.

The Parks Maintenance Department provided safe and well-maintained facilities for thousands of scheduled events in 2018.

The Recreation Department provides programs for residents from children to older adults.

A community highlight is the popular "Friday Night Concerts on the Green."

The Department sponsored many other special events last year. Residents had the opportunity for fun and togetherness at events like the Family Fun and Movie Night at Bowditch Field, the EGGciting Egg Hunt, and Pumpkins in the Park.

We even opened up a Skate Park in 2018!

Being stewards of our planet is an awesome responsibility and in Framingham we do our part to preserve open spaces, create trails and enhance our parks. I'm committed to exploring financial options such as the Community Preservation Act. I will work closely with our state delegation to pursue funding from the Environmental Bond Bill for our trails.

This year, we opened up the Sudbury River Nature Trail thanks to a more than \$300 thousand dollar grant. We also debuted the Baiting Brook Meadow Farm Trail off of Nixon Road, and laid the groundwork for the next phase of the Cochituate Rail Trail.

I want to guarantee that generations to come will enjoy resources such as these trails, Callahan State Park, Farm Pond and Cushing Memorial Park. We are building a community for the future— And we have just begun! In my first year as Mayor, several people have inspired me.

During my listening visits at our assisted living facilities like Brookdale, Heritage, and the Shillman House, as well as the Callahan Center, I was moved by the sage wisdom and joyful spark of our older adults.



150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702
Ph: 508-532-5437
www.framinghamma.gov

I want to tell you about Agnes Marinelli, whom I met on the campaign trail. Agnes, a 94-year-old Italian immigrant, lived in Framingham for 53 years. She settled here with her husband and raised three sons. She was a proud employee of the Framingham Public Schools.

During a visit with her over coffee and pizelle, she said to me, “lead with integrity and honesty because if you have that you have everything!”

Agnes passed away in February 2018. It is her words – Honesty; Integrity - that motivate and guide me as I make decisions for our city.

As your Mayor, to lead our city with honesty and integrity serves to build YOUR trust in me and your faith in my leadership.

I think of my visits to the various houses of worship. We have prayed together, grieved together and lifted each other up. I thank the Framingham spiritual leaders for the numerous opportunities to know them and their communities better.

We are a community that stands together through good and challenging times, like the tragedy at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. Just a few days later at our own Temple Beth Am, Framingham joined as one to stand united against hate.

As a community that grieves together, we understand loss. In 2017, we lost one of our very own, Devin Suau. We now have the opportunity to live by his truth and message – to be kind to one another. On October 20th, I proclaimed Devin Suau Day and requested residents perform an act of kindness to honor his spirit.

For me, our people are the core of Framingham. First and foremost, I lead with compassion. As I vowed last January, investing in our people is a critical pillar of my leadership. This investment includes recognizing our diversity and encouraging inclusion, respecting our LGBTQ neighbors, caring for our older adults, strengthening families, providing opportunities for women, and welcoming immigrants.

Whether I’m attending an afterschool program at Pelham Apartments, MetroWest OUT Trivia Night or sharing a meal with guests at the Pearl St. Café, our residents know Framingham is a community that cares, and that they also have a Mayor who cares!

In June, I had an opportunity to participate in the Boston Pride parade with other Mayors. It was exhilarating for me, and affirming for many of our residents.

In 2019, I plan to raise the rainbow Pride flag in front of City Hall, reaffirming that Framingham is a safe and welcoming community!

I ensure that every resident feels like an integral part of Framingham regardless of race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation or where you might live in the city. We all matter!



I'm going to push a little further to look at diversity in all its forms. I want to make sure that we are inclusive in our government, in our classrooms and in our community. I'm committed to ensuring that everyone feels welcome and safe in Framingham.

Therefore, I am once again requesting that funds be allocated in my budget to hire a Director of Diversity and Inclusion. Our City is poised for excellence, and I want to make sure that we are doing everything we can to be as welcoming and inclusive as possible. It is imperative that Framingham has a full-time leadership position to support this work.

