

Mayor Ethan Stirling: 2018 State of the City

Embargoed Until 5:30 PM 1/31/18

FELLOW PORTLANDERS, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AND COUNCILORS, THANK YOU FOR JOINING ME AS I REPORT ON THE STATE OF OUR CITY AND REAFFIRM OUR VISION FOR A VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE PORTLAND.

WHEN I THINK ABOUT WHAT MAKES PORTLAND SUCH A SPECIAL PLACE, I THINK ABOUT MY JOY IN MEETING PEOPLE ACROSS THIS CITY WHO, ON A DAILY BASIS, TALK WITH ME ABOUT HOW TO HELP THEIR NEIGHBORS. WHETHER YOU ARE A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS OWNER OR A RESIDENT OF ONE OF OUR SHELTERS, I ALWAYS HEAR HOW YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE SOMEONE ELSE IS TAKEN CARE OF. THAT FABRIC IS WHAT WEAVES OUR CITY TOGETHER AND ALLOWS ME TO KNOW, WITHOUT STATISTICS OR STUDIES, THAT THE STATE OF OUR CITY IS STRONG AND GETTING STRONGER.

BUT I ALSO KNOW OUR CITY IS STRONG BECAUSE OUR UNEMPLOYMENT RATE REMAINS AT AN HISTORIC LOW. OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH CONTINUES TO BE ROBUST AS WE HAVE RECORD NUMBERS OF PEOPLE STAYING IN OUR HOTELS AND WE SEE CRANES AND SCAFFOLDING ALL OVER THE CITY. TO QUOTE OUR PLANNING DIRECTOR, PORTLAND HASN'T ISSUED THIS MANY BUILDING PERMITS SINCE AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF 1866. AND THE STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOLS ARE ACHIEVING 5.6 YEARS OF ACADEMIC GROWTH IN ONLY FIVE YEARS. THAT ACHIEVEMENT IS ONE OF THE MYRIAD REASONS WE WERE NAMED ONE OF THE TOP TEN SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE STATE. IMAGINE HOW GREAT WE WILL BE WHEN WE FINALLY TRANSFORM THOSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS!

BUT ANOTHER INDICATOR IS WHEN YOU SEE A PREMIER COMPANY LIKE WEX INVEST TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN

OUR CITY, BRINGING HUNDREDS OF JOBS, WITHOUT NEEDING ANY TAX BREAKS OR SPECIAL DEALS. THAT'S WHEN YOU KNOW YOU MUST BE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT.

THAT IS NOT TO SAY ALL IS ROSY. HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS SIMPLY NOT KEEPING UP WITH OUR RISING HOUSING COSTS. I HEAR FROM BUSINESSES EVERY DAY THAT THEY ARE STRUGGLING TO FIND WORKERS AND FROM WORKERS SAYING THEIR WAGES AND BENEFITS ARE NOT MEETING THEIR NEEDS. FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE NEED OUR SHELTERS AND SOUP KITCHENS. AND NOT ALL OF OUR KIDS ARE ENTERING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AS READY TO LEARN AS THEY SHOULD BE.

BUT TO THOSE WHO LOOK AT THE WORK BEING DONE EVERY DAY IN THIS BUILDING AND SEE ONLY CONFLICT AND DIVISION,

I SAY THAT OUR RESULTS SHOW OTHERWISE. FROM TAX REFORM, TO THE ENVIRONMENT, TO IMMIGRANTS, TO WAGES, TO OUR HOMELESS, TO THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENT, TO OUR SCHOOLS, 2017 IS MARKED BY THE KIND OF ACHIEVEMENT THIS CITY HAS NOT SEEN IN YEARS. AND, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THIS PROGRESS WAS CREATED WITH NEAR UNANIMITY BY THIS COUNCIL.

LET ME START WITH THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED BUILD OUR CITY: OUR SENIORS. NO GROUP HAS BEEN FEELING THE PINCH OF RISING COSTS MORE THAN THOSE ON FIXED INCOMES. UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE, AND THROUGH THE UNANIMOUS APPROVAL OF THIS COUNCIL, I AM PROUD THAT WE FINALLY PASSED TARGETED RENT AND PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS. IT HAS BEEN OVER TEN YEARS SINCE THE STATE AUTHORIZED MUNICIPALITIES TO

PASS REFORM LIKE THIS AND NOW, NEXT YEAR AT THIS TIME, OUR OLDER NEIGHBORS WILL FINALLY BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR RELIEF OF UP TO \$900.

THAT IS \$900 THAT WILL GO DIRECTLY INTO THEIR HOUSEHOLD POCKET TO OFFSET THEIR RENT OR PROPERTY TAX BILL. \$900 THAT COULD BUY 300 GALLONS OF OIL IN THE WINTER AND A FEW EXTRA GALLONS OF MILK. THIS IS REAL MONEY IN THE POCKETS OF REAL PEOPLE WHO NEED OUR HELP. AND IT IS MY HOPE THAT IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS WE MAY BE ABLE TO EXPAND THIS RELIEF TO STRUGGLING FAMILIES OF ALL AGES.

THIS IS THE WAY TO DO REAL TAX REFORM. MAKE YOUR TAX CODE MORE PROGRESSIVE, SO YOU GET THE RELIEF TO THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST.

ANOTHER AREA OF PROGRESS HAS BEEN OUR CITY'S EFFORTS TO SUPPORT OUR IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY. SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATING IMMIGRANTS INTO ALL ASPECTS OF PORTLAND LIFE IS CRITICAL TO OUR CITY'S FUTURE. TO THAT END, THANKS TO A UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THIS COUNCIL LAST YEAR AND THE ABLE IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR CITY MANAGER, I AM THRILLED THAT WE NOW HAVE A FULLY OPERATIONAL OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY WHICH SERVES IMMIGRANTS, PEOPLE OF COLOR AND OTHER UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS BY CREATING PATHWAYS TO OPTIMAL EMPLOYMENT.

