

Good Afternoon

I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues for their continued support and confidence in me. I am honored to serve once again as your President and I treasure your counsel and your friendship as well as that of the Mayor. I congratulate you on your election and our Mayor on winning a record fifth term.

I also want to formally welcome our two new colleagues – Ayanna Pressley and Felix Arroyo. You helped to make this past election one of the most exciting in modern history and I know you will bring the passion and commitment you displayed on the campaign trail to your work here on the Council.

To my family, friends, central staff and my own dedicated staff, thank you for all you do to make it possible for me to serve the people of Boston – and particularly the residents of the 8<sup>th</sup> District who count on us day in and day out for assistance.

Last year, when I stood before you at the start of my City Council Presidency, the City and the people of Boston faced an

unprecedented financial crisis. Foreclosures were looming, unemployment was rising and the City itself was confronting deep budget cuts. The Council heeded the call and got down to business quickly. We worked closely with the Mayor to enact the toughest budget this Council has ever seen.

We held an Economic Summit in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank and the Boston Foundation that attracted some of the best thinkers we have – individuals like Michael Porter and Barry Bluestone – to better understand how we might address the current fiscal crisis and stimulate our local economy.

We also worked to make this body more accessible and more transparent. We rewrote our rules to fully comport with the open meeting law, held first-ever council meetings in the community and now require every document that passes through this body to be on-line the same day – something I am calling on the Boston Redevelopment Authority to do as quickly we did.

Now, as we enter a new year, we can see what Ben Bernacke has said are the “green shoots of economic growth.” And while, unemployment here in Boston hovers near 8% - better than

the national average – it still causes untold suffering. And State and City revenues that tend to lag the economy are likely to continue to fall requiring additional and more painful cuts. So once again, we will be challenged as never before.

In the past, Boston has always risen to the challenge. A friend recently reminded me that more than a century ago, in the middle of the Civil War, while across the country people were preparing for the possible end of our Republic – here in Boston – our leaders had such confidence in the future of this country and this City that they chose to launch a multi-million dollar effort to convert marshland to extend our city where none had previously existed, thereby doubling the size of Boston’s original peninsula. *Doubling the size of Boston during a Civil War* – now that’s ambitious!

We have always been innovators. We were the first city in America to set aside open space for its citizens – the Boston Common. The first in the nation to set up a public library and a public high school. And taking inspiration from Paris and London, the first in the nation to build a subway system.

Boston has always led the way. We were the start of the revolution. And the heart and soul of the abolitionist movement. These things didn't happen by accident – they happened because those who came before us weren't afraid to lead and weren't afraid to imagine greatness.

And today is no different. In keeping with the spirit of those who came before us, we must continue to lead Boston forward.

Most certainly, we will once again have to answer the urgent call of the present and serve the critical needs of our constituents. We must make sure that the most vulnerable receive our greatest and most effective attention. This is the work each and every one of us was elected to do.

But we must also raise our gaze above the horizon because the City Council is at its best when it thinks ahead of a crisis and imagines a greater Boston. That Boston isn't divided by its neighborhoods – it is enriched by them. It is a place where every young person in our city – no matter how poor their current circumstances – can look out their window and know the skyline of universities, hospitals, and businesses she sees, institutions that are the pride of our city, are not just buildings,

but represent her future too. She can say – that is where my mother works, and that is where my brother goes to college – and I will go there too.

We all know that with the abundance of cultural institutions that we have – our public schools should have the greatest arts and music programs in the country. With our medical and biotech industry – every one of our students should excel in math and science. And with our great sports franchises – no student should be without physical education and after school sports. That is why I am particularly pleased to see Suffolk Construction and its partners step up and bring real resources to our school’s sports programs.

And to keep our city vibrant and growing, we need to determine how we ensure that every incoming freshman who chooses Boston for four years in order to attend our world-renowned universities – stays for a fifth year and beyond, making Boston their permanent home.

And so, over the coming weeks, I will be outlining three new initiatives for our city. First, I want to bring together our region’s best thinkers – from science, industry, arts and

education – not just for a one-day summit but to advise us on what we must do to compete effectively to be the best city in America. I’ve recently reached out to Harvard Economist Ed Glaeser – he lives around the corner, but he is known internationally for his analysis of how cities compete and succeed. He’s got some exciting ideas about what makes cities great – not surprisingly – it’s about attracting and retaining smart and skilled people. I asked him to share some of his thinking with all of us – and I’ve put a copy of what he wrote on your desks. As a follow-up I plan to convene and ask him to chair a best practices working group made up of leading thinkers and concerned citizens and I look forward to your thoughts and input.

Second, as hard as we work to attract and retain the best and the brightest, we must work even harder to ensure that every child raised in this city has the education they deserve. Our superintendent and Mayor, the Governor and others – like Hubie Jones who is here with us today – are working tirelessly on education reform. Geoffrey Canada – whose book you now have on your desk – has established an amazing experiment in Harlem that is the foundation for the President’s Race to the Top competitive grants. I continue to believe that we can learn

from others – other cities and other leaders – and I am inspired by the work that has occurred in Harlem, and so pleased to know some Bostonians, led by Hubie, are working to bring these lessons to Boston – a challenge that will require all our help.

My fellow Councilors – We must prioritize public education, and in the process educate ourselves about these models and become an active part of the conversation. And so – we will be back on the bus to visit Harlem’s Children’s Zone and model schools right here in Boston and around the state so we can help support what educational reformers like Carol Johnson are trying to accomplish.

Third, and finally, just as we work to keep our community strong and vibrant, we must work to keep our government relevant. All of us participated in a genuine conversation last month about term limits and mayoral succession. However we felt at the time, or how we feel today, it is clear that a few council sessions are not enough time for the considered debate and deliberation these issues deserve and many of our constituents want. Now is the time to broaden our thinking and take a serious look at the structure of our City’s

government through Charter Reform. I will be asking John Tobin to head a Special Committee on Charter Reform. I know that he and other Councilors, with the help of advocates like Avi Green from Mass Vote and others, can help us do what's best for our city.

Again, I want to thank you for your support and confidence in me. I look forward to a challenging year ahead and to working with each and every one of you to make Boston the best city in America.