

BUSINESS, NEWS

NICHOLSON, BETTENCOURT JOIN LOCAL LEADERS FOR ‘STATE OF THE REGION’ FORUM

BY JAMES BARTLETT | September 13, 2023



Peabody Mayor Edward A. Bettencourt Jr., left, and Lynn Mayor Jared Nicholson converse during the North Shore Chamber of Commerce State of the Region meeting on Wednesday. (Spenser Hasak)

PEABODY — More than 200 of the region’s top business and government leaders gathered for the North Shore Chamber of Commerce’s ‘State of the Region’ forum.

Both Lynn Mayor Jared Nicholson and Peabody Mayor Ted Bettencourt spoke at the event, which was held at Boston Marriott Peabody.

The mayors were two of seven local mayors and town managers who also spoke about how their cities and towns were tackling the pressing issues of the region, most notably housing, transportation and infrastructure, and economic growth.

Nicholson said the housing crisis and the lack of affordable housing options was one of the main issues Lynn would be focusing on in the years ahead.

“We feel the region’s housing crisis acutely,” Nicholson remarked. “Too many of our families and residents are cost-burdened and it’s a barrier to growth.”

The first-term mayor touted the city’s efforts to bring more housing units to the city, including efforts to make sure much of that housing remains affordable.

“Citywide, it’s \$1 billion of development that’s moving through the pipeline,” Nicholson said. “Growth is going to benefit all of us, if we do it the right way.”

He noted the city’s multimillion-dollar affordable housing trust fund as another major step forward for making housing in Lynn more accessible.

Bettencourt mentioned Peabody had 800 housing units in the planning and development stages.

A common theme of the event was infrastructure, something both Bettencourt and Nicholson mentioned in their remarks.

Bettencourt noted roadwork to improve Centre Street, as well as other road improvement projects, as one of the important priorities for the city going forward.

Nicholson noted the city’s efforts to take advantage of major investments that have recently been made available to Lynn from the state and federal governments.

“We have over \$100 million worth of projects heading into our city,” Nicholson said. “Those are the kinds of investments, to get the basic infrastructure right, that we see as major opportunities to invite the private sector business and community organizations to build on top of.”

Nicholson said transportation improvements of MBTA commuter rail service for his city and the region were paramount in the coming years, alluding both to the need to reopen the Lynn MBTA station, as well as the need to electrify the Environmental Justice Corridor between Boston and Beverly.

“The tracks are there, the technology exists,” Nicholson said. “Our residents deserve a way to get into town and around the region with short, convenient and environmentally friendly transit, and we’re capable of doing it.”

Another common theme from both mayors was the importance of economic growth in both cities.

Bettencourt alluded to the revitalization of downtown Peabody as a major improvement for the city, including the opening of the North Shore Children’s Museum and The Bell Inn, which also features a restaurant and speakeasy.

“That’s been a great success for us and exceeded our expectations,” Bettencourt said.

He also stressed the city's focus on making sure that the economy remains strong after the planned closure of the Rousselot gelatin factory.

"We are committed to protecting the interests of our city and our taxpayers," Bettencourt said.

On Lynn's economy, Nicholson invoked the city's history as an industrial hub and mentioned the city's embrace of the innovation economy as a tremendous opportunity for the city's future prosperity.

"We have the workforce, we have the sites," Nicholson said. "We know that we can plug into these trends and this growth."

Nicholson said that despite all the challenges the region faced, he believed it was going in the right direction.

"From Lynn's perspective, the state of the region is strong," Nicholson said.



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