THESE COMMUNITIES STILL HAVE THE HIGHEST RATES OF POVERTY IN OUR CITY, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR FUTURE. LIKE THE IRISH, THE ITALIANS, JEWS AND CATHOLICS BEFORE THEM, THEY FACE

GREAT HARDSHIP AND DISCRIMINATION WHEN THEY ARRIVE IN OUR CITY. WE MUST DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO WELCOME THEM. OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON IT AND HOPEFULLY THROUGH THIS YEAR'S BUDGET PROCESS, WE CAN ADD MUCH NEEDED STAFF TO THIS OFFICE.

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, AND THROUGH THE UNANIMOUS AFFIRMATION OF THIS COUNCIL, I AM ALSO PLEASED THAT WE REFORMED OUR TAX INCREMENT FINANCING POLICY TO ENSURE THAT JOBS TIED TO CORPORATE WELFARE COMPENSATE PEOPLE AT A REASONABLE RATE. THIS SENDS AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE THAT WHEN DOING BUSINESS IN PORTLAND, WE EXPECT YOU TO PAY A LIVABLE WAGE TO YOUR WORKERS. WE ARE THE FIRST COMMUNITY IN MAINE TO PUT THIS STAKE IN THE

GROUND AND I AM VERY PROUD THAT WE MADE CLEAR YOU MAY NOT SPEND OUR MONEY UNDERPAYING OUR WORKERS.

THIS STEP ALSO OPENS THE DOOR TO THE CONVERSATION ABOUT WHETHER ALL CONTRACTORS WHO RECEIVE MONEY FROM THE CITY SHOULD ALSO PAY REASONABLE WAGES. I BELIEVE THEY SHOULD AND THIS YEAR I PLAN TO BRING THAT CONVERSATION FORMALLY IN FRONT OF THIS BODY. WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT ANY TIME PUBLIC MONEY IS SPENT, IT REFLECTS OUR PUBLIC VALUES FROM GROUNDBREAKING TO RIBBON CUTTING.

WHILE THE CITY AND OUR MANY COMMUNITY PARTNERS CONTINUE TO WORK TIRELESSLY TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSE THE CHRONICALLY HOMELESS, IT IS CLEAR THAT OUR CURRENT EMERGENCY SHELTER FACILITY

NEEDS TO BE REPLACED WITH A MORE EFFECTIVE APPROACH. UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE, THIS BODY TOOK THE IMPORTANT FIRST STEP OF EXPANDING OUR ZONING TO ALLOW US TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS FOR OUR SHELTERS AND PERHAPS BUILD A NEW FACILITY. IN THE MEANTIME, WE HAVE ALSO TRANSFORMED THE OXFORD STREET SHELTER INTO A 24-HOUR FACILITY TO BETTER SERVE CLIENTS AND THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD. AND WE COMPLETED THE FIRST SUMMER OF THE OPPORTUNITY CREW, PROVIDING MUCH NEEDED INCOME AND SKILLS BUILDING TO 17 OF OUR NEEDIEST RESIDENTS. AGAIN, UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED AND SUPPORTED BY THIS COUNCIL.

THANKS TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE, WE HAVE ALSO MADE IMPORTANT STRIDES IN

OUR GOAL TO MAKE OUR CITY CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2040. BY APPROVING THE PLAN TO REPLACE ALL EXISTING STREET LIGHTS WITH NEW, ENERGY-EFFICIENT LED LIGHTS, STARTED JUST THIS WEEK, WE WILL REDUCE THE CITY'S ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION FOR STREET LIGHTING BY 2.7 MILLION KWH PER YEAR. THIS MOVE ALONE WILL OFFSET THE BURNING OF MORE THAN 193,000 GALLONS OF OIL.

AND, OF COURSE, WE HAVE NEW RECYCLING CARTS. NOW I KNOW THERE WAS A LITTLE CONTROVERSY AROUND THIS AND THE ROLLOUT WAS A LITTLE BUMPY FOR SOME, BUT THIS MOVE ALONE RESULTED IN A 41% INCREASE IN RECYCLING THIS PAST NOVEMBER.

AS A SIDE NOTE TO OUR SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS, I DO WANT TO COMMEND METRO AND USM FOR PARTNERING TO EXPAND

AND STRENGTHEN OUR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM. THIS PARTNERSHIP WILL PUT BUS PASSES IN THE HANDS OF 7,000 STUDENTS, STAFF AND FACULTY. WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT ONE PERSON, WITH A 20-MILE COMMUTE, CAN REDUCE HIS OR HER DAILY CARBON EMISSIONS BY MORE THAN 4,800 POUNDS IN A YEAR BY SIMPLY SWITCHING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT, YOU UNDERSTAND THE MONUMENTAL IMPACT OF THIS CHANGE.

AND FINALLY IN REGARD TO CLIMATE INITIATIVES, OUR SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE REPORTED OUT, AND THIS BODY UNANIMOUSLY PASSED, A BAN ON CHEMICAL PESTICIDE USE IN PORTLAND. THIS WAS NO EASY CHARGE, AS IT TOOK ALMOST A YEAR AND A HALF FROM WHEN THE TASK FORCE WAS FIRST CREATED TO BRING THE ORDINANCE TO A FINAL VOTE. BUT IN THE END, WE CAME TOGETHER ON ONE OF THE

STRONGEST CHEMICAL BANS IN MAINE. A TRUE TESTAMENT TO OUR ABILITY TO PERSEVERE AND WORK TOGETHER FOR THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF EVERYONE.

IN THIS DIVISIVE TIME, WHERE CIVIL RIGHTS ARE CONSTANTLY UNDER ATTACK, I AM ALSO PROUD OF THIS BODY'S CONTINUED AND UNANIMOUS EMPHASIS ON PRESERVING AND PROTECTING THESE RIGHTS. WE CONDEMNED THE HATEFUL RHETORIC IN SOUTH CAROLINA. CITY HALL NOW HAS A GENDER NEUTRAL BATHROOM. THE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS ON A PATH TO IMPLEMENTING BODY CAMERAS AND REVISING OUR CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD. AND WE PASSED AN ORDINANCE CREATING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY TO ENSURE THAT WE CELEBRATE THOSE WHO TRULY WERE THE FIRST TO WALK ON THESE SHORES.

