

# Salem News You Don't Get in *The Salem News*

## 235 Incidents involving homeless individuals in one month, July 1-31, 2026

There are some Salem residents, including those on the City Council, who don't seem to understand the predicament that unhoused people create for our city. We are taxpaying citizens who have valued Salem for a quality of life that includes a clean and safe city, good neighbors, a rich heritage, proximity to the ocean, a beautiful museum, an excellent hospital and medical community, and reasonable home prices to buy or rent (reasonable, that is, in relation to Boston or the wealthier cities and towns on the North Shore). Our taxes pay for the city to function. When our taxes have to pay for endless emergency calls to Lifebridge—which pays no taxes—or for the EMTs to administer medical aid to unhoused people living on the street, or for the Public Works Department to clean up the messes left by unhoused people, or for the city to pour our tax dollars into buying property for Lifebridge, other city services are put on hold.

### In this issue

|                                 |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Police Incident Narrative       | Page 1-4 |
| Contextualizing the Information | Page 4   |
| The High Street Playground      | Page 5   |
| Panhandling                     | Page 6   |
| Remembering Chris Fuccione      | Page 6   |
| Take Action!                    | Page 7   |
| Graphics                        | Page 8   |

Further, our taxes pay for parks that we cannot use because they have become campgrounds for unhoused people. It is now unsafe for children to play in the High Street Playground or Charlotte Forten Park. There are sex offenders living at Lifebridge and on the streets. You are on high alert when you walk through Riley Plaza.

Most of us would like to see unhoused Salem residents—people who were born or went to school here—get help. But why should we pay for a mentally ill couple here from

Rhode Island, or the panhandling drug addict from Florida? Mentally ill and drug-addicted people need help. They are not getting it, but it is not up to Salem to fund treatment. In the meantime, homeless people with untreated illnesses are a danger to themselves, to the homeless community, and to the citizens of Salem.

Salemmites who do not live Downtown may be unaware of the severity of the problem. Have a look at what took place in July.

—Joanne Mattera

### 82 Medical Aid Responses

. Of the police responses this month, there were **three mental health issues, two suicidal persons, and two overdoses**. Because homeless people do not have primary care physicians, all medical responses start out as emergencies unless or until the situation proves otherwise. This is the most expensive way for illness to be treated. Here is the breakdown:

### . 43 Responses to the Lifebridge area

13 to Lifebridge  
16 to Riley Plaza  
7 to the Salem Police Headquarters \*  
6 to Margin Street  
1 to the Post Office on Margin Street

(\* You may be wondering about Medical Aid at the Salem Police Dept. According to a staffer, when an unhoused person walks into the Margin

*Street building to request medical aid, this is how it is recorded. Typically the same one or two individuals seek medical aid in this way.)*

#### **. 19 Responses to Downtown locations**

"Downtown" is expanding outward in all directions

2 to Salem Depot

2 to Sea Level Oyster Bar on Wharf Street

2 to Speedway on Derby Street

##### **One each:**

Charlotte Forten Park on Derby Street

Derby Restaurant location on Washington Street

Derby Square

Honey Dew Donuts on Washington Street

Passage to India on Washington Street

Salem District Court

Salem Public Library

Sam's Market on Bridge Street

Smile Designers on Boston Street

Village Tavern on Essex Street

Visitor Center on New Liberty Street

Washington Square

Winter Island Park

#### **. 12 Responses to redacted addresses**

2 to Boston Street

2 to Lafayette Street

##### **One each:**

Appleton Street

Broad Street

Congress Street

Derby Street

Essex/Washington Streets

North Street

Washington Street

Watson Street

#### **. 8 Responses to Highland Avenue**

5 to Market Basket

1 to Burger King

1 to Londi's Roast Beef

1 to the Salem Hospital Emergency Department

### **32 Well-Being Checks**

A well-being check is usually called in by an individual or a business owner who sees someone who appears to be unwell.

