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LYNN MAYOR: CITY IS WORKING TO BRING BACK FERRY

BY GAYLA CAWLEY | January 15, 2019

LYNN — The city of Lynn wants its ferry back and is working to procure a boat to make it happen, but the clock is ticking for city and state officials to get it done.

Mayor Thomas M. McGee said the city is working with the state delegation and U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton's (D-Mass.) office to start the process. Meetings regarding the procurement process have been held over the past six weeks.

"We really believe the time is now to make this happen," McGee said. "I think there's many people who understand that a robust water transportation system is not tomorrow, it's today."

Gov. Charlie Baker chose to cut ferry service last summer to Boston's Long Wharf, citing a lack of ridership. Service ran on a seasonal basis in 2014, 2015 and 2017, but in the final year consisted of one morning peak departure from Lynn's Blossom Street Extension and one evening peak departure from Boston.

In 2016, the city was awarded a \$4.5 million federal grant to purchase a dedicated vessel for year-round, long-term ferry service, but to get the funds, Baker told the *Item* in a previous interview the state has to prove it can operate the ferry, or prove the benefits associated with it.

State Sen. Brendan Crighton (D-Lynn) said the state delegation continues to advocate for starting operations again and securing the funds from the grant.

He called the ferry a "no-brainer," saying it will ease congestion by keeping cars off the road and help promote economic development on the waterfront.

“We’re going to fight for that and can’t miss this opportunity at all,” said Crighton. “It would be an absolute shame if for some reason we can’t get the state to pull this together and get a ferry. It’s coming up to a deadline and we need to get it done soon.

“We made the case for why we need operations to be happening now. Two years without a ferry has frustrated residents and local businesses.”

As the city works toward procuring a boat for long-term service, McGee said a separate challenge is getting a plan in place to have ferry service in the interim.

The mayor didn’t agree with Baker’s assessment that there wasn’t enough ridership on the Lynn ferry, which cited an average of 30 riders a day — Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) said 4,173 people rode the ferry in the summer of 2017.

McGee said numbers showed the ferry was starting to become successful.

Riders need consistency, Crighton added, and having the ferry for only a few years didn’t give the city enough time to prove it could be a successful program and build on those numbers.

“As the region continues to gridlock and (look for) opportunities for access to Boston and coming back to the North Shore, there’s definitely more than enough people who would be willing to and would be involved in taking newly involved ferry service,” McGee said.

“In terms of challenge, it’s getting past those who don’t realize the real success we’ve had and don’t believe in the success we’ll have once we reinstitute the service.”

The governor’s office referred the *Item* to a spokeswoman for MassDOT when contacted about bringing ferry service back to Lynn.

According to MassDOT, Lynn lacked the money to operate the ferry in 2018.

“Working with federal and state partners, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation is continuing the support of the city of Lynn’s work to provide ferry service by advancing the city’s efforts to procure a serviceable vessel,” said Jacquelyn Goddard, a MassDOT spokeswoman, in a statement.

“MassDOT will also help Lynn and the city of Salem to test the market and to spend their federal grants by developing a work plan to meet strict FTA requirements.”



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