AND SPEAKING OF CIVIL RIGHTS, THIS PAST FALL, I SPENT A COUPLE OF HOURS IN A WHEELCHAIR NAVIGATING OUR SIDEWALKS WITH A MAN NAMED MICHAEL. HE INVITED ME TO TAKE THE TOUR SO THAT I MIGHT UNDERSTAND BETTER WHAT A BUMPY SIDEWALK MEANS TO SOMEONE WHO MUST RELY ON WHEELS. LAST YEAR, WE UNDERTOOK A FULL ADA ASSESSMENT OF THE CITY. ONCE THESE RESULTS COME BACK, I HOPE AND BELIEVE THIS BODY WILL DEDICATE THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO PUT PORTLAND ON THE PATH OF BEING THE MOST HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE CITY IN MAINE AND ONE OF THE MOST IN THE COUNTRY.

AND LAST, BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST, IS PASSAGE OF THE BOND TO REPAIR OUR FOUR CRUMBLING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS - PERHAPS THE SINGLE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENT THIS BODY HAS MADE IN YEARS. NOTHING

HAS MORE BEARING ON THE FUTURE OF OUR CITY THAN HOW WE EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN. AND WHILE IT WAS CERTAINLY A LONG HARD FOUGHT STRUGGLE TO BUILD THE NEAR CONSENSUS NEEDED, WE DID IT.

AFTER THIS BODY BUILT A COMPROMISE THAT GAVE THE VOTERS A CHANCE TO SUPPORT THE LARGEST SCHOOL BOND IN OUR HISTORY, THE VOTERS THEN PASSED IT WITH 65% OF THE VOTE. NO OTHER POLICY CHOICE FOR THE CITY PASSED (OR FAILED) WITH SUCH A LARGE MARGIN IN YEARS. NOT THE DEFEAT OF RENT STABILIZATION, THE VIEW CORRIDOR, MINIMUM WAGE OR EVEN THE PASSAGE OF CONGRESS SQUARE PARK.

HOWEVER, BEFORE WE COULD BRING PORTLAND TOGETHER AROUND THE LARGEST BOND IN CITY HISTORY, WE IN THIS BODY FIRST HAD TO WORK OUT OUR DIFFERENCES.

AND WE DID. LAST MARCH, WHEN THE 4-SCHOOL BOND FELL ONE VOTE SHORT OF THE 7 NEEDED TO GET TO THE VOTERS, SOME THOUGHT THAT THOSE OF US WHO SUPPORTED THE FULL BOND SHOULD FORGO OUR PRINCIPLED STANCE TO CREATE AN EASY COMPROMISE. THAT MIGHT HAVE MADE OUR LIVES EASIER ON THIS COUNCIL, BUT IT WOULD HAVE ENDED UP FRACTURING OUR CITY BY PITTING ONE COMMUNITY AGAINST ANOTHER, TELLING SOME KIDS THEY MATTER NOW AND OTHERS THAT THEY HAVE TO WAIT. DODGING HARD ISSUES DOESN'T BRING PORTLAND TOGETHER.

WE WERE EACH ELECTED TO LISTEN, IN FACT IT WAS ONE OF MY CAMPAIGN THEMES, AND WHEN VOTERS LINED UP UNTIL THE WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING TO TELL US THEY WERE FED UP WITH 23 YEARS OF WAITING, I AM GLAD WE HEARD THEM AND REFUSED TO GIVE UP.

THROUGH CONTINUED HARD WORK, WE BUILT A COMPROMISE THAT ALLOWED THOSE WHO FELT THERE WAS A DIFFERENT WAY FORWARD TO BE HEARD, BUT ALSO ENSURED THAT THE PUBLIC WOULD FINALLY HAVE HAVE A SAY ON WHETHER THEY WANTED THE CERTAINTY OF FUNDING ALL FOUR SCHOOLS NOW.

AND THEN THE PARENTS AND TEACHERS AND CHILDREN OF THIS CITY GOT TOGETHER AND RAN A CAMPAIGN THAT KNOCKED ON TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DOORS. IN FACT, I

MYSELF JOINED HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS AND KNOCKED ON OVER 1,000 OF THOSE DOORS AND I KNOW OTHERS AROUND THIS DAIS ALSO DID THEIR PART. WE HAD ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS WITH THOUSANDS OF VOTERS IN EVERY PART OF THE CITY, ANSWERING THEIR QUESTIONS. IT WAS A CAMPAIGN THAT STOOD UP IN DEBATES AND BEAT BACK MISINFORMATION. AND THAT EVEN WITHSTOOD AN ELEVENTH HOUR FLIP-FLOP BY THE PORTLAND PRESS HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD DESIGNED TO DEFEAT THE BOND.

BUT, IN THE END, THE PEOPLE WON A VICTORY THAT WILL IMPACT ALL OF US FOR GENERATIONS. A VICTORY WHICH ENSURES THAT IN THE CITY OF PORTLAND, A CHILD'S ADDRESS WILL NEVER DICTATE HIS OR HER EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

THAT IS SOMETHING FOR THIS BODY AND THIS CITY TO BE
VERY PROUD OF.

SO THAT IS A LIST OF SOME OF OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN
THE PAST YEAR. TAX REFORM. SCHOOL REPAIRS. LED LIGHTS.
BODY CAMERAS. LIVABLE WAGES. BANNING CANCER-CAUSING
PESTICIDES. INCREASED RECYCLING. AN IMPROVED SHELTER
SYSTEM WITH A BRIGHTER FUTURE. ALL WITH A GROWING
ECONOMY. AGAIN AND AGAIN, THIS BODY ACTED IN A WAY
THAT PUT OUR RESIDENTS AND THE FUTURE OF THIS CITY
FIRST. AND OTHER THAN A SINGLE NO VOTE ON THE FINAL
SCHOOL BOND COMPROMISE, WE DID IT UNANIMOUSLY.
EVERY. SINGLE. TIME.

SO, TO THOSE WHO SAY THIS BODY IS DIVIDED AND GETTING
NOTHING DONE, THE EVIDENCE SHOWS OTHERWISE. IT'S NOT

THAT IS WAS EASY. IT'S NOT THAT WE DON'T DISAGREE,
ARGUE AND SOMETIMES GET ANGRY WITH EACH OTHER. WE
DID AND WE WILL IN THE FUTURE--BECAUSE WE ALL CARE
PASSIONATELY ABOUT THIS CITY AND THINK BIG DECISIONS
ARE WORTH BEING PASSIONATE ABOUT.

