

Madame Mayor, fellow City Councilors, School Committee members, City Staff, Clergy, invited guests and family, and my fellow Newton citizens,

Let me start with some heartfelt thanks. First, thanks to my colleagues for allowing me the opportunity to accept the challenge of leading the council. Thanks to our Clerk David Olson and his staff for all the guidance and support they provide all council members. Thanks to our Mayor and her city department heads and staff for the direction they provide not only to the Mayor, but to our city council as well. Thanks to my 2 sons who have put up with me and supported and encouraged me during my years serving on the School Committee and City Council. And finally, thanks to all the good citizens of Newton - we will now all come together for the good of our city to have hearty conversation about our future.

We are certainly at a historic moment for Newton. In this new year, 2020, we are celebrating the 100-year milestone since the 19th Amendment was ratified by the states and women gained the right to vote. Women are now well represented on our City Council. A remarkable moment. I thank my mother who became a doctor in the 30's for providing a role model for me. There are a lot of women in leadership in Newton working hard to face Newton's challenges.

And we will have lots of challenges this term – they will take the form of zoning proposals, economic development needs, land use special permits, enhancements to public transportation proposed by us or MassDOT, public safety, support for new programs and services for seniors and families, budgets, proposals to create or renovate city and school buildings, and support for actions to mitigate climate change. The council will work with the Mayor, the school committee and our citizens to learn and understand the pro and cons for every docket item – what we call our agenda items. So many people have no clue what the Council does. What we do is play an important role in the life of Newton. We create the zoning, we review the special permits for small and large projects, and we pass the budget. We have site plan review power of public buildings – such as schools. We create, with the help of the law department, all the laws for our city. And most importantly with luck, we make wise decisions on all these issues.

It is easy, really easy, to say that we will work to build bridges between people with differing viewpoints. But given the times we live in - this may in fact be our most difficult task. All of us love Newton and have a vision for what we want it to be. We will all have to work hard to listen to each other and keep open minds and if we disagree, we can still do this agreeably.

Just a word about a few things I hope accomplish with the council – Along with the Clerk we need to strengthen our communication with Newton Citizens. As I said, so many don't know what we are doing and why. Information can go a long way toward building bridges. I'm also very interested in using technology more effectively for us as Councilors and for citizens access to information about our work. We aren't using our brand new screen today but the next time you come to one of our Council meetings – seeing the presentations in the Chamber will improve by 1000%. And finally, I'm asking

our Committee Chairs to take time at the beginning of the term to develop an agenda – and determine what are the things the Council can do in this term to move Newton forward.

Two years ago we were blessed by a prayer from Reverend Howard Haywood who sadly left us last year. He talked about our being brought together on inauguration day by our visions for better world; by stewardship of the natural world, caring for children and families, civic compassion, understanding and inclusiveness for all members of the community.

These are good thoughts for me to end with. I look forward to a productive term for the city council and for our city. I wish all of you a healthy, happy and productive New Year.