

NICHOLAS M. MAVODONES

INAUGURAL REMARKS

DECEMBER 7, 2009

Thank you, and good afternoon. I want to thank you all for taking time out of your very busy schedules to be here at City Hall today. In the crowd are members of the public, friends and relatives of Councilors, former Councilors and Mayors, elected officials, City and School Department staff, as well as many others.

It is certainly a great honor to be standing here before you today. First of all, I want to pass along my congratulations to Councilors Kevin Donoghue and David Marshall on their successful reelection campaigns and say how much I look forward to working with each of you and the other members of the Council during the upcoming year. I also want to extend my welcome and congratulations to what I'm sure are the very proud families and friends of Councilors Marshall and Donoghue who are also in attendance today.

Thank you, Councilor Waxman, for nominating me and for the very kind comments. As some of you may know, Dory and I have been friends for over twenty years. In fact, our children grew up together in the same neighborhood. I was very happy when she agreed to run for and serve on the Portland School Committee; and I'm

thrilled that she is now a colleague on the City Council. However, I must admit, I will miss having her as my seatmate this year.

And, thank you, Councilor Skolnik, for seconding the nomination and for your thoughtful comments. You have worked very diligently over the past two years on behalf of your district and the city as a whole. I look forward to working closely with you over the upcoming year.

I want to take just a moment to thank Councilor Duson for her year of service as Mayor of Portland. As was the case during her first term as Mayor, over the past twelve months, Jill has spent countless hours, on numerous efforts, working on behalf of the city and its residents. She has done a fabulous job dealing with both internal and external issues and representing the City in the community and on a state and national level. Let's not forget that Jill got to attend a meeting with President Obama in the West Wing of the White House during her term in office. Once again, I want to thank Jill, and her son Nate, who is a senior at Casco Bay High School and busy applying to colleges, and daughter Tai for sharing her with all of us over this very busy year.

I would like to thank my family for joining me on this very special day. My wife Kelly Hasson, my dad Nick Mavodones and my in-laws Gig and Mary Hasson are in the audience; as are my three children: Nicholas, Joseph and Jillian. My mom passed away, two and a half years ago, during my last term as mayor; I know she, too, is with us here today in spirit. As I have done in the past, I want to give thanks to my parents for

instilling in me those values that have guided my entire life and helped bring me to the place I am today.

I also want to express my pride and appreciation to my children Nicholas, Joseph, and Jillian who, whether or not they knew it at the time, and perhaps they might not agree today, helped me to develop and hone the many skills necessary to become an elected official. These include, but certainly are not limited to, the ability to listen, willingness to compromise and the exercise of patience. All of them have made special arrangements in their busy work schedules to be here with me today. Joe lives and works here in Portland. Nick just arrived from Burlington, Vermont and must drive back this afternoon. Jill flew in last night from New York City and returns tomorrow.

Lastly, I must in advance thank my wife Kelly. She is my best friend, with whom I spend nearly every minute of our very limited free time together. I know all too well from my past experiences as Mayor that there will soon be much less of that time available. However, while Kelly is also a very busy principal of the Hall School in Portland, I look forward to having her by my side while I am Mayor during the upcoming year.

UPCOMING YEAR

I have realized over the years that Councilors, and perhaps some members of the audience, actually hope each incoming Mayor's speech will be relatively brief – perhaps

this has something to do with the food waiting in the State of Maine Room – so, I intend to try to adhere to those wishes.

WORKING TOGETHER

We are fortunate to have a very experienced City Council. As you know, this will be the second year in a row that all of us will work together. Each Councilor brings to the dais a wealth of personal and professional experiences; and for this, we are very fortunate.

I expect during the month of January to convene a workshop session, facilitated by someone from outside City Hall, to discuss how we intend to work together as a body during the upcoming year and also to review and develop a list of those items of importance to the entire Council and upon which we may choose to dedicate our time and energy during 2010.

COLLABORATION

As we prepare for another challenging year, it is vital that as a community we work together to find ways to move the city forward into the next decade. An example of this very difficult work is the Future Search process initiated by Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Morse that is taking place later this week at the Ocean Gateway facility. I want to recognize Dr. Morse, who is here today, for the great job he is doing on behalf of all of Portland's students.

We must redouble our efforts to look for meaningful ways in which our school and municipal governments can collaborate. However, I want to be clear that I'm not suggesting change just to say we are changing. There must be demonstrated benefits, programmatically and financially, for any such collaborations to move forward and be successful.

This is also true of how we work with surrounding communities, Cumberland County and other Service Centers throughout the state. A great deal of work has been accomplished through the Metro Coalition, initiated by former Mayor Jim Cohen. The opening this year of the Regional Crime Lab is just one example of this type of collaboration. In these challenging economic times, we must continue to partner, whenever possible and appropriate, with our neighboring communities.

Service centers, large and small, throughout the state are facing many of the same issues as Portland. I've been in touch with colleagues in Lewiston and Bangor to discuss a joint meeting of similar service center communities early next year here in Portland. I expect to reach out to other service centers, such as Auburn and Augusta, to invite their participation as well.

FINANCIAL

Given the general state of the economy and prospects of significant reductions in revenue over the next year, especially on the educational side of our budget, financial issues will continue to dominate the work of the Council. We are very fortunate to have

City Manager Joe Gray and Finance Director Ellen Sanborn leading the development of the City's upcoming budget and ensuring that continuous financial monitoring is taking place. Our Finance Committee this year will be led by outgoing Mayor Duson, who, in fact, held this position during another recent and very difficult financial period, and brings a great deal of experience and skill to the role of chair. She will be joined by Councilor Anton, who also has a keen understanding of the budget and has served for the past two years on the Finance Committee, and Councilor Coyne, who brings three years of service on the School Committee, including two as its chair, to the table.

