



**Mayor Jon Mitchell**

**State of the City Address**

**Thursday, March 9, 2017**

**[remarks as prepared]**

Thank you to Joe Michaud, Rick Kidder and the New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce for another great job in organizing this annual event, to Webster Bank for its enduring sponsorship, and to Superintendent Jim O'Brien and Greater New Bedford Voc-Tech for their customary hospitality and service.

Residents and friends of New Bedford,

When I first took office, many were writing off America's older industrial cities – and for good reason. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, rampant housing foreclosures, widespread job loss and declining tax revenue left many cities struggling to provide basic services and grow jobs. Here and elsewhere, it was easy to see the glass as half-empty.

Since then, some of those cities have met those predictions, and continue to slide. But New Bedford didn't buy the conventional wisdom.

There was no denying that our challenges were as daunting here as anywhere: a struggling economy, a school system that was on the brink of a state takeover, neglected city buildings, and precarious finances.

But we made a conscious decision. We chose not to recline in the false hope that someone else would bail us out.

We took control of our affairs. We were confident that through thoughtful planning, a long-term focus, and old fashioned persistence, we could activate the great potential we all knew New Bedford had.

And that confidence was well-placed.

I am pleased to report today that through the collective effort of our residents and city employees, New Bedford is engineering one of America's most remarkable urban turnarounds.

Consider this:

In my State of the City Address two years ago, I cited a Wall Street Journal article that reported that out of nearly four hundred American metropolitan areas, New Bedford had the sharpest drop in unemployment over the previous year.

As noteworthy and encouraging as that news was, what has been even more remarkable is that it just happened again. As has been widely reported, at the close of November, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the New Bedford area unemployment rate fell more than any other metro in America – again.

Think about that. For those of us old enough to remember when factory closings seemed to be a monthly event, when the lines at the unemployment center spilled out onto the sidewalk, and when few young adults would consider returning here, it is all too hard to believe.

But it really has happened.

The growth has been across the board. We've witnessed a major surge in manufacturing, the filling up of our business park, the gelling of an innovation sector, the steady diversification of our famous port, and the blossoming of the downtown restaurant and entertainment scene.

The growth in jobs has meant more opportunities for our residents to buy a home, send their kids to college, and pursue the American dream.

Job creation doesn't happen of course if a city isn't making headway on other fronts, and that's exactly what's been happening here.

First and foremost, while other cities have struggled with upticks in crime, New Bedford has over time become safer. Through the steady work of our police, we've seen double digit declines in crime in each of the last two years.

Our schools are moving in the right direction. The four year graduation rate at New Bedford High School is the best it's been in ten years. School climate has improved, and we're seeing marked gains in performance in many key areas.

More people are visiting our city. Attendance is way up at our major attractions, including the zoo, the Whaling and Art Museums, and the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center -- and of course, good luck getting into any downtown restaurant the night of a Z performance.

Last year we succeeded in landing a ferry service to Nantucket, which carried some 30,000 passengers in its first year. Coupled with the 70,000 passengers on the Vineyard ferry, there are an awful lot people now coming to our central waterfront.

Major public construction projects, funded by a combination of municipal, state and federal money are moving full steam ahead. Two new schools, the CoveWalk, the new beach bike path, major renovations at New Bedford High, the Wamsutta Street Rail Bridge, the \$50 million SMAST expansion, City Hall renovations, and municipal building repairs too many to count, the first new major zoo exhibits in over twenty years, are all almost done.

And there's a long list of new projects that are about to start: on our commercial fishing piers and State Pier, on Coggeshall and Union Streets, the entire southern stretch of JFK Boulevard, the Elm Street Garage, airport runway upgrades, and several public parks across the city.

There's a lot more, and too little time to talk about it all.

But the most important point we should heed from our recent progress is this: decline is not inevitable. For a city that has suffered job loss and capital flight for decades after the Great Depression, and all the ills that came with them, it has been tempting to assume that there's nothing we can do about the general trajectory of our city.

Well, we rejected that passive way of thinking. We decided to act. And after decades of decline, we've done something that so many other older industrial cities haven't managed to do: we have reversed course. Sure we still have our challenges, but the change in direction is undeniable.

Our job now is to pursue an upward, more sustainable course, toward a city that can compete effectively in an ever changing global economy; that can protect and support the well-being of its residents; and that can nurture a quality of life that attracts people to the city and offers everyone an opportunity to pursue the American Dream.