Four key areas emerged in these first 12 months that we must focus on in 2019. They are:

1. Economic Development;
2. Housing;
3. Transportation; and
4. Education.

A strong economy is the heart and soul of a community. Our government is faced with the challenge of balancing growth and sustaining that growth. It's crucial that we do this smartly!

Essential to this is staying ahead of up-and-coming markets while supporting our existing businesses. As we invite new businesses to our community, we will do it thoughtfully to ensure they are a good fit for Framingham.

As the hub of MetroWest, we are poised to be that destination city - business friendly, progressive and bold!

And we have just begun!

Housing options are in limited supply. Options for older adults, young professionals, veterans and those with disabilities is in particularly limited supply. In addition, there is a 10-year waitlist for affordable housing in Framingham. We have to be bold and creative to make housing options throughout the City a reality.

You see, I don't believe we've explored all the possibilities. I challenge my team to look at other prospects for housing. This includes:

- mixed income housing
- creative ownership
- securing funds for rehabilitation of existing homes
- innovative partnerships with private entities, as well as the State and the Federal government.

I seek ground-breaking solutions to these complex challenges – Let's find a reason to say YES for Framingham.

Traffic and transportation are challenges in Framingham. The comfort is to know we are not unique.



150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702
Ph: 508-532-5437
www.framinghamma.gov

The hub of our public transportation is centered in Downtown. We are fortunate to have an MBTA commuter rail and regional bus system, but we need to investigate alternatives and ways to expand service.

We are exploring new ways for people to get around our City. Launching this Spring is a bike share program in partnership with a company called Zagster. This service will increase transportation options, and potentially reduce traffic and relieve the demand for parking. One cool thing about this program is that we can try it out at no cost to the City.

Building on our partnership with Peter Pan Bus Line, we're studying creative ways to alleviate traffic on our highways and expand commuter options to Boston. We want to reduce both congestion at peak hours and our carbon footprint. It's a win-win.

To ensure that Framingham's voice is heard, I joined the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition. All of the municipalities along the commuter rail lines are represented on this new Coalition. The goals include improving infrastructure and reliability of service, and expanding access and service hours on the Commuter Rail. We know that a robust, reliable transportation system will make a difference for our residents.

And with the Traffic Commission beginning their work, I know in 2019 we will be on a fast track to an improved experience when on our roadways.

And we have just begun!

My goal for education in Framingham is that everyone understands the abundance of what's available at our schools. I support Superintendent Tremblay's efforts to focus on the whole child.

Partnering with Dr. Tremblay and the School Committee and using our School Department's strategic plan as a guide, we will be looking at milestones of success. By giving our students the roots and wings they need to succeed, we are ensuring that they all can be the change agents our world demands.

I want to leave you with one final story, an example of the caliber of people in our city. In November, I met Amanda Maguire, who grew up in Framingham and is a Framingham State graduate.

Amanda has a dream of joining the United States Army Reserves as an Intelligence Officer. She told me that the diversity in Framingham made her a well-rounded individual. By the way, Amanda speaks three languages - English, Portuguese and Spanish - thanks in part to her education in the Framingham Public Schools.

This hard-working, intelligent and confident woman asked me for a letter of recommendation to include in her application. I was proud to write her letter, and even more proud to know Framingham had given her "roots and wings" to be her best!



150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702
Ph: 508-532-5437
www.framinghamma.gov

She appeared before a U.S. Army Officer Board on Dec 27th. I'm pleased to report she was accepted to Officer Candidate School and departs in April. Amanda is here tonight, and I'd like her to stand and be recognized.

The City of Framingham is a great place to be! We are well on our way to being a stellar city, with influence in our region and throughout the Commonwealth. I'm proud of what we've done this year, and we've only just begun.

Just like a house, a City needs a strong foundation.

Building on our first-year foundation, I'm confident we will continue to make progress as a new city. It will take hard work and a lot of people. I'm counting on you, Framingham. We have the chance to do extraordinary things! Now is the time - roll up your sleeves and let's make a difference TOGETHER!

Your Mayor - the people's mayor - is honored to lead the way!
And we have only just begun!

God Bless
and go Pats!!!
Good Night!