



CITY OF FRAMINGHAM

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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MEMORIAL BUILDING
150 Concord St, Room 213
Framingham MA 01702

Michael A. Tusino III
Chief Operating Officer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 01/27/2025

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Mayor Sisitsky Delivers His 4th State of the City Address

FRAMINGHAM – It is my honor to welcome you to my fourth State of the City address. Thank you City Council Chair Philip Ottaviani, Jr. for your kind words. I appreciate your partnership to promote the best interests of the City. Thank you Framingham High junior Maddie Tessitore for your beautiful rendition of the National Anthem. For those of you who may have missed the wonderful production of Grease at FHS, Maddie had the lead role as Sandra Dee. U.S. Army First Lt. Brian Doyle, a member of the Framingham Police Department, thank you for leading us in the pledge of allegiance. And Chaplain Luiz Alvarez, of the Massachusetts Army National Guard, thank you for your moving invocation.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of representatives of our federal and state legislative delegations, representatives from Senate President Spilka’s office, members of the City Council and School Committee, Cemetery and Library trustees, and members of boards, commissions and committees all of whom volunteer your time to support the valuable work going on in our City.

I am grateful and honored to work alongside all of our City employees. Not a day goes by when you don’t go above and beyond to make sure that the needs of our residents and businesses are met. To my administrative team, my sincere gratitude for all that you do to support my



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vision and goals for the City. I never take for granted that you have all allowed me to serve this esteemed office as the Mayor of Framingham. To my family, thank you for your unwavering support along with the sacrifices that you have made to enable me to make a positive impact for Framingham!

Leading the City of Framingham is a huge full-time responsibility and I am grateful for having the opportunity to be your Mayor. The more than 75,000 members of our city create a tapestry of diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences, making the beauty of each of our neighborhoods unique and something we all should embrace, cherish and celebrate.

This past weekend I, along with several members of the City Council, and members of my staff, attended the Massachusetts Municipal Association Connect 351 Conference. I was inspired by featured speaker Suneel Gupta, an American entrepreneur, and author. He asked, what is your “why” which gave me the opportunity to consider my “why”?

I get up every day, with energy and enthusiasm. My “why” comes from the belief that we can make Framingham the best it can possibly be, for our children, our seniors, and everyone in between. I relish the challenge of solving problems which go along with building a City that understands the value of coming together.

In my first three years as Mayor, I have achieved many accomplishments.

The Framingham Farmers Market continues to be extremely popular. In March, the city hosted the Massachusetts Farmers Markets association annual conference with over 100 people in attendance right here in Nevins Hall.



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The market season opened on June 20th, one of the hottest days in 2024! All told, total 2024 attendance was almost 26,000 people. The Framingham Farmers Market has become one of the most successful farmers markets in the Commonwealth. The 2025 Farmers Market will open on Thursday, June 19th.

I brought fireworks back to the City and I am pleased to announce that our third annual fireworks event will return on Friday, June 27th at Farm Pond. More than 15,000 people attended last year and we anticipate an even more robust event this year. A large group of dedicated City employees are well into planning for this year's event. I am often approached by residents who tell me how much they appreciate and how grateful they are to have the fireworks in Framingham.

Throughout the year we held multiple events to improve the quality of life of our residents. Activities included, free skating at Loring Arena, the Flag Day Parade, raising the Pride and Disability Flags, Friday Night Concerts on the Common, Spooktacular at City Hall that drew over 700 attendees, Indigenous Peoples Day at Farm Pond, and a tree lighting celebration which included closing Union Avenue to name a few. Additional events for this year include a unique car show featuring automobiles throughout the history of Framingham, using our new portable stage to bring events into neighborhoods, and the first annual Framingham Day to be held on Saturday, October 4, which has been created to honor the artistic, cultural, and diverse community that we proudly call home.

