

MAYOR JIM DONCHESS INAUGURAL ADDRESS

JANUARY 5, 2020

Good afternoon President Wilshire, Vice President O'Brien, members of the Board of Aldermen, Executive Councilor Pignatelli, Senators Rosenwald and Levesque, President Raymond and members of the School Board, Fire Commission, BPW, Police Commission, members of our legislative delegation, School Superintendent Mosley, Police Chief Carignan, Fire Chief Rhodes, City division directors and staff, and community members.

Welcome all to Nashua North and to the inauguration ceremony of the 110th Nashua City government.

This is a day of celebration for all of those who have worked hard to get here. But it is also a time for thanks.

First thank you to our families, my wife Vicki, for all of the support and sacrifice you will give every one of us as we serve in City government.

Thank You to Our City Employees

And thank you to the 2,800 City employees who work every day to make Nashua a great City – the teachers, who help our kids learn to read and compute, think and analyze, write and communicate, and who guide our kids from kindergarten to career; the firefighters, our first

responders, who have been our partner from day one in the City's Safe Stations program; the police officers, who keep us safe, who strengthen our neighborhoods with community policing, and who are role models for the City's young people; the Public Works employees, who fix, patch, and plow our streets, collect the trash and recycling, care for our parks, playgrounds, and green spaces, and the staff, who work in public health, in the library, and in City Hall.

### Thank You for the Privilege of Serving as Nashua's Mayor

Thank you to all Nashuans for giving me the opportunity and privilege of serving our City as Mayor for the fourth time. I continue to listen and I learn from you – at the dozens of town halls we have held over the last four years, at the monthly Coffees-with-the-Mayor, in City Hall and on Main Street, at our cafés and the Farmers Market, and when I visit people at their homes to seek out their ideas. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and dreams. I pledge I will continue to listen, to learn, and to be accountable to you.

### We Have Accomplished Much Over the Past Four Years

By working together over this past four years we have accomplished a great deal:

Four years ago, Nashua had not yet completed the job we began in 1988 when we opened half-day public kindergarten for the first time. Today, all of Nashua's 5 year-olds are able to attend full-day public kindergarten at all 12 of our elementary schools.

Four years ago, many of our streets were crumbling, and after years of neglect, people were skeptical that Nashua's streets would ever be fixed. One man stopped me walking on Concord Street and said, "Concord Street will never be paved." Many also doubted that Kinsley Street would ever be repaired. Today, we are in the midst of our City-wide, multi-year \$41.5 million Paving Plan of Action. We have repaved and crack sealed over 60 miles of our 300 miles of streets including Concord Street, including Kinsley Street, Amherst Street, and many others.

Four years ago, only about 100 new units of housing - Cotton Mill Square and the Jackson Falls condos – had been added to downtown since Clocktower Place in the 1980s. Today, we have more than 500 units of new downtown housing including the Lofts 34 mill conversion on Franklin Street and the affordable housing complex on Marshall Street. This new housing has added tens of millions of dollars to the downtown tax base and 1,000 new downtown residents to patronize Main Street businesses. And we have more new housing approved for our emerging Railyard District in the east end of downtown near Temple and East Hollis Streets.

Four years ago, the banks of the Nashua River downtown were overgrown with weeds and entangled with invasive species, and we had no plan to change this sorry situation. Today, we have developed a Nashua Riverfront Master Plan, and we are starting the work of revitalizing and showcasing the beauty of our riverfront with lighting, suspended walkways, landscaping, and docks.

Four years ago, we had no specific goals for reducing our carbon footprint, and we lacked an urgent plan for a greener Nashua. Today, we have moved our urgent plan for a green Nashua to the front

burner. We have ambitious energy-reduction goals, and we have hired the City's first energy manager to jump start green projects. We have converted all of our street lights to LEDs, we have secured ownership over our two hydroelectric dams, we have fought in Concord for expanded net metering legislation, we have VeoRide scooters and bikes, we have our first hybrid electric buses, we have solar arrays on the Lake Street Fire Station, the Transit Garage on Riverside Drive, and the Conway arena, we have more charging stations for electric vehicles, and we are already working on extending our rail trail to the new Railyard District to the east of Main Street.

Four years ago, Pennichuck, the water company the City owns, had its headquarters out of town, and we asked why is this? And four years ago, the Courthouse Oval in the center of downtown was sitting vacant. Today, Pennichuck has committed to coming back home, and the company will be bringing 60 new people to work at an expanded HQ in the Courthouse Oval.

Today, our City has more life with the New England Roots and NuMuse music festivals, with a reactivated Central Fire Station, with a Main Street Farmers Market, with Dancin' in the Street, with our Pride Parades.

