

## Inaugural Address January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Two hundred and ninety one years ago a journey began; A journey to fill the desires of every human to live in a community where one would be celebrated and not fall victim to the venom of discrimination, A journey to bask in the freedom of inalienable rights, where one could define their success and themselves based upon the talents and abilities they were born with and not be confined by the chains of tyranny, exploitation, inequality, or injustice.

Our journey would guide the souls of our founders. From the shores and nations of England, Ireland, Canada and Greece they would travel, inspired by the Hilltopper spirit of honoring, protecting and cherishing each other as brethren. These values would embody their being, and be passed onto the generations of their lineage. From these desires, dreams and hopes the foundational blocks of community would be casted and laid. With each generation of Hilltoppers, we would continue to add to the mosaic of the quilt we began, bound together by the fabrics of its ancestry's language, traditions, customs and practices. We would not surrender who we were but instead as a unified Somersworth family celebrate our differences, honor who we are and who as a community we have become.

While the strength of the mills adoring the downtown landscape remind us of the history of our industrial ***"Proud Past"***, the voices of Hilltoppers who's spirit lives beyond, reminds us of the elements of our ***"Bright Future"***. The success of Somersworth was never created by board room mentality. It is and will continue to be the practices and values that we identify as Hilltoppers that has led us on our re-discovered path of achievement over the last 6 years and will continue to keep Somersworth ***"On the Move"*** as we continue our journey over the next two years.

Our success will be measured by ourselves and what we as unified citizens can achieve. Our home, our city, our Hilltop community, has finally abandoned the ideology that we are in a race against our neighbors of Dover, Rochester and Portsmouth; that our self-value, self-worth, must be measured against how our neighbors value us, depict us and view us.

We are not a community of million dollar homes, of high priced restaurants and seven dollar lattes. Instead, we are home to citizens committed to the values which are priceless; dreams, hope, family, faith and neighbors. Over the last six years our pride, determination and spirit has been re-awoken to the realization that we are not in a race, but a journey. A journey which will include not only each citizen of Somersworth but each neighbor who embraces the Hilltopper values of caring, respecting and working for each other.

Tonight, we re-affirm that commitment to keeping our great city ***“On the Move”*** and are ready to begin our travels together over the next two years. So ***“Let us Continue”*** to move down the path towards our self - determined greatness and ensure the success of each citizen and our great community.

***“Let us Continue”***, to ensure the prosperity of each success will be felt by the residents of Rouleau Drive and Franklin Street, from Union and Green Street to Firefly Circle and Victoria Drive, let each Hilltopper continue to let the spirit of commitment to each other and community progress.

***“Let us Continue”*** to ensure that no Hilltopper student is left behind and that each young soul who calls Somersworth home is afforded the opportunities to achieve the dreams we have guided them to forge. With limited resources we have built schools which define excellence. Within the walls of our schools are committed staff, faculty and administrators, who each day pledge themselves to the success of the next generation. As a community, we must rise above the term adequate and move beyond the failures of our state and federal government and continue to fund our schools to the level of reaching 21<sup>st</sup> century educational opportunities. For the past 6 years we have stood firm in our commitment. ***“Let us Continue”*** to stand by our commitment to building the best schools in the state, where each student is valued, challenged and known as the unique individual they are.

Our rich cultural diversity has been one of the corner stones of our success. For centuries the Hilltopper spirit has continued to illuminate throughout the rich ethnicity within the 10 square miles we call home. As we continue ***“On the Move”*** our commitment to honoring each other and celebrating each other's individuality will aide not only in strengthening the fabric which holds us together, but continue to revitalize our economy. Over the last six years, it is the re-birth of this

commitment which has led to our state wide reputation of being named New Hampshire's "***Welcoming City***" and recognized by **Business New Hampshire Magazine** as a community which has reemerged itself, with vibrancy in its downtown with new businesses, energy and a belief in Somersworth once again.

With this energy, "***Let us Continue***" to bring our downtown back to life with business, and open space, while honoring Somersworth's "***Proud Past***" and ***Bright Future***" and by making Somersworth a destination tourist stop with the nation's first "***Little Indonesia***". By the end of this month I will be naming a commission to move forward with the work which has been completed through the Mayor's office and with the Indonesian Community Connect, to make this concept a reality. The high level of excitement and energy from the nation of Indonesia on this project can be felt each time I converse with the Ambassador. "***Let us Continue***" with moving forward in constructing Americas first "***Little Indonesia***" in the only Somersworth on the planet.