My administration has acquired land to extend the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail into Framingham and we are currently developing designs for both the Bruce Freeman and Chris Walsh Memorial Trails. We have also initiated the cleanup and redesign of Mary Dennison Park. In order to mitigate the cost of the cleanup, we successfully negotiated an agreement with Avery Dennison



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to pay for the majority of the remediation costs. This new park, will provide residents with an accessible playground, fitness area, picnic pavilion, athletic fields, sport courts and a splash pad.

I officially reopened the Arlington Street Playground last summer. New improvements in the playground include the City's first splash pad, play elements and retractable Futsal goals within the basketball court.

In conjunction with the Park and Recreation department we were able to install new scoreboards at Fuller Field, as well as energy efficient lighting improvements, laser grading, and fence and dugout improvements at Long's Athletic Complex last year.

There was a lot of activity during the skating season at Loring Arena. We hosted four MIAA playoff games which added \$15,000 of revenue to the Arena. Framingham Youth Hockey and Avidia Bank organized a skate with NHL star Patrice Bergeron, who graciously skated at the rink for 2 hours with members of Framingham Youth Hockey.

To kickoff the 325th anniversary of Framingham, Loring Arena hosted a well attended free public skate for the community. Close to 250 residents came together to skate and celebrated with cake.

The Park and Rec Department manages hundreds of acres of City property, including athletic fields, neighborhood parks and playgrounds, a dog park, a skate park, as well as 6 new permanent pickleball facilities, tennis and basketball courts, aqueduct trails, and several hundred acres of active and passive parks.

Renovations have already begun on the former Marian High School with the goal of converting it to a city-wide community center. The removal of the obsolete heating system, and removal of



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hazardous materials has been completed. The next phase will be the installation of new windows and roof. We are working with the Mayor's Advisory Committee to develop the detailed plan for the reuse of this 100,000 square foot building.

In 2024, the City of Framingham's Grants Manager, worked closely with various City departments to secure grants.

Some of these include a \$2,000,000 State HousingWorks Grant for the construction of intersection improvements at Fountain Street & Dudley Road, a \$420,000 MassTrails grant for Phase 2 of the Bruce Freeman Trail project, and \$100,000 for the Carol Getchell Trail. Additionally, \$850,000 was secured for the design of Phase 2 of the Chris Walsh Memorial Trail, following last year's \$3.7 million in federal funds for Phase 1.

In conjunction with our Planning and Community Development Department we also secured some of the following grants: a Mass Downtown Initiative grant award; a \$1 Million MassWorks grant to fund public utility improvements at Mary Dennison Park; and a \$215,000 Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant to preserve 40 acres of land in south Framingham which will eventually provide a connection to the Upper Charles Trail.

The Planning Board, by Special Permit, approved the first designed "Agrihood" development in Massachusetts that integrates residential living within an active farm. The unique design includes a 63-unit age-restricted (55+) Active Adult Housing development which offers luxurious living amid pastures and ponds while surrounded by more than 800 acres of protected land. Construction is underway and the total value of new growth when completed will exceed \$80 M.



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Our Inspectional Services department issued 8134 building permits, resulting in over 3.1 million dollars in collected fees. The department inspectors performed over 10,000 inspections of varying degrees.

Among the building permits issued were for renovations at the TJX Company building at 550 Cochituate Road. This was a vacant building that TJX purchased and invested over \$45 Million in renovations to expand their Framingham operations. TJX continues to demonstrate their desire and commitment to remain in Framingham by recently purchasing two additional vacant office buildings to expand their campus.

In order to address the long standing water and sewer billing problem, we prepared a comprehensive water and sewer rate analysis, with the goal of stabilizing the Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund, ensuring equitable cost distribution among users, promoting water conservation, and supporting vital infrastructure improvements. As a result, we were able to develop a revised rate structure for water and sewer billing.