Over this past 4 years we became a Welcoming City. We value all Nashuans, and we welcome all who come to make a life for themselves and their families.

Nashua has also earned a lot of honors – the 13<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> spots on WalletHub's 2019 and 2018 lists of Best-Run Cities in America, Money Magazine's 2018 Best City to Live in New Hampshire, the State Arts Commission's 2017 Arts Award for Creative Community, the 16<sup>th</sup> spot on Money

Magazine's 2016 list of 50 Best Places to Live in America, a new AAA bond rating from Standard and Poor's, and others.

### We Will Do A Lot More

Looking ahead there is a lot more that we can accomplish, but we must remain connected and continue working together.

We will continue our commitment to provide an excellent education for every student at every school every day. Over the next four years we will focus keenly on our middle schools by replacing the aging Elm Street Middle School with a new school and by renovating and reconfiguring the Pennichuck and Fairgrounds Middle Schools. We also need to keep a close watch on our ELL program and ensure that we have enough teachers to meet the challenge of students first coming to school speaking Spanish, Portuguese, Swahili, and many other languages.

We will make Nashua greener. We will work with our schools, and our fire and police departments, and Public Works to reduce our carbon footprint - with more solar on City and school buildings, with LED lighting in our schools, and with more electric vehicles. I can tell you that our young people are committed to making a difference on climate change right here in Nashua. Our goals are for a 25% reduction in our carbon footprint by 2015 and to become carbon neutral by 2050. We will meet these climate goals, but to do so we will need to get everyone involved.

As you may know, for more than three decades we have been working toward a downtown performing arts center. We will soon see a new marquee on Main Street. Within not too long a time, thousands of people will be coming to Main Street annually to attend a performance at a new performing arts center at the site of the former Alec's Shoes.

We will continue our focus on fixing Nashua's streets and infrastructure.

City government with the involvement of the entire community will develop a new master plan for the City of Nashua – we're calling it Imagine Nashua 2040 - to guide our vision for the future of our City.

We will continue to fight for commuter rail by working with our legislative delegation and with our local Rail Committee.

### Rising Health Care Costs – Our Major Financial Challenge

I do have a word of caution. The rising costs of health care for our City employees is the major financial challenge we now face. To be specific, health care costs rose 11% or \$3.3 million this year, and they will go up almost as much next year. We should take these rapidly increasing costs of health care seriously, and exercise fiscal discipline, as we consider new spending commitments so that property tax increases remain affordable for our residents.

One characteristic all of the people on the stage share is that all are committed to community service and to making Nashua a better place to live.

### Service to Community and the Importance of Opportunity – Values I Learned from My Family

The value of service to community is something I learned from my family during my childhood in Illinois. My father coached youth baseball for many years, and my mother was president of my school's PTA. Both my mother and father taught that this is the thing to do – find a way to contribute to the community.

Helping to ensure opportunity for all Nashua citizens is at the core of our mission as a City and as an entire community. Full-day kindergarten for all of Nashua's children, the Arlington Street Community Center, the English language and other learning programs at the Adult Learning Center, our largest-in-New Hampshire elderly property tax exemption, the proposed middle school project, our Pride Parades, our City summer jobs program for high school students – these are some of the ways we are opening the doors of opportunity and enhancing the quality of life for fellow Nashuans.

The importance of opportunity is another value which my family taught me. My father and uncle, the children of immigrants, grew up very poor in Youngstown, Ohio. My uncle Joe Donchess was considerably older than my father Steve, and ultimately Joe became a role model for both my father and me. After my grandfather and their father was killed in a quarry accident in Youngstown, Uncle Joe became a surrogate father for my father.

Even before the quarry accident, Joe went to work in the Youngstown steel mill at age 10. Then he was discovered and given a scholarship by the football coach at the Wyoming Seminary, a private school in Pennsylvania. Joe excelled in school and was a star football player. He earned an athletic scholarship to the University of Pittsburg where he became an All-American and played in the Rose Bowls of 1929 and 1930. Joe went on to medical school and became an orthopedic surgeon. He was later inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame. Joe in turn helped my father through college and law school and later helped his nieces and nephews through college. Joe multiplied the opportunity which a football coach at Wyoming Seminary gave him by lifting up many others, including my brother and me.

#### We Can Realize Our Vision

We've done a lot over the last 4 years, but I know that Nashua's best is yet to come. As we look ahead to the next 4 years, I am ready to serve Nashua with energy, creativity, and hard work. By continuing to work together, by valuing and supporting each other, we can realize our vision of making Nashua the best middle-sized City, the best place to live in America. Thank you and God bless.