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**State of the City Address**

February 17, 2015

Good evening, Beverly residents and friends. I am excited to speak to you tonight as I deliver my second State of the City address. I have been your Mayor for just over a year, and it has been a fast year. It is my great honor to serve the people of Beverly, and I find the work we do to be immensely rewarding.

On a personal level, this past year has held much happiness for me in all areas of my life, and yet it also brought some very unexpected personal tragedy in the death of my brother Bob just before Thanksgiving. I want to thank the many, many people who have expressed sympathy and love for my family and especially their love for Bob over these past weeks. My brother is and always will be one of my heroes. He was my confidant, my touchstone, one of my most trusted advisors and mentors. He made everything in our family more fun, he was my friend, and I love him. Bob was adored by many; he cared about people and gave of himself selflessly, especially to those who struggled in life, and he enriched the lives of everyone he knew and loved. Bob believed in me, and he had a great deal to do with me standing here tonight as your Mayor. So, tonight, I am rededicating myself and all we are doing to improve our hometown to Bob's memory. I know he is rooting us on.

When I asked the voters of Beverly to entrust me with the leadership of our city, I committed to making city government open and transparent, to working collaboratively with my fellow elected officials and with the many talented people in Beverly who want to help shape a better life here.

I committed to moving several key projects forward to completion. And I committed to implementing fresh new ideas focused on growing our local economy, revitalizing our downtown and waterfront, and bringing ever greater educational opportunities to our children.

Tonight I will share how we have collectively delivered on those commitments over the past year and what we hope to achieve in 2015 and beyond.

Openness, transparency, and collaboration – From the Mckay School redevelopment to removing the Designated Port Area and re-zoning our waterfront, to the decision to adopt a grade 5-8 configuration for our new middle school, to the Brimbal Avenue proposed Whole Foods plaza, to working with PTOs to improve pedestrian safety around our schools, to working with the Ryal Side community to open and improve safety at Green Hill – in these instances and more, we have sought meaningful public participation and collaboration. I believe Beverly is a stronger city when our citizens participate and help to shape our future. We will continue to promote these values in all the work we do.

In 2014, we inherited work from the prior administration. Specifically, five issues required significant attention throughout the year.

First, the new Sohier Road and Brimbal Avenue connector road project. When we took office, Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the adjacent property owner planned to exchange land parcels on either side of the existing connector road. However, the Department expressed concerns with this plan. After much discussion and investigation, the state, in April, rejected the land exchange, and told the city to design a new connector road in the same layout as the existing one. The city was required to fully design and secure approval of a new road by the Department, along with permits from two state environmental agencies – all within calendar year 2014 to ensure receipt of a \$5 Million state economic development grant to pay for the road. With months of outstanding work by many city departments, we succeeded, and construction is scheduled to start this spring.

Next, the Rantoul Street/Route 1A project is a \$20 Million road improvement that will resurface and improve the full length of Rantoul Street, and Cabot Street from Gloucester Crossing north to the front of the Memorial School building. The city's legal and engineering departments worked diligently for months with state transportation officials to finalize design and secure all legal rights to allow this project to be approved and advertised. Work will start this coming summer.

Next, our long awaited new middle school is moving closer to reality. In 2014, we hired our Owner's Project Manager and our Design/Architecture firm, and we secured approval of our Preliminary Design Plan. Last week, our local Middle School Building Committee approved Preferred Schematic Design, which is to build a new school at the Memorial site. This recommendation has been submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority and will be considered by the MSBA Board at their March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Careful investigation has shown that building a new school will be less expensive than renovating and adding to the existing Memorial building. We're set an aggressive schedule to complete the new school by June 2018, moving staff and administration into the school that summer and planning for a successful September 2018 opening, while concurrently transitioning our elementary schools to a kindergarten through grade four model.

We are working closely with state officials, legislators, and other school districts whose building projects are proceeding on similar schedules to our own, doing everything possible to ensure maximum state funds, so we can build the middle school our students, their families, and the community need.