We are making progress with building a new elementary school on the southside. Following the city's acceptance into the Massachusetts School Building Authority's (MSBA) funding program, the school administration together with our school building committee has reached each significant milestone in advancing this project. This reflects the City's commitment to delivering a modern, sustainable, and inclusive educational facility for our community.

During 2024, the DPW completed many infrastructure improvements throughout the City. These projects included the reconstruction of streets in the Cedar Street neighborhood, with new granite curbing, sidewalks with ADA ramps and improvements to the stormwater drainage. Similar work was also done on a section of Brook Street.



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New crosswalks with ADA ramps were installed on several other locations in the City.

Over 3 miles of streets in the Pinefield neighborhood were resurfaced. The intersection improvements at Edgell Road and Central Street which include new traffic signals and turning lanes are nearly complete. Final paving is scheduled for this spring.

Other infrastructure improvements include the replacement of 3,200 feet of sewer main, 5,500 feet of water main, and relining of over 13,000 feet of sewer main.

The Worcester Road Sewer Pumping station is under reconstruction. This station accommodates 25% of the City's sewer flow. Other sewer pump station improvements include Garvey Road and Flanagan Drive. We are working on the design for improvements to sewer pump stations located on Gates Road, and Weld & Victor Streets, as well as the Elm Street water pumping station. We are near completion of the Walnut Street flood mitigation and boardwalk project.

With the growing impacts of climate change, we recognize the critical role in advancing sustainability initiatives that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We are actively pursuing green energy initiatives such as installing solar panels on municipal buildings, installing EV charging stations, and seeking out opportunities to purchase electric vehicles for the municipal fleet. We are working with Eversource on their Geothermal Project. Phase 1 is nearly complete and the design has begun for Phase 2.

Framingham Community Electricity will be coming online in March. This program will enable residential and small business users to purchase green energy as well as provide stable and competitive pricing.



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For the 34th consecutive year, Framingham was named a Tree City USA community. Using an Environmental Justice Grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the City's Tree Warden and staff from the DPW planted 28 shade trees along Grant Street. We are establishing a new municipal tree planting program to serve the environmental justice neighborhoods and other areas in the City.

The Mayor's compost taskforce, with a mission to promote city-wide composting, and remove organic waste from the waste stream, has selected a preferred vendor. The City received a \$22K grant to purchase compost bins, which will be offered for free for the first 1,000 homes who sign up for the program. We cannot ignore that climate change is happening here; it is happening now!

The Technology Services Department initiated the implementation of OpenGov, an online platform that streamlines permitting, licensing, and code enforcement. This system enhances communication both between City departments and the public.

Areas of the City, including the Arlington Street Park now benefit from an expanded City-owned fiber network, providing enhanced security through surveillance cameras and free Wi-Fi access for residents. This initiative underscores the City's commitment to fostering safer, more connected public spaces.

Led by our DEI Officer, we expanded our summer internship program. Two of the participants ended up getting job opportunities with the City. We are anticipating another successful internship program this year.

Our DEI Officer provided over 120 employees with DEI training and will expand training offerings to all city boards, committees and commissions this year.



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In September the Library hosted the Spooktastic Book Fair, an event with over 50 authors, attracting over 1500 attendees.

The Library of Things collection offers library cardholders the opportunity to borrow and use things ranging from snowshoes to paper shredders and everything in between.

The broad range of adult programming enriched over 11,600 patrons, a number that includes only in-person attendees. The Children's Department offered story times and programming in Mandarin, Spanish and Portuguese in addition to their regular schedule of robust programming that brought over 13,000 visits from kids. The Bookmobile was seen throughout the community and it reached over 10,000 patrons.

The Branch Library was recognized by the National Wildlife Federation as a Certified Wildlife Ambassador for its pollinator garden.

It's critical to make sure every child in our City has access to quality education as this is an investment in our future. I have always supported the Framingham Public Schools and strongly believe it's important to improve the educational quality of our schools.