WHEN I RAN FOR THIS OFFICE, I PROMISED THE PEOPLE OF
THIS CITY THAT I WOULD WORK TIRELESSLY TO BRING
PORTLAND TOGETHER TO TACKLE REAL SOLUTIONS TO BIG
PROBLEMS THAT HAD BEEN SET ASIDE FOR FAR TOO LONG.
AND THAT IS WHAT WE DID IN 2017 AND IT IS WHAT I WILL
CONTINUE STRIVING FOR FOR AS LONG AS I HOLD THIS
OFFICE.

WHILE WE HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES, WE OBVIOUSLY STILL
HAVE GAPS THAT THIS BODY MUST CONFRONT. GAPS IN

EDUCATION. GAPS IN OUR PLAN TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE. GAPS IN OUR HOUSING NEEDS. AND GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT. THESE ARE SERIOUS ISSUES AND THEY WILL TAKE A LOT OF CONTINUED HARD WORK. WE CANNOT TAKE OUR FOOT OFF THE PEDAL, JUST BECAUSE WE HAD ONE STRONG YEAR.

LET'S START WITH THE EMPLOYMENT GAPS. TODAY, IN THE CITY OF PORTLAND, OVER 70,000 PEOPLE FROM ACROSS OUR STATE COMING HERE TO WORK EVERY SINGLE DAY. WE ARE THE CITY WHERE MORE WEALTH CHANGES HANDS EVERY DAY THAN ANY OTHER CITY IN MAINE AND WHOSE OVERALL VALUE HAS INCREASED FOR FOUR STRAIGHT YEARS AND IS NOW PROJECTED TO BE OVER \$9 BILLION DOLLARS.

WE ARE A POWERFUL AND WEALTHY CITY IN SO MANY WAYS. BUT WITHIN THIS WEALTH, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WORST FLU

SEASON IN YEARS, WE ESTIMATE THERE ARE MORE THAN 25,000 WORKERS WHO CANNOT TAKE A SINGLE PAID DAY OFF FROM WORK IF THEY GET SICK OR NEED TO CARE FOR SOMEONE THEY LOVE.

THAT IS SOMETHING WE SIMPLY CANNOT ALLOW TO CONTINUE. NOT IF WE WANT TO CALL OURSELVES A COMPASSIONATE CITY. NOT IF WE WANT TO CALL OURSELVES A CITY THAT CARES ABOUT ITS WORKERS. NOT IF WE WANT TO BE A CITY THAT PROTECTS PUBLIC HEALTH.

LAST YEAR DURING THIS SPEECH I PROMISED TO PROPOSE AN ORDINANCE THAT WOULD GUARANTEE EARNED SICK TIME FOR EVERY WORKER IN PORTLAND. AND LAST FALL, AFTER WORKING WITH THE MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY, THE SOUTHERN MAINE WORKERS CENTER, AND A NUMBER OF SMALL

BUSINESS OWNERS, WE BROUGHT FORWARD AN ORDINANCE THAT IF PASSED WILL ENSURE EVERY WORKER EARNS A MINIMUM OF SIX DAYS OFF A YEAR THAT THEY CAN USE TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES OR A FAMILY MEMBER.

THE EMPLOYEE WILL BE ABLE TO EARN THE TIME OFF OVER TIME, JUST LIKE ONE EARNS PAY OR VACATION, AND THEY WILL BE ABLE TO USE IT FOR ANYTHING HEALTHCARE RELATED, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH, PHYSICAL HEALTH OR TO PROTECT ONESELF WHEN DEALING WITH A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATION. THIS ORDINANCE WILL ENSURE THAT A SINGLE PARENT WHO HAS A SICK CHILD WILL NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN MISSING THEIR RENT PAYMENT AND TAKING THEIR KID TO THE DOCTOR. THEY WON'T HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN MAKING THEMSELVES MORE SICK BY WORKING WHEN THEY NEED REST AND HAVING THE MONEY

THEY NEED TO BUY GROCERIES. THEY WILL NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT CHOOSING BETWEEN MONEY AND SAFETY, WHEN THEY ARE FEARFUL THAT GOING TO WORK MAY PROVIDE SOMEONE AN OPPORTUNITY TO VIOLATE A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER.

BUT THIS IS NOT SIMPLY AN ISSUE OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS, IT IS ALSO AN ISSUE OF PUBLIC HEALTH. THIS IS ABOUT THE WAITER WHO IS OBLIGATED TO HAND YOU YOUR MENU AND DELIVER YOUR PLATE WHEN THEY ARE SICK. IT IS ABOUT THE CAREGIVER TO YOUR CHILD UNINTENTIONALLY SPREADING GERMS AT THE DAYCARE, BECAUSE THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS A DAY'S PAY. IT IS ABOUT SOMEONE WHO CARES FOR THE ELDERLY, ACCIDENTLY INFECTING YOUR PARENT BECAUSE THEIR EMPLOYER DOES NOT PROVIDE PAID TIME OFF FOR ILLNESS.

AND IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE PEOPLE IN THESE INDUSTRIES WORK WHILE SICK, IN A RECENT STATEWIDE STUDY, IT WAS DETERMINED THAT 90% OF RESTAURANT WORKERS ARE WITHOUT PAID SICK TIME. THE SAME STUDY DETERMINED THAT 70% OF THOSE WORKERS ACTUALLY WENT TO WORK WHILE SICK, AND HALF OF THEM SAID THEY DID IT BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT AFFORD TO TAKE A DAY OFF.

