

## Mayor Ruthanne Fuller's Inauguration Speech



To President Laredo, President Emeritus Baker and members of the City Council, Chair Goldman and members of the School Committee, Mayor Warren and Mayor Cohen, Governor Baker, Senator Creem, Representative Khan, District Attorney Ryan, reverend clergy, esteemed dignitaries, family, friends, fellow citizens, and dedicated city workers and educators, as I address you for the first time as Mayor of Newton, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude, responsibility, and optimism.

This is a moment of great civic pride for me. An historic moment for Newton, too – as I stand here, the first woman to serve as Mayor of this great city.

I'm honored to speak those words, and mindful of what it means to break any barrier. I'm grateful for those who came before me and on whose shoulders I stand – those who fought the fight for equality for every citizen – and made this possible.

Two days after the election in November, I attended a special ceremony at Newton North High School. It marked the return of a newly restored mural titled "Citizenship" that honors the soldiers from Newton who died during World War I.

I was struck by the inscription on the wall – an oath, written more than two thousand years ago in Ancient Greece.

It says in part: "We will strive unceasingly ... [through a] public sense of civic duty ... [to] **transmit our city not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.**"

To me, those ancient words resonate today and capture my sense of our mission on this first day of 2018 – to build a greater, better and more beautiful Newton to transmit to our children and grandchildren – grounded in our sense of civic duty, inspired by our shared vision, and fueled by our tradition of working together.

**Working together**, let's make Newton better than ever for raising a family, building a life, and enjoying our senior years.

**Working together**, with the School Committee, I will strive to provide Newton's children with nothing less than **the best education in the Commonwealth**. I pledge to continue the work of my predecessors, Mayor Warren and Mayor Cohen, in rebuilding our schools.

I didn't wait for January 1<sup>st</sup> to get going. I have already held the first meeting on our highest priority school buildings, including Lincoln-Eliot. When it comes to doing right by our kids, **I just couldn't wait** and I commit to you that, working together, we will make it happen.

**Working together**, let's make Newton an even better place for our older residents. They are the ones who built this great city, funded the school system with their tax dollars, and laid the foundation for the Newton we all love. I will launch a feasibility study this year for a **top-notch Senior Center** with a rich, all-encompassing program. Working together, we will make it happen.

Strong neighborhood and village life is the bond that ties our city together. **Working together** with citizens, business people, and the City Council, I will work to strengthen that bond.

We will develop master plans for our villages and commercial corridors, including Needham and Washington streets. Master plans will enable us to build what we all envision: appropriately scaled, walkable, thriving villages linked to mass transit. Villages that include a variety of uses - stores and offices, art and culture, and housing of various types, priced so the next generation can move here and seniors have a place to downsize so they can stay. As a first step toward those goals, I will request funding in the next two weeks for a Washington Corridor visioning initiative.

**Working together** with the City Council, we will update our zoning ordinances so new homes fit in with the rest of the houses on the block. I have heard over and over from our residents that we need to act and act now. I commit to delivering a new zoning ordinance to the City Council this fall.

**Working together** with the Governor and his cabinet, including Newton's own Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack, we need to improve public transportation in Newton. Greater reliability, frequency and accessibility is our shared goal and we, here in Newton, must rebuild our streets and sidewalks to make them more usable for all. Let's finish the Complete Streets Design Guide this spring so pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers can get across our city smoothly and safely.

**Working together**, let's build for tomorrow by making Newton a greener city today, where sustainability is our touchstone and renewable energy the order of the day. I commit to having a Climate Action Plan in place by the end of this year. Let's not just preserve our open space but add to it, starting with the permanent protection of Webster Woods.

**Working together**, let's make it a priority to find more ways to tackle the deadly opioid crisis in our community. Families struggling with this illness need more support and more options. I commit to increasing the number of counselors and social workers to address prevention, treatment, and recovery.

**Working together**, let's invest in our future and be fiscally responsible.

**Working together**, we can continue to set the standard of what it means to be an **inclusive and welcoming city**. As Grey Held's evocative poem suggests, we can be a city where people of different backgrounds and traditions "connect with neighbors in a stronger framework."

So, **working together**, I believe we will make Newton better than ever to raise a family, to build a life and to enjoy retirement because the beating heart of our city isn't our bricks and mortar nor our tree-lined streets.

### **It is our people.**

The Newton we love is more than a city of 88,000 individuals. It's a **community of neighbors**. And I will work tirelessly so every resident, from Nonantum to Auburndale, Upper Falls to Oak Hill and all points in between feel part of our community – equally – where the concerns of all citizens are listened to and acted on.

As I serve, I promise that I will stand up for Newton's core principles of respect, diversity and acceptance and I will never stop listening. Regardless of where you live or who you are, **your voice will count at City Hall**.

Just as so many of you opened your doors to me and invited me into your kitchens and living rooms this past year, the doors of City Hall will always be open to you.

To all the voters of Newton, regardless of which candidates you voted for or whether you were yea or nay on the charter, we stand together in our common love for this city and **I ask for your help, your ideas, and your input**

Communities are based on families. I've had the benefit of a strong one throughout my life and I'm grateful to my husband, Joe, and my children, Mark, Chris and David and David's wife, Roey, for their unwavering support throughout the last year. I know that my Mom, Marianne, who was so excited by the campaign but passed away before its conclusion, and my Dad, Alan, who can't understand what's happened due to Alzheimer's, would be so proud that I and my brother, Kurt, are continuing their commitment to public service. My brother, Kurt Schwartz, is the Director of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency.

All of us who are here today as elected officials as well as our city employees, especially those in Public Safety and Public Works, rely on our families' support every day so we can serve in Newton. I pause so that **all of us can thank you**.

We live in trying times. But I am optimistic because I believe in the people of Newton. This city rightly prides itself on making things happen. By planning the work and working the plan, we will **harness Newton's drive and community spirit to make this city even better**.

I am certain that by working together, we will meet every challenge, rise to every occasion, and seize every opportunity to ensure our city remains a shining example of a **great community in action**.

**Together, let's take charge of Newton's future** so that the Newton of today will fulfill that Athenian Oath of old. Together, we will transmit our city greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.

Now, let's get to work.

Thank you all so much.

*Rosanne Fuller*