So much more will be expected of all cities in the years ahead. In an era in which the federal government has struggled to address basic problems and whose credibility seems to erode with every passing day, people are turning to cities to solve their problems.

Cities that thrive are the ones that recognize they are primarily responsible for their long-term success.

New Bedford is no exception. We live in a competitive world, and no one is going to do the competing for us.

It doesn't matter that we are not a major metropolis.

Nor do we have the luxury of being a satellite of one.

You could start running trains between here and Boston tomorrow, but that is just one of many ingredients in the recipe for our success.

Nor should we allow ourselves to buy too much into labels that are often affixed to older industrial cities, like Working City, Gateway City, and others. Though well-intended, they are all too often understood to mean cities that are looking for help.

New Bedford is not an ailing patient.

We are prepared to compete.

So what will it take?

### **Economic Development**

For starters, we will persist in our effort to build a diverse regional economy centered on New Bedford. We will continue to implement the blueprint set forth by the Regeneration Committee, whose central premise is that Greater New Bedford needs to make the most of its assets so that businesses that rely on these assets can gain competitive advantages in their markets. This economic development plan has been producing results in no small part because of the skillful implementation of Derek Santos, Tony Sapienza, and the team at the Economic Development Council.

New Bedford has always been, and always will be, a seaport, and our connection to the water is our single most important asset. According to a recent state-commissioned study, the Port of New Bedford generates over \$9 billion dollars of direct and induced annual economic output and supports nearly as many jobs as the Port of Boston. In a state economy known for high-tech, mutual funds and research hospitals, the Port of New Bedford contributes fully two percent of the state's gross domestic product.

We will continue our "all-of-the-above" strategy to diversify port development that has led to eye popping growth in cargo tonnage and recreational boating, and the expansion of our fish processing base, the largest in America.

It also should go without saying that we won't let up in our support for the fishing industry, and we will continue to ready ourselves for the arrival of the offshore wind industry.

Both industries are well positioned. Our lead position as the center of fishing industry on the East Coast only strengthens with each passing year. And with our geographic and other

advantages, the same can happen with offshore wind. Our team has worked tirelessly in the last five years to put New Bedford on the map as an offshore port, and we're finally at a point now, as the industry is setting down roots in the United States, where they are all looking at New Bedford as the place to start. The goal for both fishing and offshore wind is for businesses that have some connection to either one to say, "We need to be in New Bedford."

There are two keys to long term success in our port. The first is to have a strong port authority, which is exactly what Ed Washburn is establishing at the Harbor Development Commission.

The other is to build modern port infrastructure that industry can rely on. And we are steadily making progress, with the recent construction of the New Bedford Marine Commerce, dredging of some of the federal channel, repairs to numerous piers, and the installation of refrigeration at the State Pier which will lead to even more work opportunities for our longshoreman.

When it comes to state support for our port, we owe a debt of gratitude to Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. Coming from Central Massachusetts makes her an unlikely champion of the maritime economy, but that's what she's been, particularly here in New Bedford. It just shows what a quick study and thoughtful listener she is, and I really want to thank her for helping New Bedford leverage its primary economic asset.

The ramp up in port activity has been mirrored by the growth in every other sector where we have competitive advantages. Manufacturing has expanded to the point where the business park is just about full, and vacant mill space likewise is being gobbled up. Construction work is way up, as building permits are through the roof – pardon the pun. And the hospitality sector is taking off, with a new hotel on the way on Union Street, and new restaurants opening seemingly one a month.

Our relentless focus on leveraging the city's assets, building on strengths that have always been right in front of us, is a strategy that is paying off. In the coming years, more assets will be developed. We will modernize our airport, explore opportunities for new industrial space to take advantage of our excellent highway system, and accentuate our historic assets through the infusion of capital from the Community Preservation Fund and other sources.

When it comes to growing our opportunity for our residents, New Bedford will play every card in our hand.

We need to remember, however, that the value of any asset changes over time. This city was once dotted with textile mills that gained an advantage by being close to water sources, tapping immigrant labor, and enjoying the protections of tariffs against foreign

competition. Once those advantages diminished, it all disappeared, most of it over the course of a single decade. And because our economy wasn't diversified, but was rather focused almost exclusively in textiles, the city found itself in an enormous hole.

To compete effectively, and to remain a thriving community, we need to anticipate change and adapt quickly, and diversify our economy so that it can absorb shocks.

Technological development is accelerating change in our economy and transforming our way of life. You need look no further than the smart phone you have in your pocket or purse to feel the pace of change. Just about everybody has a smart phone now. Let's be honest, it's hard to keep your hands off it because you rely on it so much.

