

# **STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

**Mayor E. Denise Simmons and City Manager Louis DePasquale  
February 1, 2017, 6 pm, Sullivan Chamber**

Good evening!

Thank you all for joining us tonight for our 2017 Cambridge State of the City address. This is a time of year when we have come to expect that our president, our governors, and our mayors will set aside an evening to provide an update on how their community is faring, taking stock of the Year That Was, and looking ahead to the Year Yet To Come.

It is true that our city has not always customarily held these State of the City addresses; yet, we are living in a time when customs are being reassessed, against a national backdrop of great change and uncertainty, and such an update is warranted. The anger and anxiety of last year's bitter and contentious presidential election slowly descended upon us like an unwelcome fog, and as our new president settles into office, communities like ours are faced with a new set of challenges, and the urgent need to develop successful strategies for navigating through unfamiliar terrain. Certainly, just the opening two weeks of the Trump Administration have seemingly targeted progressive communities like Cambridge, threatening penalties if we do not comply with what most of us view as the President's misguided and un-American directives. Tonight, we are going to take a few moments to address how Cambridge must adjust to this new reality, and we will speak to how – through legal and legislative measures when possible, through outright defiance when necessary – we will continue to adhere to the ideals that have long made Cambridge a national beacon of tolerance, diversity, inclusivity, and hope.

Despite the uncertainties of the national backdrop, there ARE reasons to be hopeful, and even optimistic, in these opening weeks of 2017. I am certain that most of you are aware that last November, longtime Finance Director Louis DePasquale took his seat as our new City Manager – just the third individual to hold that role in the past 35 years. Cambridge has unquestionably benefitted from the guidance and professionalism of Mr. DePasquale's immediate predecessors; each of these individuals worked to make his own mark on Cambridge, and such has already been the case with Mr. DePasquale, a dynamic individual who has brought a fresh sense of optimism, enthusiasm, collaboration, and passion into his role as our municipal government's chief executive officer. Already, even in just these first three months, our collaborative working relationship has yielded some terrific results, some of which Mr. DePasquale and I will be touching upon this evening.

Before we look ahead at the year to come, I'd like to glance back upon some of the work that we engaged in during the first half of the 2016-2017 Council term. From our very first meeting last January, the City Council was determined to get right to work, and to immediately establish an effective method of communicating, idea-sharing, and problem-solving. At that first meeting, I was honored and privileged to once again be selected as mayor, and since I'd had the good fortune of serving in this role once before, I quickly moved to launch, and in some cases revive, some important programs and initiatives. Among these initiatives were:

- THE SAFE STREETS, SAFE CITY Program, which was born out of the recognition that the warmer summer weather typically brings with it an increase in street violence in cities all over the country. I sought to be proactive and invited the Cambridge Police, City Department Heads, youth outreach workers, the interfaith community, local business owners, and other area stakeholders to determine what steps we could collectively take to decrease the opportunities for summertime

violence from taking hold. The resulting conversations resulted in the beginnings of building greater awareness of some of the root causes of this violence, building greater connectivity between our summertime programs and the City's support for them, and greater collaboration among those of us working to cultivate a safer community. We also discussed the urgent need to better engage men between the ages of 18 – 35, who are most at risk of being the victims of violence on our streets. Last year's *Safe Streets* conversations were just the beginning of what MUST be a sustained, multi-pronged, multi-year effort, and this summer I am hoping that we see further progress in the *Safe Streets, Safe City* campaign.