#### **. 24 Responses to specific locations**

2 to Steve's Market on Margin Street

2 to CVS on Essex Street Pedestrian Mall

2 to Jaho Coffee Roasters on Canal Street

2 to North Shore Medical Ctr. on Highland Avenue

##### **One each:**

Lifebridge

Riley Plaza

Artist Row

Broad Street Cemetery

Dunkin Donuts on Washington Street

Hampton Inn on Washington Street

Hotel Salem on Essex Street Pedestrian Mall

Klop Alley

Lafayette Park

Museum Place Garage

Nicole's Mini Mart on Essex Street

Red Lion Smoke Shop on Washington Street

Salem Common

Sofi Apartments at Salem Station

Steve's Quality Liquors on Gedney Street

Washington Square

#### **. 8 responses to redacted addresses**

2 to Washington Street

##### **One each:**

Chandler Street

Charter Street

Essex Street

Jefferson Avenue

Norman Street

Webb Street

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### **68 Unwanted Presences**

I've grouped three categories here—**Loitering**, **Suspicious Persons**, and **Trespassing**—

because all involve people being where they are not invited. The police are called when a request to move along is disregarded, when the caller sees something that does not look right, or when an individual has made his way onto private property.

If Lifebridge is set up to serve the homeless, why does it call the police to remove unhoused people for being an unwanted presence?

#### **53 Loitering responses**

The police term is "Undesirable/unwanted guest." For businesses, loitering can result in loss of income, and there are numerous businesses that have had to call the police. As for private dwellings, no one wants to walk out of an apartment to find someone sleeping or

shooting up in the hallway or vestibule of their building or camped out in their backyard.

**. 38 Responses to specific locations**

4 to Speedway on Derby Street

3 to Lifebridge

3 to Witch City Mall

2 to Salem Common

2 to Salem City Hall

2 to Salem Five Bank on Salem Green

2 to Starbucks on Washington Street

**One each:**

Broad Street Cemetery

Charlotte Forten Park

Congressman Seth Moulton's office on Front Street

CVS on Essex Street Pedestrian Mall

Derby Wharf

Domino's Pizza on Canal Street

East India Square

Leslie's Retreat Park on North Street

Merchant Hotel on Washington Street

Museum Place Garage on New Liberty Street

Planet Fitness on Highland Avenue

Salem Hospital Emergency Department

Salem Post Office

Salem Self Storage on Jefferson Street

St. Peter's Church on St. Peter Street

Steve's Market on Margin Street

Village Silversmith on Essex Street

Village Tavern on Essex Street

Walgreen's on Boston Street

Wendy's Restaurant on Lafayette Street

**. 15 Responses to redacted addresses**

5 to Washington Street

2 to Essex Street

**One each:**

Broadway

Canal Street

Charter Street

Derby Street

Lafayette Street

Palmer Street

Pratt Street

Union Street

**11 Suspicious Persons**

A suspicious person is one whose behavior suggests that an illegal act has been committed or is about to be. Instinct and past experience may be a guide for reporting. Police would have a record of prior suspicious activity.

2 to Canal Street

**One each:**

Broad Street

Charlotte Forten Park

Derby/Congress Street

Forest River Park

Lafayette Street

McDonald's on Canal Street

Salem Depot

Salem Police Department

South Harbor Garage

**4 Trespassing**

This is the unauthorized entry into a person's yard or home or to a business.

3 redacted addresses on Washington Street

1 at Speedway on Derby Street

**20 Responses to breaching the peace**

**Disputes** are typically verbal. **Fights** are physical. **Disturbances** disrupt the peace with noise or physical activity, as determined by the responding police officer. Additionally, there were calls for **Noise**, for **Threats**, and a police effort to **Keep the Peace**.

**. 8 Disturbances**

2 at Riley Plaza

**One each:**

CVS on Essex Street Pedestrian Mall

Dunkin Donuts on Washington Street

New Derby/Washington Street

Salem Depot

Salem Housing Authority on Charter Street

Speedway on Derby Street

**. 5 Disputes**

Highland Avenue

Jefferson Avenue

Salem Self Storage on Jefferson Avenue

Washington Street

North Shore Medical Center on Highland Avenue

**. 4 Fights**

2 at Riley Plaza

**One each:**

Charlotte Forten Park on Derby Street

McDonald's on Canal Street

**. 2 Noise complaints**

High Street Park

Whaler's Lane

**.1 Keep the Peace**

Police called to Summer Street

## 11 Arrests, Threats, Protective Custody

It is not clear from the police reports how many of these incidents were between members of the homeless community and how many were directed outward.

