



The City of Fitchburg

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2020 FITCHBURG STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Good evening residents of Fitchburg, thank you for tuning into FATV - A public access television station that strives to work together for a stronger Fitchburg. I am honored to stand before you as the Mayor and I am pleased to deliver the 148th State of the City Address.

Four years ago, I went door to door asking for your confidence, your support, and your vote. I wish to express my sincere gratitude for your trust in my administration. Together, we have challenged the status quo, created new development, taken bold steps, and have produced a record of great work worthy of emulation by future residents of Fitchburg. In the next two years, working with our City Council, let us continue to climb the hill of progress - bringing us to the precipice of success and a resurgent City of Fitchburg.

As I deliver this address, I am reminded of our once vacant City Hall and the parallel it draws with the state of our City. A building that nearly a decade ago, was seen as a challenge, blighted, and abandoned. Yet, here we are today, witnessing the reconstruction of our treasured history. This building exemplifies who we are as a community. Through all of our struggles the building stands today resilient, inspiring us all as a vision of future prosperity.

Now, there is a new dawn on the horizon for the City. Fitchburg is in a better place than it once was. In many ways, today's perspective is no different than the perched view of the raging Nashua River, centuries ago. Then, as today, it was a view filled with uncertainty, yes, but also hope, opportunity, and unbridled optimism. In 2019, the optimism, hard-work, and delivery of services did not go unnoticed. This work was carried out by our dedicated department heads, staff, city employees, volunteers, and our boards and commissions.

This past year was epitomized in a December 2019 editorial of the Sentinel and Enterprise, "Fitchburg is sending business-friendly message." With the support of City Council, in an 8-2 vote, the City adopted a single tax rate - which will effectively even the tax burden between commercial/industrial and residential properties. The former split-tax rate is a failed policy. It drives out commercial ventures, and restricts business investment because of a larger tax burden. Through this adoption, the City has placed itself on the competitive edge to attract new business

investment, retain existing businesses, and more importantly - change the outdated perceptions that the City is unfriendly to business.

While Fitchburg's average single family tax bill continues to remain one of the lowest of any of the surrounding communities, the City added \$30.4 million in new taxable value. Although the City still receives the largest portion of growth through personal property, it is important to note that this year's growth was more evenly shared between residential and commercial/industrial classes. This is a positive sign of the increased investment in the commercial/industrial portion of the City's tax base.

Our real estate market continues to show signs of improvement. Sixteen new single family homes were built during the 2019 fiscal year, with a majority of those homes being custom construction - adding greater value to our community. In a July issue of MassLive, Fitchburg homes were noted as having the largest jump in value in Worcester County for 2018, with a one year increase of 11.3% and a median price for an average single family home of \$213,400.

Similar to the downtowns of South Bend, Indiana, Atlanta, Georgia, or Cedar Rapids, Iowa - The City of Fitchburg will be joining other municipalities in the conversion of a one way Main Street to two way. During the 1960's many cities fell victim to misguided "urban renewal" for the re-design of main street corridors for one thing: cars. This idea was to create a relatively quick commute in and out of downtowns. For decades, this system has failed not only our city, but several throughout our nation. It has created an environment in our central business district, the heart of our City, hostile to pedestrians. This design and methodology has stunted our approach to creating a vibrant Main Street by evacuating our downtown, rather than nurturing growth and a place of destination.

With the partnership of Fitchburg State University, community stakeholders, and support of the Baker-Polito administration, our Community Development Department received a \$3 million MassWorks grant for the conversion of Main Street and Boulder Drive to two-way traffic. This win for our city aligns with our Economic Strategic Plan, supports Complete Street Initiatives, and complements our Transformative Development Initiative. During the winter and spring months, design, public comment, and coordination will take place - with an expected completion date of summer 2021.

In addition to the \$3 million MassWorks Grant, the Baker-Polito Administration has recognized the great work we have been doing and awarded the City of Fitchburg a \$400,000 Complete Streets grant this past month. Working in concert with the MassWorks project, residents will see at the intersection of Blossom and Cushing Streets; revised crosswalk configurations, ADA compliant curb ramps, sidewalk repair, and added safety features for pedestrians. The collaboration of our departments with businesses and state officials is what made these funding opportunities realistic. It is with great pride that the City accepts these grant funds, and I thank everyone involved who helped bring these projects to fruition.