That technology, or set of technologies, has become integral to nearly every conceivable business and our own personal lives. So it's easy to forget smart phones have only been around for ten years. It's just one of many examples of technologies whose impact on our lives we're just beginning to appreciate.

My point is that things are changing quickly and the cities that are nimble enough to stay ahead of the game, and whose economies are diversified, will prevail.

That's one of the reasons why having a strong entrepreneurial environment is so important. Small businesses are better able to adapt, and for the ones that don't, if things are working the way they should, new ones have the opportunity to spring up in their place.

We will maintain our commitment to small business development. We will continue to strengthen our loan programs, connect businesses to mentorship opportunities, identify and break down regulatory barriers, and do everything in our power to hold the line on taxes. This city values its small businesses, and it'll stay that way.

To further diversify our economy -- to make it more adaptable -- we also must cultivate what I would call our "idea assets."

The rise of the so-called "knowledge economy" is hardly news any more. But here in New Bedford, at times we have assumed that businesses in the technology and creative sectors are to be found somewhere else -- in large metropolitan areas or university towns for instance.

The reality is, however, that our world doesn't permit us to think that way anymore. We need to be in the ideas game. We'll always be proud to be a city of big shoulders, but we also need to be a city of big ideas.

The good news is that we have a foundation to build on.

Creativity springs from our prodigious arts community. The Commonwealth recently named us the top arts community in the state because of the concentration of artists here, our vibrant cultural institutions, and our residents' openness to artistic expression.

We will continue to accentuate all of it. Not only do public art exhibits, artist studios, and live music and theater make our city a more interesting place and attract tourism, they create an environment that encourages creativity. And that's good for business.

Last year at this event, I announced that we would establish the state's first ever municipal arts fund that would be supported by our hotel tax revenue. With the help of the city council, leadership in the arts community, and Representative Cabral and Senator Montigny, that fund is now in place, and will help amplify the arts scene, and fertilize creativity.

Similarly, we need to expand New Bedford's innovation economy. Whether you know it or not, it's already here. This city has a growing community of tech start-ups. Check out the Groundworks incubator on Purchase Street in the Quest Center and you'll see a hive of entrepreneurs that are creating new business right here in New Bedford.

Talk to Chris Rezendes about his internet-of-things lab in the old Standard Times building downtown. The lab has become a national leader in an emerging set of technologies and has drawn investment from multinational corporations like General Electric, Dell, and Caterpillar.

Stop and look around, and you will notice that there are start-ups all over the city. And we need to celebrate what they do, and pave the way for a broader start-up community. Toward this end, I am announcing today an important initiative that will do just that—the creation of a marine science-oriented “innovation district” located on underutilized city-owned land adjacent to the new SMAST facility.

With the SMAST expansion nearing completion, we have an opportunity to help turn the marine research being done there under the leadership of Steve Lorenz into job opportunities. We need to take full advantage of the new SMAST facility, by creating a surrounding environment in which business ideas can be spun off and grow. The district could include residential units for doctoral students and faculty, incubator space, and even perhaps small restaurant development that complements the work next door at SMAST.

Like innovation districts in other cities, the idea is to cultivate opportunities to grow new businesses right by where the research is taking place. Marine science businesses make all the sense in the world in a city so tied to the sea.

Innovation districts have injected significant new business activity into older industrial cities like St. Louis, Pittsburgh and Chattanooga, and it can work here. Given the proximity of beaches, historic Fort Rodman and our bike trails, it'll be a highly attractive location in so many ways.

I want to give a special thanks to city councilor Joe Lopes for all of his hard work and support in helping to develop this concept. I think it'll be great for the quality of life and property values of the Clark's Point neighborhood, and indeed the whole city.

### **Creation of Opportunity**

At the same time we faithfully pursue our economic development strategy, we need to create pathways for our residents to pursue opportunity. More than anything else, we must be unwavering in our commitment to providing our kids with the public education that enables them to compete effectively for jobs as adults, and to develop into responsible citizens.

Our schools have come a long way in the last few years. The days when the needs of adults were put before children are in the rearview mirror. We now have a school system that is clear in its academic goals, manages taxpayer dollars reliably, and has raised the standards for academic instruction.

We have improved immensely the teaching of non-English speakers, upgraded technology, cleaned up school grounds, revamped the curriculum, and established administrator training program.