- The MAYOR'S MONTHLY INTERFAITH LEADERSHIP Breakfast is another initiative that I revived this term. Cambridge has over 100 interfaith leaders from all denominations, and so much of their humanitarian work overlaps with one another AND with the work of the municipal government. These monthly meetings have allowed us to build stronger relationships with one another, and to start strengthening the connective tissue between programs that seek to combat homelessness, feed and clothe the less fortunate, cultivate social justice, strengthen community relations with the police, and assist those seeking to get their lives on a more positive track. These monthly gatherings have also provided me with an excellent forum for ensuring that our interfaith leaders stay on top of critical city issues, and for ensuring that they can keep ME notified about issues of concern to them and their congregants.
- The Monthly MAYOR'S SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE is similar in concept, in that each month, a group of 15 senior citizens culled from diverse cultural, economic, and geographic backgrounds comes to my office to advise me on issues that may have bearing for our local senior citizens. This group of individuals have been vital in helping to bring my attention to issues that matter to seniors, such as the need for new bus shelter locations and the concerns about ensuring that those with mobility issues are considered in important City conversations. This committee has truly helped ensure that Cambridge is a community that is welcoming and accessible to people from EVERY age group.
- Starting last year, I also convened a MINIMUM WAGE ADVISORY TASK FORCE, alongside my co-chairs Vice Mayor McGovern and Councilor Mazen. We've brought together a cross-section of business leaders, labor leaders, economic advisors, and minimum wage activists to explore the feasibility of increasing the local minimum wage, what impact this would have upon our lowest-paid workers, upon small business-owners, and upon the community at large – AND we've been assessing how to most prudently move this forward if we find that it IS something that can be done. This group has met numerous times over the past several months and our hope is that it shall be issuing recommendations on this matter to the full City Council for further deliberation and consideration in the very near future.
- Another of the informal advisory committees that I established this term is the WOMEN'S PAY EQUITY Advisory Committee: Experts and advocates have been coming together to advise me on how to ensure that women working for the City are being paid at the same rate, and given the same opportunities for advancement, as their male counterparts. Bright minds from the Harvard Kennedy School, The Boston Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, staffers from Congresswoman Katherine Clark's office, and others have shared best practices and given us guidance on how to best ensure that Cambridge is a true LEADER in pay equity, and that we will be well ahead of the curve for the statewide implementation of this law on July 1, 2018.
- This term, I have also been proud to once again partner with the YWCA Cambridge to helm the Girls Only Leadership Development Program, offering lessons and advice to 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls in

advance of their high school years. As in past sessions, a diverse group of mentors – strong, dynamic women who are leaders in the local arts, business, government, social justice, academic, legal, religious, and cultural communities – have signed on to share their knowledge and experience with our GOLD participants, and the monthly meetings and workshops have been tremendously rewarding to participants and mentors alike. We are currently in the middle of the fourth iteration of the program – which just two weeks ago was awarded grant money in the form of \$5,000 by the B.Good Family Foundation – and I am truly proud of the work that has been placed into nurturing the GOLD program into one that I hope shall flourish over the coming years.

The initiatives I just mentioned have drawn upon the passion, wisdom, and dedication of dozens of individuals who have been so generous with their time and expertise, and their work is going to have positive ripple effects that extend far beyond this City Council term. The people who have joined me on these advisory committees have exemplified the very best of the Cambridge spirit: that willingness and desire to reach out and assist our friends and neighbors. That “Cambridge Spirit” was also very much evident in a major event that is still fresh in everyone’s minds, as it took place almost exactly 60 days ago. I am referring to the massive fire that occurred in the York Street and Berkshire Street neighborhood on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### DECEMBER 3 FIRE RESPONSE

Any fire that results in the loss of housing and precious family mementos is a tragedy, and that was certainly the case for the more than 160 people that were directly impacted by this fire. Yet thankfully there were no serious injuries or fatalities, and we are all SO thankful for the tremendous efforts of our Fire Department and Police Department, and the more than 20 communities that sent crews to help extinguish the fire. And even before the fires had subsided and nightfall had descended, the City Manager and I started putting plans in motion to assist the affected families.

Within hours, an online Mayor’s Fire Relief Fund, which would go on to collect nearly a million dollars, was established. Within less than 48 hours, City Hall was converted into a One-Stop Fire Relief Triage & Referral Center, with an unprecedented web of representatives from the Community Development Department and other City Departments, the Cambridge Housing Authority, the Red Cross, the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, over 16 different State agencies and relief organizations, staffers from the offices of Senators Warren and Markey, staffers from the offices of Representatives Clark and Capuano, Attorney General Healey, and our State Representatives – all of us were in this building, coordinating and collaborating to expedite the relief process for over 80 families that needed immediate shelter and relief. The Red Cross informs us that they have never before seen a Massachusetts community respond this efficiently to a crisis of this magnitude, and Cambridge created a template for other communities to follow when facing these types of crisis in the future. I truly believe that the effective response we showed, that spirit of figuring out innovative, collaborative new ways to quickly solve problems and help people, was due to the fact that we had the right team in place.

