

## STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

### A JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BOARD CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

March 6, 2017

5:30 PM

Present:

- City Council: Dumont, McCallion, Messier, Cameron and Paradis.
- School Board: Austin, Rivers, Bolduc, Hiller, Yoder.

City Manager Belmore welcomed all and introduced Mayor Hilliard at 5:30pm.

Mayor Hilliard presented his State of the City Address:

Honorable members of the City Council, School Board, City and School Officials, citizens of Somersworth;

The state of our City is our journey on what many believed was the “Never Forever Endeavor”.

The ending of the roar of the industrial machines of the once great mills, ushered in a dark chapter for our community. The closing of the mills brought the era of the shoe shops but as so often occurs, this too, would end. As the shoe shops closed, another industrial giant chose to call Somersworth its home; General Electric. They brought with them the hope of jobs and growth. Then, after decades of generational employment opportunities, commitment and engagement within our Hilltop city, their gates and openness also closed.

Each shift, each closing, and adjustment took its toll on our small Yankee community. Downtown businesses which were etched in family traditions, became vacant. The demographics of neighborhoods fell victim to the promises of urban renewal, and for a period it seemed that the Hilltopper spirit, the engine, that had driven the success of Somersworth since 1729 had lost its energy. Throughout our community, within the surviving local restaurants, coffee shops and bars, the optimism which was once the foundation of Somersworth's identity had been replaced with a repertoire of lost spirit, "that will never happen" and "Somersworth is now Scumersworth."

This loss of spirit was further echoed by a lack of cooperation, communication and collaboration between elected bodies and city agencies. The construction of superficial silos and the belief that each body and municipal and school employees actions, had no cause or effect upon the community as a whole, brought on a time line of stagnation, lack of vision and settling for non Hilltopper values.

For a period, Somersworth became foreign to itself. Absent of its identity, foundation, direction, history and future. Yet, even those who were the naysayers never really gave up. As all of those who are New Englander's know, even the most critical and grumpy Yankee, never surrenders their commitment to their hometown.

Each negative comment was masked with the challenge of seeking improvement. Each criticism, was the kick of motivation needed to discover solutions, communicate, work together, innovate and lead. Those who truly love the home we call Somersworth, never gave up and only sought the unwavering commitment of those that stepped forward to lead, to do just that; lead.

**Lead**; our community down the path on its new journey towards greatness and success. Of aggressively marketing and selling Somersworth, continuing the development of our downtown business district, and attracting new entrepreneurs and business leaders to our community.

**Lead**; our community, by not settling for anything less than we deserve, by seeking innovative ways to deliver on the best of the best, with each project or service we embark upon.

**Lead**; by utilizing the investment of the Idlehurst elementary school and new CTC center as community centers for all citizens and local organizations.

**Lead**; by ensuring that our students have access to 21century education and learning opportunities, and continuing to demand that the state and federal government honor their partnership and obligation in this commitment.

**Lead**; by continuing to ensure that our first responders and law enforcement have the tools necessary to keep us safe, as well as competitive salaries which keep them in Somersworth, and a state of the art fire station.

**Lead**; by continuing our commitment to developing a sustainable Somersworth. By lessening each citizen's eco footprint, by creating local programs and incentives which harbor environmentally friendly policies and practices.

**Lead**; by following the master plan of the drug task force, offering our hearts and community to those who seek treatment of addition. While balancing our aggressive approach to those who wish to poison Somersworth with heroin and opioids.

**Lead**; by modeling the cooperation of government between elected bodies. By showing how our local government of a Mayor, City Manager, City Council, School Board, and municipal boards can rise above ego, self-service and hidden agendas in the name of progress and a commitment to Somersworth. This collaboration and cooperation have been the spirit of driving further commitment from all government employees. The

modeling we give as local elected leaders continues the energy within city hall, the school system and throughout our community as we continue on our journey of reaching our Vision 2020 goals and ensuring a “Bright Future” for all.

I welcome all leaders in Washington or Concord who need the courage to abandon the practices of partisanship and political polarization, to visit the Hilltop city. Upon the conclusion of your visit you will be retaught the principals of democracy; honoring differences, practicing civility and leading in the name of your city, state, nation and not thyself.

**Lead**; by continuing our investment and commitment to roads, sidewalks and infrastructure improvements.

**Lead**; honoring, celebrating, and learning from our differences. Building a community which is welcoming to ALL. Adding to the mosaic which has made our community desirable for all who seek liberty, hope and true brother and sisterhood. Standing by those values and defending them when necessary from policies in Washington or Concord which might be counter to our Hilltopper values.