The school department has partnered with MassBay and Framingham State University where FPS students enjoy dual enrollment and early college opportunities. Many FPS students graduate from Framingham High School with transferable college credits and in some cases completed Associates Degrees.

The Framingham Public Schools Welcome Center and Student Registration Department is now located at the Farley Building where other Framingham Public Schools Central Administration Departments are located. This ensures that families have a wider access to resources.



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The expansion of PreK opportunities for Framingham families serves 4-year old children both within the Framingham Public Schools and at our partner sites at Framingham State University, the YMCA, and Loving Nest Preschool.

The Framingham Adult English as a Second Language program with over 1,350 adults, has become the largest adult basic education program in New England. This program was one of only two programs nationwide selected by the Carnegie Corporation to conduct a \$300,000 pilot program.

School bussing continues to have a significant impact on our students and community. I continue to work with the school administration and School Committee on the challenge to implement an alternative plan that will improve the school bussing problem for the next school year.

We continue to work with Framingham State University on several initiatives to develop a closer working relationship with the City. I have held numerous meetings with President Nancy Niemi and her staff and appreciate her willingness to work with us.

Last January, we welcomed the opening of the new MassBay Health Sciences, Early Childhood, and Human Services Center. The Center, under the leadership of President Dr. David Podell, will prepare area residents for challenging career paths that lead to economic prosperity throughout MetroWest. This building houses the only Certified Simulation Center in the region for unparalleled education and training in Nursing and Allied Health professions.

The City's Veteran Services department and the Veterans Council launched the Hometown Heroes Banner Program, recognizing 30 of our Veterans as a living tribute to honor past and present members of the Armed Forces.



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Holiday wreaths of remembrance were placed at each of the 7 Cemeteries in the City. In addition, community volunteers placed 5,500 flags on Veterans' graves.

Memorial Day as well as Veterans Day Programs were held to recognize and honor the men and women who have worn the military uniform of the United States Armed Services. Medals of Liberty and Medals of Fidelity were presented to families of those Veterans who made significant contributions to the cause of our freedom.

Governor Maura Healey recently signed the Historic HEROS Act, An Act Honoring, Empowering and Recognizing Our Servicemembers (HERO Act). We have begun to implement the first phase of this act and will be recommending to the City Council that the rest of the HEROS Act be approved to take effect in July of this year.

Our Citizens Participation Officer (CPO) has been diligently working to fill many of the positions on the 47 Boards, Committees and Commissions. We have appointed 65 people in the last 10 months. Our legal department has been working with the CPO to offer open meeting law training to members of these Boards, Committees and Commissions.

We are employing a variety of communication tools to effectively engage with city residents and businesses. Language access remains a top priority for my administration. The City's website is available in more than 100 languages, thanks to AI technology.

The City's Public Information Officer (PIO) is consistently producing city-wide communications in three languages: English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Recently, Hindi has also been added to this initiative.



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My administration has secured a state earmark to install a multi-language kiosk in the Memorial Building, to enhance customer service.

The City's complimentary weekly newsletter continues to expand in popularity. Each Sunday, it features more than three dozen items. The newsletter has increased from 1,000 to 2,500 subscribers with an 80% open rate.

The city's social media presence has significantly expanded over the past year. In 2024, the city's Facebook page surpassed 10,000 followers. In the last 28 days we've had almost a half million page views on the city's Facebook page and we reached almost 50,000 individuals. The city has also embraced various additional platforms.

On June 25th, the City of Framingham will commemorate a significant milestone: 325 years since its establishment as a town, now incorporated as a city. I have established a Celebration Committee dedicated to planning a variety of events throughout the year. Events will include historical, cultural, artistic, activities etc. which will be reflective of the diversity of the City.

I have attended many meetings and events hosted by both the Framingham Business Association and Downtown Framingham Inc. to learn more about ways that the City can help them prosper.

My administration collaborated with women-owned and Latino-owned small businesses to host the inaugural Framingham Business Expo last September. The event culminated with a stunning fashion show that showcased clothing from local Brazilian boutiques.



