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2018 Inaugural Address

Good Afternoon

First today, I ask you to join me in remembering Riley Fessenden, who two years ago in this auditorium led us in our Pledge of Allegiance with her brothers and her sister. Riley was a beautiful, thoughtful, and loving child who shared her light with our community and made us all better for having known her. Two years ago, we declared the first week of January to be Riley "Rocks" Fessenden week in Beverly. This year, Riley's family and friends are again celebrating Riley's life by helping others and they have asked the community to join them. In their words: "During the week of January 1-7 we hope you can join us in celebrating Riley's smile, light, love, hopeful and caring personality and colorful spirit".

Please join me this Saturday right across the hall in the Beverly High School cafeteria for the first Riley Rocks Dance Marathon from 5-9 PM. Admission is $10 and the proceeds will benefit the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. I know it will mean a great deal to Riley's family if you can support this wonderful event.

Thank you all for being here today, especially the family members and close friends of our elected officials. The service we offer our community is not ours alone – you wear this mantle of service too. You are the supports we rely on to be successful. The sacrifices you make are real, and none of us can do the work we do without you. Thank you.

It is an incredible honor and privilege to stand with you again today, taking the oath of office for the third time to serve you as your Mayor – to uphold our state constitution and laws, our city charter and ordinances, as we work to move this great city forward.

I am excited and energized to again be blessed to work with such talented and dedicated public servants as my colleagues on the City Council and School Committee. I especially want to welcome our new City Council colleagues – welcome Julie Flowers and welcome back Tim

Flaherty – and our new School Committee colleague – welcome Kelley Ferreti and congratulations to you all.

There is so much that is good and right in Beverly. There is much to celebrate about our great city as we start the new year. World class businesses and institutions, dedicated neighborhood groups and civic organizations continue to invest in our community. Partners large and small, new and old. Some have been part of the fabric of our community for over a century, while others are coming to Beverly for the first time this year. They are all partners in moving our city forward.

There is plenty for us to accomplish together in the next two years. First and always, our responsibility is to provide the key, core city services that all our residents, students, and local businesses need and count on. Thankfully, our city is well served by our many talented, dedicated department heads – some of whom are here in attendance – by the hard working city employees who deliver these core services throughout the year, and by our hundreds of Board, Commission and other volunteers who serve countless hours to make this great city all it can be.

Department heads and all other city and school employees here today, as well as all city volunteers in attendance, please stand – and will the audience please join me in thanking you all for your commitment to our city.

Please allow me to share with you now a preview of initiatives and issues we hope to advance over the next two years. First, we have been internally piloting a new work order system called QScend, which will allow people to enter a request for work, for example reporting a broken street light or a street sign that is missing. QScend will route the request to the appropriate department and person, and we hope this will improve communication and outcomes for us all. We plan to go live with this service later this spring.

In Public Safety, Police Chief LeLacheur and Fire Chief Cotter continue to lead the dedicated men and women who protect us every day. Last month, the City Council approved funding to begin the transition to a consolidated civilian dispatch system for Emergency calls in the city. Once complete, hopefully later this year, 4.5 police officer positions will become available for redeployment, enhancing police services throughout the city.

Further, today I have submitted a request to the City Council for a $1 M appropriation to hire an Owner's Project Manager, hire a design/architecture firm, and begin designing our new police station. Our goal is to design the new station over the next 18 months, and begin construction later in 2019.

In the Fire Department, we have just completed significant upgrades to the North Beverly Fire Station. And we are tracking US Homeland Security, with the intention of applying for a grant this year to add four additional firefighters to our department. With this grant, the federal government would cover a significant portion of the cost of these positions for two to three

years, after which we would take on the full cost. This is an affordable way to increase public safety staffing, and we plan to apply as soon as the grant becomes available.

Our public school system is thriving. We fund our schools to the maximum level we responsibly can, and will continue to do so. The educational programming we offer our students, and the caliber of instruction they receive are top notch. In fact, Beverly Public Schools is one of the most innovative school districts in Massachusetts, as evidenced by our role in MAPLE (the Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech Consortium) as a catalyst district. Our leadership is further evidenced by our membership on the Board of Advisors as well as by the learning walks our schools recently hosted for districts from across Massachusetts.

Our new 1400 student, grades 5-8 middle school is nearing completion. We expect to open for the 2018-2019 school year later this summer. The new Beverly Middle School will be the premier 21st century state of the art middle school in the region. Our school district has advanced and aligned curriculum, and our middle school staff have participated in significant professional development, all designed to prepare our staff to take full advantage of the educational facility we are building – including the technology investments, the classrooms, and the twelve maker spaces which will house dynamic and effective project based learning for our middle school students across curricula and throughout each year.

Together with our pre-kindergarten program at the McKeown School, our newly reconfigured grade K-4 elementary schools, and our Beverly High School, our administration, teachers, and support staff will continue to deliver a world class education to over 4,600 children. I look forward to our shared efforts on behalf of our kids in the coming two years.