### . 6 Arrests

2 at Lifebridge  
2 at Riley Plaza  
1 at High Street Park  
1 at Salem Public Library

### . 2 Threats

Both at Lifebridge

### . 2 Protective Custody

1 at Salem Depot  
1 at North Shore Medical Center on Highland Avenue

### . 1 Drug use complaint

At High Street Park

*( High Street Park sits directly behind Lifebridge. Its mention so many times in this report is directly related to its use as a campsite. )*

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## 11 Larceny and Robbery

**Larceny** is theft that does not involve violence, whereas **robbery** does, whether by physical intimidation or actual contact. **Shoplifting** takes place specifically in a store.

### 4 Shoplifting

The Boutique on Front Street  
Family Dollar on Canal Street  
TJ Maxx on Traders Way  
Walgreens on New Derby Street

### 3 Larcenies

2 at Lifebridge  
1 at Shaws Market on Highland Avenue

### 1 Robbery: Breaking & Entering

Pickering Wharf Marina

### 3 Lost & Found

2 at Lifebridge  
1 at Witch City Mall

*(Given the source of the calls, when police are contacted about inexpensive items that are misplaced or pilfered, they respond to keep the peace, identifying the event as Lost & Found.)*

## 11 Individual events

. Two 911 calls from Speedway on Derby Street  
. Domestic issue on Lafayette Street  
. Drunk individual at Arge's Liquors on Boston Street  
. Drunk individual on Washington Street  
. Fraud/scam on Harbor Street  
. Motor vehicle accident at Target on Highland Avenue  
. Mutual Aid rendered at Salem Hospital ER  
. Officer testified against defendant at Court  
. Trash dumping on Essex Street  
. Unknown problem at McDonald's on Canal Street

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## Contextualizing the Information

Police responded to an average of seven or eight calls a day in July. This is the tip of the iceberg. Many individuals don't call the police, often because they have done so in the past but know the police are limited to what they can do. Instead, they are adding locks, door cameras, and security systems to their homes. Businesses have done and are doing the same.

While specific events and locations of homeless activity vary each month, one element remains: Lifebridge is the magnet that attracts a homeless community to Salem. Most of the activity emanates from or revolves around that Margin Street facility. Across the street, Riley Plaza is the de facto outdoor living room for the homeless community. But follow the trail of cigarette butts, nip bottles, and trash, and you will see the widening circle of homeless activity. Even City Hall had to call the police twice this month to remove loiterers.

As the radius widens, retail businesses bear the brunt of shoplifting and loitering. What we're seeing more of this month: homeless activity extending down Canal Street and continuing its expansion up to Highland Avenue. For instance, police responded five times to Market Basket.

Neighbors in the GESNA neighborhood see and hear the homeless activity daily. For a long time, residents of Lifebridge were forbidden to use the High Street Park, but as rules have loosened, and a greater number of homeless people are *not* sleeping at Lifebridge, parks have become fuller than ever (see story next page). Also, homeless activity is reaching into surrounding residential neighborhoods, as a perusal of the statistics in this report will show.

## Camping at the High Street Playground

On the early evening of July 26, a resident of the GESNA neighborhood brought her children to play in the High Street playground. Almost immediately, a homeless woman of questionable mental stability began to follow the resident and her children around, so much so that she felt that she and her children were in danger. They left.



Camped for the night at the High Street Playground

A few feet away, half a dozen homeless people had set up camp for the night under the open-sided roofed structure in the park. The police responded to calls but explained to neighbors that because of a city ordinance, they had to give the unhoused campers 12 hours' notice before removing them. That's an overnight. If you are unhoused, you can camp overnight, move on the next day to another location, and then another, and another, and then move back to the first location. We see this on Essex Street, at Charlotte Forten Park, and along the South River walkway near Forten Park. If several groups of unhoused people do this—and there are many groups of unhoused people in Salem—the same location can be occupied every night by different people—legally, with the police unable to do anything about it.

Now add this twist to the mix: Within the homeless community—both those living at Lifebridge and those living out of doors—there are registered sex offenders. What happens when sex offenders set up camp in a children's playground?

You can thank your City Councilors for prioritizing the rights of unhoused people, most of whom are not from Salem, over your own tax-paid quality of life.