There is no denying the City's accelerating transformation. This past month, we received an exciting email from a business owner - Brian Cote of Red Line Wall Systems. As a Contractor on the City Hall project - he was witnessing the work being done in our downtown, and wanted to be a part of it. He wrote, "Please let Mayor Steve know - we are very excited to be part of the rebirth that is happening in Fitchburg." Brian purchased 805 Main Street, located across the street from City Hall, and will be renovating it into a mixed-use development with an eatery style business on the first floor and apartments on the upper floors.

Pete Capodagli and his wife Ann, purchased 938 Main Street this past year. With renovations well underway, Pete noted that without the reconstruction of City Hall and the Fitchburg Arts Community, he would not have conceived of purchasing the building and investing considerable capitol.

On the other end of Main Street, local contractor Matt Fournier and his wife Kellie, are creating and investing in 35 Main Street with the Urban Fork Kitchen & Market project. This commercial kitchen will create a cooperative space for new business ventures and start-ups to put their skills to the test. More importantly, this project received the first ever in the Commonwealth, \$10,000 refundable tax credit for the Commonwealth's new Vacant Storefront Initiative. Also, the Urban Fork received \$160,000 grant from MassDevelopment's collaborative workspace program. This unique business plan was recognized by the Massachusetts Office of Business Development for the fulfillment of an unmet need in our TDI district, adding value to the local business community and creating synergies with other local businesses.

Across the street, the Harper Furniture project received great news from the Department of Housing and Community Development this summer. Receiving important tax credits from the DHCD, this 44 unit \$20 million construction and historic rehabilitation project will break ground this summer! Developed by Rees-Larkin Development, this project demonstrates another example of the importance of participation between local, state, and federal resources necessary to redevelop large areas of our downtown.

Let us also celebrate the opening of several new small businesses - Mully's Indoor Golf Lounge, BION Greek Food, The Pig in Flames, Disc Golf 978, FunStuf Party Place, and more!

In the predevelopment stages of new projects, the vacant lot at Day and Main Street was approved this summer for 112 - units of transit oriented development. Rick Boscardin has been working closely with an investor who will bring technology based solutions for businesses attracting new customers, and is looking to occupy the former Historical Society building on Grove Street.

Also, working with MassDevelopment, our Community Development team has been making strides with the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority's 43.5 acre sandpit site near the airport. Additionally, the City has been working closely with the owners of the Iver Johnson buildings and Santander building focusing on new visions for potential development.

The work of our municipal government, the projects in our pipeline, and the potential that we have is a sense of promise of what we can become. For this reason Community Development has created two important documents to ensure that we continue with this growth. The first is a Welcome to Fitchburg packet. Provided to new homeowners, businesses, prospects, and outsiders - this packet lays the foundation of who we are as a city, incentives we have to offer, and how to become more involved. As part of the City's two new federally approved Opportunity Zones, the city released a new investor prospectus - a document that focuses on attracting businesses to key areas. Showcasing a representative sampling of properties, the prospectus demonstrates the range of investment opportunities that can be experienced right in our own city!

Our zoning overhaul is well underway! Forming a Zoning Steering Committee, the City has contracted with BSC Group to make key changes to ensure our zoning aligns with our Economic Strategic Plan, simplify and streamline our zoning code, and enhance the city's economic competitiveness in the region. Looking forward, we can expect to have public meetings and comment this coming summer.

Another construction project aimed for this coming spring is the Twin City Rail Trail. City departments have been working diligently on obtaining easements, finalizing development plans, and working with the state to move this project forward. When completed in 2022, this project will allow for a 4.5 mile connection from Leominster to downtown Fitchburg and will include an impressive flyover bridge to connect neighborhoods south of downtown to the Fitchburg Intermodal Station, improving transit accessibility for thousands of Fitchburg residents. As I have said before - this project will fulfill the dream of every Leominster resident - the ability to walk, run, and bike their way to Fitchburg!

In one of the largest appropriations for equipment to the DPW from available funds, the city spent \$540,000 on seven new pieces of equipment for our Streets Division, and we recently celebrated the ribbon cutting of our new \$575,000 salt shed. When it comes to investing in our road infrastructure, it has several layers other than just paving. It's investing in the proper equipment and facilities to provide services.

One of the largest changes at DPW this year has been this winter's snow and ice operations. DPW is transitioning away from using sand as the primary means of treating our roadways and toward using salt and liquids to pretreat during winter storms. This proactive approach reduces sedimentation in our catch basins, and provides a more effective means to clearing our streets.