AND IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT PROVIDING PAID SICK TIME PREVENTS THE SPREAD OF DISEASE, JUST LOOK AT THE NUMEROUS STUDIES PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS SHOWING THAT PAID SICK LEAVE INDEED LEADS TO THE DECREASED SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

IN SHORT, ACCESS TO PAID SICK LEAVE IS BOTH A HUMAN RIGHT AND A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE FOR PORTLAND. I AM LOOKING TO 2018 AS THE YEAR PORTLAND JOINS SEVEN OTHER STATES, INCLUDING MASSACHUSETTS, VERMONT AND CONNECTICUT, AND 30 MUNICIPALITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, TO BECOME THE FIRST COMMUNITY IN MAINE TO ENSURE THAT EVERY WORKER WHO CLOCKS INTO A JOB IN THIS CITY WILL HAVE TIME OFF TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES OR THEIR LOVED ONE. EVERY. SINGLE. WORKER.

BUT MAKING SURE OUR WORKERS ARE ABLE TO TAKE TIME OFF IS ONLY ONE SIDE OF THE EQUATION. THE OTHER IS MAKING SURE OUR EMPLOYERS HAVE THE WORKERS THEY NEED TO DO THE WORK. RIGHT NOW, WITH UNEMPLOYMENT AT 2.3%, I HEAR FROM BUSINESSES ALL THE TIME THAT THEY ARE HAVING TROUBLE FINDING QUALIFIED PEOPLE. ONE PIECE

OF THAT EQUATION IS THE WORK WE ARE DOING WITH THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY. CONNECTING OUR NEWEST MAINERS WITH EMPLOYERS HELPING TO FILL AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC GAP.

ONE QUICK EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THAT WITHIN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE OFFICE OPENING, READY SEAFOOD CALLED ASKING IF WE COULD HELP BUILD A BRIDGE TO SOME WORKERS. AS A RESULT, 11 WORKERS WERE HIRED AND SEVERAL HAVE BEEN PROMOTED.

ANOTHER PIECE IS PAYING HIGHER WAGES. PUT SIMPLY, EMPLOYERS, IF YOU WANT TO ATTRACT EMPLOYEES, THOSE OF YOU WHO CAN, MUST PAY MORE. PORTLAND'S QUALITY OF LIFE WILL ONLY GO SO FAR IN ATTRACTING THE EMPLOYEES YOU NEED.

THAT SAID, I DO KNOW THERE IS MORE OF A ROLE FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN ASSISTING BUSINESSES. WE HAVE A VIBRANT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE LED BY GREAT STAFF. AND WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THE OFFICE HAS THE RESOURCES TO SPREAD THE WORD ON HOW WE CAN HELP. FROM LOANS TO BUSINESS PLANNING TO GRANTS AND NETWORKING, WE DO A LOT.

AND WE NEED TO DO MORE TO ASSIST WITH TRAINING THE WORKERS BUSINESSES NEED. THAT IS WHY I SUPPORT THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM BOND FOR \$75M NOW IN FRONT OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE. IF SENT TO THE VOTERS AND PASSED, THIS WILL BE A GAME-CHANGER FOR USM BEING ABLE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SKILLED WORKERS FOR BUSINESSES ALL AROUND THIS REGION.

SPEAKING OF USM, I ALSO SUPPORT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE MUSKIE SCHOOLS TO CREATE A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CENTER AT USM. AS RECOMMENDED, THIS CENTER WOULD CONVENE EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO MARRY NEEDS WITH TRAINING.

NOTHING WILL STIFLE OUR ECONOMY MORE THAN NOT HAVING THE EDUCATED WORKFORCE NEEDED FOR GROWTH AND PRODUCTIVITY.

AND FINALLY, WE NEED TO COMPLETE THE DISPARITY STUDY THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REQUESTED LAST YEAR, SO WE CAN MAKE SURE GROUPS ON THE EDGES OF OUR ECONOMY, WOMEN, MINORITIES, VETERANS AND OTHERS

ARE NOT BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN HIRING.

NOW LET US TURN TO OUR HOUSING GAPS. AS EVERYONE IN PORTLAND KNOWS, HOUSING COSTS HAVE RISEN EXPONENTIALLY IN THE LAST SIX YEARS. FROM RENT INCREASES, TO CONDO CONVERSIONS TO SHORT TERM RENTALS TO HOME PRICES, OUR WORKING AND MIDDLE CLASS ARE BEING SQUEEZED OUT. YOUNG FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS ARE HAVING TO LOOK TO SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES TO PURCHASE THEIR STARTER HOME. LONGTIME TENANTS ARE SEEING THEIR RENTS RISE BEYOND THEIR MEANS, OR THEIR BUILDING IS BEING SOLD RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER THEM TO BE TORN DOWN AND TURNED INTO A LUXURY UNIT FOR A PART TIME RESIDENT.

NATIONAL STANDARDS SAY THAT A HOUSEHOLD SHOULD NOT SPEND MORE THAN 30% OF ITS INCOME ON HOUSING. BY THAT STANDARD, LATEST DATA IN PORTLAND SHOWS THAT AN ASTOUNDING 62% OF OUR RENTERS CANNOT AFFORD A 2 BEDROOM APARTMENT IN THE CITY, AND 74% OF OUR HOMEOWNERS CANNOT AFFORD THE MEDIAN HOME PRICE. THAT IS SIMPLY NOT SUSTAINABLE IF WE WANT TO HAVE A MIDDLE CLASS LIVING IN OUR CITY.

NOW, WE HAVE PROPOSED A FEW WAYS TO CONFRONT, OR AT LEAST EASE, THE CRISIS, AND WE CAN CERTAINLY TRY TO BUILD ON THOSE. WE CAN EXPAND OUR SENIOR RENT AND TAX RELIEF POLICY AND EXTEND IT TO MORE FAMILIES. WE CAN REPLICATE THE DENSITY INCENTIVES WE ADDED TO OUR CORRIDORS FOR OTHER ZONES AROUND THE CITY. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD ALSO RE-LOOK AT SOME OF THE TENANT

PROTECTIONS WE VOTED ON TWO YEARS AGO LIKE 90-DAY NOTICE ON EVICTIONS AND REQUIRING LANDLORDS TO ACCEPT HOUSING VOUCHERS.

DOUBLING THE INCLUSIONARY ZONING REQUIREMENT IS STILL MAKING ITS WAY THROUGH OUR PLANNING BOARD AND HOPEFULLY WILL BE BEFORE THIS BODY BY THE SPRING FOR OUR CONSIDERATION AND, I HOPE, PASSAGE.