Here is an excerpt from Sec. 24-31, Camping, of the "Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions" of the Salem Code ordinances:

*"To camp* means to pitch, erect, or occupy a campsite or to use camp materials, or both, for the purposes of, or to facilitate, outdoor sheltering, either temporarily or permanently. *Campsite* means any place where a tent, tarp, or other temporary structure is established for the purpose of maintaining an outdoor shelter. *Camp materials* means items used to establish or facilitate occupancy of a campsite, including tents, tarps, or other temporary structures, as well as large furniture, stoves, and other cooking instruments."

"During a period when shelter is unavailable, when the city notifies an individual located in any campsite that a period when shelter is unavailable has ended, said individual shall have 12 hours to remove their camping materials."

For the entire document:

[https://library.municode.com/ma/salem/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=PTIIICOR\\_CH24O\\_FMIPR](https://library.municode.com/ma/salem/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIIICOR_CH24O_FMIPR)

In May 2025, the City Council enacted the 12-hour rule. Homeless campers—that is, people sleeping outdoors—have 12 hours to move. That's an overnight. They can, in theory and in practice, sleep in a different outdoor space each night and be within their legal rights to do so.



## What to know about panhandling

You may ask why panhandling is not banned in Salem. Here's why: Federal and state courts view peaceful begging as protected expression of free speech, treating it similarly to asking for political or charitable support. So ordinances that ban all panhandling in downtown zones or public sidewalks are regularly overturned by judges for violating constitutional rights.

However, there are limits to panhandling—limits we see regularly transgressed in Salem. This is when you can call the police:

- . A panhandler is standing on a narrow highway median or stepping directly into active traffic lanes to collect money, such as at the traffic lights Downtown. Alert the police, because not only is the panhandler putting her/himself at risk, s/he is impeding the flow of traffic
- . A panhandler is aggressive, such as blocking your path, haranguing or threatening you for money, or touching you
- . A panhandler is loitering, trespassing, or disturbing the peace. It's not the panhandling that's illegal but the behavior of the person

By all means donate to a charity that helps the homeless. But donate wisely. Charities that pay their directors and senior staff huge sums while offering limited services to clients are not worthy of your money.

## Remembering Christopher Fuccione (1965-2026)

**Chris Fuccione** was a member of GESNA as well as of Witch City Action. This might seem like a contradiction in Salem's polarized politics regarding the homeless community, but Chris saw and understood both sides. Formerly homeless himself, he was making a life at Seeds of Hope, the permanent housing part of Lifebridge at the corner of Endicott and Margin Streets, with an eye to moving into more independent housing. He never forgot the struggle and always spoke up for those who had no permanent home.

Yet as a member of our neighborhood and of our community group, which vocally opposes the management and expansion of Lifebridge, he understood the neighbors' point of view. Chris spoke candidly to us about Lifebridge's many shortcomings—its lack of caseworkers, the untrained staffers, the residents who needed but did not receive mental health and addiction help, the drug use and violence that often took place inside, and the deplorable physical condition of the building in which he lived.



Chris Fuccione, our friend

Chris was, as you might surmise, our “inside man,” well aware that retribution by Lifebridge for his revelations could have had him out on the street again. (We were prepared to fight on his behalf.) However, Chris had a larger vision. In his run for City Council in 2023 he was thinking about the issues that affected all the residents of Ward 2, housed and unhoused. He didn’t win, but he made a respectable showing, enough for him to know that his work was appreciated.

Chris will be remembered as a good and caring friend and as an active and involved citizen.

Joe Cultrera, our neighbor and a good friend of Chris’s, sums it up: “Chris was the real life bridge. Between our neighborhood, our history, our culture, and those in need.” -- J.M.

#### Other voices from the GESNA community:

**Mary Beth Bainbridge:** Chris Fuccione was an embarrassment of riches. He was kind. He was grateful. He was fun. He was passionate. He was an open book. He was a good neighbor. He was a great friend.

Chris loved politics. He fought to make the world a better place for all. He volunteered for several committees and provided valuable contributions. He gathered signatures for various causes from animal rights to his own campaign for ward councillor.

Chris spoke out for others and gave a voice for unhoused individuals that needed it. He spoke up and demanded better services at Lifebridge. He pushed against the expansion knowing full well his own housing might be lost in the process.

Chris loved to share, whether it was candy or copies from his printer. He was personable and loved connecting people. He believed in the power of community and found ways to build community.