One of the things I am most proud of from the City’s fire relief efforts was the way in which so many of us worked EXTRAORDINARILY quickly to find housing for those displaced by this disaster. The majority of those who were displaced had been living in affordable units, and while I’m incredibly pleased that we were able to find new housing for these people so quickly, the fire placed an even greater strain on our already over-stressed affordable housing stock.

For many years, City leaders have been striving to create policies that promote healthy development and foster the economic health of our city, while at the same time trying to prevent Cambridge from becoming a city that houses only the very rich, and the very poor. This is something that hundreds of cities across the country have been grappling with for decades, and there unfortunately are no simple fixes or easy answers.

Nevertheless, we must continue striving to find the appropriate balance that keeps our city economically robust, diverse, AND affordable.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Of the many forces that shape how our community evolves, perhaps THE single greatest issue we are facing is the availability of affordable housing. The local, regional, and national dynamics that have been causing apartment rents and home prices to soar over the past 25 years have created a significant challenge in maintaining an adequate level of truly affordable units. Additionally, we have far too often seen our community conversations over how to best address this challenge deteriorate into bitter disagreements about the wisest path forward, we have seen neighbor pitted against neighbor, and we have seen policy disagreements descend into personal attacks. Unquestionably, whatever path we choose will have meaningful ramifications, and these discussions unquestionably rouse people's passions – but we must be mindful of the fact that we will ALL end up on the losing end if we allow the acrimony of our national political discourse to filter down to the local level and poison our municipal discussions. That's not the Cambridge I grew up in, and it's not the Cambridge any of us should be willing to accept.

This term, the City Council and I have been working hard to build upon our previous affordable housing successes. In 2015, we voted to nearly triple the linkage fees that developers must pay into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which should yield millions of additional dollars for our affordable housing programs in the coming years. The Housing Committee then immediately turned toward discussions about the need to increase the amount of affordable housing that must be built by mandate under our Inclusionary Housing ordinance. Starting last April, I led the Housing Committee through numerous public hearings designed to give us a thorough understanding of what options were open to us, and last September, we forwarded a set of recommendations that included increasing the set-aside ratio for affordable units from an effective rate of 11.5 percent to a rate 20 percent. This will effectively DOUBLE the amount of affordable units that must be included in new developments of over 10 units built going forward. These changes, while by no means being the “silver bullet” solution that will completely resolve our community's affordable housing crunch, will nonetheless constitute an important step forward in creating more urgently needed affordable housing units, and this shall be a tremendous benefit to so many Cambridge families – families who might otherwise be squeezed out of their community – in the years to come.

On a related housing note: I want to address some of the fears and anxieties experienced by my friends in the aging LGBTQ Community. After being “out and proud” for many years, many of us who are reaching our “Golden Years” are starting to face new and unanticipated concerns of discrimination and intolerance as nursing homes, assisted living, and home health aides are becoming an increasing part of our lives. In some cases, LGBTQ seniors are actually feeling pressured to go back into the closet due to the less-enlightened views they're occasionally encountering from those people who provide these age-related services. The aftermath of the recent national election has only heightened fears that intolerance and discrimination may be on the rise. This is why I have been convening City leaders, housing experts, and LGBTQ leadership from across Cambridge and Greater Boston to discuss the critical need for LGBTQ-Friendly Senior Housing. A number of meetings have established the clear need for such housing, we are now on a path to pursue further, more tangible action toward this goal, and Cambridge has the opportunity to be a true national leader in this area.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – TOWN MEETINGS

My work around LGBTQ Issues harkens back to some of my earliest work on the City Council, and it is something that runs through some of the very best moments of this building's history – such as in May 2004, when Cambridge became the very first City Hall anywhere in the nation to issue same-sex marriage licenses. This work has also been typified through enduring traditions like our periodic LGBTQ Town Hall

