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Bringin' it all back home Governor presents budget to state from Memorial Hall



GOV. DEVAL PATRICK entered Memorial Hall for his statewide budget address to wild applause Tuesday. Among those greeting him were Lt. Gov. Tim Murray, shaking the governor's hand, and the city's Beacon Hill delegation — state Senators Richard R. Tisei and Thomas McGee and state Rep. Mike Festa — seen over Patrick's left shoulder. (Mike Angelo Photo)

By LIZ JENNINGS

MELROSE — The city was bursting with pride Tuesday night, awaiting the arrival of Gov. Deval Patrick. And why not? After all, the governor picked Melrose in which to deliver his first state budget address.

A nearly-packed house of 600 area residents chatted and fidgeted in their seats at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, adding to an electric energy as they hoped to hear good news in a speech that many said would set the tone for Patrick's term in office.

"From Melrose to Stoneham, to Wakefield to Reading, it's a night when our governor is going to bring his message to the cities and towns of the Commonwealth and I know he can hear us and I can't thank him enough for leaving Boston and coming to the suburbs to deliver his message to the people," Mayor Robert Dolan said graciously, welcoming Patrick and Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray to Melrose.

Cameras clicked, the media buzzed about the room and the crowd was on its feet, cheering and clapping as Patrick made his way to the stage, which he took promptly at 7 p.m.

He opened by handing out many thanks, adding, "It is wonderful to be back in this glorious home."

At the governor's previous stopover in Melrose — a rally in Memorial Hall during his campaign for gover-

PATRICK Page 20

Ward 2 drainage funding OK'd

MELROSE — Despite an unfinished drainage study of the city's hardest-hit flood zone, the aldermen took a leap of faith this week and approved borrowing \$8.1 million, most of which will be used to alleviate decades-old flooding problems in the northeastern part of Melrose.

The largest single public works project in the city's history — estimated to cost \$6 million — is hoped to accomplish for many residents of Ward 2 what they've wanted for years: Little or no water or sewage in their homes during heavy rains. The so-called Bennett's Pond Brook Watershed Remediation project is the city's attempt to stop the kind of major damage caused by last May's Mother's Day Flood. About 30 percent of those who

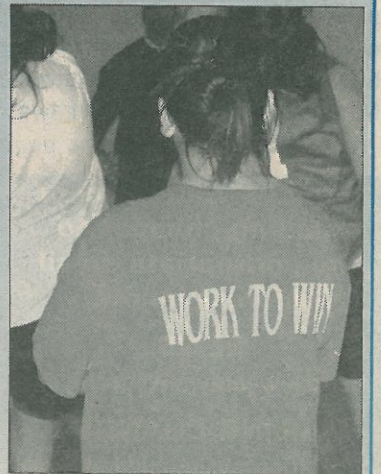
DRAINAGE Page 22



THE MOTHER'S DAY Flood last May forced about 30 percent of Ward 2 residents to relocate temporarily. These two men paddled down the middle of Bay State Road. (File Photo)

Work to Win

The girls' varsity basketball team has been working to win all season long and the results have come in the form of a number one seed and first round bye in the Division II North playoff bracket. The motto "Work to Win" is worn on the back of senior Krysta Limone as coach Rob Ferrante runs practice. The Lady Raiders have been practicing and scrimmaging in preparation for their quarterfinal game on Saturday. For complete playoff coverage, see Sports beginning on Page 13.



PATRICK continued from page 1



GOV. DEVAL PATRICK Tuesday night at Memorial Hall in Melrose. (Mike Angelo Photo)

nor — Patrick told citizens that he expected to find a \$1 billion surplus upon entering office. It was different this week. He attributed the \$1.3 billion deficit the Commonwealth is facing to low revenue growth, increases in health care costs and carried-over spending commitments.

Despite the grim news, Patrick announced that through “tough choices and creative solutions,” he and his team had closed the budget gap.

“This budget is balanced without gimmicks,” Patrick said. “We did not defer difficult decisions. We did

not use band-aids to treat symptoms and ignore their root causes. We did not square our ledger with under-the-radar fee increases. And we did not shift the financial burden onto cities and towns or public schools or poor people,” he concluded.

Patrick gave a broad overview of his proposed \$26.7 billion spending plan, which he presented to the Legislature Wednesday. The proposed plan represents a four percent increase over the \$25.6 billion budget approved last year.

His speech echoed many of his campaign promises, like increased

local aid to cities and towns, which Patrick seeks to hike by \$200 million. He also said that he would allow cities to raise revenue by imposing new taxes on meals and hotel rooms.

Following the governor’s presentation, Dolan said he was happy with what he heard but said that he didn’t expect much of an increase in state aid to Melrose. He was pleased, however, that in the wake of this reality, Patrick is giving small cities and towns the freedom and tools to manage their day-to-day affairs.