MAYBE WE CAN ALSO TAKE A LOOK AT THE RENT STABILIZATION INITIATIVE BROUGHT TO US BY FRUSTRATED TENANTS, BUT DEFEATED AT THE BALLOT BOX AFTER THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY SPENT HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS. MANY IN THE COMMUNITY SAID THE PROPOSAL HAD SOME GOOD IDEAS, BUT OVERALL WENT TOO FAR. PERHAPS WE CAN FIND A WAY TO UNITE BEHIND ITS BETTER IDEAS AND SEE IF

WE CAN PUT SOME PIECES IN PLACE TO FURTHER PROTECT OUR TENANTS.

BUT WHAT CAN WE DO THAT MIGHT HAVE BROAD SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY?

WHAT I HEAR MORE THAN ANYTHING FROM BOTH DEVELOPERS AND TENANTS IS THAT IF WE WANT MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING, THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO PROVIDE FUNDING. WHILE I DON'T AGREE THAT THIS IS THE ONLY PATH, I DO AGREE THAT WE HAVE NOT DONE NEARLY ENOUGH TO INVEST OUR OWN RESOURCES INTO THIS CRISIS.

RIGHT NOW OUR HOUSING TRUST FUND HAS JUST UNDER A MILLION DOLLARS AND SINCE ITS INCEPTION, 15 YEARS AGO, IT HAS BARELY SPENT \$600,000. THAT IS LESS THAN \$50,000 A

YEAR. THAT IS OBVIOUSLY A DROP IN THE BUCKET OF WHAT WE NEED. THE HOUSING COMMITTEE CERTAINLY RECOGNIZES THIS GAP, AS THEY HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING, FOR SOME TIME, HOW WE COULD CAPITALIZE THE FUND. SO, TODAY, LET ME PROPOSE A GOAL AND A POSSIBLE PATH FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION.

THE GOAL? INJECT \$10M DOLLARS INTO THE FUND BY THE END OF 2019.

YES, \$10M DOLLARS. WHY? BECAUSE AN INVESTMENT OF THAT SIZE COULD LEVERAGE UPWARDS OF \$50-\$60M IN ADDITIONAL MONEY TOWARD OUR HOUSING CRISIS. IT CAN BE USED FOR SMALL INVESTMENTS TO FILL A FINANCIAL GAP IN A HOUSING PROJECT. IT CAN MAKE A LARGE INVESTMENT, WHEN A DEVELOPER PLEDGES SUBSTANTIAL RETURN FOR THE

COMMUNITY. IT CAN HELP WITH MUCH NEEDED UP-FRONT DEVELOPMENT COSTS OR IT CAN HELP ON THE BACK END OF BUILDING THE UNITS THEMSELVES. IT COULD HELP KICKSTART MORE HOUSING FIRST PROJECTS, A GOAL THIS COUNCIL HAS BEEN WORKING ON FOR YEARS.

AND IF WE DIDN'T WANT TO PUT ALL OF THE MONEY IN THE HOUSING TRUST, SOME OF IT COULD BE USED TO HELP WITH SOME OF THE GREAT IDEAS THE HOUSING COMMITTEE IS CURRENTLY LOOKING AT. ONE WOULD BROADEN THE INCOME GUIDELINES OF OUR TENANT BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. ANOTHER WOULD CREATE A FIRST TIME HOMEBUYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THOSE JUST STARTING OUT. YET ANOTHER WOULD CREATE A FORECLOSURE PREVENTION PROGRAM TO KEEP PEOPLE IN HOMES DURING ROUGH TIMES.

THESE ARE SMART IDEAS THAT COULD HAVE A REAL IMPACT, BUT THEY NEED MONEY. A PORTION OF THE \$10M COULD GET ALL THESE PROGRAMS OFF THE GROUND AND STABILIZED FOR YEARS.

SO, THE TEN MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION, OF COURSE, IS HOW DO WE FIND THE MONEY? FIRST, I PROPOSE WE START OUT WITH THE \$3M WE RECEIVED FROM THE SALE OF THE WEX PROPERTY ON THE WATERFRONT. NEXT, BASED ON OUR INCLUSIONARY ZONING REQUIREMENTS, I BELIEVE ANOTHER MILLION WILL COME IN BY THE END OF 2019, BRINGING US TO \$5M WHEN YOU INCLUDE WHAT WE CURRENTLY HAVE IN THE FUND. FOR THE REMAINING \$5M, I WOULD ASK THIS BODY TO SEND A BOND OUT TO THE VOTERS. BORROWING RATES ARE STILL AT ALL TIME LOWS AND THE VOTERS OF PORTLAND

HAVE CLEARLY SHOWN THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO INVEST IN OUR CAPITAL NEEDS.

WILL \$10M IN OUR HOUSING TRUST FUND COMPLETELY SOLVE THE HOUSING CRISIS? OF COURSE NOT. BUT USING THAT TEN MILLION TO LEVERAGE TENS OF MILLIONS OF STATE, FEDERAL AND PRIVATE MONEY WILL HAVE A DEEP AND LASTING IMPACT. AND WITH THE INCREASED REVENUE FROM THE PROPERTY TAXES GAINED BY THESE INVESTMENTS, I BELIEVE WE WOULD MORE THAN OFFSET THE INTEREST EXPENSE FROM THE BORROWING.

BUT EVEN IF THE INCREASED TAXES DIDN'T COVER THE COST OF THE BOND, THE FACT THAT WE WOULD BE PUTTING HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF NEW UNITS ON THE MARKET, AND CREATING HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF NEW

CONSTRUCTION JOBS, IS WELL WORTH THE PRICE. THIS IS WHAT WE NEED TO PROTECT OUR MIDDLE CLASS AND WORKING FAMILIES. THIS IS WHAT WE NEED TO KEEP PORTLAND FROM BECOMING A CITY OF HAVES AND HAVE NOTS.