There have been seismic changes in our elementary schools, not the least of which is that through a successful negotiation with the New Bedford Educators Association, elementary school children this year are attending class all day on Friday, for the first time in over forty years.

Middle school reform is well underway, and there have been noticeable improvements in school climate. Next year the district will expand the Accelerated Learning Program to all middle schools so that high achieving students will have a clear pathway into the high school Advanced Placement program, which is producing students who are going off to America's most competitive colleges.

Most importantly, the school system now holds itself accountable. Everyone is expected to perform, and evaluations from the top to the bottom of the organization are very real. Going through the motions no longer flies.

A whole lot has happened, and some of the changes have been difficult, but they have been absolutely necessary given where the district was five years ago. We knew the

turnaround of our schools wasn't going to be an overnight exercise, but it's clear that the district's hard work is paying off. And we must not let up.

And I want to take a moment to add this: Over here at Voc-Tech, employers can't be more impressed with the technical training programs that are preparing tomorrow's workforce. Ask any employer of a Voc-Tech grad, and they will tell you just how important this institution is to the competitiveness of our region.

In the long run, the competitiveness of our workforce, and the ability of our residents to earn a livelihood, will depend on their willingness to continually acquire new skills. There are plenty of examples of how new technology has rendered certain jobs obsolete, or changed the job's required skills. Take the ATM machine, for instance, a technology that became ubiquitous in most of our lifetimes. It didn't make traditional bank tellers obsolete, but it certainly changed their job descriptions. In addition to handling deposits and withdrawals, they advise customers on mortgages, investments and estate planning.

We've got to help people adapt to these kinds of changes. So in addition to our strenuous effort to reform K-12 public education, we are opening the doors to life-long learning so that everyone can have the opportunity to grow professionally and compete. We've worked to reform the Workforce Investment Board, so that it can deliver the skills employers need. Under the leadership of Jim Oliveira, the WIB's programs are producing results.

Our successful after school programs headed by Cynthia Wallquist and Mary Rapoza, our revamped senior programs created by Debra Lee, and the veterans programs run by Chris Gomes have been are all part of the same general effort toward creating opportunities for self-improvement.

In a similar vein, we will soon release a master plan for our library system whose specific goal is to shift the library's mission onto the library patron. In the internet age, libraries shouldn't simply be buildings with books in them. They need to engage their audience and enable them unlock the doors to knowledge and understanding.

City government can't do everything, but it can help create opportunities for success, and that's exactly what we will do.

### **Well-Being of Our Residents**

Successful cities protect the well-being of their residents. And this responsibility starts with public safety.

Despite what often appears to be a media fixation on crime stories, the crime rate in New Bedford is down – significantly down. It has dropped in part through effective policing.

Chief Cordeiro is off to a fast start. His approach is exactly what New Bedford needs. It is both data-driven and community-driven. He knows that reliable information can make police officers more effective, and he also knows that no police department can be effective if it isn't trusted in every corner of the community.

We will continue to work closely with DA Tom Quinn's office to target violent offenders who cause a disproportionate amount of crime. The police department's has also been restructuring the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative program, which targets young gang members.

And we continue to turn the screws on unscrupulous landlords, because they pose a public safety problem. Despite much improvement in this area, we still have landlords who are all too willing to allow dangerous people into their rental properties. If they don't know by now, they will eventually get the point; New Bedford will not permit you to neglect your property.

Our goal is continue to tamp down on crime and its sources, until everyone, in every neighborhood, can say they feel safe.

All of our public safety departments have been in the thick of what I believe is the single most vexing public safety challenge of our day: opiate addiction. Any discussion of the well-being of residents of our city has to begin here. The problem is not unique to New Bedford, but it has ended or ruined too many lives in our city.

Our EMS and Fire Departments do a terrific job at their core missions, and in fact stand out as among the very best in the state, but they, like the police, are consumed with this problem.

There isn't a night that goes by when they are not administering Narcan to someone who has fallen unconscious, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. They will remain unwavering in their efforts, because every one of those addicts is someone's son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister. And not a single one of them ever thought they'd be in the position they're in.

New Bedford was one of the first communities to arm its first responders with Narcan, and they have saved hundreds of lives along the way. They've done a great job, but they'd be the first to tell you that it's not enough.

Let me be clear: This is a complex, multi-faceted problem that affects people of every walk of life, so the only way we are going to turn the tide is through sustained, collective effort. Opioid abuse is everyone's problem, and we can all be part of the fight against it.

That is why, nearly two years ago, we established the Opioid Prevention Task Force that is comprised of numerous government and community partners.

