

Inaugural Address 2014

The Haverhill of the 21st Century

Introduction

Good morning. I am honored and humbled to be here this morning. As I stand up here, I recall the first day I was ever up on this stage, as a very shy and scared high school freshman going to school here in this building. It is great to be back—again-- thank you!

I am deeply grateful for the unique opportunity that the citizens of Haverhill have given me here today. I am also aware of the words of President Kennedy: *“To those whom much is given, much is expected.”* The historic opportunity given to me today comes with it a special obligation, not just to be the longest serving Mayor, but also to work to be one of the best. I will try my best.

This morning, I have broken slightly with tradition and asked our first lady, Martha Fiorentini, to be up on stage with me today, because without you, I would not be standing here.

My sister Anne and my brother in law John and my niece Lisa are here this morning, and I want to say thank you to them for their love and support over the years—I would not be here without you.

We are honored to be joined today by members of our State and Federal delegation—our partners in government, that have done so much for our city. Thank you Congresswoman Tsongas for all you have done to help our city. I thank our legislative delegation for all they

have done, and particularly want to recognize and thank State Representative Brian Dempsey, who has brought millions of dollars to our city. [Recognize Mayors and others in attendance.] I also want to recognize and thank the Haverhill High band, the Haverhill High Chorus, the St. James Latino Choir and the Be Imagine Music Studios for your wonderful musical selections. I want to recognize and thank our new city clerk, Linda Koutoulas, her second day on the job, for putting all of this together, thank you Linda.

We recognize our elected officials, who have served us so well, and today I also want to recognize our service men and woman for their service. I want to recognize here today a decorated veteran from the Vietnam War, who lost his vision in the war but continues to have a vision to serve our city; please welcome our hometown hero, Gerry Boucher. Thank you for coming.

As I stand here this morning, I recall my first inauguration and looking out at the audience at my Mom and Dad who were so proud to be here. My father lived to see the American dream come true—born the son of immigrants, he received a great education here in Haverhill, went on to college, and lived to become a school teacher and father of the Mayor. We must work hard that our city offers today's new immigrants the same great education, the same opportunities my father had. To those new immigrants who are here with us today, I say, "*Bienvenidos. Esta es su ciudad.*" *Welcome, this is your city.* I wish I could say this in more languages, because this is your city wherever you came from, whatever is your native tongue, whatever is the color of your skin, whether your family has been here for 400 years or you arrived here from another land yesterday, we will never become a tale of two cities, this is your city.

A Decade Ago

When I addressed you a decade ago, we faced the largest municipal debt in history of Massachusetts. Our goal back then was simple: **to survive**. It took extraordinary team work, extraordinary help from our State partners, and an extraordinary group of municipal employees that I salute today—but today, our quality of life is improved, our old factory buildings are revived, our MCAS scores are up, our unemployment rate is down, and today our city stands with the highest bond rating in our history. Today, **Haverhill is back!**

But today is no time to rest on our laurels, or to talk about yesterday. Today is the time to talk about tomorrow, about the modern 21st century city that our children and grandchildren will be proud to call home.

Improving Education

That vision for tomorrow, for the great 21st century city of tomorrow, must start with education.

Over the past few years, we have made an extraordinary commitment to improve education in our city—we've increased funding by millions of dollars and sent a message that academic achievement is our top education priority. We have sent a clear message, and it's getting through, improving academics is our number one top priority. We are making progress, but we know that there is more to do. We must continue to send the message that academic achievement is our number one top priority in education and we must continue and expand the MCAS tutoring program that has worked so well for Whittier Voc Tech and which we started last year. We must continue down the path that our superintendent has put us on: academics is job one.

Now, we know that what happens inside a classroom is the most important thing in education. But we also know that the quality of the learning environment, the building, matters.

That's why with the help of the State, we put \$32 million into fixing our high school. Today, the days when our high school stood on the brink of losing its accreditation are gone. Like Haverhill itself, Haverhill High is back.

We also spent millions of dollars to repair, maintain and upgrade our buildings like the Tilton, the Consentino, the Walnut Square and the John Greenleaf Whittier Schools and the Nettle. But there is one school where two sets of outside engineers have told us that the most cost effective thing that we can do is to replace it. That school is the Hunking School. Replacing the Hunking School will be our most important initiative in 2014. We must not fail in this initiative.

We must not fail because valuing education is part of Haverhill's great tradition. This great tradition meant that when I grew up in Haverhill, the greatest generation just back from the war, paid for four new schools for us children. Those four new schools allowed us to get a quality education, to go onto college and to build a good life for ourselves. Now it's time for our generation to give back. We must not fail.

