

2010 Inaugural Address

Mayor Kimberley Driscoll
2010 INAUGURAL ADDRESS
Monday, January 4, 2010

Ladies and Gentlemen of the City Council and School Committee, Representative Keenan, District Attorney Blodgett, Attorney General Coakley, President Pat Meserve ... and other distinguished guests.

I want to offer my sincere congratulations to each member of the City Council and School Committee sworn in today. I am mindful that the progress that we have made over the past four years would not have been possible without the support of many of you.

Let me begin today by thanking my husband Nick and our three terrific kids Delaney, Ailish and Nicky. Thank you for your help, for your support and for your willingness to deal with the many responsibilities that go with Mom being the Mayor.

I also want to especially welcome Councillor O'Keefe, the most senior member of the Council, who we are so glad could be part of this morning's ceremony, in light of his recent surgery. Glad you're here Joe and looking well.

It is indeed an honor to be with you this morning as Mayor of this great city. Election to public office is a gratifying and humbling experience. Gratifying because of the work and effort that goes into serving the people of Salem and humbling because of the enormous responsibilities that have been entrusted to me, and to all of us, elected to serve.

My most vivid memory of standing in front of you in January of 2006 is that I thought that four years was a long time. As it turns out, although, there were some long and difficult days, the truth is, the time flew by It absolutely flew.

I am truly grateful for the resounding vote of confidence the people of Salem gave to me and to all of us in November. I attribute that to the faith people have in the ambitious goals we set forth just four years ago and the success we have had in achieving many of them.

It seems fitting that we are returning to Old Town Hall for this inaugural ceremony. Four years ago, I noted that this historic building was in many ways symbolic of Salem itself...having never quite reached its full promise.

Well, over the last four years we have worked hard, day in and day out, to ensure that this building and our city, each reach their full potential.

In fact, not long ago, we were joined just outside these walls in Derby Square by Senator John Kerry, as Downtown Salem was designated by the American Planning Association as one of the top 10 neighborhoods in the United States.

In a few short months, we'll be enjoying the produce harvested by local growers in the second year of our very successful Farmers Market.

A rebirth in progress, this once overlooked building has come alive with a robust lecture, class and performance schedule by Gordon College and, in addition, renovations will soon start as a result of a National Historic Trust Grant that we all literally had a hand in, by voting online early and often.

As for our city, despite the global economic downturn, Salem is brimming with activity with a number of public and private sector projects either underway, wrapping up, or in the works.

From the new \$106 million dollar J. Michael Ruane court complex rising up at the entryway into downtown, to a new residence hall under construction at Salem State, to the \$13 million dollar renovation of the Old Salem Jail, the recently funded new \$40 million dollar MBTA parking garage, to the complete transformation of the former Salem News Building, the soon to start new Senior Center, and the recently permitted Salem Wharf project, we have weathered this economic storm quite well.

I think it's important to note that projects such as these do not just happen. They are the result of the vision and hard work of all of us.

However, in the months and years ahead we will need to seize every opportunity to continue this progress and to fulfill our city's promise.

We know from experience that the road will not be easy, given the uncertain times and budgetary hurdles that lie ahead.

It's no secret to anyone here that the fiscal outlook, both currently and into the next fiscal year, is going to continue to be challenging.

Each challenge will be greater and every decision will be harder, for there are no easy choices left. If we are going to strengthen and advance our community, we will have to embrace changes in the way we operate our government.

In leading this city, I have often recalled President Lincoln's words to a war weary Congress when he

said,

“The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise -- with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.”

In Two Thousand Ten (2010), ..in our time and place,... it is our duty to rise to the occasion....to continue to think anew and to act anew.

For the past four years, our administration has held firm on the principles of creating a professional, hardworking, creative government that is inclusive and open to all. We have embraced positive change and strived to improve the quality of life for all of Salem’s residents. The boldness, creativity and courage of the past four years must remain the constant driving force of our second term. In fact, I want the hallmark of these coming four years to be that we became even more bold, even more creative and even more diligent in our pursuit of greatness for our city, the jewel of the North Shore.

One thing is certain, we can no longer afford to keep doing things in the same old way. We must think and act anew when it comes to delivering city services and balancing our city budget.

The tools exist, we must be open to using them.

In the very near future, we’ll get that chance as we review proposals that embark on regionalizing services, restructuring benefits, enhancing local revenues, and remediating a long overdue contaminated and costly blight.

These conversations will be hard and not all of these proposals will be popular. But, we must join together to advance these changes as they will enable us to provide the quality of municipal services our residents have come to expect, but with the cost savings and efficiencies that taxpayers demand.

Our collective efforts to build a government based on professionalism not politics, that was hardworking, creative, inclusive and open to all has been validated by the citizens of our community.

Salem is a vibrant, fun and active place to live, work and visit and I feel extremely fortunate to be Mayor of this great city.

While we are proud of what we have accomplished in the first term, it only represents the beginning of something very special for our community.

With a little faith and a lot of hard work,..along with the courage to think and act anew,.. we will continue to make a great City even better.

Thank you for your continued confidence and your prayers for a brighter future for us all. God bless and

Happy New Year.