NEXT, LET'S TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE. LAST YEAR, IN THIS SPEECH, I CHALLENGED US TO MAKE 2040 OUR GOAL FOR BECOMING CARBON NEUTRAL. I APPRECIATE THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE FOR TAKING THAT CHALLENGE SERIOUSLY AND PASSING A RESOLVE, UNANIMOUSLY AFFIRMED BY THIS BODY, THAT PUTS US ON A PATH TO DO JUST THAT. BUT NOW THAT WE HAVE SET THE GOAL, WE MUST CONTINUE PUTTING THE PIECES IN PLACE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

TO ENSURE OUR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY, WE MUST TAKE THE FIRST STEP OF UPDATING OUR DECADE-OLD CLIMATE ACTION PLAN. THIS WAS A GOAL FOR THE LAST COUNCIL YEAR, BUT WITH ALL THEIR OTHER WORK, THE COMMITTEE SIMPLY RAN OUT OF TIME. BUT THIS YEAR I HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE THEY WILL TAKE IT UP. IT WILL ALSO TAKE RESOURCES TO GET THE HELP WE NEED TO DO THE ANALYSIS, SO HOPEFULLY WE CAN FIND THOSE MONIES IN OUR BUDGET.

BUT WHILE THEY WORK ON THAT PLAN AND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS, THERE ARE SOME STEPS THAT WE AS A CITY COULD TAKE TO CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY TOWARD A CLEANER MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE. FOR INSTANCE, AS ELECTRIC VEHICLES BECOME MORE AFFORDABLE, IT IS

IMPORTANT THAT THE INFRASTRUCTURE BE IN PLACE TO SUPPORT THEM.

CURRENTLY, THE CITY HAS PUBLIC EV CHARGING STATIONS IN THE ELM, TEMPLE AND SPRING STREET GARAGES, BUT ONLY ONE FUELING PUMP PER GARAGE. IN OTHER CITIES SIMILAR IN SIZE TO US, THEY DEDICATE ENTIRE FLOORS. AND MANY CITIES ALLOW PEOPLE TO PARK ELECTRIC VEHICLES, AT BOTH PUBLIC GARAGES OR AT METERS, FOR FREE. WE SHOULD CONSIDER DOING THE SAME.

AND WHILE WE'RE AT IT, LET'S PUT FREE CHARGING STATIONS AT ALL OUR SCHOOL PARKING LOTS, SO TEACHERS CAN DRIVE ELECTRIC TO WORK AND NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS CAN CHARGE THEIR CARS OVERNIGHT WHEN SCHOOL IS NOT IN SESSION.

AND WHILE WE ARE PUTTING IN ALL THESE EV STATIONS, WE MUST ALSO START REPLACING ALL NEW VEHICLES PURCHASED ANNUALLY FOR THE CITY, WITH EITHER ELECTRIC OR HYBRID. THEY EVEN MAKE ELECTRIC POLICE CRUISERS NOW.

ANOTHER EASY STEP WE CAN TAKE IS TO SWITCH THE CITY'S ELECTRIC PLAN OVER TO RENEWABLE. AND MAYBE WE CAN EVEN ALLOW PEOPLE IN THE CITY TO OPT INTO OUR PLAN, AS A WAY TO CROWDSOURCE FOR BIGGER SAVINGS.

I KNOW WE ARE ALSO LOOKING AT NEW RULES FOR BIKESHARE PROGRAMS. LET'S GET THAT DONE THIS YEAR, SO WE CAN HELP DE-CONGEST DOWNTOWN.

AND FINALLY, WE MUST UP OUR GAME IN REGARD TO INCREASING OUR SOLAR ENERGY EFFORTS. WE ARE STILL BEING LAPPED BY NEW ENGLAND NEIGHBORS FROM BURLINGTON TO MANCHESTER TO BOSTON TO PROVIDENCE IN PER CAPITA SOLAR POWER PRODUCTION. A *SOLARIZE PORTLAND* PROGRAM IS ONE WAY TO BEGIN TO CATCH UP, ACTING AS A BULK BUYING CLUB FOR SOLAR PANELS. TOWNS AROUND US LIKE BRUNSWICK, BATH, AND FREEPORT ALREADY HAVE SOLARIZE PROGRAMS AND PORTLAND SHOULD TOO. ANOTHER IS TO BOND SOLARIZATION OF MORE PORTLAND BUILDINGS. EXEMPTING SOLAR UPGRADES TO PRIVATE HOMES FROM VALUATION OR PROVIDING REBATES WOULD ALSO INCENTIVIZE MORE SOLARIZATION ACROSS THE CITY.

ALL OF THESE ARE EASY, LOW-HANGING FRUIT THAT WILL ALLOW US TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT AND MEASURABLE STRIDES TOWARD OUR GOAL OF BEING CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2040.

AND FINALLY, LETS TALK ABOUT EDUCATION. AS MENTIONED EARLIER, WE TOOK A TREMENDOUS STEP FORWARD LAST YEAR WHEN WE PASSED THE FOUR SCHOOL BOND. CREATING EQUITY IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KID WAS ESSENTIAL TO BUILDING THE KIND OF ENVIRONMENT WHERE EVERY CHILD CAN LEARN. THIS YEAR, LET'S TAKE THE LOGICAL NEXT STEP.

IT IS TIME FOR PORTLAND TO FINALLY ACHIEVE OUR SCHOOL BOARD'S 2010 STATED GOAL OF UNIVERSAL, ALL DAY, FREE QUALITY PRE-K FOR EVERY FOUR YEAR OLD IN THE CITY OF PORTLAND.

I AM SURE I DON'T HAVE TO GO INTO ALL THE RESEARCH ON WHY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IS SO IMPORTANT FOR LEARNING. BUT SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT WHEN YOU BOIL IT ALL DOWN TO WHAT THE EXPERTS UNDERSTAND. WHAT TEACHERS UNDERSTAND. WHAT PARENTS UNDERSTAND. IT IS SIMPLY THAT THOSE STUDENTS WHO GO THROUGH QUALITY PRE-K PROGRAMS ARE BETTER PREPARED FOR KINDERGARTEN THAN THOSE WHO DON'T. AND WHEN YOU START KINDERGARTEN BETTER PREPARED, YOU ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO ACHIEVE LONG-TERM EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS. AND WHEN YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO ACHIEVE LONG TERM EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS, YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO ACHIEVE LONG TERM SUCCESS IN LIFE.

