

**CITY OF PITTSFIELD
INAUGURAL ADDRESS
January 6, 2020**

WELCOME

Good Morning and Happy New Year. Thank you for joining us to celebrate the city's 2020 inauguration. Wasn't that was an outstanding performance by Kids 4 Harmony. Thank you, boys and girls, for making this a very special occasion by playing beautiful music.

Welcome to our distinguished guests. First, to our spiritual leaders – Father Peter, Pastor Tim, and Rabbi Liz; thank you for your blessings. As we embark upon a new term representing our fellow citizens your prayers will guide our leadership.

Judge Simons – thank you for your dedicated and transformative leadership in our family courts. The fabric of family life is strengthened because you lead your court with wisdom and a kind heart. I aspire to be more like you.

Congratulations Councilors. You have been entrusted by the people of Pittsfield to use your judgment, experience, and discernment to make decisions and solve problems. Together, in every corner of this great city you and I share the same constituents. May this shared responsibility unite us.

President Marchetti – congratulations on being elected by your colleagues to serve as President of the Pittsfield City Council. Our friendship has lasted through the years because we respect each other, we confide in each other, we trust each other, and yes, sometimes we shout at each other. Those moments are always followed by an apology, a good laugh, and a promise to keep going forward together.

Congratulations Councilor White on being chosen to serve as the Vice President. It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the city's leadership team. We share much in common – a progressive vision and a commitment to design a city for the future.

To honorable friends on the School Committee, Congratulations. I consider my work with you to be one of the most significant matters I conduct as mayor. From the moment our children walk into their school as kindergartners until they walk across the stage as high school graduates, our kids and their families are counting on us to ensure that they receive an exceptional education. I am grateful to be among you.

Congratulations Madam Clerk – As our city clerk, your hard work and dedication reflects the commitment you have made to preserving Pittsfield's history and ensuring that elections are conducted with integrity and fairness to all.

My parents are here. With every passing day I offer up a prayer of gratitude that my parents are still with me. I am so fortunate. My mom inspired my love for cooking and travel. My dad

gave me the gift of music, sports, and good humor. Together, they have given me boundless, timeless gifts like curiosity, perseverance, and wanderlust. My heart is filled to the brim with love.

I begin and end each day with my sweetheart. My husband, Barry, is brave, funny, and smart. He has carried me through long days and difficult moments. He always makes me laugh and, together, we happily celebrate the great joy of our life.

THEME

I want to thank every Pittsfield voter for participating in this election. And, to every supporter who walked beside me in this re-election journey, thank you, thank you, thank you.

For the past 16 years without interruption, the people of Pittsfield have put their trust in me; first as a city councilor, then as the city clerk, and now as mayor. Earning the confidence of Pittsfield voters time and time again is a tremendous honor. I am deeply humbled to begin my second-four year term as Pittsfield's mayor. Each day I will strive for courage in confronting challenges, compassion in knowing the hearts and minds of our citizens, wisdom in decision-making, and harmony among all.

In the dawn of the New Year we share one enduring belief. We are Pittsfielders. What binds us together is a common story about what it means to be a citizen of Pittsfield, Massachusetts in the United States of American. Above all, Pittsfielders are proud of their heritage. We hear enduring stories about great athletic achievements, outstanding academic and professional accomplishments, quiet family traditions, devoted spiritual congregations, final farewells, happy beginnings, discouraging moments followed by peaceful reflection, and big ideas leading to great triumphs.

No matter our personal history, culture, or lifestyle, we Pittsfielders share similar aspirations. Dreams of health and well-being for ourselves and our families, access to an exemplary education, and a pathway to financial prosperity. We hope for resilient neighborhoods where we feel safe and share our lives. We celebrate with our friends and stand with them in times of hardship. We are challenged by similar obstacles yet we share a single aspiration – to achieve our greatest potential.

As we embark upon a new term in the New Year let us commit ourselves to advancing diversity while seeking unity. Our city council and school committee reflect greater diversity than ever before. While it is a significant accomplishment granted to us by the citizens we represent there is so much more work to do. Every day, when I walk into city hall, I am privileged to work alongside the most diverse senior leadership team in Pittsfield's history. We work tirelessly to build a stronger city that reveals every hope and realizes every dream for every citizen that we serve.

Oftentimes, we struggle to perfect the experience of unity. It is easier to find someone we can identify ourselves "against." On this day of inauguration, instead of others, they and them - let us always be we and us. Together we can exhibit mutual respect and appreciation for one another. Whether we're at work, with our friends, at school, in the neighborhood, or at a community center, we must do our best to ensure that everyone has a place to live their lives as

their conscience dictates, where everyone has the freedom to protect their individual human dignity. As we strive to strengthen the city we all love, we will be at our best when we have a free and open exchange of ideas without the turmoil of damaging our relationships. Debating issues and initiatives that are critical to our city's future may create tension. This is a natural aspect of our democracy. However, if we proceed with faith and fortitude we will discover fair compromise.

Ladies and Gentleman – as we kick off 2020 we have a busy agenda. We will build a stronger Pittsfield that reflects our collective hopes, dreams, and aspirations; a city that offers promise and possibility to every citizen by creating resilient neighborhoods, designing exceptional schools, fostering economic prosperity, and shaping the peaceful enjoyment of life's simple pleasures.

We will embrace our shared responsibility by asking how can we, by planning the work and working the plan, by creating trustworthy communication, by seeking opportunities for professional growth, and by seeing the small thing and doing that thing right now.