Three miles of road were paved in 2019, and an additional 7.5 miles of road received preventative maintenance. While most of the City's paving is funded through Chapter 90 state aid, I supplemented the budget with \$190,000 from available funds to continue our paving efforts. This equates to more than \$400,000 of additional funding to our streets. Road maintenance is a challenge for our city, and something that we are all aware of. The City has been creatively investing in new approaches towards maintenance and technology to best identify which roads receive certain treatments. This past year, the DPW Commissioner and I provided testimony at the State House during a hearing of the Joint Committee on Transportation advocating for a new method of indexing Chapter 90 funds to align with the annual percentage increases in the states Capital Investment Plan budget. Repairing our roads is a state issue, just as much as it is ours. I will continue to advocate for more state funding and utilize available funds to address our road needs.

Bridges and dams are the most critical pieces of infrastructure that the DPW has to manage. With the help of our state delegation - Fitchburg DPW received \$500,000 in an emergency Small Bridge Grant fund from MassDOT to make repairs to the Westminster Hill Road Bridge. This funding will substantially cover the costs of design and construction repairs. MassDOT has also been very helpful with the superstructure replacement of the Westminster Street Bridge, which is scheduled for completion in October 2020. DPW is also coordinating with MassDOT on the replacement of the Water Street bridges. This \$21.5 million dollar project is set to start construction in spring of 2021. The northern bridge over the railroad will be a full reconstruction, while the southern bridge over the river will have a new deck and sidewalks installed. These projects will be constructed in such a way to allow for two way traffic throughout the construction phase.

The EPA MS4 Storm Water permit has continued to be a challenge for the City. Since the EPA has not provided Massachusetts cities and towns with funding to address the requirements of the permit, the City has been meeting compliance through the use of available funds at the cost of \$400,000. Funding for permit compliance through available funds is not ideal, as it is now a reoccurring cost, and should be part of the general fund. In an effort to slowly make this permit compliance part of the general fund, I added two new DPW positions in the fiscal 2020 budget, at a cost of \$100,000. These positions will focus on storm water related work and will reduce our dependency on available funds to \$300,000. Looking ahead, we will be meeting with engineers and specialists to review options of sustainable funding.

During 2019 the Wastewater Division has been preparing for numerous projects that will be built during 2020 to improve our aging system, most of which was constructed before 1930. Nearly \$500,000 has been dedicated to designing the next sewer separation project to keep wastewater out of the Nashua River. The closure of three combined sewer overflows in 2020 are expected to remove an average of 5 million gallons of wastewater a year from entering the Nashua River. Also, 12 combination sewer/drain manholes were separated, with designs of 150 manholes completed. Over the coming years, these manholes will be separated, which will further increase the water quality in local waterways.

With the closure of the paper mills, our west wastewater treatment facility has not been fully utilized in the past several years. In an effort to creatively re-use the west plant, the City has hired The West Group, a consulting law

firm to assist with converting the west plant into an anaerobic digestion facility. This public-private partnership, will allow the city to seek a private vendor to operate a facility on publicly owned land. With the possibility of the landfill closing in the very near future, a facility that can handle organic waste is crucial to Fitchburg and the region. This solution will divert organic material from entering the landfill, and uniquely be converted into another consumable source of energy. Over the coming months the City will issue a request for expression of an interest, and in fiscal year 21, a full request for proposals to develop the site.

The Water Supply Division has embarked on a city-wide water meter upgrade project that, when completed in 2020, will modernize the city's water meter reading system. This system will allow residents and businesses to monitor their water usage through on-line customer portals and also be able to receive alerts when there could be a potential leak at a respective property. Also, the city received a \$240,000 LAND grant and a \$94,000 grant from the Trustees of Reservations for a watershed land protection project that will forever protect 138 acres of land in Fitchburg's northwestern watershed.

One of the largest issues facing our public cemeteries, is that Forest Hill Cemetery is close to reaching its capacity. DPW has designed and laid-out an expansion in a section of Forest Hill that is currently unusable due to a high-water table. DPW personnel have installed 200-feet of drain lines and a leaching catch basin to lower the water table to acceptable elevations, as well as the installation of monitoring wells. If results are as expected, many acres of unutilized space will now be suitable for development of approximately 850 graves, allowing the City to postpone the need to develop a new cemetery for years.

In all of its glory - the Longsjo Middle School roof replacement project has come to a full completion just prior to winter. I would like to thank the school committee and city departments that have helped bring this project across the finish line. Large school projects are continuing so that we can modernize and upgrade our buildings while utilizing state funding. This year the South Street Elementary School was selected to be part of the Massachusetts School Building Authority's accelerated repair program for replacement of the roof and boiler system. Through the support of MSBA, this \$3.1 million project will be 80% reimbursable to the City, with our total share of project cost being approximately \$620,000.

