

Clergy, senators, representatives, mayors, school committee, board of aldermen, superintendent, honored guests:

I would first like to thank the citizens of Melrose for the honor of serving as this city's mayor for the past 10 years. I would like to thank my family for the sacrifices they make to allow me to do what I do. I would like to thank all staff for dedicating their professional lives to making our lives better. I would like to thank the hundreds of volunteers that serve on our boards and commissions both today and in years past for building the foundation for our current success. I would also like to recognize those that stand on the stage tonight who have done one of the more challenging things in life: You put your name on a ballot and stood for election. That takes courage, hard work, and great personal sacrifice. You deserve the respect and admiration of our community.

What an incredible decade for our city, our country, and our world. How will history look at the past ten years? Some would say it was 10 years of war, historic economic meltdown, worldwide political unrest, Tea Parties and occupiers, extreme winters and extreme floods, and plummeting confidence in our political system. But it is my hope and my belief that people would look at the last ten years in Melrose somewhat differently. I would describe it as:

- A decade of shared sacrifice and shared achievement
- A bold statement at the ballot box that we will invest in our schools and our future
- Historic engineering feats that solved a century of flooding problems
- Unparalleled cooperation between labor and management to save jobs and sustain good wages, excellent benefits, and a strong pension system
- The re-energizing of our downtown and re-gentrification of our business districts
- A commitment to fund and support our scholars, musicians, and athletes
- And a commitment to lift up those in need: The elderly, the disabled, the hungry, the cold, and children at risk

These are some ways I choose to define the past decade here in Melrose

But tonight, we must focus on the future. Tonight I wish to paint for you a picture of my plan for Melrose in 2020. So much in our world is changing, and so much will change in 8 short years. We are living in a new age economically, politically, socially, and technologically.

But at the center of this external change, the foundation and fundamental values of my administration will stay the same. There are 10 guiding principles that I have used every day, principles that I will continue to use:

1. Assemble the best management team
2. Streamline departments, manage costs, manage debt and use it to our advantage, and always stay ahead of the crisis around us
3. Provide equal access to resources and opportunities that contribute to the advancement of all Melrosians
4. Strive always to bring depth and meaning to the slogan "Melrose: One community open to all"
5. Embrace transportation planning that accommodates a mix of modes, including rail, auto, bikes, and pedestrians
6. Promote a citywide agenda that always puts public education at the forefront
7. Continue to invest in the maintenance and enhancement of our city's public safety, infrastructure, and technological abilities
8. Create a vital economic climate that supports a wide variety of business, cultural, historical and recreational opportunities in all parts of the city
9. Promote balanced and responsible suburban design, planning, and development for the protection of our city's environmental greenbelt, from the Middlesex Fells to Pine Banks, Mount Hood, and Swain's and Towner's ponds, to enhance our health and quality of life
10. Promote and involve an active citizenry that works in partnership with responsive government to manage this great city's destiny in a thoughtful, honest, and accountable manner

Sustainability is a term that has become more and more important in recent years. It affects all areas of life: Industry, agriculture, and yes, government. Sustainability

must be at the center of all our decisions and our operations. That has not always been true at the state and national level.

Local government is the only level of government that must by law have a balanced budget. Our ability to raise revenue is capped, with no consideration of extreme situations or costs. We cannot set the tax rate unless our books are balanced, and we must answer not only to the state Department of Revenue but also to an independent auditor. In addition, we are constantly evaluated by the rating agencies Moody's and Standard and Poor's, who look at both our current practices and our future outlook. As a result, we cannot take on debt that we cannot pay, and we cannot spend money we do not have.

That means that sustainability is always a consideration, and we must constantly balance the cost of doing business with our ability to raise the revenue to pay the bills. That is a critically important discussion. What kind of school system do we want for our students in relation to our ability to pay for those services? Are the benefits we provide to our employees, including salary, health insurance, pensions, and contracts, sustainable in the long term? Will those fixed costs overwhelm our ability to invest in anything else, or can we contain them?

We must also consider whether the programs that we enjoy in good times are sustainable in bad times as well.

We must examine our energy and construction policies, to ensure that they are sustainable. This is the motivation for our recycling efforts, our achievement of Green Community status, and our investment in our fleet of city vehicles. It is always on our minds as we consider new construction. Our goal is to build wisely, so the next generation does not have to pay for shortsightedness.

Because we are so dependent on the federal and state government, we must consider where they are headed. Many of our residents benefit from federal programs such as fuel assistance and early childhood education, just to name a few. As a city, we include local aid from the state in our budget every year. I must question whether the state and federal government are able or have the will to give us the tools to be successful in this political and economic climate. These are issues that we face every day and will be facing well into the next decade. They are hard issues, but we have always been willing to confront them as a community.