ACCORDING TO THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL PRE-K RESULTS IN A 23% REDUCTION IN THE MATH ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND A 43% REDUCTION IN READING ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR STUDENTS WHO BENEFITTED FROM HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K EXPERIENCES VS THOSE WHO DIDN'T.

THINK OF HOW MANY PARENTS WILL WANT TO MOVE HERE, IF WE HAVE FREE UNIVERSAL QUALITY PRE-K? THINK OF HOW MANY PARENTS WILL WANT TO STAY. THINK OF HOW BUSINESSES WILL WANT TO EMPLOY OUR GRADUATES IF THEY KNOW EVERY KID IN OUR SYSTEM HAD AN ADDITIONAL YEAR OF EDUCATION?

I APPLAUD THE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S LEADERSHIP IN ADDING PRE-K CLASSROOMS OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS.

CURRENTLY, 120 OF OUR 4 YEAR OLDS ARE BEING SERVED EACH YEAR. EVEN SO, WE ARE STILL ONLY MEETING 25% OF THE NEED.

THANKFULLY, IN THE PAST YEAR, AT THE DIRECTION OF OUR SCHOOL BOARD, OUR SUPERINTENDENT HAS BEEN ANALYZING THE PROGRAM AND PUTTING TOGETHER A PLAN TO IMPLEMENT SOMETHING UNIVERSAL WITH THE HIGHEST STANDARDS. WHAT WILL ULTIMATELY BE NEEDED TO MAKE THIS A REALITY, ARE THE RESOURCES.

AND THAT IS WHERE THIS BODY COMES IN. THE SCHOOL BOARD WILL FINALIZE THE DETAILS OF THE HIGH QUALITY CURRICULUM, THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE STRUCTURE NEEDED TO SERVE EVERY KID, AND THE PROGRAMMING TO ANNUALLY SERVE ALL 500 4-YEAR OLDS IN THE CITY. BUT I WILL LOOK TO

THIS BODY TO ASSIST WITH COMING UP WITH THE RESOURCES NEEDED.

THE TOTAL COST TO HAVE UNIVERSAL PRE-K IS ESTIMATED TO BE UNDER \$2 MILLION DOLLARS. WE ALREADY HAVE HALF A MILLION BUDGETED FOR THE PAST PROGRAMMING, LEAVING US WITH LESS THAN 1.5M TO RAISE.

SO, LET ME BE CLEAR. YES, I AM ADVOCATING THAT WE PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO THE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL. NOT FOR THEM TO CUT ELSEWHERE AND ROB PETER TO PAY PAUL. I DO NOT BELIEVE OUR SCHOOL BUDGET IS FAT OR WASTEFUL. IN FACT, I BELIEVE JUST THE OPPOSITE. THIS STEP MUST BE SEEN AS A REQUIREMENT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS, NOT A LUXURY THAT WE CAN ONLY AFFORD IF WE CUT SOMETHING ELSE.

THAT IS WHY I WANT US, IN 2018, TO SEND TO VOTERS A REFERENDUM ASKING IF THEY ARE WILLING TO PAY FOR A HIGH QUALITY UNIVERSAL PRE-K PROGRAM THAT WOULD BEGIN IN THE FALL OF 2019. PUTTING IT TO A VOTE OF THE PUBLIC IS NOT REQUIRED AT THIS STAGE OF THE PLANNING, BUT I BELIEVE THAT IF WE WANT TO DO SOMETHING THIS SIGNIFICANT, WE SHOULD GIVE OUR RESIDENTS A DIRECT VOICE. AND IF THEY VOTE IT DOWN, THEN SO BE IT. BUT I AM CONFIDENT THAT WHATEVER THE SHORT-TERM COST, OUR COMMUNITY WILL PUT KIDS FIRST.

LET'S MAKE 2018 THE YEAR WE VOTE YES TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRE-K FOR OUR GREAT CITY.

SO, THOSE ARE THE POLICIES I AM PROUD WE PASSED IN 2017 AND THE POLICIES I BELIEVE WE MUST FOCUS ON IN THE YEAR AHEAD. WE HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES AS A CITY, AND AS A COUNCIL. AND WE SHOULD BE VERY PROUD. BUT WE STILL CLEARLY HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO TO ENSURE OUR PROGRESS CONTINUES.

WE GOVERN AND LEAD THE GREATEST CITY IN MAINE. THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ENGINE OF MAINE. WE WILL BE DOING PORTLAND A DISSERVICE IF WE REST ON OUR LAURELS, AND I WOULD BE DERELICT IN MY DUTIES IF I DIDN'T CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR US TO DO OUR BEST.

YES, THIS BODY WILL HAVE MORE DISAGREEMENTS IN 2018.

YES, THESE DISAGREEMENTS MAY SELL PAPERS AND
INCREASE CLICKS.

BUT YES, WE ALSO KNOW DIFFERENTLY ABOUT WHAT HAS
BEEN HAPPENING IN THIS CHAMBER AND IN THESE HALLS.

WE HAVE BEEN ACHIEVING RESULTS BY WORKING TOGETHER.
BY LISTENING TO OUR CONSTITUENTS. AND BY BEING WILLING
TO PUSH EACH OTHER TO EXCELLENCE.

BUT WE ONLY ACHIEVED AS MUCH AS WE DID BECAUSE OF
YOU WATCHING TONIGHT. YOU WHO LIVE AND WORK IN THIS
CITY. YOU WHO COME TO THIS CHAMBER AND TESTIFY. YOU
WHO SEND EMAILS AND CALL. YOU WHO STOP EVERY ONE OF
US ON THE STREET AND TELL US WHAT YOU WANT FOR YOUR
FUTURE.

I MENTIONED EARLIER THAT WHEN I RAN FOR THIS OFFICE I WOULD BE YOUR LISTENER IN CHIEF. THAT REMAINS MY FOCUS. WHETHER YOU CHOOSE TO WHISPER, TALK OR YELL, I WILL LISTEN. BECAUSE THAT IS THE ONLY WAY WE WILL CONTINUE BRINGING PORTLAND TOGETHER. NOW, LET'S GET TO WORK.

THANK YOU.