Our School Department has an operating budget of \$80.7 million. This consists of \$56.7 million of Chapter 70 aid from the state and \$24 million from the City. I am pleased to report that the city has once again met its net school spending requirement. I also would like to thank our state delegation and the Governor for signing into law, this November, the Student Opportunity Act. During my time in the legislature, it was a priority of mine to see additional state funding for Fitchburg, so that every student has a competitive education. Now, as Mayor, this historic legislation will bring much needed dollars to our schools. However, this new legislation is only in place for the next seven years. I urge our state delegation to continue to make needed adjustments to the Foundation Budget, so that these dollars remain and continue to grow for our district, our teachers, and most importantly - our students.

Fitchburg students and teachers have continued to make our district proud. Making substantial progress towards student learning goals, the district's annual criterion reference target percentage for MCAS scores improved from 43% in 2018 to 60% in 2019. Also, chronic absenteeism has seen a 2.9% reduction in school year 2019. Our young students continue to break reading records with our Early Childhood Literacy Initiative, with words read by students increasing by 28%.

Over the next year, our School Department will continue to work with MSBA and a feasibility study on the Crocker Elementary School to be developed as either a PK-4 or grade 1-5 school. With the rising costs of a higher education, the school district is also working on expanding early college pathway offerings at the high school whereby students can earn 12 college credits, prior to graduating as a Senior. With the passing of the Student Opportunity Act - school officials will continue to create collaborative and innovative means to meet all students'

academic, social emotional, and co-curricular needs. With the support of Secretary Kathleen Theoharides, Fitchburg High School was awarded a \$250,000 Green Communities grant for a LED conversation. This project, totaling more than \$300,000 will save the school department approximately \$20,000 annually in utility costs, and will largely assist with meeting our five year energy efficiency goals.

I am very proud of the new added position to the Fitchburg Police Department, however this employee has four legs. With the assistance of the Stanton Foundation our Police Department was able to re-instate our K-9 program. Hangos, a one year old German Shepard mix was ceremoniously sworn into the Police Department in November along the side of his handler, Officer Josh Lambert.

Last year, the City was awarded multiple school safety grants totaling over \$200,000. Police and school administration have been working hard on implementing each grant. These awards will include the purchase of anonymous tip reporting software security and threat assessments, locks, and bi-directional amplifiers. Also, working with the City Treasurer, security cameras are being installed in the Putnam Place Garage and the Main Street parking deck, totaling approximately \$100,000.

Our UCR Part 1 Data, has once again shown a reduction in crime. These preliminary statistics reflect January through October totals of violent crime decreasing by 8% from last year, and 21% from a three year average. Furthermore, the FPD was recognized by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, as one of the first departments in the state, for partnering with medical professionals and training officers to help residents with mental illness. The One Mind Campaign, has successfully trained our officers to have positive interactions with persons who may be affected by mental illness.

I would like to congratulate Chief Martineau for being named as President of the Central Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association. Chief Martineau's proactive approach to policing and his involvement with the community is second to none. On behalf of the City of Fitchburg, I would like thank the Chief for representing the City so well, and we look forward to supporting him during his tenure as President.

Protecting our community from Mass Causality Incidents is a high priority of our public safety personnel. Both Fitchburg Fire and Police Departments have been working collaboratively on training sessions and investing in proper equipment to protect the public should one of these unfortunate incidents occur.

Arriving this past summer, with the assistance of a FEMA Grant and an appropriation of available funds, the Fire Department received two new pumpers - Engine 4 assigned to the Headquarters, and Engine 2 assigned to the Oak Hill Fire Station. This year, a FEMA assistance grant totaling more than \$250,000 was awarded to our Fire Department to purchase new personnel protective gear for all our firefighters, providing them with better protection during fires and hazardous situations. Also, communication is key for fire personnel. Major upgrades to their portable radios took place this year totaling \$70,000. This upgrade will take two years to implement, with the first half of radios installed this year.

Our Fire Prevention Bureau has been working closely with cannabis cultivators to assist them in becoming compliant with fire safety codes. The old mill buildings that are rehabilitated often have many structural and safety issues. Large scale warehouse fires are strategically the most dangerous due to size and complexity. However, with new investment in these buildings, significant steps can be taken to protect the occupants, surrounding buildings, and our public safety personnel.

