



Lynn Mayor Jared Nicholson looks on as Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll meet with the Lynn Business Partnership on Monday. (Spenser Hasak)

Healey, Driscoll, and Nicholson visit Lynn Business Partnership

Rachel Barber

November 13, 2023 by [Rachel Barber](#)

LYNN — Alongside Mayor Jared Nicholson, Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll visited the Lynn Business Partnership and heard its members advocate for improved transportation, equity, and affordability in the region Monday morning.

Comprising the senior executive officers of the top three dozen firms doing business in Lynn, the Partnership’s mission, since 1992, is to “improve the economic vitality and overall quality of life in Lynn.” Members packed the conference room at Eastern Bank’s office on Market Street as they hoped to emphasize their priorities to the administration.

Early on in the meeting, Healey had some good news for those in the room, revealing that the **long-awaited** Commuter Rail temporary platform is expected to open in Lynn on Dec. 18.

Driscoll kicked off the meeting by invoking the city's history, citing the fact that Lynn used to be the largest shoe manufacturer in the nation. But after decades of slowed economic development, she added, the city has become known simply as a gateway into Boston. She said organizations such as the Partnership are important because they bring together people from nonprofits, the private sector, and the public sector to agree on a "North Star" for the community.

"It's organizations like this bringing together key stakeholders in a community who can craft a vision and go after it. All of you are advocates. It's not just the schools' job to educate kids and it's not just the mayor's job to ensure there is a vibrant community," Driscoll told members. "Think of us as partners. We want to be in service to communities that are on the ground doing the work every single day."

Transportation is one of the key issues on which state and local leaders have been working together. Several in attendance commended Healey and Driscoll for the **launch** of the ferry between Lynn and Boston and the hiring of new MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng. Eng **visited** the Partnership in October and is partially credited with expediting the reopening of the city's Commuter Rail station.

"People from all over the world are here and come here for a better life," Nicholson said. "As a result, a lot of our goals require the need to be ambitious and generate asks. I have been so excited by how receptive the Healey-Driscoll administration has been to those asks — to hear them and act on them. The T has been a great example."

Recognizing that Lynn is a majority-minority community (**50.3% vs. 49.7% as of the 2022 Census**), Healey emphasized the importance of listening to local voices on issues of equity and representation. She specifically shouted out the work being done by her Advisory Council on Black Empowerment and Advisory Council on Latino Empowerment, the ideas of which she said she has been taking to heart since taking office in January.

"Many of them have to do with small businesses, entrepreneurship, and supporting growth," Healey said. "It turns out there is a lot we can do and a lot that we probably haven't been doing as a state. These ten months have been about operationalizing that, making sure we have someone in charge of leading small businesses, and working with rural communities. It's targeted intentionality. There is an equity lens on everything we do."

Citizens Inn Executive Director Carolina Trujillo, who is also a consultant to Essex Media Group's Spanish-language newspaper, *La Voz*, sits on Healey's Advisory Council on Latino Empowerment and echoed her sentiments at the meeting.

“That is the best way to drive progress,” Trujillo said. “By listening to the people actually affected giving their opinion.”

Driscoll also touched on equity in terms of education opportunities, celebrating the **implementation** of MassReconnect, a state-funded program allowing eligible residents 25 or older to attend community college for free. The program includes Lynn’s North Shore Community College, which has since seen an enrollment increase of 500 students, according to its president, Bill Heineman.

In response to Hall Company President Gordon R. Hall’s concern about Massachusetts’ competitiveness in the real-estate market relative to neighboring states, Healey said she wanted to “go further on the estate tax” but had to make compromises with state legislators.

Her administration’s recent tax cuts increased the maximum tax exemption from \$1 million to \$2 million when a property is inherited after the owner’s death. This change is meant to make it more attractive to retire and age in Massachusetts.

Driscoll’s father and grandparents grew up in West Lynn and she worked nearby as Salem’s mayor for several years. As a result, she said she sees the potential “power of this city.” Healey agreed and again encouraged residents to reach out to her office with ideas.

“Don’t be shy. Let us know,” Healey said. “My notes — we’ll take them back with the different points you made. Keep talking to us.”



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