Staying with our children for the moment, we have completed an inventory of all municipal playgrounds, and I have submitted today to the City Council a request to approve spending $175,000 from the Recreation Department enterprise fund. Together with another $50,000 from the Recreation Department operating budget, this money will be used to repair and replace playground equipment throughout the city in the coming months.

One of our greatest responsibilities is to balance the many needs in our community:

- Immediate needs to fund and deliver critical services to our residents, and the longer term ability to fund those same services, which cost more over time
- The need, both now and long term for affordable, quality housing for people of all ages and income levels – people already living here and those who want to make Beverly their new home
- The need for further economic development to create more good jobs in Beverly and to deliver the new growth revenues we need each year to fund core city services
- And the need to accomplish all this while we continue to preserve our green spaces, enhance our neighborhoods and our downtown, and not overburden our infrastructure

We need to be thoughtful and intentional. And we need to be willing to embrace change that strikes that balance. Simply put, we need to grow smart.

Last year, we completed a Housing Needs Analysis, which put data to what many of our friends, neighbors, and co-workers have been experiencing – namely this:

Seniors are afraid to sell the homes they raised their families in and downsize, because they can't find anything they can afford in Beverly. Young adults who grew up here and want to choose Beverly as their adult home can't find a place. Renters who live here now and work at good, modest paying jobs are finding it harder and harder to stay as rents increase.

The data paints this sobering reality for Beverly residents:

23% of Beverly renters pay over 50% of their income on housing – That's over 1,350 of Beverly's renters

12% of Beverly homeowners pay over 50% of their income on housing – That's over 1,200 of Beverly's homeowners

The need for affordable housing in Beverly is clearly real.

Beverly is a great place to live. And just as you or someone in your family lineage came to Beverly and chose to build a life here, others now want to do the same. And just as your family and mine were welcome in Beverly, we have an obligation to keep the doors of this great city open to new generations. As new jobs come to Beverly, which we need, we want many of the people who fill these jobs – for both traffic and environmental reasons – to live right here in Beverly. As baby boomers retire and want to stay here, we will need more housing – for them, for the people who fill their jobs, and for the people who work in the many new jobs that will be created to meet the health care needs and the cultural and entertainment needs of an older population.

And the answer to this challenge is see it as an opportunity. Not to be ruled by fear – fear of increased traffic, of more demands on city services, of change.

The great thing is that there are ways to see our housing needs and our shifting demographics as the opportunity they truly are. We shouldn't have to cut down trees and lose acres of woodlands to gain new housing. We shouldn't have to build housing in locations where each adult in the house needs his/her own car. We have the model already. Today it's called Transit Oriented Development – but it's been around a long time. It's basically a common sense approach to housing – build more housing near the train, near the subway, within walking distance of stores and services. Our Master Plan anticipated this. Over a decade ago, Former Mayor Scanlon and the City Council, with some of our Current City Councilors at the table, made zoning changes to prioritize Transited Oriented Development along Rantoul Street and around the Beverly Depot train station. Simply defined, Transit Oriented Development allows

for greater housing density where people can walk to the train, to restaurants, and to stores – and it is working.

In our downtown, TOD is bringing fewer than one car per unit of housing as residents rely more on walking, the train, Zip car memberships, and biking. Even the cars that have come with the housing tend to sit in garages. Their owners use them less on average than in our outlying neighborhoods where almost every errand and trip seems to necessitate driving. TOD is also bringing fewer school children than other types of housing – specifically in our downtown, one Beverly Public School student per 30 units of housing, compared to one student per just over three units of housing in a traditional single family neighborhood in Beverly.

Beyond our downtown focus, the City's Housing Plan, completed last year, includes a list of recommended strategies to meet our housing needs, including passing a Great Estates Ordinance which can help to create housing while preserving some of Beverly's older estates, by subdividing larger homes into apartments or condominiums. We can save these beautiful homes from the wrecking ball and help maintain the feel and dimensions of these older properties. We will submit our proposed Great Estates Ordinance to the City Council for its consideration this year.

This spring, we will hold a series of neighborhood and community meetings to share what we have learned through the Housing Plan process, and listen to the community's ideas, hopes, and concerns as we strife to move ahead together as a city. Along with this, we recently received a state grant to help us develop a Harbor Plan for our harborfront and the commercial shoreline along the Bass River. This work will kick off soon.

We continue to manage the city's finances responsibly, as today I have submitted a request to the City Council to add $3 M to the city's stabilization fund, building our rainy day reserves to 10% of our FY 2018 operating budget. This allows us to keep our bond rating strong, maximizing the assessments we will continue to make to maintain, upgrade, and, when needed, replace our assets. In addition to the playground upgrades, our new middle school, the design funds for our new police station and other repairs including a new HVAC system for the Beverly Public Library main branch, we are in the process of spending nearly $3 M this year to build roads and sidewalks. The most visible of these projects this year will be the new roundabout in Centerville at the intersection of Essex Street and Old Essex Road (where the highway Exit 18 North offramp meets Route 22). Construction is scheduled to begin this spring on this long needed safety improvement project.