We must not fail the children who will attend the Hunking, but a new school will not benefit just those children.

We must not fail the parents who will send their children there, but a new school will benefit more than just those parents.

We must not fail because a new Hunking School will benefit all of us, those with children in the school, those with children in other schools and those without children or grandchildren in any school, those who live on the south side of the river and those who live on the north—a new

school will improve all our property values, prevent our other schools from becoming overcrowded and improve our image as an up and coming city. This is our obligation, to provide good education for OUR children, and in that obligation, we must not fail.

Bringing in more business

This modern 21st century city, the Haverhill of tomorrow, must be a city that is business friendly, job friendly and goes the extra mile to attract and keep new business in our city. That means expanding the use of our brand new web site to attract new business to our city, and we will walk the extra mile to attract, expand and keep our businesses.

Improving the Police Department

This great 21st century city of tomorrow must be safe.

Now, make no mistake about it, we have an extraordinary police department led by an extraordinary chief, and I am proud of them. They kept us safe in the toughest of times and we are grateful for their service.

But we, and they, are committed to doing more.

Last year, we added four (4) new police officers—and this year, we must do more.

But this must be a start, not a finish. To build that shining 21st century city, we also need to become more proactive, not just reactive. We need to put policemen back on foot patrols and bike patrols, crack down on quality of life crimes—including noise complaints-- that often make it difficult to attract good people to live in our neighborhoods, we need to work with our unions

to find more innovative ways to put more men on the streets quickly and we need to send a clear message: Haverhill is a safe city and we are going to keep it that way.

Waterfront

Building the Haverhill of the 21st century Haverhill of tomorrow is about schools, it is about police, it is about business but it is about more. It is about a vision for tomorrow. To build the Haverhill of the future, we must look not just to our shining past but also to our brilliant future.

That 21st century city of tomorrow must face and focus on the Merrimack.

From the time the first settlers sailed up here 400 years ago, the key to our future has been along the Merrimack.

Today, we have a unique opportunity to rezone our city to re-orient buildings along the waterfront, and to once again make the Merrimack our focus. We must follow the dictates of the ancient Roman poet Horace “carpe diem” —seize the day. We must seize the day and act now.

Several years ago, we rezoned our downtown to reduce red tape and regulatory barriers, eliminate the special permit requirement to build, and reduced parking requirements and look what happened. Our efforts sparked \$150 million in new public and private investment, millions of dollars in new tax revenue, with more to come, and with a new building re-development announced just yesterday.

Now, we need to build on that success. We need to rezone along the Merrimack and incorporate the same principles that worked so well for us in the past—reduce red tape and regulatory barriers, eliminate the special permit zoning requirement, and send a message to

business—if you allow public access to the waterfront, if your investment takes into account our core belief that the river belongs to all of us, not just to those who want to develop next to it, then your investment is welcome and we will not put arbitrary barriers, special permits or politics in the way.

Redeveloping the waterfront must be a public private partnership. We cannot do it all as city, but there is a role for public investment along our waterfront.

Our public investment should come along the rail trail, along Water Street and in series of parks and playgrounds along the waterfront. This fall, if all goes well, we start construction of the first phase of our rail trail. Someday, that trail should extend from the train station in Bradford all the way to the Groveland line. For this vision to become a reality we will make the rail trail a priority. Later this year, we will apply for grants to begin building the next phase.

Rail trails are nice, but you do not need a rail to have a trail. On the Water street side of the river, I will continue to open up the water front, seek State transportation and park money so that this area, once covered with weeds and blocked from the waterfront, will someday be a beautiful gateway to the city. Along the Bradford side, we will work with our own parcel of land, the Ornstein parcel, to develop this in conjunction with the owners of nearby land, so that there is a park, a trail and the public has access. And along the forgotten factory buildings along the Bradford side of the river, we must rezone so that those buildings can become housing and spark a new renaissance along that end of the river.

This is our vision, our dream—a city that is clean, a city that is friendly to business, a safe city with world class schools, a city which embraces its waterfront. If we work together, this dream can come true. Bobby Kennedy once said: “There are those that look at things the way they are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?”

To make Haverhill great, we can never be satisfied with what we have, we can never be satisfied with the status quo and we must always strive to do better. We must dream of things that never were and ask why not.

With your help, this dream, this vision of a new Haverhill can become a reality.

Thank you again for the unique opportunity you have given me. I will work night and day to make Haverhill better. Thank you for coming here this morning.