Chris always seemed to find the bright side of things. He loved word play and took particular joy in making a groan-worthy pun. He had beautiful blue eyes that sparkled when he laughed.

The world will be a poorer place without him.

**James Zavaglia and Marjorie Zavaglia:** This is a huge loss to everyone who knew Chris, including myself and Marjorie. Chris always fought the good fight, He had a good heart and a good moral character and compass. He will be missed by all.

Read his obituary at Croswell funeral home:  
<https://www.croswellfuneralhome.com/christopher-j-fuccione/>

## TAKE ACTION!

#### Want to make your voice heard?

- . Mayor Pangallo: [mayor@saalem.com](mailto:mayor@saalem.com)
- . City Councilors: [citycouncilors@saalem.com](mailto:citycouncilors@saalem.com)
- . State Senator: [joan.lovely@masenate.gov](mailto:joan.lovely@masenate.gov)
- . Representative: [manny.cruz@mahouse.gov](mailto:manny.cruz@mahouse.gov)

#### Join the conversations on Facebook

. **GESNA: Our Neighborhood. Our History**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1296570384591885>

. **Salem MA Community Blog**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/4211010885816938>

. **Salem ma Really Uncensored**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SalemMAreallyUNCensored>

#### Join with your neighbors in real time

Share information. Work as a group to let our city government know your concerns. They clearly have an agenda that doesn’t include their constituents, but keep a record of your concerns and complaints. If you have a skill—law, writing, speaking—use it. Write letters to the editors of *The Salem News*, *Salem Patch*, *The Boston Globe*; contact broadcast media. When enough people comment, media takes notice.

#### Share the link to this document

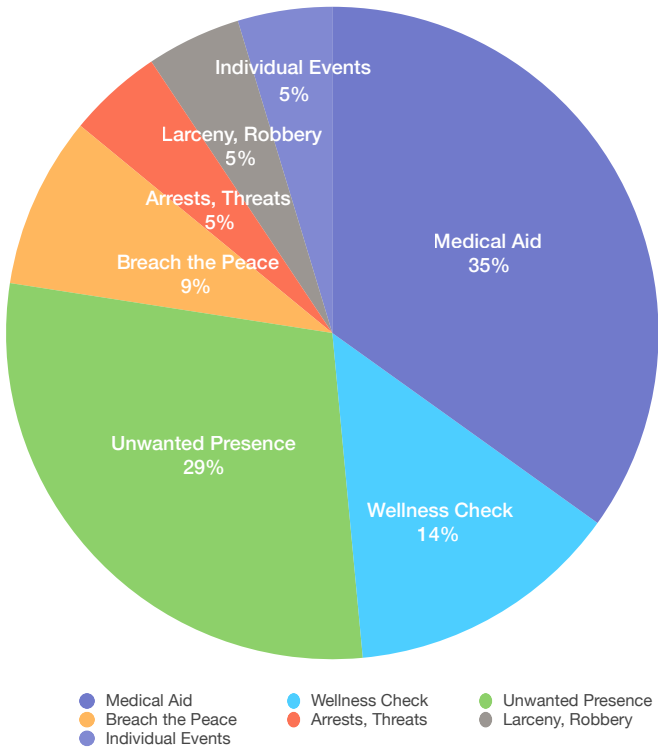
Salem residents who do not live Downtown are much less aware of homeless activity than those of us who live with it every day. Let them know what’s going on.

If you have a story you wish to share, contact me: [joannemattera@gmail.com](mailto:joannemattera@gmail.com)

Incidents: July 1-31, 2026

| TYPE                                             | INCIDENT |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Medical Aid                                      | 82       |
| Wellness Check                                   | 32       |
| Unwanted Presence                                | 68       |
| Breach the Peace                                 | 20       |
| Arrests, Threats                                 | 11       |
| Larceny, Robbery                                 | 11       |
| Individual Events                                | 11       |
| TOTAL INCIDENTS                                  | 235      |
| SOURCE: Salem Police Dept. Terms as used by SPD. |          |
| Infograph courtesy GESNA/ONOH.                   |          |

PERCENTAGE OF 235 INCIDENTS: JULY 1-31, 2026



INCIDENTS TOTAL 235: JULY 1-31, 2026