After 43 years of dedicated service to the City of Fitchburg, Fire Chief Kevin Roy will be retiring in the end of June. The City has taken the appropriate steps to begin civil service exams and form a search committee to hire a new Fire Chief. On behalf of the City of Fitchburg, I would like to thank Chief Roy for his leadership, his friendship, and his pride in our great City.

Our Board of Health has been working with our Legal Department to establish new additional disposal options for Fitchburg residents in 2020. Not only will residents be able to access the Fitchburg Sanitary Landfill to dispose items, AKS Recycling, will also be providing a drop-off to dispose of trash, recycling, and other items for a small fee - in addition to two more Household Hazardous Waste Days. This new option will help residents to dispose of items and assist in the effort to reduce litter in our neighborhoods and should be rolling out in the coming months.

The Fitchburg/Westminster Sanitary Landfill expansion efforts are continuing. The Health Dept. is collaborating with Waste Management exploring temporary measures to allow the landfill to operate for an additional 3 to 5 years, while still working on land acquisition to expand operations for an upwards of ten years. It is important to understand how crucial this project is. Not only does the landfill provide some free and reduced cost disposal options totaling millions of dollars each year, it also provides revenue to the city, nearing \$3 million annually. If the landfill does close, the city and residents need to understand the implications are significant, with disposal costs possibly quadrupling. My administration in conjunction with the Board of Health will work diligently with Waste Management and state agencies to ensure these expansion projects happen.

Our Substance Abuse Prevention Division has been successful in implementing the Massachusetts Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative and the Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative grants. Over 1000 resource information cards have been distributed, monthly narcan trainings continue to be conducted, and over 30 events were attended to help educate our local residents. Our coordinator has also revitalized FACT, the Fitchburg Community Action Team, charged with identifying our youth needs and taking action to reduce substance abuse. Rolling out in 2020, our coordinator also received a new Substance Abuse Prevention grant of \$100,000 annually for the next three years.

Working with District Attorney Joe Early and Judge Christopher LoConto - Fitchburg District Court will be launching a drug court in the coming year. This court will be geared to provide support and services for those people facing addiction. Opioid addiction is one of the largest problems nationwide and in the community - this new approach will provide people with probationary support in the community and in the court system. Solving this epidemic is a multi-tier approach of collaboration, and a drug court is an excellent tool to help remediate relapse and abuse.

Our Building, Health, and IT Departments have been working collaboratively on implementing a new on-line permitting system. This system, ViewPoint Cloud, gives municipal offices the power to manage all of our permitting and licensing operations. This will provide not only efficiencies within our code enforcement agencies, but also give residents a friendlier platform to work with their government agencies.

Our Neighborhood Improvement Through Code Enforcement Committee continues to take the lead at addressing problem properties. Nearly twenty problem properties were closed out with addressing serious code violations and an impressive 27% drop in properties that were in a state of foreclosure. This coming year, we can expect to see approximately six properties that will be slated for demolition.

Just as it is important to maintain our private housing stock, the Board of Directors for the Fitchburg Housing Authority and their Executive Director have been working to maintain our public housing. In this year alone, The Housing Authority received over \$11 million in grant funding to address capital needs in their housing stock. This funding will help with vacancy turn-around, staff training, landscape improvements, and extensive upgrades to our senior housing. Again, this funding would not be possible without the support of the Baker-Polito Administration.

With excavators, heavy equipment and construction crews, the Fitchburg Municipal Airport can expect to see the completion of its 5,001 foot runway in 2020. This runway reconstruction and extension will open new doors to accommodate jet traffic, new revenues, and create new possibilities for development at the airport. I would like to thank the FAA and MassDOT Aeronautics Division for their leadership and assistance to make this runway expansion possible.

Our Library was not short on programming this year! With 51 teen events, 190 adult programs, and 462 children's programs, there was something for everyone to participate in. The Senior Center also expanded programming to include 5 new life enrichment lessons, hosted a caregiver series, history programs, and was awarded a ten-week program for seniors promoting healthy aging. Also, our Veterans Department has been hard at work assisting over 1,000 veterans, filing over 200 claims, and delivering aid to Chapter 115 recipients.

Over the course of the next year, organizations across the city will join together to educate and motivate our residents to participate in the 2020 Census. It is prudent that everyone is counted in our city as the census affects our city in so many positive ways. Through our Complete Count Committee, we will utilize our local knowledge to develop an awareness campaign and encourage our residents to participate. Please stay tuned - in the coming months Census notifications and material will be forthcoming and we need your help to make every person count!