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Also in September, my administration partnered with numerous organizations to host the inaugural Find Your People Fair. The primary objective of this event was to address the issue of loneliness by providing adults with opportunities to discover and engage in various hobbies.

We plan to host these events again this year.

I held meetings in all 9 districts to hear firsthand from the residents about their issues and ideas for their neighborhoods. Joining me at these meetings were members of the City Council, School Committee, police and fire departments, DPW, Park and Rec, planning and economic development and other members of my staff. Residents have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute to the decision-making process that shapes our community. I will hold another round of these district meetings this year.

As a result of legislative approval last year, I appointed members to an

Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The EDC members have already begun working on how they can coordinate with my administration toward promoting economic growth in the City.

The Corporation will collaborate with public agencies, private enterprises, and nonprofit organizations to develop and manage projects that strengthen the city's economic infrastructure. I envision this coordination to also include creating a public/private partnership, which I have been working on, to build a new community swimming pool, as well as upgrades for improving accessibility in the Memorial Building to enhance its ability to attract regional events.



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I reactivated the Cushing Memorial Chapel Advisory Committee which had been inactive since Framingham became a City in 2018. The committee, in conjunction with the Veterans Council and my office, held a memorable 80th anniversary celebration in late fall and will work on ideas for making improvements to the Chapel to make it more accessible for community use.

The Public Health Clinic, in partnership with the Framingham Public Schools, continued to provide critical vaccinations to the school population addressing access to health care barriers.

With the use of Opioid Settlement Funds, we hired an Outreach and Prevention Coordinator to serve the Opioid Task Force, and address the prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery efforts to reverse the course of addiction.

We hosted the Remote Access Medical Clinic (RAM) in August, providing critical medical services to hundreds of residents such as general medical, dental, and vision care to those without access. The RAM Clinic will once again be held at Keefe Tech this summer.

This past year the Health Department relocated its offices from City Hall and a storefront on Concord Street to new quarters at 188 Concord Street, a city-owned building adjacent to City Hall. The Capital Projects and Facilities Management division was responsible for the successful renovation of this space to facilitate these moves.

Throughout this past year, the Framingham Police Department (FPD) continued to work closely with the Framingham Fire Department and the Police and Fire Departments of the Town of Natick on our new Regional Emergency Dispatch Center. In 2024 we received a 911 grant from the Executive Office of Safety and Security and the State 911 Commission to proceed with this joint venture. A director has been hired and we are now in the process of upgrading and enhancing our current equipment and infrastructure needs. The center will also be located at



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188 Concord Street, and will begin operating in early 2026. The legal department helped facilitate the completion of the intermunicipal agreement between Framingham and Natick which established this district.

The introduction of Body Worn Cameras came to fruition in 2024. This program is designed to not only improve community relations but to also improve the quality of interactions between officers and members of the public.

The Police Department's Community Impact Unit (CIU) continues its two-pronged approach of law enforcement and outreach. In addition to helping those struggling with untreated mental health issues, homelessness and addiction. In November alone, the CIU responded to over 200 calls for service in the City.

The Officers of the Framingham Police Department took part in a wide variety of safety programs and community outreach efforts including: Shop-With-A-Cop, the Police Athletic League, the Framingham Youth Police Academy and the Read-Aloud Program, a program that brings Framingham Police Officers to local elementary schools.

We worked closely with Senate President Karen Spilka's office and state agencies to ensure that the proposed regional justice center will be located in downtown Framingham. We are confident that this will have a positive impact on the downtown economy and the city as a whole.

Our legal department represented the City in the conveyance of the former Danforth Art Museum to the Commonwealth for the development of the Regional Justice Center.



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We also negotiated a memorandum with the Commonwealth for conveyance to the City of the existing District Court parcel, once the Regional Justice Center has been constructed and opened.