Next, the proposal to build a retail plaza on Brimbal Avenue with a Whole Foods market has engendered passionate feelings and inspired much conversation throughout the community.

Our volunteer Planning Board members and professional city staff, along with many citizens, have invested countless hours to understand and discuss potential impacts that may come with this proposed development. I want to thank all who

have been involved. This is democracy. This is public process. And ultimately, we as a community are better as a result.

Last week, the Planning Board concluded the public hearing, and they will vote on the special permit application at their February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. Whatever the Board's decision in this matter, all interested parties have been carefully listened to and their ideas, opinions, and concerns heard. We will move forward as a community and work in good faith to ensure appropriate economic development and preserve quality of life in neighborhoods throughout Beverly.

The Regional Emergency Call Center, or the RECC, is a regional 911 system being implemented by the Essex County Sheriff's department. Five years ago, Beverly joined this regional effort to dispatch police, fire, and ambulance calls. Initially, sixteen area cities and towns expressed interest. However, only six decided to participate, including Beverly. Five years later, the RECC has delivered none of the services promised to Beverly. Last year, we met with leadership at the RECC numerous times. First, they suggested beginning service to Beverly by summer 2014. Later, they pushed the target date back to fall, then spring 2015. Today, they are still months away from being able to serve Beverly.

Given the numerous delays involved, we looked seriously at other options. Beverly's current system dispatches consistently in well under a minute, while the RECC has set a goal of dispatching within a minute and a half of answering a call, and are not consistently meeting even this goal. For my administration, the core issue is this: We are responsible to ensure that the public safety needs of our residents, workers, students, and emergency first responders are met. There is much that city government does that is important, nothing moreso than responding quickly and effectively to life threatening situations. We have concluded that at this time the RECC cannot respond as accurately, quickly, and effectively to Beverly's emergency calls as we can ourselves. Therefore, when the RECC announced last month their decision to move forward without Beverly, we agreed and are taking actions instead to improve our already outstanding services.

We will combine our police and fire dispatch systems and staff the new dispatch with highly trained, competent civilian staff. This will result in greater public safety throughout Beverly, as police officers currently staffing police dispatch will be redeployed to patrol city streets and neighborhoods. Further, financial projections give us confidence our new combined civilian dispatch will provide real cost savings to the city. We will propose implementing the new system this July.

2014 saw several new initiatives. We decided to take a fresh look at a couple of longstanding problems – lack of redevelopment of our waterfront and the disposition of the Mckay School.

Regarding the waterfront, last April we applied to the state to remove 37 year old Designated Port Area restrictions on our harbor from the McDonald's building all the way past the Tuck Point condominiums. After both the city and the state conducted numerous public hearings and meetings, the state issued a draft decision last month granting the city total removal of the restrictions. A final decision will follow by April 5<sup>th</sup>, which we hope will reinforce and implement the draft decision.

Concurrent with this process and in anticipation of the state's decision, we engaged the public last summer in an effort to re-zone our waterfront. Based on significant public dialogue over several months, our Planning Department published a new draft waterfront zoning ordinance last week and held a public meeting to invite feedback, which was very positive. We will submit the proposed ordinance to the City Council in March.

For decades, Beverly residents have wanted a vibrant, active harbor front. The vision articulated by the public and reflected in the proposed new waterfront zoning ordinance, will protect and enhance existing waterfront uses including commercial fishing, and bring new uses and attractions to our harbor front – specifically mixed use development with potential for first floor shops and restaurants and second and third floor residential. The new zoning will mean much greater public access to the harbor, and provide for thoughtful redevelopment, respecting both existing waterfront uses and adjacent

neighborhoods. Soon, Beverly will see the type of waterfront amenities we have historically lacked.

The former McKay elementary school has been vacant for a decade. Prior attempts to sell the property proved unsuccessful. We worked with neighbors and crafted a vision consistent with the scale of the surrounding neighborhood that also ensured a purchase price and annual tax revenues beneficial to the city. Windover Development submitted the successful proposal, and they will appear before the City Council later tonight seeking the necessary special permit to move this exciting residential project forward. We hope to close on this sale by June.