Through the instrumental assistance of people like Dr. Mike Rocha and Reverend David Lima, the Task Force has launched important programs designed to help addicts avoid relapsing. These include the establishment of recovery coaches that pairs addicts with a specially trained coach who has at least one year of sobriety under his or her belt. Programs like this are showing real progress in other parts of the country.

In addition, for over a year now, teams of police officers and members of our faith community have visited addresses where overdoses have occurred, to offer services to both victims and loved ones. Just last year, they made over 300 such visits. During these Clergy Ride-Alongs, as they are called, family members are also trained and provided Narcan, just in case.

But the most effective way to stem the tide of addiction is through prevention. We need to keep people from ever using drugs in the first place. So we are focusing our energy and resources on our children. Starting as early as elementary school, students are now hearing consistent, age-appropriate messages about the perils of drug use. They all need to hear it, and hear it clearly.

As a parent, I was struck when my own fifth grader came home from school and asked about the dangers of alcohol and drugs after one of these classes. That's when I woke up and realized that's exactly what she and kids her age should be hearing.

Just because opiate abuse is a nationwide problem, it doesn't mean we should say we can't do much about it. We are doing a lot, and we will expand these efforts.

### **Physical Condition of the City**

I want to talk now about a compliment our city received a couple of weeks ago. It was at a regional meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association – and we are pleased to have MMA executive director Geoff Beckwith with us today. It was held at the Fort Tabor Community Center. An elected official from one of our suburbs approached me and said, “Mayor, I really enjoy driving through New Bedford now. It just looks so much different.”

The comment was a reminder that we who live or work in the city often may not discern the gradual improvements because we are here all the time, but that doesn't mean the changes are insignificant.

And they have not been by accident. A few years ago, we made a conscious decision to take responsibility for the physical condition of the city. For too long the city neglected its built

environment: buildings, sidewalks, cemeteries, parks, water and waste water systems, roads, and the general cleanliness of the city.

I believe our residents deserve to live in a clean city with well-designed and visually appealing public spaces.

So we've done something about it. We've planted over 2,500 trees, restored City Hall and numerous other buildings, revamped the trash system (which has doubled our recycling rate), enforced the trash laws, wiped out graffiti, built four new neighborhood parks, and are investing tens of millions of dollars in water infrastructure to keep our drinking water clean.

I also think most would agree that we need to do more for the roads in the city, and the funding we get from the state on this is not enough to keep up the city's 300-plus miles of roadway. That is why I have submitted to the City Council a proposal that would effectively increase our road repair spending effectively by fifty percent.

And there is no question that the city has become significantly cleaner. Now cleanliness is a hard thing to measure, but I rely on the word of the experts, Lynne Coish and the dedicated volunteers of Operation Clean Sweep. They'll tell you that because of the city's enforcement efforts and new trash system, they can't fill their dumpsters anymore during their summer clean ups. There's simply far less trash on the street. And I'm especially grateful to Ken Blanchard and Zeb Arruda, and their departments for their persistent efforts on this front.

I think we can do even better. This spring we will roll out still more cleaning measures to take the standard of cleanliness to the next level, that will include more street sweeping, heightened enforcement of commercial dumpster use, and expanded use of mobile technology to track our cleaning efforts.

We want to people to come to New Bedford and say, "Now there's a city that cares about itself."

### **City Finances**

Now, I'm about to say a word about the city's finances. I warn you because I've been doing this long enough to know that usually at this point in the program, people start waiving for their servers for more coffee.

But we must talk about it, because it's about your money, and because nothing else works if we don't spend it wisely.

Under the leadership of our CFO Ari Sky, New Bedford taxpayer dollars have never been better managed. Through careful planning, new financial policies, and much improved working

relationship with the city council, the city has achieved the highest bond rating in its history, and we are steadily pursuing what we hope will be yet another ratings increase.

To reduce costs, we have made city government run more efficiently. You've heard me brag before about the Wall Street Journal report that New Bedford has more installed solar capacity per capita than any city in the continental U.S. – and there I just did it again. But all those solar panels have saved taxpayers millions of dollars on the city's electricity bills. We've also consolidated departments, combined positions, automated payroll, and taken countless other belt-tightening steps.

This year we will launch an operational study of city government to ensure that we've done everything we can to make city government provide the best services at the lowest possible cost. By the time we're done, we will have the most efficiently run city government in Massachusetts. That's our goal, plain and simple.

