

Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022

## Mayor's Update

*This afternoon I took the oath of office from Newton resident Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Kimberly S. Budd to begin serving my second term as Mayor. Here is my inaugural address:*

To my fellow Newtonians here in person or joining us on NewTV; President Albright, Vice President Lipof, President Emeritus Baker and members of the City Council; Chair Olszewski, Vice Chair Shields and members of the School Committee, especially our four new members; our former City Councilor now Congressman, Jake Auchincloss; Chief Justice Budd and Judge Heffernan, District Attorney Ryan, Governor's Councilor Devaney, reverend clergy, musicians, family, friends, and dedicated city and school employees; I am so glad we are together.

We gather for this inauguration in an unusual setting and at an unusual moment in history. We assemble not in the City Council Chamber seated side by side as has been our tradition. Rather we are in the more spacious Newton North auditorium, masked, and physically distanced.

For the last two years have been so difficult and, indeed, anxiety about COVID-19 is still palpable.

We shoulder a collective grief of losing 223 Newtonians and 822,000 souls across the country. We mourn them. And we act to stem the tide of loss by getting vaccinated and boosted. We stem the tide of grief by wearing a mask and giving each other space. We honor those who died by caring for our neighbors and loving our families with increased devotion.

In so many ways, our hearts are full. Our love of this good City and our shared aspirations for Newton are undiminished.

Indeed, I am optimistic that we will meet the challenges of today and embrace the promise of Newton's future by working together.

A few moments ago, all of us took our oath of office.

*(Photo: Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Kimberly S. Budd administering the Oath of Office for my second term.)*

I have administered this oath many times ... to Fire Chief Gino Lucchetti and Police Chief John Carmichael, to the new women and men who put their lives on the line serving our City in our Police and Fire Departments, as well as to newly elected Councilors and School Committee members.



Each time I do, I am moved.

For we swear to support the Constitution of the United States, and thus...

*to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity.*

This is our profound duty, made all the more urgent by the difficulties we face.

We have committed to forge here in Newton for the generations that follow us a greater, better and more beautiful future.

We will meet this moment by investing in our people, our places, and our community.

Newtonians need us to act with urgency as we move toward a future:

- Where every student's individual needs are supported, which the pandemic has made even more paramount.
- Where investments in our school buildings reflect our deep commitment to our children. We will be cutting the ribbon at our new pre-school in 2022, followed by Lincoln-Eliot, and with others queued up.
- Where our older residents benefit from a new, state of the art senior center. I look forward to that ribbon cutting three short years from now.

- Where music and theatre, pickleball and soccer, walking and biking are woven more into the everyday fabric of our lives, bringing us together and lifting our spirits.
- Where those who are struggling from mental health challenges, addiction, housing instability, food insecurity and domestic violence are better connected to care and support.
- Where we institutionalize equity and social justice, reinforce inclusion, affirm diverse identities, support victims of hate and bias, foster respect among all of us, and celebrate difference.

Our places and public spaces need investments as we move toward a future:

- Where our village centers mirror the vibrancy of our residents – with tree-lined wide sidewalks, accessible crossings, outdoor dining and gathering spaces, a thriving arts and culture vibe, diverse and affordable housing options, and a healthy local business scene with a mix of wonderful restaurants.
- Where our zoning allows for housing for working people, for young families just starting out, for our older residents when they want to downsize and for people with limited incomes and we complete the transformation of the West Newton Armory into 43 green apartments that will be 100 percent affordable.
- Where Newton lives up to our moniker the “Garden City,” with improved playing fields, playgrounds, new greenways and accessible trails, newly planted trees and well-maintained parks along with newly secured open spaces in perpetuity that we all fought for – our own Webster Woods.
- Where we have roads in better condition and more transportation choices:
  - We launched Newton in Motion, NewMo, our City’s rideshare service, a real game changer.
  - And this past year I, along with our state delegation led by Representative Khan and with Congressman Auchincloss, secured design plans for new commuter rail stations in Auburndale, West Newton and Newtonville to allow frequent and accessible service.