Meetings. These Town Hall Meetings have been an excellent opportunity for the community to come in and share their thoughts directly with their legislative leaders and the various department heads. It flips the notion of public meetings on its head, because in these meetings, WE hear from the community, and not the other way around –and the feedback you have given us over the years has been invaluable. This proud tradition will be continuing full force in 2017, and in addition to the next LGBTQ Town Hall, we are formulating plans to throw open the doors of City Hall to hold discussions about the intersection of Race, Class, Gender, and Culture in Cambridge, to hold a Town Hall on The Aftermath of the 2016 Election, and to focus on Tenants’ Rights in the months ahead.

#### SHOUT OUT TO WORK OF CITY COUNCILORS

In the interest of time, tonight’s discussion of the work we’ve engaged in this term cannot possibly be comprehensive. But I do want to briefly touch upon the fact that EACH of my colleagues on the City Council have been working incredibly hard to meet the various challenges in front of us: Vice Mayor McGovern, for example, has been doing incredible work in leading regional conversations around how to tackle our homelessness problems. Councilor Cheung has been working to increase the efficiency and accountability of our City departments. Councilor Kelley has been a leading voice in trying to increase the safety of our streets for bicyclists in a methodical manner, and in looking at ways to increase neighborhood resiliency. Councilor Maher, as Chair of the Government Operations Committee, was critical in leading the process for helping us find our new City Manager. Councilor Carlone, with his background as an urban planner, has been a key and important voice in helping guide and shape our discussions around building an affordable, sustainable, and livable city. Councilor Mazen has been tremendous in his work in trying to promote greater community engagement, and in urging that we continually look at the issues before us with fresh eyes and new approaches. Councilor Devereux has been a critical voice in ensuring that Cambridge is actively working to be a greener, more climate-friendly community. And Councilor Toomey has continued to be a prime force behind the Grand Junction Community Path, and ensuring that the businesses and neighborhoods in East Cambridge have a loud and knowledgeable champion. Each of us have our areas of interest and expertise, and by pooling that together as one body, I believe THIS City Council has been doing some truly outstanding work over the past 13 months.

#### DIFFERENT MAYOR’S INITIATIVES & EDUCATION

A moment ago, I mentioned that we will be having a number of Town Hall meetings in the months ahead. Some of the faces attending as part of the City’s Leadership Team at these Town Hall Meetings will be a little different than in years past, for this has been a year of great change not only nationally, but locally. Not only do we have a new City Manager, but 2016 also saw a new interim Police Commissioner, a new Library Director, and a new Superintendent of Schools join the City’s top leadership. The new School Superintendent, Dr. Kenneth Salim, has been working closely with the CPSD leadership and the School Committee to take on the challenges and opportunities of reshaping our school system to ensure that every single child in our school system, regardless of means, neighborhood, or background, is given a solid education and the best possible preparation for a life of success and prosperity.

As Chair of the School Committee, I have launched and been involved in numerous initiatives that are designed to close the ever-persistent Achievement Gap, and to increase the collaboration between the schools, the students, and their families, streamlining our programing in such a way so that we can all work toward greater opportunities for ALL our students to succeed. Programs like GET IN LINE, which teaches parents how to navigate the web of support services available to their kids and how to plug their children into programs that can increase their chances of academic achievement; THE BROTHERHOOD, which targets at-risk young men and seeks to provide greater social, emotional, and academic support to ensure they work towards higher rates of graduation and then find college success or meaningful career paths; COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS, which looks at the intersection of race, equity, and the Achievement and Opportunity Gaps, and seeks to increase the diversity of the CPSD workforce; the MAYOR’S PAGE

PROGRAM, which seeks to cultivate the next generation of civic leaders by having them directly engage in the municipal legislative process; and the EXITING CRLS PROGRAM, which will offer a methodical series of exit interviews with graduating seniors and their parents to gain a better sense of what we're doing right in our public schools, and what areas may be open for review and modification to better meet the needs of our students.