The Fire Department recently put a new Engine 3 into service along with a new Rescue 1 that is equipped with upgraded extrication and technical rescue equipment. The department also hired 10 new firefighters, had special training for the Command Staff, and received and implemented over \$225,000 in state and federal grants.

During the year, the Fire Department responded to over 32,000 Emergency calls which equates to almost 90 calls per day. The Fire Prevention division completed over 5,700 inspections.

The Fire Department also provided training for School Department personnel and Library employees in First aid and CPR, as well as DPW training on Trench Safety, and CPR training for Public Health employees.

The Callahan Center's attendance was over 37,000 in 2024. The Center's Van provided 1,635 rides, mostly to get to medical appointments and for grocery shopping. Over 2,000 older adults participated in cultural programs ranging from history to the arts.

Social Services staff provided 4,500 interactions for older adults needing physical, mental, emotional, and financial assistance. The Callahan Center hired bilingual employees to assist the diverse population of Framingham.

All of these accomplishments took bold vision and leadership and they will significantly enhance the lives of residents. Tonight, I am proud to report that the state of our City remains strong!



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I am encouraged by the progress we've made, but know there is still work to do. The challenges we face are not insurmountable if we work together.

Difficult decision-making encapsulates the burden of choice that often comes with effective leadership. It requires the ability to make tough choices and prioritize the greater good, even if it means facing resistance or displeasure.

One of the most critical, yet divisive events of the past year revolved around the necessity to make Framingham compliant with the MBTA Communities Act. As the December 31st deadline for compliance approached, I felt the crucial need for the City to submit documentation that we were in compliance, despite the fact that no final action had been taken to amend the zoning ordinance. I and members of my staff determined that we could make a strong case to the state that the existing zoning provisions in the downtown area met the requirements of the MBTA Communities Act. I was not willing to put the City in a position to face legal consequences and loss of grant funding by not complying with the December 31st deadline.

After numerous conversations with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and staff at the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. I am pleased to report that our application for compliance has received conditional approval, and I am confident that upon the requisite documentation, that we will receive final approval.

The ability to continue with our various projects and maintain existing operations is partially dependent on what happens on the federal level as well as the state level. Our federal legislative delegation has been very supportive of us in terms of earmarking grants, yet there's no guarantee that the new administration in Washington will follow through with the approval of the necessary appropriations. After listening to the Governor and Lieutenant Governor at the



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MMA Annual Meeting, I am encouraged by their recommendations on increasing the amount of local aid from the previous year.

Getting back to my “why”. I revere the partnerships that I have built between our businesses, schools, and residents. I serve as your Mayor with the unwavering belief that when we come together, our collective efforts are far greater with strength. Due to recent changes in immigration policy at the federal level, I will convene a task force on Wednesday with City departments, community organizations, and local religious leaders to listen to their concerns and strategize on ways to respond.

I don’t claim to have all the answers, but I commit to you that I will always work to ensure that our city is a place of promise, of progress, and of pride.

This is why I do what I do. It’s not for recognition or reward, but because I believe in the power of community, the strength of unity, and the potential of our city. Together, we can create a brighter future for all of us, where families can thrive, businesses can grow, and every resident feels valued.

My "why" is also about hope. Hope that when we look back years from now, we’ll see a city transformed by the collective effort of all of us. Hope that our children will inherit a place where they can grow, dream, and succeed as they truly are our future. If we come together and believe in the strength and diversity of Framingham, I am confident that we can accomplish what I have set out for our future.

Last week, as we remembered the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. these words resonated with me. “The time is always right to do what is right. We must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future.”



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I welcome anyone who is willing to think big and bold to join me on this journey. It takes collaborative and creative thinking along with leadership, which can make this all a reality. And lastly, I ask you to think about your “why”!

I want to thank each and every one of you for your support and commitment to Framingham. Let’s continue to move forward in a spirit of cooperation and respect so we can grow stronger together.

Thank you and goodnight.