

SALEM CIVIC BRIEF

What City Hall did this week · Week of August 31 – September 7, 2026 · Salem, Massachusetts

A plain-language read on what Salem's boards, commissions and City Council actually did — and what's coming — written for the people who run businesses here. Every item points back to the city's own posted record so you can check our work — and you should: agendas get amended, items get continued and meetings get cancelled, sometimes within the same week. Confirm against the linked source before you act on anything here.

START HERE

Three things worth your attention

If you read nothing else this week, read these. Wednesday night is the one to circle: three city bodies meet at the same hour.

1. Wednesday at the SRA: the Lappin Park redesign, plus four downtown storefront reviews

ACT THIS WEEK · Salem Redevelopment Authority · Wednesday September 9, 6:00 PM · City Hall Annex, 98 Washington St, 1st floor, or Zoom (ID 825 2248 3838, passcode 558760)

The night opens with a **joint SRA and Design Review Board public meeting on the Lappin Park redesign** — the Essex Street pedestrian mall's front porch, and the park many businesses rent for pop-ups and art markets. If you have an opinion about how that space should work, this is the room, and it is a public meeting.

The SRA's regular meeting follows. First up is a **presentation on temporary downtown wayfinding for October** — a seasonal system meant to move October crowds around downtown more safely, proposed to be installed and removed within the month with nothing fixed to any building. Worth hearing if your storefront depends on where October foot traffic goes.

Then the small-project reviews, which are the practical ones to watch if you are planning any exterior change: the **Salem Inn's expansion at 11 Summer Street** (15 hotel rooms, a townhouse, and a solar carport), an **ADA ramp at 14 New Derby Street**, **façade trim painting at Flying Monkey, 160 Essex Street**, and the **Peabody Essex Museum's new sign package on the Charter Street side of 161 Essex**. These are the categories the board says yes and no to — useful precedent before you file your own. The SRA then holds its annual meeting: FY2027 goals and election of officers.

→ [Read the SRA agenda](#)

2. Same night, one block over: the public hearing on a citywide data-center ban and dropping parking minimums for two-family homes

ACT THIS WEEK · City Council + Planning Board joint public hearing · Wednesday September 9, 6:00 PM · Council Chambers, City Hall, 93 Washington St · Zoom and SATV Ch. 22

Two zoning amendments get their public hearing. **Amendment #385** would prohibit data centers in every zoning district in the city — a blanket ban, not a siting rule. **Amendment #387** would remove the required-parking minimum for two-family dwellings, putting them in the same "none required" row as multifamily. Nothing has been decided; the posted hearing record's vote fields are blank, and the drafted motions simply close the hearings and refer both to the Planning Board.

Why it matters to a business owner: #387 changes what two-family property owners must build and maintain, and it continues the Council's steady move away from parking minimums — the same direction that eventually reaches commercial districts. Public comment is open at the hearing; written comment is the practical route if you are also at the SRA.

Rounding out the collision, the **Zoning Board of Appeals holds a special remote meeting at 6:30 PM** with six petitions. The one with commercial weight — removing a condition on parking assignment at the 60-unit **75 North Street** mixed-use project — is expected to be continued to September 16 at the applicant's request. Comments to zoningboardcomments@saalem.com.

→ [Read the joint hearing agenda](#)

3. Mayor's Night Out is Friday September 25 — the business trick-or-treat sign-up is open now

ACT THIS WEEK · Sign-up issued by the City's Special Events office August 28 · press release expected Tuesday September 8

The City's business trick-or-treat sign-up for Mayor's Night Out went out on August 28, about two weeks later than last year, and the official press release is due Tuesday when City Hall reopens after Labor Day. Downtown storefronts that want to be on the trick-or-treat route should sign up this week — the City's link is circulating through the downtown business organizations. Fountain-area tables are filling (the National Park Service is confirmed), and the Salem 400+ giveaway bags return using last year's stock.

THE CALENDAR

Salem meetings, September 8 through September 25

From the city's Agenda Center as of Monday morning. City offices are closed Monday September 7 for Labor Day. No Licensing Board agenda is posted anywhere in the window — that means not posted, not recess; anyone with a one-day license application pending for October should ask the Licensing office which meeting it lands on.

Date	Time	Body	What's on it
Tue Sep 8	see agenda	Board of Health	Kratom emergency ban update; tobacco retailers' federal lawsuit — see below
Wed Sep 9	6:00 PM	SRA + Design Review Board (joint), then SRA regular and annual	Lappin Park redesign; October wayfinding; Salem Inn; PEM signs — see above
Wed Sep 9	6:00 PM	City Council + Planning Board joint hearing	Data-center ban (#385); two-family parking minimums (#387) — see above
Wed Sep 9	6:30 PM	Zoning Board of Appeals (special, remote)	Six petitions; 75 North St expected to continue to Sep 16
Wed Sep 16	see agenda	City Council — Ordinances, Licenses & Legal Affairs with Committee of the Whole	Notice posted July 29; subject not stated on the notice
Wed Sep 16	see agenda	Zoning Board of Appeals	75 North St continuance target
Thu Sep 17	see agenda	Planning Board	Pickering Wharf: 57 Wharf St / 201 Derby St, three added floors, 18 units
Wed Sep 23	see agenda	Design Review Board	Regular meeting
Fri Sep 25	evening	Mayor's Night Out	Downtown; business trick-or-treat
Wed Oct 14	6:00 PM	SRA	Next regular meeting

LICENSES, PERMITS & HEALTH

What's moving through the boards that gate what a business can do

Board of Health Tuesday: the statewide kratom ban and the tobacco retailers' lawsuit

ACT THIS WEEK · Board of Health · Tuesday September 8 · in person; webinar ID 858 7881 9111, passcode 766795

Tuesday's agenda carries an update on the **Massachusetts Department of Public Health emergency order banning the sale of kratom statewide**, and an update on the tobacco manufacturer's granted-order policy and the **federal lawsuit filed by tobacco retailers**. If you sell either product category, the state ban is already in force and this is where the local board discusses how it is administered.