Our community must continue to evolve as we move toward a future:

- Where Newton continues to lead on green initiatives so we use less, green the rest, compost more, and recycle right.
  - We will be guided by the goals of Newton's first Climate Action Plan written and enacted during my first term.
- Where city services are easier to use and more responsive to our needs with our recently launched NewGov state-of-the-art online information system for permitting and more as a model.
- Where everyone who works for our City knows they will have excellent health insurance and a funded pension plan.
- Where Newton's finances continue to be strong, and we match our ambitions to the reality of our means.
- Where our significant one-time ARPA investments help those who are struggling today and build the foundation for a better tomorrow.

I am optimistic about our future in Newton and we are on the right path.

I am grateful to the voters of Newton for giving me this opportunity to continue serving even as the challenges of our times test our resolve.

These challenges are manifold and add to the pressure we all feel. Supply chain issues and inflation are causing prices to go up, hitting our wallets. Housing prices are through the roof. Headlines highlight gun violence and inequities across our society. All of this can make our very foundations feel shaky.

And yet, in the face of such hurt and instability, Newtonians renew my faith in our shared future.

Our community has come together for Festa, Diwali, our first Indigenous Peoples Day and Juneteenth celebrations, pumpkin smashing, window painting, Paddy's road racing and supporting our school principals.

We tackle the seemingly impossible by coming together. Newton resident Dr. Justin Holtzman teamed up with our Health and Human Services staff to provide thousands of vaccines and boosters. We feed the food insecure with the help of our three food pantries and an amazing Grab 'n Go program. We step in to support households who lost their incomes, with the help from the leaders of the Newton COVID-19 Cares Fund.

Think of the people powering our Boards and Commissions, Green Newton, Families Organizing for Racial Justice, Newton Neighbors Helping Neighbors, the

Chinese American Association of Newton, Newton Coalition of Black Residents, the Newton Conservators, Newton Community Pride, the Newton Cultural Alliance, the Interfaith Clergy, our restaurateurs and so many others.

These Newtonians are weaving a social fabric that makes all our lives better.

Importantly, we find ourselves in a much better place this January 1st than one year ago. We have access to vaccinations and booster shots. Over 95% of Newtonians are vaccinated; that's remarkable.

As our community of neighbors come through for one another so too do our City and School employees for our community. Across our departments, I see a level of preparedness and professionalism that inspires me. I will forever be grateful to our first responders and nurses, teachers and custodians, librarians and lawyers, human resource and health and human services professionals, and all the others.

I want to thank the families of these employees so often left to themselves while their loved ones worked long hours. This is certainly true of my family, the love of my life, my husband Joe, and our wonderful children – Chris, Mark, and David - and their partners, Roey and Charlotte – and, of course – our grandkids Henry and Jeremiah. My family has been my rock and my refuge.

The past four years brought challenges I never imagined when I first took the oath of office as Mayor – of course, COVID-19 – but I also speak of the incivility that surrounds us.

It has infected our national politics and has found its way to Newton.

With our words and our actions, we must unwind this unwelcome tone.

I know each of us who took the sacred oath today to form a more perfect union can model how to work together, to listen to each other, and to create a shared path forward. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson argued that it is our patriotic duty to do so for the future is in our hands.

We who were democratically elected must work to trust in one another's love for this community so that we ensure our community of residents' trust in us.

I close today by borrowing from Lincoln's second inaugural address:

Let us who are privileged to have been chosen by the citizens of Newton to lead in this time of difficulty resolve at the start of this new year to govern with malice toward none and with charity for all, to bind up our city's wounds, to care for those who have

borne the brunt of the pandemic and injustice, and to do all which may achieve a just and promising future for the next generation of Newtonians.

Thank you and I wish everyone a happy, healthy and safe new year.



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