We've achieved many successes and continue to be “On the Move”! because we continue to believe in ourselves, our neighbors, and our community. We overcame our fears of “If I Never Forever Endeavor”.

As an educator by trade, all who know me both inside and outside of the school environment can attest for my love of children books. One only needs to venture into the children’s section of any bookstore to discover the adult messages of encouragement and reflection within their pages.

“If I Never Forever Endeavor” written by New Englander Holly Meade from Sedgwick Maine, reminds us, of all we have achieved as a community, by overcoming our fears. It inspires us to continue to soar, to honor our “Proud Past” and “Bright Future”.

Mayor Hilliard read, “If I Never Forever Endeavor” by Holly Meade

It is the spirit of togetherness and honoring each other which has lead us out of our nest to once again soar. It is the ability to listen to each other, to communicate in respectful ways and to not allow un-neighborly attacks which has kept Somersworth a shining beacon for those who wish to experience the best of Yankeeism. We are once again flying, where our journey will lead is up to us, it is now uninhibited. There will be storms and strong winds along the journey. There will be times when we need to rest, breath and reevaluate our direction.

However, this is our journey, our destiny and our home. Together we have left the nest honoring our “Proud Past” and together soar towards our “Bright Future”.

We are a community, We are “On the Move”, We are achieving progress and greatness,  
WE ARE SOMERSWORTH!!!!!!

City Manager Belmore introduced Director of Finance, Scott Smith.

Director Smith presented the financial situation of the City. The largest revenue source is Taxes; receipts are at 99%, with a total receipts at 97%, which is historically where we would be. FY 2017 General Fund Budget is about \$12mil. As of February 24, 2017, the general fund expended 67% of appropriations; they are watching Public Works for winter operations. Historically, expenditures fall within 98% of appropriations.

City Council policy is to maintain a Fund Balance between 5-17% of total appropriations. Fund Balance is currently at 9.04%, which is very strong and in the middle of the policy. There was no new debt authorized this year, and a final payment on a \$5,000,000 High School renovation bond was made this year.

For the Enterprise funds, water increased \$1.84mil and sewer increased, \$2.2mil

City Manager Belmore presented various approved CIP projects for FY2017. He also spoke on the Brownfields Grants, which will be used for the cleanup of the former Bretons Cleaners property.

Director of Planning and Community Development, Shanna Saunders, presented the DOT Transportation Alternatives Program Grant, and outlined what is included in the project and showed a map of the included area.

Director Saunders went on to present the improvements to the Mast Point Dam Recreation area. There was a “City Team” approach to this project with the partnership of Development Services, Recreation, Public Works and Volunteers.

Director Public Works and Utility, Michael Bobinsky, presented the Indigo Hill Road Improvements. They are starting the final phase, Green Street to Davis Street. They are working with the “Complete Streets” approach. The duration of the project is expected to be April 17<sup>th</sup> through September 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be road closures during this time. Director Bobinsky also shared that the department has acquired 2 new trucks.

Police Chief David Kretschmar shared information on the new SUV-style police vehicles; Ford Explorers. He also presented the various community events that the Police Departments participates in; National Night Out, community and crime prevention presentations, crime prevention and victimization of Senior Citizens, and pizza with the Police program.

Fire Chief Keith Hoyle said they have responded 1400 emergency calls and have completed 800 inspections and permits. The Fire Department is involved in various Community outreach programs, including Fire Department Open House, visits to schools, elementary classes visit to the department, and Elderly fire safety classes.

City Manager Belmore spoke about Community Events; Bluegrass Festival, Christmas Parade, Indonesian Festival, and Children's Festival. He announced the 2017 Food Truck Festival which will be held on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Superintendent of Schools, Jeni Mosca presented the 5 imperatives; life-long learners, effective communicators, critical thinking, active and engaged citizens, personal wellness.

Superintendent Mosca read "Each Kindness" by Jaqueline Wilson.

School Board Chair, Don Austin presented the schools' budgeted revenues and expenditures and stated that it is right on target at this point.

City Manager Belmore said that the City is fortunate to have the volunteers that we have on the various committees and boards. He thanked the elected officials, as well as Superintendent Mosca and her staff. He said, we are on the move and our bright future is ahead of us.

The State of the City Address concluded at 6:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Trish Harris, City Clerk