In the last decade, our community has invested over 19 million in infrastructure improvements. The investment in our community has been another element in our growth and success. "***Let us Continue***" with the commitment to invest upwards of a million annually to ensure our city roads will continue to guide all towards the prosperity we seek, and that the Public Works Department under the leadership of Director Michael Bobinsky can continue to keep Somersworth "***On the Move!***"

While we experience our growth and expansion, "***Let us Continue***" to be the stewards and guardians of the environment and species we have been entrusted with. We must ensure that not only will the next generation of Hilltoppers be left with 21<sup>st</sup> century schools, upgraded infrastructure and a viable local economy, but open space, clean water, and a sustainable community which honors the complexity of each species and protects them for future Hilltoppers. As we continue "***On the Move***" let us do so by sharing the planet we have been entrusted with and abandon the failed practices of conquering it.

The safety of each citizen and their property has always and will continue to be values embedded within the Hilltopper spirit. Our first responders each day rise to promoting, protecting and defending the values which define us and keep us safe and free. "***Let us Continue***" to ensure through personnel, equipment, and facilities

that we are providing our first responders with the means of carrying out their duties. **“On the Move”** must be defined by the passing and construction of a new Fire Department Facility in 2020, and supporting the hiring of a new Chief who will carry forth the high level of commitment to his force and Somersworth like Chief Hoyle has. **“Let us Continue”**, with our commitment to our Police Department by adding and hiring more officers, cruisers and supporting the progressive practices of Chief Kretschmar. **“Let us Continue”**, our strong partnership with Stewards Ambulance and ensure the high level of standards and care will continue to be implemented for all Hilltoppers in need under the watchful caring eye of Paul Robidas.

While the rest of our nation is searching for the entrance back onto the path of unity, our city government has defined how democracy truly functions. Six years ago we tore down the silos which had led to our dysfunction and erased the superficial lines between the Council, School Board and city employees. We now function as one team, honoring each other’s insight, experience and ability to keep Somersworth **“On the Move”**. The model of how Somersworth governs itself will continue to evolve with our determination to construct something bigger than ourselves. **“Let us Continue”** to listen to each other, to work with each other and to respect each other. While members of a team might not always agree, and nor should they, those who are elected to serve others instead of self or party ideology are true Hilltoppers. It is those who subscribe to this philosophy who will continue to inspire, lead and build upon the construction of the past generations. With open minds and ears, **“Let us Continue”** to govern as a team and commit to our city, our community, that we will protect it from the partisanship which has led to divisions throughout our democracy.

With pride and sacrifice for 244 years our veterans have protected this great nation as the beacon of hope for all who yearn to be free. This May, we will honor our Somersworth Veterans with a living testament of a newly designed Veterans Park. As we continue with the final details, with the Hilltopper spirit guiding us, **“Let us Continue”** to honor those who served and thank all those citizens and businesses contributing to the constructing of the park. When called upon, our Veterans with unwavering commitment were there for us, now let us show a token of our gratitude by opening our wallets and donating, by being part of the living testament we will construct in their honor and in the name of democracy.

In 2008, City Councilor Todd Marsh, Jon McCallion, and I endorsed and passed a resolution giving a long term vision for our community. Vision 2020 was born twelve years ago with the goal to reinvigorate our community and reground Somersworth back to the roots of its success. Twelve years later, we have achieved over 95% of the goals; creating a community where all are honored and celebrated, providing a high quality education, improving our infrastructure and recreational opportunities and ensuring all citizens are safe with enabling our first responders to do their jobs. The 5% left, is for us to now celebrate our accomplishment. And celebrate we will! Over the next year the Vision 2020 Committee will be tasked with celebrating all of our accomplishments and our great community. Under the guidance of the Chair of Vision 2020 Committee, Councilor Matt Gerding, will spread the word to the rest of New Hampshire, New England and our nation on how our 10 square mile community continues “On the Move!”

Since 1729, our ten square mile community has overcome each obstacle which has impeded its path towards success. With the hopes and dreams of each individual we have forged a unified vision, where all have and can continue to be honored and live in peace. The commitments to ourselves, our neighbors and our great Hilltop City has enabled Somersworth’s great re-awakening and has led us “***On the Move***”. As Hilltopper’s let us never forget our “Proud Past” and let us equally be dedicated to our “***Bright Future***”. In the days, months and two years which lay ahead, “***Let us Continue***” to hold true to the values which have led to our success, let us stay firm and united against the temptations which will lead to our failures and let us all continue to serve and sacrifice for each other and the community we call home, the home we call Somersworth.

We are Hilltoppers, We are Somersworth. We have a “**Proud Past**” a “**Bright Future**” and we are “**On the Move**” now, “**Let us Continue**”

**We are a community! We are achieving progress and greatness! WE ARE SOMERSWORTH!!!!!!**