When it comes to jobs and the economy, Pittsfield is in a much stronger position today than it was four years ago. The Red Carpet Team has hosted 14 businesses in industries such as advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, e-commerce, and technology. Eight of those 14 sessions were with local, existing, successful businesses. In addition, we supported 16 small businesses and altogether created 490 new jobs. And there's more to come. We will succeed in building a local economy within diverse sectors. We will never again experience a great decline.

To keep our energized economy moving forward we must focus on ensuring access to state-of-the-art communication technology. Rather than waiting for a corporate internet provider to invest in our future we will take control of our own destiny. Pittsfield will explore the possibility of becoming a fiber optic internet service provider. Community wide access to fiber optics advances our economic competitiveness and will provide enough bandwidth for businesses and residents for decades to come.

A greater emphasis will be placed on the city's outdoor recreation economy. Our beautiful surroundings are perfectly suited to advance this sector of the economy. Pittsfield will be a destination where culture meets recreation. And, this is our year! The Ashuwillticook rail trail bike path will FINALLY extend into Pittsfield, the historic Springside House is undergoing a rebirth bringing new opportunities to Springside Park, a natural resource gem in our great city, and this spring we will see the completion of the Westside Riverway Park, in the heart of the Westside.

Efforts to strengthen and stabilize our neighborhoods and create new housing will continue. In the first term, 18 vacant and blighted properties were demolished making way for neighborhood pride. Demolition is a key element to securing neighborhoods, but it isn't the only solution. As we enhance our efforts at stabilizing neighborhoods, we will undertake renovations of former vacant and blighted single family houses. Starting on Eleanor Avenue and Forthill Avenue we will turn two vacant, blighted houses into lovely homes for Pittsfield families. We will revisit the city's At Home in Pittsfield initiative because I firmly believe that small investments in exterior

home improvements will give our under-resourced citizens the ability to protect their home from decline, help build up their personal wealth, and create pride in their surroundings.

As part of the Tyler Street renaissance, streetscape designs will be revealed, we will introduce an in-fill housing prospectus to developers, and propose a zoning overlay district to allow for greater flexibility in the redevelopment of this historic neighborhood and commercial district.

Building a stronger city that creates promise and possibility for every citizen must include exceptional public education. We will understand and prepare for the challenges presented by the national teacher shortage. Over the next seven years, Pittsfield will receive a significant influx of state funding. These funds must be directed right into the classrooms and that includes closing the teacher pay gap.

Greater diversity within Pittsfield's school faculty is a critical element for the academic achievement and citizenship of all our students, but especially for our students of color and their families. In a ground-breaking initiative, our school leaders created a teaching and community immersion experience with the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The first session was so successful that Pittsfield received a second Teacher Diversification grant to continue our relationship with Bethune-Cookman University, Livingstone College, Alabama State University, and Howard University. The new grant will launch the spring session and includes incentives for future teachers to consider relocating to Pittsfield.

In addition to teacher recruitment and retention, for the first time in Pittsfield's history, we will undertake a public school master planning process to identify current space usage, determine the appropriate capacity for specialized populations of students, and provide options and alternatives for school use, renovation, and construction all within the context of Berkshire County and Pittsfield population trends and forecasts. The master plan will include recommendations about the number of schools, where they should be located, and potential grade reconfigurations that will best serve our students, their families, and our taxpayers.

Creating a safer city demands a bold, multi-faceted approach. In my first term, we hired more police officers, deployed Shotspotter technology, opened a Westside Community Outreach Post, created the Police Review and Advisory Board, and conducted several joint law enforcement operations with the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office and the Berkshire County Law Enforcement Task Force, and the Massachusetts State Police. To strengthen these powerful relationships and to expand the fight against drug trafficking and gun violence, the Pittsfield Police Department has taken the lead in applying for a federal Department of Justice designation that will bring federal law enforcement personnel, funding, and resources to the Berkshires. Berkshire County police departments partnered with Pittsfield to write a comprehensive, compelling, application that is currently under review.

And, here again, we struggle with recruitment and retention within the city's police department. We are constrained by a broken civil service system and limited by non-competitive wages. These factors hinder our ability to hire police officers and keep them with us. Seeking a solution to our crumbling police station and using technology to our advantage will all be on the public safety agenda.

CLOSING

Before I close with a personal story, I'd like to invite all of you to a reception at the Beacon Cinema immediately following the ceremony. There will be delicious food catered by Zucchini's, President Marchetti's renowned Italian cookies and the Pittsfield High School jazz band and orchestra will perform.

I'd like to share with you a personal story that has had a profound and life-long lesson. It was not a momentous occasion but that is precisely why it has powerful meaning to me. After I graduated from college, I worked in Boston. On the weekends I would travel home, to this place where I had a lot of family and friends and a wonderful social life. On Friday nights, I'd jump on the turnpike in my gold Nissan Pulsar (if you want a good laugh google that car – it's basically a space age Gremlin) and I had one of those ginormous car phones. Most of the time I could cruise along blasting Fleetwood Mac or The Steve Miller Band on cassette tapes. But this one particular winter evening I was headed west during a frightening snow storm. It was treacherous, low visibility, and I was really scared. I called my dad and tearfully explained that I couldn't concentrate because I kept looking in my rear view mirror for the cars and trucks that came barreling up behind me. He calmly said "Don't worry about what's going on behind you. Keep your eyes forward and maintain a steady speed."

Whenever I find myself in a challenging predicament, whenever I'm tempted to spend countless hours looking backwards for answers, or when I worry about what others are thinking or doing, I remember the words that carried me through a dark and snowy night on the Massachusetts turnpike – "don't worry about what's going on behind you. Keep your eyes forward and maintain a steady speed."

Thank you.