Where do we go from here? The first place we go is to our active and intelligent citizenry. We must engage the thousands of new residents who have moved into

our city in the past 10 years. We must re-engage those who have been here for decades. We must create a new melting pot of Melrose citizens. All their voices need to be heard, and they need to be an active part of our vision.

There are some immediate ways in which we can expand our dialogue. As of tonight, Melrose is now on Twitter to provide real-time information regarding the city's happenings, our plans, and our goals. Next month, I will begin a mayor's blog that will allow interaction regarding ideas for our community.

Starting in February, every e-mail from any city employee that goes to a resident will have a survey attached to it, so we can get immediate feedback regarding our service and to make your dealings with your community as easy and efficient as possible. Beginning next week, and from this point forward, department head goals will be posted every six months on the city website.

Our Board of Aldermen and School Committee will be using tablets during their meetings, and agenda documents will be available to viewers at home as they are being discussed.

But I also believe some of the "old fashioned" ways of communicating, like actually talking to people, can be more effective. We will review every new business that opened in the city of Melrose in 2011, and my office will sit down with that business owner to talk personally about every aspect of why they chose Melrose, how they felt about the city's procedures, and how we can improve the process. We will continue that practice throughout 2012 and beyond.

I want to develop a municipal university, in which members of my administration would sit down with citizens to discuss what they do and how they do it, to take some of the mystery out of government. Information is a citizen's greatest tool.

With the volunteer help of Gary Romano, a Melrose resident and well known consultant who engages community discussions throughout the United States, we will begin to engage groups of citizens in a discussion about the future of Melrose. I am calling this the Our City series. We will invite board and commission members and specific groups that may include teens, seniors, those who have lived in the city 10 years or less, those who have lived here 10 years or more, residents with small children, residents with teenagers, all of whom bring specific views of where our city should be going based on their needs. Together, we will create a modern master plan that will spell out our shared vision. Through that dialogue, we will develop a more sustainable Melrose

Nothing makes a community more sustainable than excellent schools. I commit to every parent and taxpayer, as I have over the last ten years, to do everything in my power to support our public schools. As the son of an educator, as a product of those schools and as a parent of two children, I have made public education a priority of this city, and I will always continue to do so.

The first thing on my educational agenda is to work with the School Committee to hiring a new superintendent. I would be remiss not to recognize our Superintendent of Schools, Joe Casey, who will be retiring this July, and thank him for his tireless commitment to our partnership and to our children.

We must hire the best superintendent available. I believe we have a strong search process that has already begun, with incredible volunteers serving on our search committee. We have set an aggressive salary, and unlike in some communities, this new superintendent will have not only a colleague in the mayor's office but a partner. It is our hope that this search will repeat the success of our search for a new principal for Melrose High School, which yielded an incredible candidate, Dan Richards, who has already made profound and meaningful changes to improve Melrose High School. He too is a partner in our goal to make Melrose High School the choice for every child in this city.

Our next step toward that goal begins next week, with the development of a building committee that will invest millions in the renovation of Melrose High School. We must do it without a debt exclusion, we will do it within our debt limit, we will do it without compromising classroom education.

We have already invested over \$8 million in the renovation of Melrose High School and its campus in the last six years. We eliminated the open space, upgraded the security systems throughout the building, gutted and replaced the entire electrical infrastructure, upgraded the technology in every classroom for both students and teachers, put on a new roof, added a new athletic complex, and brought in the Melrose Performing Arts Center. Now we are applying to the Massachusetts School Building Assistance Program for funding for new science labs throughout the building. We have signed a contract with the Massachusetts Area Planning Council to create energy-efficient systems throughout the building, and I will propose the development of what was previously known as the School Resource Center of the high school and the middle school into a new Melrose Technology Center. This will be a center of 21st century learning, giving our students the technological skills they will need in college and the workplace. This

will be a 21st century library resource center that will offer not only books but also access to information in all different modes. It will also be a center for professional development for teachers, administrators, police, fire, and other city departments, as well as parents, a center that the entire community can use and a new library model that will complement our already outstanding Melrose Public Library. As our new athletic complex is the gem of the Middlesex League, and our theater is the envy of artists throughout the area, this technology center will be a model that other school districts will aspire to emulate.

And tonight I would like to propose a bold initiative for our younger students: It is my goal that every student in Melrose will have a library card, and will have toured our public library, by the end of second grade. This initiative will begin next school year. There is nothing more important to the development of our young learners than encouraging reading and the love of our public library.

We will also develop our own version of the national Race to the Top program, which gives innovation grants to educators in some states, including Massachusetts. The Melrose Innovation Grant Program will support innovative teachers who want to try new approaches that, if successful, can be replicated for the benefit of all our students. I will ask the board of aldermen to allocate \$10,000 for this program, which will be teacher-driven, and I am excited to see what our creative teachers will come up with.

