LYNN — A better-than-expected first year of the Lynn ferry, the continued success of Lynn Memorial Auditorium and the hiring of a cultural district director were among the 2014 accomplishments Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy highlighted in a meeting with an Item reporter and editor this week.

“The ferry completely exceeded our expectations,” Kennedy said of the first year of a two-year pilot program shuttling commuters to and from Boston from the Blossom Street Landing. Kennedy said the ferry attracted 3,000 more riders than the 10,000 the city had targeted.

The mayor added that the ferry schedule could be expanded next year from this year’s three daily round trips.

In addition to the ferry, Kennedy pointed to other positive developments on the waterfront and elsewhere. She said Arthur Pappathanasi is close to embarking on the redevelopment of the Beacon Chevrolet site, Charles Patsios has a preliminary plan for the former GE gear plant, and Pat McGrath is scheduled to close in mid-February on the sale of the South Harbor site.

The developers of that site, Kennedy said, envision a “full-service community,” including “residential, commercial and medical” uses.

The mayor talked about the need for a hotel in a city of 90,000, adding that previously announced plans for Lynnway hotel “aren’t dead, they’re delayed.” She said a Fairfield Inn would be a good fit as far as the price of rooms and amenities offered.

It is not uncommon for Kennedy to take to the Auditorium stage prior to concerts to welcome people to the show and, for the non-Lynners in attendance, to the city. She urges them to patronize nearby restaurants — and, by all accounts, they take her advice.

“The Blue Ox, Rossetti, Asian Garden, Brothers Deli — they’re all packed on a show night,”
Kennedy said. “The Auditorium has spurred tremendous economic advantages downtown.”

Kennedy, Community Development Director and Auditorium general manager Jamie Marsh and production manager Henry Ryan traveled to New York City Monday to attend the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) annual conference.

“We want to expand our offerings to a wider variety of genres,” the mayor said, mentioning Motown, doo-wop and country, as well as a “MythBusters” or “Archer”-type show as possible additions.

Kennedy also sees the Auditorium as an image enhancer for the city.

“We have an image that needs some polishing,” she said. “The way to do that is to bring some people here so they can tell their friends about the great strides we are making in Lynn.”

Kennedy said the hiring of Emily Ruddock as the first Downtown Lynn Cultural District director is a sign that not only are the arts flourishing in Lynn, but also the city is committed to using that as a selling point.

Downtown zoning changes, self-pay municipal parking lots, and attracting new restaurants April’s Pub and Grill and R.F. O’Sullivan’s were also listed by Kennedy as positive developments.