“The fact is that the local aid is going to be very low this year. I think what he said that was most important is that he feels that cities and towns can make their own decisions about taxation, about health insurance, about pension reform and decentralizing day-to-day government by taking the decisions out of the Statehouse. At the local level, we have to do the daily business of the people and that’s what we need. The money is just not there but if you give us the tools to manage, like any other business, we are going to be successful. It’s a very Republican principled idea and he gets it because he is about good ideas and about bipartisanship” Dolan said.

Patrick said he would increase funding for education by an additional \$200 million, and flashed forward to next year when he said he will invest a record \$3.7 billion in public education and resources for every single public school in Massachusetts will increase.

“I heard a good beginning,” said Superintendent Joseph Casey. “His commitment to education was very reassuring and the fact that he is going to continue to roll out an education budget so that we can have further dialogue (cities and towns, superintendents and school committees) with the governor. We look forward to working with him to craft a better education for all

School Committee member Christine Casatelli, during the question and answer period that followed the speech, asked the Governor when he expected all day kindergarten to be available and fully funded. She didn’t expect Melrose to be one of the communities to benefit from the 800 new all-day kindergarten programs Patrick promises.



SCHOOL COMMITTEEWOMAN and Melrose restaurant owner **Wendy Golini** asked Patrick about increases in restaurant tax. (Mike Angelo Photo)

students,” he concluded.

Patrick also plans to enable up to 800 new all-day kindergarten programs for between 12,000 to 15,000 students and this investment of \$39.6 million, according to the governor, represents a 46 percent increase in funding for all day K classes next year.

“He mentioned about the full day kindergarten and the 800 more classrooms. Well that’s great but is Melrose going to get any of those classrooms? Who knows? Or are they going to go to communities with lower income families, which maybe they should. That sounds great but how will that affect us?” Casatelli wondered.

When she put the question right to him, Patrick told her that there were many cities and towns who expressed they didn’t want all-day kindergarten. As a mother and a school board member, Casatelli feels that with more expected of kids today, having all-day kindergarten and a solid early beginning are vital.

Patrick also stated that he will eliminate \$295 million in what he called “unintended corporate loopholes.” He plans to tap \$225 million from the state’s rainy day and tobacco settlement funds.

He will make \$515 million in spending cuts, including \$179 million to Medicaid and \$136 million in unspecified cuts to other state programs.

He will boost community policing programs by \$13 million to hire 250 more officers, add an annual state tax credit of up to \$860 to off-



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DRAINAGE continued from page 1

live in Ward 2 were temporarily displaced by flood waters and about 70 percent of homeowners there suffered some sort of property damage due to flooding.

The project, briefly, will include an analysis of the area's drainage system (to be finished in April); increasing pipe capacity; splitting the drainage system at Pearl Street to travel down Hesselstine Avenue, avoiding as much impact as possible to private property; repairing the remaining downstream system from Ruggles Street to Howard Street; connecting and improving drainage from Hawley Road, Hawes Avenue, Ells Avenue and Heywood Avenue; fixing the existing problem on Boardman Avenue and replacing substandard water services to homes where needed.

The Ward 2 project alone is expected to add three cents to the average water customer's bill for the year beginning this July, and between 12 and 13 cents (Impact on water, sewer rates) for fiscal year 2009. The aldermen also approved borrowing \$1,317,318 for an MWRA program to continue upgrading water lines and \$800,000 to put a new sewer main in Grove Street from main to the major Berwick Street trunk line. Those projects will also add cents to the water and sewer rates in FY 2008 and 2009.

The Ward 2 project will take three years and officials plan to begin in late spring or early summer.

DPW Supt. Robert Beshara told the aldermen's Appropriations

Committee Monday that development during much of the last century was done in water storage areas for Bennett's Pond Brook, which runs under the Lynn Fells Parkway. The water has no choice but to back up in the ward's aged-old drainage system and spill out onto and into private property.

A major part of the project will be the replacing a compromised 36-inch main that runs under Hesselstine Park behind the Horace Mann School with three 30-inch mains. Water pipes will need to be moved out of the way at each crossing with the drainage system. Back yards between Hesselstine Avenue and East Highland Avenue may need to be dug up so the city can access culverts on private property.

Where the drainage system enters Damon Avenue, Beshara said there is too much water coming into an undersized pipe.

Beshara said the project is meant to prevent flooding for longer periods of time, so that when a huge storm comes, the system can better handle the water flow.

All this underground work will require the ripping up of streets in Ward 2, which will prove an inconvenience. That's why the city has hired Mike Lindstrom, a former aide to state Sen. Richard R. Tisei, to act as community liaison. Lindstrom will work out of Mayor Robert J. Dolan's office and will coordinate public outreach and community meetings.