→ [Read the Board of Health agenda](#)

Pickering Wharf's 18-unit addition is next up September 17

DECISION PENDING · Planning Board · Thursday September 17 · continued from September 3

The proposal for **57 Wharf Street and 201 Derby Street** — demolish the upper floors of the Pickering Wharf complex and add three new floors with 18 dwelling units in the downtown B5 district — was continued from the September 3 meeting to September 17. That is the substantive hearing. The **Walmart "Spark" Depot** conversion of vacant storefronts at 440 Highland Avenue moved to October 15. No minutes are posted from the September 3 meeting, so nothing heard that night is confirmed.

→ [Read the September 3 Planning Board agenda](#)

Jefferson Avenue is getting a zoning overlay later this year

ON OUR RADAR · City Council · overlay ordinance expected in the fall · per Councillor Hapworth's September newsletter

The Council met with city staff over the summer on the **Jefferson Avenue Corridor Plan**. With a future South Salem train stop planned, several large underused parcels, housing pressure, and long-standing safety and flooding concerns, Councillor Ty Hapworth expects a zoning overlay to come before the Council later this year "to encourage housing and mixed-use development, support local businesses, improve the public realm" and advance affordability goals. Mixed-use means ground-floor commercial is in scope. If you own or rent on the corridor, this is the rezoning that changes what gets built next door.

Salem 400+ merchandise: the City's copyright covers the official logo only

FOR YOUR FILES · Guidance from the City's Salem 400+ office, September 2

A Haunted Happenings vendor asked what anniversary merchandise is allowed. The City's answer: it holds the copyright for the official Salem 400+ logo only. It cannot copyright the fact that the city is turning 400, so that text is free for anyone to use. Useful for every retailer and maker planning anniversary product this fall.

ON THE RECORD

What the newly posted minutes say

A working small-business owner now sits on the Design Review Board

FOR YOUR FILES · Salem Redevelopment Authority · minutes of August 12, 2026 · posted this week

The SRA's August 12 meeting recorded four unanimous votes. The one that matters most to storefront owners: **Joe Badowski was appointed to the Design Review Board** — the owner of Honey and Sage Photography, which puts a working small-business owner on the board that gates every downtown storefront change.

The other three: the **Witch City Mall awnings** for Zitelle repainted from green to black as the business moves to the pedestrian side; the **Salem Inn at 11 Summer Street** cleared to remove a rear garage and vinyl siding ahead of design review; and the SRA's director authorized to close the **conveyance of the old courthouses at 252 Bridge Street and 32–34 Federal Street** to the designated developer.

The Executive Director's report also noted the business town hall held at the PEM in August, which drew roughly 400 people from businesses across the city and was convened jointly by the City's economic development partners.

→ [Read the SRA minutes](#)

AROUND THE CITY

Shorter signals worth having in the back of your head.

- **Council committee sessions keep getting cancelled** — the September 3 hearing on the Project Labor Agreements ordinance was scrubbed August 27 with no new date, the third consecutive committee cancellation. Members in construction and trades were its audience.
- **City Seal heads to the full Council** at its first September meeting after a 7–2 committee vote to accept the Task Force recommendation to change it; Councillor Hapworth, one of the two no votes, calls the outcome likely settled. No regular Council agenda is posted yet.
- **Gas leaf-blower ordinance** still awaits the full Council, with a single 2030 compliance date for residents, commercial operators and City departments. Hapworth's stated objection: he won't ask residents to follow a rule the City can't practically follow, or pay for two fleets.
- **Encampment ordinance review this month** — the Council's Public Health, Safety and Environment committee will hear from Salem PD, the Community Impact Unit and Lifebridge on how the camping ordinance is working. Downtown public spaces are the subject; no agenda posted yet.
- **Food Truck Festival on Salem Common, September 19–20, and Notch's Oktoberfest, September 13** — the one-day licenses were heard August 27; outcomes unconfirmed until minutes post. Plan on September 13–20 as the soft open for October foot traffic.
- **Old Town Hall's October food court is on the City's public calendar** — September 24 through November 1: Thursday–Friday noon–7, Saturday 11–8, Sunday 11–6, plus Indigenous Peoples' Day, Monday October 12, 11–6.
- **Salem: The Game Show, Sunday September 20, 7:00 PM, Old Town Hall** — a by-locals, for-locals game show; free admission, roughly 150 seats, first come first served.
- **Preservation in a Changing Climate conference, Wednesday September 23, at the Peabody Essex Museum** — the sixth annual, on climate impacts to historic buildings; relevant if you own in a historic district.
- **Free zoo admission for Salem residents all September** — Stone Zoo and Franklin Park Zoo, an annual Salem Days tradition funded by the Norman H. Read Charitable Trust. A resident perk worth mentioning to customers.