

I would like to thank my colleagues for your vote of confidence in my ability to lead the council for the coming year. I am honored.

I wish to thank Senator Markey, Congresswoman Trahan, Mayor Fiorentini, the legislative delegation, Department Heads, City employees, citizens, friends, family and my dedicated election committee and all those in attendance today.

I would like to extend New Year's wishes of health and good fortune to all. It's a historic day for the City. I am honored to stand before you as the first woman to serve as president of the Haverhill City Council. Our Council history is dotted with women who have served on the council, among them Betsy Conte, Marge Goudreault and my colleague Mary Ellen Daly O'Brien who today becomes the longest serving female Councilor in our history. I would be remiss not to mention Theresa Bauman. A veteran of World War II who was awarded the Purple Heart. She was the first female to serve on the Council and was successfully elected 5 times. She served as the first female Vice President of the Council and was the first woman to run for Mayor in Haverhill. Her legacy continues as I follow her nephew, John Michitson, as Council President. John Michitson took on the duty of Council President for 10 years. Thank you John for your service.

I am excited and optimistic for the City as we start a new decade. In order to continue our improvements we must acknowledge the existence of issues with public safety, infrastructure maintenance and the need for a stronger educational system and a focus on economic development. I know that the Council is ready to meet these issues and work with the Mayor, legislative delegation, state agencies and our federal representatives. We are here to work with and for the individuals, neighborhood groups, non-profit organizations, service clubs, religious organizations and any and all who are striving to make a positive difference in Haverhill. As we recognize our present issues and meet them head on, we need to focus on the future.

A long wished for Master Plan is nearing its debut. It will be a guide for our City's next decade of decision making.

A Charter Commission is in the offing to address Ward Representation as a possible way forward for a more representative government. The Lupoli Haverhill Heights project is nearing completion and the east side of downtown's long-awaited resurgence seems closer.

I am optimistic and hopeful for our future yet know some difficult decisions will need to be made. We must address our parking issues in the downtown either in partnership with a private or public entity, the creation of a building authority or some other vehicle. We must adopt the Master Plan's vision regarding forward thinking changes in our industrial parks, thus increasing the opportunities for job and tax base growth in the City. The needs of new schools and a new fire station must be addressed.

My fellow Councilors and I are excited to tackle these and other issues that will arise. While the views and opinions of the individual Councilors are varied, and we disagree often with one another and the Mayor. Those disagreements come out of a wish to do what we see as best for our community. I know we are all ready to work for our fellow citizens and this great City. We will make those tough decisions, compromise when necessary and work together. Ultimately, we are here to help. We are all working for our fellow citizens, neighbors and a City we all love. We will work with purpose towards our shared future.

Thank you very much.

Melinda E. Barrett
City Council President