

The State of New Bedford



by
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This coming Thursday (March 24), Mayor Scott Lang will give a “State of the City” address. The State of the City address is much like the annual State of the Union address that Presidents give each year. Expect Mayor Lang to address important issues like the economy, education, public safety and other important issues to residents of New Bedford. As a preamble to the State of the City address, I thought I’d put together a State of New Bedford article presenting facts on our city.

THE GOOD



In the past year, New Bedford has had some major accomplishments and recognitions. Last October, New Bedford was spotlighted by the Massachusetts Cultural Council as a center for arts and culture and this month the National Trust for Historic Preservation recognized New Bedford as one of the 12

Distinctive Destination in The United States. Economically, New Bedford welcomed a Market Basket to the old Fairhaven Mills on Coggeshall Street, and was selected for a \$35 million dollar construction staging area for Cape Wind.

New Bedford has also gone through a significant transformation. In the past few years, downtown New Bedford

has added three non-corporate coffee shops and tons of new restaurants and eateries. UMass Dartmouth and B.C.C. have significantly increased their presence in the city over the past year. The Lofts at Wamsutta Place and The Fairfield Inn and Suites have been wonderful additions to the city, and The Regency Apartments has undergone an amazing renovation. Living in New Bedford, or visiting, has never been easier or more pleasant.

THE UGLY

Yes, New Bedford has a lot going for it, but there are some major challenges ahead for the city and its residents. The big issues are the economy, public education and public safety.

Unemployment

According to the Herald News, the New Bedford unemployment rate was at 16.4%. The Massachusetts unemployment rate is at 9% and the unemployment rate for the United States overall is at 9.5%. This puts New Bedford in the strange position of being in a state that has a lower unemployment rate than the national average, but is more than 7% higher than the state unemployment rate. Mathematically, that puts New Bedford's unemployment 55% higher than the average city in Massachusetts. The New Bedford "underemployment rate", or those working part-time but looking for full-time work, is likely somewhere around 30%. The bottom line is that the people of New Bedford are struggling to find a job they can make a living at, or finding a job at all.

Public Education

According to The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, only 53% of students that enter the New Bedford high school system will graduate. This means that for every 1,000 kids that enter our high schools, 530 will graduate. The bigger number is 470 will NOT graduate. Is there any wonder why our unemployment rate is 55% higher than

the state average? Experts will tell you that the difference in income between a college graduate and a high school graduate can be \$1 million over a lifetime, and significantly more when compared to high school dropouts.

Public safety and crime rates are also impacted by a low graduation rate. According to a nation-wide study by The Center for Labor Market Studies and reported by The New York Times, "one in every ten young male high school dropouts is in jail or juvenile detention, compared with one in 35 young male high school graduates." Based purely on these statistics, for every 1,000 kids that go through the New Bedford High School system, 470 will drop out and out of those, 47 will commit a crime that will put them in jail or juvenile detention.

New Bedford High School and Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational-Technical High School combined have approximately 5,100 students. This means roughly 2,400 kids will not graduate, resulting in 240 kids that will turn to crime and end up incarcerated every four years.

The State of the City

Like most cities, New Bedford has a LOT to be proud of, but it has even more to improve on. New Bedford is a city of proud residents that come from all walks of life. There are few cities in the world that have the rich history of New Bedford. This Thursday, Mayor Scott Lang will present his views on the state of our city. I recommend you attend, listen, and if given the chance, present your opinion on the state of the city.

The State of the City Luncheon Details

Thursday, March 24, 2011

Purchase tickets



Date: Thursday, March 24, 2011

Time: Noon – 2:00 P.M. (registration begins at 11:45 A.M.)

Location: Cafe Funchal

123 Church Street, New Bedford, MA 02745

Reservations:

\$28 per person

\$280 per table of 10

\$325 per Signed Corporate Table

New Bedford Mayor Scott Lang will give his final “State of the City” address tomorrow at 1 P.M. on WBSM 1420 AM, and on wbsm.com.