In the last year, we have taken significant action to ensure the city's financial stability into the future, creating a stabilization – or rainy day – fund last spring. During this time, we have partnered with the City Council and deposited \$ 5.2 Million dollars into this fund to ensure the city's ability to provide needed services and make investments in the future.

In 2014, the City Council approved our request for \$3 Million in road and sidewalk improvements, much of which were completed in 2014, with more paving and reconstruction to be undertaken this spring.

In 2014, we created a Project Review Team – department heads who meet regularly with project applicants – to provide answers to anyone interested in investing in Beverly, from individuals who are trying to start their very first business to developers of larger scale projects – to make the often complex process of doing business in Beverly clearer and more transparent. Not all applicants will succeed in getting approvals for their projects, but they all deserve and will receive straight answers and clarity as they plan their proposed investments.

Our downtown continued its renaissance in 2014. The city's partnership with Beverly Mains Streets and Montserrat College led to the creation of the Beverly Arts District. I am also proud of the work we have done to encourage and support our creative entrepreneurs – particularly in three of downtown's landmark properties – as the Cabot Theatre and the former Casa de Moda are well on track

to once again productively anchor our downtown – and the Bell Market owners are unveiling exciting plans to bring their property back to life in 2015.

What else will 2015 hold for Beverly?

In recent years, we have heard residents loud and clear. Lynch Park, Dane Street Beach, our harbor front, and Obear Park will all have new bathroom facilities by this summer. The Carriage House at Lynch Park will have new windows installed facing the harbor. And Lynch Park has a new play structure and family splash pad for families' enjoyment for years to come.

For the first time in many years, the city's Memorial Day observances will take place on Memorial Day – the Monday of Memorial Day weekend – both the Beverly Farms and downtown ceremonies. In recent years, public attendance has dwindled downtown leading to the parade being left out last year. We will promote this year's events, and I urge you to help us ensure a successful downtown parade.

Beverly is proud of our veterans and active military personnel, and we are eternally grateful for the sacrifices of those who have given their lives in the defense of our country and our democratic principles throughout the course of America's history. On Memorial Day this year, let's show that gratitude and appreciation.

In response to the problem of homelessness in Beverly and surrounding communities, we formed a regional homelessness task force and are now partnering with neighboring communities of Salem, Peabody, and Danvers. We'll make progress in the coming year with the many different profiles of homeless people, including families, teens and young adults, and older longterm homeless. We will also examine overall regional housing needs, for both market rate and affordable housing for the coming decades.

In 2015, the city will begin to offer a comprehensive credit card and online payment system for everyone transacting business with and paying bills to the city. Under the direction of the city's Finance Department, city departments have

undergone training and will implement this in person and online credit card payment system in the coming weeks and months.

In July of this year, the city will take ownership of Camp Paradise in Centerville, a 12 acre property that was a longtime home to the girl scouts. This will become a community resource managed by the Beverly Recreation Department and available to us all.

Last year, we worked with Essex County Greenbelt, a land conservation organization, to draft a permanent conservation restriction for 85 acres of city-owned land in North Beverly adjacent to Norwood Pond, as well as the pond itself. The conservation restriction will be ready for City Council consideration in the coming weeks. As proposed, the city will continue to own the property, Essex County Greenbelt will hold the conservation restriction, and residents and visitors to Beverly will now always be able to enjoy a walk, jog, or bike ride through the woods behind the North Beverly Elementary School all the way to the shores of Norwood Pond.

As a community, we are in the midst of a conversation about how to best increase our recycling rates – something that we need to do for our children and our planet's health, and something that makes good economic sense, done right. There are many models for how communities recycle, and we will determine the best option for Beverly. We look forward to working with the City Council, School Committee, Solid Waste Management Committee and interested residents this year to identify and implement a program that will significantly increase recycling and decrease trash disposal costs to the city and residents.