In the upcoming fiscal year, I plan to increase the city's contribution to our schools by over \$1 million for the first time in our city's history. We will invest an additional \$75,000 in textbooks and learning materials on top of the \$40,000 we have already committed this fiscal year. We will seek to consolidate all school maintenance, snow removal, and facility functions out of the school department and into the Department of Public Works. This consolidation will create enormous operational efficiencies as the school department will no longer have to worry about how much snow we will get each year or how to cover the cost of oil, electricity, windows, and other capital repairs. Although I recognize the City's obligation to bargain over these changes, and will meet that obligation, my goal is to allow the school department to focus on one thing, and one thing only: the education of our students.

At the end of the day, the sustainability of local government is dependent upon our ability to deliver services in the most efficient way possible. That can only be done through regionalization. The idea, which is predominantly a New England trait,

that our state should be divided into small fiefdoms, defined by man-made borders and protected by the magic words "This is the way we always did it," is an affront to taxpayers and quality operations. Our regionalization of our health department, which also serves Wakefield and Reading, has paid incredible operational dividends and made our communities healthier. In fact, Melrose and Wakefield have just been awarded a Mass in Motion grant that will increase health and wellness in our two communities. Our unique IT partnership with Essex is only the beginning, as local government tears down technology barriers that have been gone from the private sector for over a decade. But as we move forward and evolve, we must look at other areas of regionalization. Our assessor's department could be regionalized in the future. Certain aspects of our building department could be regionalized in the future. 911 should be regionalized. Fire Departments, which are informally regionalized through mutual aid, could be formally regionalized. Ambulance service could be regionalized, as should our agencies that address the tragedies of drugs and alcohol. Some of our attempts might not be as successful as others, but to do everything the same way, and not constantly re-evaluate how we do business, will only mean one thing: With health insurance rising, salaries rising, pensions rising, and revenue fading, we will face diminished services and a lessened quality of life.

There are many other things that I am excited about over the next four years.

- With our new recycling coordinator, I want to begin a neighborhood-by-neighborhood campaign to increase recycling, from our senior housing to our day cares, and increase recycling in Melrose by over 10%.
- As a green community I want to work with the Energy Commission to have 1,000 homes in our community audited to improve efficiency at no cost.
- Under the leadership of Veterans Service Officer and Staff Sergeant Ryan McLane, and with the help of the Veterans Advisory Board, we will continue to meet the needs of every veteran that walks in the front door of City Hall. In fact, the level of benefits has never been higher in the history of the city, and we will continue to meet that need.
- I want to begin the process of developing Route 99 as the contract with Waste Management and Aggregate expires in 9 years, to set the stage for our own transfer station.

I want to invest in our people and our neighborhoods:

- I want to build upon the start this year of our adult education program that can retrain our citizens for new jobs or enrich them socially.
- I want to invest in the Melrose Highlands as we have invested in our other business nodes, to improve that beautiful neighborhood.
- I want to continuously improve our parks: Warren Park, Gooch Park, the East Knoll.
- I look forward to starting the remodeling of the full commercial kitchen at Mount Hood to increase revenue and enhance the Mount Hood experience
- We have planted 480 trees over the last four years. I want to beat that.

And I want to support our arts. I will propose to the Board of Aldermen the creation of a grant program to support local artists in every medium who want to present their work to the entire community, whether it be the folk festival, choral music, an art show, plays in the park, or concerts in the summer. This will supplement the Massachusetts Cultural Council grant program and empower individual artists. And tonight I would like to name that grant program for someone who served 42 years (CHECK) as a fine arts teacher in Melrose, as choral conductor, educator, department chair, play director, volunteer, and community advocate for the fine arts. It should also be noted that his wife, Wilma, a musician herself, taught piano for countless Melrosians. It will be a great program that will support his life's work and enrich our community. It is my plan to submit to the Board of Aldermen for approval \$10,000 per year to support the Joseph Messina Fine Arts Grant Program. Thank you for your service, Mr. Messina. Melrose will always be a community that supports the arts through these Messina grants.

Great progress has been made, but as you can see, there is so much more to be done. I am energized by the challenge and I am committed as your mayor to see it through until the job is done. I expect the next 8 years in Melrose to be a time of evolution, a time of positive change, a time of challenge, and a time to better position Melrose for long term security. I offer for your consideration this evening my vision for the future of this community. It is a vision that will include every one of you and will demand citizen involvement to create our generation's legacy.

But remember, this is your city, and I will manage it to the best of my abilities. I do not have all the answers or pain-free solutions for the complex issues before us. I cannot say that our community will not at times struggle in easing—but still tough—times, but as we move forward, know that I and the people sworn in tonight will embrace the values and traditions that all Melrosians young and old hold dear, for we are Melrose, and we shall continue to make history together. Thank you very much