Despite it all, and despite all the economic growth in our city, we are still pinching pennies. We've had to resort to measures I would prefer not to do, like leaving vacant positions open, browning out fire stations and budgeting our school department at the state minimum level. We're not alone. Other cities in this state are feeling the pinch, too.

The problem is that in Massachusetts, cities lack the legal authority to implement spending reductions for items that are crowding out other spending. I'm talking primarily about health care, pensions, charter schools and labor agreements that are forced on us by state arbitrators. Massachusetts municipalities have their hands tied far tighter than cities in other states. If I had the authority, like mayors in many other states have, to deal aggressively with these costs, we could avoid tax increases without significantly altering benefits. It actually wouldn't be that hard.

This isn't a criticism of the current administration in Boston. It's been this way for a long time, and I know the governor and lieutenant governor share my concerns about the sustainability of municipal spending. Something has to change, and I will continue to work with the MMA, the administration and legislators to advance this discussion.

### **What Is Required of Citizens**

In charting the course forward, city government is clear about what it must do to enable New Bedford to compete in a changing world and enable our residents to live fulfilling lives. But government can only take it so far.

Some twenty-four hundred years ago, Plato observed, “A city is what it is, because its citizens are what they are.” Government can set the conditions, but it is the collective actions of private citizens that shape the place.

I’m reminded of this every time I go to the YMCA, which, I confess, is not nearly often enough these days. I spent a lot of time there as kid, learning how swim, playing basketball, and doing lots of other activities, and I have many fond memories there.

Since its founding, the philosophy of the YMCA has been about the cultivation of character. The idea is that the investment the Y makes in children today will make stronger citizens, and therefore a stronger community, in the future. But of course the Y can’t do its job without the willingness of others to support its programs.

The Y on Water Street is still called the “New Y” by some who remember the “Old Y” on Sixth Street. The New Y was built in 1972, at the tail end of the urban renewal period and not long after the West End riots. It was a time of uncertainty, and a time when trust in the national government was waning – which sounds eerily familiar.

In the northern wall of the Y’s lobby is a bronze tablet that lists all the corporations and individuals who stepped up to build that building. I hope everyone stops and takes a look at it. It’s a who’s-who of regional leadership at the time. Some lived in the city; some lived in our suburbs. They easily could have said that even though the Y is important, the city was dying, and that it would be cheaper to build in a surrounding community anyway.

They recognized that a city is constantly being built, not just by government, but by citizens, motivated not just by altruism, but also, as de Toqueville put it, by “self-interest, rightly understood.”

They recognized that it was essential to the region that the institution be built right in the heart of downtown, because as the city went, so did the entire region.

And they knew that the kids who benefited, whose character would be shaped by the institution, might someday be their employees, might start a business, or might even run for public office.

They were business leaders who looked at their bottom lines not just tactically, but strategically. And it wasn’t simply a check writing exercise. They came together and said, “We need to get this done.”

Today, we owe them a debt of gratitude, because the Y has been, and continues to be, an enormous contributor to the civic life of Greater New Bedford. With the passage of time, we can’t thank them personally, except for the one person on that bronze tablet who’s still with us,

and who's dedication to building a stronger city is worthy of our emulation. And that's my friend, Cal Siegal.

Cal is New Bedford through and through. He was a student leader at New Bedford High School, and graduated as the salutatorian of his class. After beginning his studies at Yale, he left to join the Army in the middle of World War II. As a very young rifleman, he saw immediate action in the Allied drive through Belgium into heart of Germany in late-1944. A recipient of the Purple Heart and Bronze Star, Cal was wounded at the Battle of the Bulge, and spent 51 weeks recovering in military hospitals. After the war, he finished his degree at Yale.

Cal had a lot of options. With his talent, he could have gone anywhere, but he decided to come back to New Bedford. Over the course of his career, he has built successful businesses, served on major non-profit boards, and he has been in thick of countless civic initiatives – leading, as they say in the Army, from the front.

I ask you to join me in hearty thanks for Cal's contributions to our city.

As important as those contributions have been, his example is most relevant to us today.

We have our own opportunity, in our own time, to be city builders.

That requires us to stretch, to extend ourselves.

And we in New Bedford need to work harder than folks in other places, but that's okay.

There is personal satisfaction for sure comes from being able to pull off something that others thought you couldn't do. You know how savory sweet that can be.

But real fulfillment comes with the knowledge that you've left your children and grandchildren, and city you love, better for your efforts.

I look forward to our work ahead together.

Thank you. And God bless our great city.