I want to speak with you now about an issue communities tend not to want to acknowledge. When it comes to drug abuse and addiction (including alcohol), Beverly is no different than any other community anywhere in this world. There is drug use and addiction in every high school in the world - in every neighborhood in the world. Every one of us knows the face of addiction, and every one of us knows lives that have been destroyed by addiction. Fortunately, here in Beverly, many people are already doing great work to fight back. Still, as a

community, we can and we need to do more. Our kids are at risk; our loved ones are at risk.

My administration is working with District Attorney Jon Blodgett and his office, along with the Beverly Public Schools, Beverly Police, and other key partners. In the coming year, we will focus on education, treatment, and enforcement. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 PM in the Beverly High School auditorium, Beverly school nurses will sponsor a presentation entitled: Opiates – Signs and Symptoms of Use. In partnership with DA Blodgett's office, we'll sponsor a series of forums educating our community on the harsh realities of drug use. And thanks in part to a state grant that created the Beverly/Gloucester/Danvers Opiate Task Force, we'll redouble our efforts to arrest drug dealers, support efforts by the DA's office to prosecute them successfully, and get their poison off our streets.

A common pathway to heroin addiction is by abusing prescription pain medications like oxycontin. We now have a prescription drug drop box in the front lobby of the Beverly Police station. I urge Beverly citizens to bring unused prescribed pain medication to the police station for safe disposal. Too often, young people start by taking their parents' and grandparents' pills and end up addicted to opiates.

This needs to be a sustained effort. Drugs steal peoples' dreams, their ambition, their peace of mind, and their sense of self. Drugs wound many families deeply, and in fact destroy many others. Drugs kill our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and parents. And for too long, the stigmas associated with addiction have kept communities from calling addiction what it is and attacking it head on. Addiction is a disease, an illness – it can afflict your loved ones and mine. Good, kind, talented, loving, beautiful people fall prey to this disease. People with great gifts to share with the world are denied that opportunity, and we are denied their gifts.

Let's break the stigma. Let's fight back against drugs right here at home. Tonight, I commit to making the fight against drug use and addiction a top priority for as long as I serve as your Mayor, and I ask you to join me.

Last tonight, I am very excited to share news of our new Summer Learning Initiative. This summer, in partnership with community business and non-profit leaders, with the Greater Beverly YMCA as lead partner, we will offer a six week summer learning program to incoming Beverly first graders. This program will be designed to prevent summer learning loss, and achieve gains in our children's literacy. Children will receive a three hour literacy program each morning followed by lunch and a traditional summer camp experience each afternoon at the Y.

We will offer this program to 40-60 children this summer. Beverly Public School staff have identified kindergartners who can benefit from this program, and have reached out to their parents to sign children up. Funding will be provided through grant funds and the generosity of our community partners. The city's Director of Grants has been diligently pursuing grant opportunities.

Eventually, we hope to offer this program to all at-risk incoming first, second, and third graders, to ensure grade level literacy by third grade. This will greatly increase the chances for all students to succeed in school and life. It will also provide teachers greater opportunity to hit the ground running each September with all their students, thereby benefiting whole classes. This will strengthen our school district and thereby our community for years to come.

The work of moving our great city forward energizes me. I know it energizes the talented employees of this city and our great educators. There is a buzz throughout Beverly right now. People are engaged, and their talents are creating opportunities and opening doors all over town.

I greatly enjoy my working relationships with all members of our school Committee, City Council, school administration, city departments and the people of Beverly.

We are just getting started. The coming years will see continued revitalization of our downtown and waterfront, new investments in housing and the creation of quality jobs, a strengthening of our already outstanding schools and city services,

and an openness and collaborative spirit that will help us successfully tackle all challenges – both known and unknown.

Beverly is the best hometown I know. And our collective efforts will ensure Beverly will always be the world class community on the North Shore of Boston we already know it to be. Thank you for your kind attention tonight.