At this time, I want to point out the incredibly thorough work done by the School Committee's Finance Committee, led by Chair Kate Snyder, over this past year. It is my understanding that Kate will continue in that capacity during the upcoming year, as well.

Our City is very fortunate to have such experienced leaders working on its municipal and school budgets during these very difficult financial times. With our school system looking at projected cuts in State Aid to Education of more than 7 million dollars during the next fiscal year, it is going to be a challenging period for our community. For this reason, it is great to have 5 former members of the Portland School Committee now serving on the City Council.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Portland is very fortunate to be blessed with leaders, both in the private and public sectors, who understand the importance of economic development. Please note that

economic development includes not only new and retained business, but housing and education. At a time when many communities are experiencing only business closures, Portland is fortunate to have new business investment taking place. I would point up Congress Street to the Arts District. State Senator Justin Alford and Greg Shinberg are redeveloping the old University of Southern Maine dormitory at 645 Congress Street into much needed housing and retail space; the VIA group will soon be moving into the redeveloped former Baxter Library, which has been owned for many years by Maine College of Art; and Roxanne Quimby has purchased and is developing artist space near Longfellow Square. Closer to City Hall, we have the renovation of the Portland Public Library; and just down the street, Linda Bean's Lobster Rolls, Coastal Maine Popcorn, as well as other businesses opening in the Old Port. And, let's not forget the new Marriott hotel that just opened at the base of Munjoy Hill, as well as the Bayside Trail, currently under construction, that will connect Deering Oaks with the eastern portion of the peninsula and its existing trails. Off the peninsula, the City will be working hard to develop a technology park off Rand Road. Construction of the new Ocean Avenue School is underway and progressing well. These are all positive developments that are taking place during very challenging times. I want to point out the strong leadership of Councilor Leeman, who again this year will be chairing the Community Development Committee, in promoting economic development throughout the city. Cheryl's vast experience and steady hand will be essential as we move forward.

SAFETY NET

A year ago, I recall Mayor Duson speaking about the growing needs of working families during these trying economic times and how the City and, for that matter, other service center communities have a responsibility to ensure that a safety net is available. The indicators are everywhere -- one only has to look at the growing lines at the soup kitchen just around the corner, the number of individuals, and families, staying night after night in our homeless shelters, and the need for basic clothing and staples in our food pantries. Moreover, while driving up Preble Street each morning, I witness the ever-increasing number of people waiting in line for day laborer opportunities. Although Portland's property tax collections remain at close to 100%, home foreclosures are taking place and some residents are losing their jobs and health insurance, or trying to get by working fewer hours, sometimes the result of furlough days. As City leaders, we must continue to do everything in our power to ensure that safety net is available for our citizens and their children.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

I want to point out the impressive work of our Energy and Environmental Sustainability Committee. With Councilor Marshall at its helm, the composition of the committee won't change this year. A considerable amount of progress has been made on the energy services contract. This committee, in concert with the Finance Committee, will be working on implementation and funding of the items identified during this effort. The results of this work will not only save the City and its taxpayers a great deal of

money in coming years, it also will be integral in helping the City reduce its carbon footprint.

CHARTER COMMISSION

As I look around the room, I see a number of members of the Charter Commission here today. I want to recognize the incredible amount of time and energy these individuals are giving to review the City's charter. Anyone tuning in to Public Access television, whether day or night, can find their meetings on the air. The final recommendations of the Commission will be released during the upcoming months. This will, hopefully, generate considerable discussion in the community regarding how the great City of Portland will be governed in the future. Our governance structure may change or remain the same; that will be in the hands of the electorate. In the meantime, as individual Councilors and as a collaborative Council, we will continue to work and make decisions in the best interests of our community.

SINCE FIRST TERM AS MAYOR

As I look back on my first mayoral address in 1999, I find that many of the significant issues at that time remain just as important today. The big items 10 years ago were Bayside development, the waterfront and our schools. Tremendous progress has been made in each of these areas; however, there is much more to be done. I believe you are either improving or declining – in fact, there is nothing in between. And, despite the economic conditions we continue to endure with our fellow Americans across the country, the City of Portland continues to improve and to prosper. We must not lose sight of the successes that are just past the horizon. As a city, we have a lot to look

forward to this year including our energy efficiency projects, the projected growth in cruise ship visits, the construction of a new elementary school, the rehabilitation of Dougherty Field and the completion of the Bayside Trail, to just name a few.

CITY AND SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Before closing, I want to take this opportunity to recognize all of the women and men who work for the City and School Department. We have an incredibly talented and committed workforce. I don't want us to lose sight of the fact that most services are being delivered by fewer employees than in the past. And, that the great majority of employees did not receive a wage increase this year. Please join me in a round of applause thanking our entire City and school department family for the great efforts put in every day on behalf of our residents and visitors.

THANKS

Lastly, I want to thank all of you for your support and for joining us today. I hope you'll also all join us for the receiving line in the rotunda and for the reception down the hall in the State of Maine Room. Most importantly, please join me in concentrating our collective efforts toward nourishing and sustaining our great City of Portland! Anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Let's commit to moving our City of Portland forward for 2010 and many years beyond!