Taken together, all these programs and initiatives demonstrate our City's commitment to educational excellence, and in making certain that the kids coming out of Cambridge public schools are placed on a path towards achievement and success.

As I stated a moment ago, we have a number of new people in our City's leadership roles this term: in addition to our new School Superintendent, we have our New head of the Library, Maria Taesil Hudson McCauley; our Acting Police Commissioner, Brent Larabee; we shall soon have a new Fire Chief – and we must also give GREAT thanks to Chief Gerald Reardon for his many years of service – and of course, our new City Manager, Louie DePasquale.

At this time, I would like to invite our City Manager, Mr. DePasquale, to the podium to share HIS thoughts on the term so far, and where we must go from here. While he has only been in this role for a brief time, he is no stranger to any of us here, and he has done a tremendous job from Day 1. With that, I bring forward Mr. DePasquale:

## CITY MANAGER'S REMARKS

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Thank you, Mr. DePasquale, for sharing your reflections and your thoughts on the challenges, the opportunities, and the priorities for the year stretched out in front of us.

## CONCLUSION

As I stated at the top of my remarks, we are only a few weeks in, but it's already clear that 2017 is unlike any time in our recent memory. No city exists in a vacuum, and the passionate debates that have been playing out on the national stage over the past year have unquestionably reverberated – at times, significantly – in the City of Cambridge. Even in just the past few days, as the President has issued Executive Orders that tarnish some of the very pillars of our great nation, creating religion-based immigration bans and threatening to punish proud Sanctuary Cities like Cambridge – the lines between yesterday and today have rarely seemed quite so stark, nor so fraught. In the short time this new administration has been in office, it already feels like so much of what we cherish about our country is being systematically attacked from within.

For communities like Cambridge, there is a genuine concern about what path our country is heading down. And that is why now, more than ever, we must hold fast to our local ideals of tolerance and inclusiveness. This will be on full display next Monday night at 4:30, when we gather on the front steps of City Hall for a Unity Rally that promotes our proud diversity and our commitment to remaining a Sanctuary City. All are welcome to participate in that rally – and it is important that we recognize that cities like ours can and should continue to set the example, to push back against hateful, extremist national policies where-ever, however, and whenever we can. No one – not even the President of the United States – is going to bully Cambridge into sacrificing who we are. We will work with the City Solicitor, we will work with the

Attorney General, and we will work with our Congressional Representatives to ensure that we maintain our status as a Sanctuary City, and to ensure that people all over the world understand that the only thing that is NOT allowed in Cambridge is bigotry.

By refusing to give in to negativity and divisiveness, we can send a powerful, positive message to people across this country. And we must also continually put into practice the qualities we demand of our national leaders, by always treating one another with civility. We must look back to that amazing “Cambridge Spirit” exhibited in the hours, days, and weeks following the December 3<sup>rd</sup> fire, and replicate that over and over during the weeks and months ahead. It is going to be something each of us must continually re-commit to, because in Cambridge, we understand that extremism, intolerance, and absolutism are NEVER the answer.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to thank everyone for coming out – and coming together – for this report on the State of our City in 2017. We have not been able to cover every major policy discussion from the past year – such as the need to ensure our streets are made safer for motorists AND bicyclists, or the need to promote and protect our local businesses against skyrocketing rents and online competition. We could spend another hour on these important topics, and many others, and I assure you that the City Council will continue to be holding those critical discussions in this room, and out in the community, in the months ahead. All of us – the City Council, the City Manager, and I – are committed to taking on these challenges as best we can. I am fortunate to serve with all of these hard working and devoted public servants, and in this new national political climate, the work we do at the municipal level is going to take on an even greater significance. This is going to require a community-wide level of heightened engagement, involvement, and discourse. It is going to require that we continue to look after one another as good neighbors and caring citizens. It is going to require that each of us remember that, even when we disagree on tactics and rhetoric, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are so deeply fortunate to be residing in a community that values tolerance, understanding, respect, and civility. Now more than ever, these are qualities that we could all use more of. This is how we will continue to work – together – to ensure that our great city continues to grow, to evolve, and to prosper. With that, I thank you all for coming, and I wish you a good evening. Thank you.