With regard to the finances for fiscal year 2020, and with the help and guidance from our City Council, we passed a fiscally conservative budget. The city's general operating budget of \$130 million, confirms the strong working partnerships among our municipal departments and our ongoing determination to provide Fitchburg residents with the best possible services.

Our Stabilization account has a strong balance of \$7 million. My commitment is to continue to appropriate available funds into this essential reserve account in order to protect our city from any unforeseen emergencies. Also, new to the budget this year is a reserve account for snow and ice. Typically the winter season costs the city approximately \$1.2 million in snow and ice. \$500,000 is placed in the DPW budget and the difference is appropriated from available funds. In an effort to prepare for spending this winter, I budgeted an additional \$600,000 from FY19 available funds into a snow and ice reserve account. This totals \$1.1 million dollars in our operating budget to address winter conditions on our roads.

For the first time in decades, the City received a revised outlook to our bond rating from Standard and Poor's Global. This year our outlook went from stable to positive with an affirmed A+ underlying rating. Fitchburg was cited with new economic growth, conservative budget practices and increased reserved levels for our new bond rating. We must continue to grow our tax base and maintain conservative budget measures to further improve our bond rating.

In the fiscal year 2021 budget, we will need to prepare for the relocation of municipal offices to Main Street as well as the addition of custodial staff. Also, as part of a city-wide building risk, maintenance, and capital planning - my office is looking to add a Facilities Director position. This crucial position will oversee all maintenance and operations of municipal buildings. In the past several years, the city has been addressing our aging buildings in a reactionary approach. This is costly, time consuming, and preventable. It should also be mentioned that our insurance company has strongly advocated that the city provide funding for this position and become more proactive about our building maintenance.

This past December, the City Hall Building Committee and Project Team previewed to the City Council updates and progress of our City Hall. Less than a year ago, in March of 2019, interior demolition began. This process revealed several layers of previous updates and facelifts the building received through the past 167 years. With each layer, came new updates, changes to approach, and creative thinking to resolve any concerns. I would like

to thank the Building Committee, Colliers Project Leaders, BOND, and ICON Architecture for bringing unique ideas to solve complicated building scenarios.

Like theater curtains -the layers of the white thermal insulation are coming down from the City Hall and revealing the work construction crews have been doing this past fall and winter. Repointed brick, painting, installing walls, frames, hardware & windows – our old City Hall is revived with the pride and grandeur she deserves.

Speaking of pride, there is immense pride by the laborers, steel workers, carpenters, electricians, masons, and every trade that is working on this building. Several contractors hiring local people to work on such a historic project, making history with every nail they hammer and with every wire they pull. Fitchburg natives such as Fred Liatsis, Pete Matson and Mike Flynn get to go home and share with family friends how they are making a positive difference in their community - a story that will be passed down from family generation to generation. Hiring local contractors like Tim's Fabricators, who are specialized in installing telescoping steel beams and columns in extremely tight conditions, have brought their expertise to City Hall. Or how about the women that are part of this historic construction project. From members of the Building Committee, project managers, or working in the front lines of the renovation - women have broken ground and are crucial members to project completion, which is scheduled for the late fall of 2020.

In reading Fitchburg's Mayor John B. Fellows Inaugural Address, given 100 years ago, he made particular note of the importance of division of city wards to help prepare for the doubling of registered voters in Fitchburg. It is hard to believe, but it was only 100 years ago women received equal rights to vote. Ratified on August 18, 1920, this historic centennial offers an unparalleled opportunity to commemorate a milestone of our American democracy.

I would like to thank my family for their continued support and confidence in me: my wife Joanne, my children Marcus and Alexandra, their spouses Sara and Michael, and to my four beautiful grandchildren, John, Rena, Sofia, and Michael. And a very special thank you to my Chief of Staff A.J. Tourigny and my Administrative Assistant, Joan David. I would also like to thank FATV and their dedicated staff who made this broadcast possible.

To reminisce and remain focused on the losses of the past, is an inherit way to miss the opportunity of a well-envisioned future. Fitchburg residents I am here to tell you, working with community stakeholders, leaders, and investors - we have envisioned, we have planned, and we have executed changes for a better Fitchburg.

Together let us continue to tear down obstacles and collectively build a resurgent Fitchburg!

Thank you, God Bless this Nation, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and God Bless the Great City of Fitchburg.