The first of those meetings was held on March 1. Ward 2 Alderman David Buonopane, a driving force behind the remediation efforts (who was also displaced from his home last May), designed the meeting to address flooding issues in the area's neighborhoods. Specific details and observations of how flooding has affected residents were discussed.

Because work will be required in the vicinity of the Horace Mann School, Alderman-at-Large Donald Conn Jr. questioned Beshara about disruptions during the school day.

Beshara said no work will be done in front of the school during school hours.

Conn asked Beshara if the DPW could handle all the projects happening around the city. He said it could.

The bidding process was a concern of both Conn and Ward 3 Alderman Francis X. Wright. Beshara said he'd like to see fewer bids awarded (with possibly one or two companies doing pipe replacement and street work).

Ward 7 Alderman William Forbes asked Beshara whether

another historical flood area — Sylvan and Lebanon streets — would be addressed and Beshara said it would.

Dolan told the aldermen that "by no means" does the significant borrowing "disproportionately affect" water and sewer ratepayers or the city's budget.

The Appropriations Committee approved the borrowing unanimously.

The project's cost, the mayor has said, is a drop in the bucket compared to the \$514,439,100 people have invested in Ward 2 homes.

PATRICK continued from page 20

set property taxes for lower and middle-income homeowners.

He will raise public health spending by 15 percent, and will invest more than \$20 million in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention programs.

"What this means in human terms" is that half the people who are uninsured today will be insured by 2008, he said.

Patrick wrapped things up by recognizing that he can't address everything he would like, acknowledging that the conditions of the state parks, forests and beaches as well as the state's housing concerns and funding increases for colleges and universities need attention.

"I am proud of this budget, of the agenda it fits within, and of the thoughtful and creative team that put it together, many of whom are

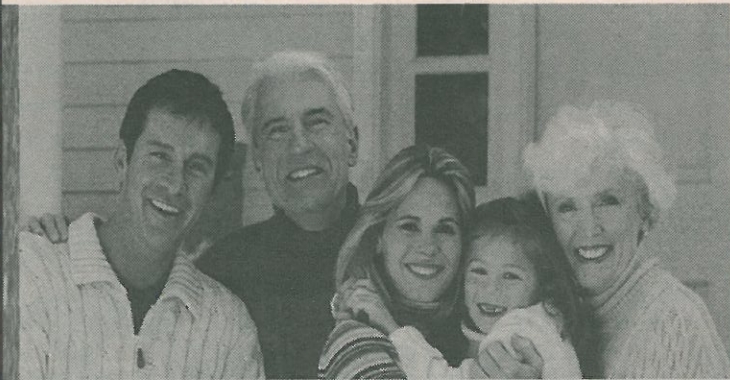


SUPT. OF SCHOOLS Joseph Casey listened intently to Gov. Deval Patrick's budget message Tuesday in Memorial Hall.

(Mike Angelo Photo)

here tonight. They know, just like any of you, that progress will not be instant and that change will not come without struggle. It will take hard work and a commit-

ment to long-term over short-term gain. But I don't believe those who say it can't be done," the governor said in his closing remarks.

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Emblem fashion show March 11

BILLERICA — The Massachusetts State Association of Emblem Clubs will host a fashion show and luncheon on Sunday, March 11, at the Billerica Lodge of Elks, Webb Brook Road in Billerica.

Fashions will be furnished by T.J. Maxx and will feature dress and casual outfits, and sportswear, loungewear and beachwear.

A roast chicken luncheon will be served at 1 p.m. and tickets are \$20 per person.

Tables of 10 may be reserved for anyone interested in doing so.

The Melrose Emblem Club is the local branch of the State and National Associations of Emblem Clubs. It is a strong community service-oriented organization which strives to serve local communities, as well as to foster

greater love of our country by promoting patriotism at all times.

They also support a Scholarship Committee on all three levels, local, state and national, and promote Drug Awareness and Literacy programs.

Melrose members on the committee include Sandi Dinardi and Marie Ryan. For more information, please contact Ryan at 781-665-8126.

Musica Libera in Melrose March 8

MELROSE — Musica Libera, a Jewish Italian band, will perform Jewish Music from Around the World at Temple Beth Shalom, 21 West Foster St., Melrose, on Thursday, March 8, at 6 p.m. Ticket prices of \$3 per person or \$10 per family will include pizza, salad, soda and dessert.

Tickets will be available at the

door.

Musica Libera's unusual sound is a delightful combination of Klezmer, Pink Floyd and opera.

The four musicians are Davide Casali of Trieste, Italy, founder of the group who plays clarinet, piano and electric bass; Ellen Garfield of Lynn, lead singer and

music teacher at the North Shore Hebrew School; Samuele Orlando of Trieste, plays keyboard; and Anton Pros Volpi of Trieste, on percussion.

The group was formed in Trieste, Italy in 2005.

All are welcome to attend this unique event.