By fall 2018, we also hope to secure funding through the state's Transportation Improvement Plan process to begin reconstruction of three other intersections – Henry's at Routes 1A and 97, Mckay and Balch Streets by the Beverly Golf and Tennis Club, and the intersection at the foot of the Beverly-Salem bridge by our harborfront. Like the Brimbal Avenue roundabouts, these three signalized intersection improvement projects should dramatically improve the safety and

efficiency of our roadways, also providing additional capacity to accommodate the future housing and economic growth our city needs.

Another significant infrastructure question is what to do with the Briscoe Middle School building. Over the last two years, the Municipal Building Reuse Committee examined numerous alternatives for future uses, including moving City Hall to Briscoe while also building the new police station there. The results of this process: the projected cost to build a new stand alone police station and rehabilitate the current station into additional city offices is about $28 M, while the alternative of rehabilitating Briscoe to house the city's needs projected to cost twice that amount if not more – or $55-70 Million. Before any decisions are made, we plan to put out a Request For Interest from potential developers, digest this information, then hold some public discussion of possible directions to go. All of this will take place in the coming months, with a goal of deciding upon a course of action by later this year.

We continue to make strides in the fight against addiction and the opioid epidemic. We have successfully partnered with Beverly Hospital, siting a 24 hour medication drop box in the hospital lobby to go along with the medication drop box in the Beverly Police Station, providing people options for safely disposing of prescription medications that too often end up in the wrong hands and lead many down the horrific path of addiction. Our school district has updated its health curricula to deliver age appropriate health education in this area. Again partnering with the hospital, our police department works to counsel addicts, visiting them within 48 hours of a non-fatal overdose in hopes they will agree to seek in-patient rehabilitation treatment. There is much more to do, and we are committed to continuing this critical fight to save our loved ones from the heartache and tragedy that addiction brings.

This coming summer, my administration and the Beverly Public Schools will again partner with the Greater Beverly YMCA, Endicott College, and our many sponsors to provide our 4th annual Mayor's Summer Learning Program for at-risk Beverly Public School children entering grades one, two, and for the first time this year – children entering grade three. We plan to increase the number of children served to 180 this summer. With the focus in early elementary years on developing literacy skills, on learning to read, then eventually turning around and utilizing these skills as children begin to read to learn – it is critical that we do more to build literacy skills in our early learners, that we give these kids a fighting chance to get the education they need.

This program is making a positive difference for some of our most at-risk younger students. As they return to school in the fall more ready to take on the challenges of the next grade level, our teachers find classrooms filled with students who are more literate and ready to fly, which benefits the whole class and leads to greater success for these students and for our school district as a whole.

The last topic I want to speak about today is sustainability, a topic that municipal leaders throughout the country and around the world recognize must be addressed at a local level in order to do our part to mitigate the impact of climate change. We plan to make significant

strides in the next two years on sustainability initiatives. This spring, we will convert all our street lights to LED lighting – this will significantly improve our electricity efficiency, which will in turn save money.

Later this spring, we will make changes in our trash and recycling program – decreasing the barrel allowance for weekly curbside trash pickup, while encouraging greater recycling - and we will also move towards eliminating the use of plastic bags and polystyrenes at retail businesses throughout the city.

The traffic intersection improvements I mentioned are designed to help decrease traffic congestion and cut traffic idling time, thereby decreasing carbon output citywide. Transit oriented development helps to get people out of cars and onto public transit. We are currently working with our regional planning agency and neighboring cities and towns to increase public transit use. In Beverly, we are working to implement a regular commuter shuttle to take employees from the Beverly Depot to and from their jobs at Cherry Hill Park, Cummings Center, and other employers throughout the city. We have also begun to study how we provide school transportation, asking whether offering bus service to more of our students can significantly impact traffic congestion around the city and decrease carbon output by cutting down on the number of families driving their children to and from school each day.

Over the next several months, we will hold a series of meetings and forums to share strategies for decreasing trash and reusing and recycling more of what we use. At these meetings, we will also brainstorm and solicit ideas and feedback on how we can become a greener community, how we can best decrease our carbon output – the key challenge facing all cities, towns, and countries as we work to mitigate the impacts of climate change and ensure the strong quality of life we all want to pass on to our children. As elected representatives entrusted with running our city government, we need to work to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels to power and heat our buildings, run our vehicle fleet, and manage our waste stream. Beyond that, how can residents and businesses work to decrease their reliance on fossil fuels, and what role can we as a city serve to facilitate these efforts? I am excited at what we can accomplish together – to conserve, to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels, to increase the generation of renewable energy in Beverly and across the region. When successful, our shared efforts will cut down on traffic congestion, improve air quality, save money for the city, our residents and businesses, and demonstrate effective and replicable ways we and other cities and towns can battle climate change.

Together, we certainly have plenty to do these next two years. I am excited to get started – so, with that, Happy New Year to you all – let's work collaboratively and make 2018 Beverly's best year yet.