

**Inaugural Address
Mayor Mark A. Cayer
City of Lewiston**



Good Evening:

I would like to welcome all of you here tonight to the 2020 Mayoral Inauguration and the swearing in ceremony of the Lewiston City Council and the Lewiston School Committee.

I'm grateful and I'm humbled that the community has entrusted me to serve as your next Mayor.

I am also very fortunate to share this stage tonight with a slate of elected officials who have an undeniable passion for our community. The community has elected a diverse group to lead this great city. When I look at the new slate of leaders, I see

diversity in age, gender, race, and political beliefs. This diversity will work to our advantage. If we, as elected officials, take the time to really listen to each other, and if we understand and consider different viewpoints in our decision-making, I promise you that we will move forward policy that will be truly representative of the community and it will be sustainable for future generations.

Serving in an elected position at the local level is never easy—but it is always rewarding. Our decisions over the next two years will directly impact our neighbors’ lives. Because this is true, service to our community must always be uppermost on our agenda. As local elected officials, we must advocate for our constituents as a whole, compromise when possible, and debate passionately when necessary. But always in the spirit of service. The creators of the Lewiston City Charter made it very clear that partisan politics has no place at the local level. I promise our community that I will lead by example by adhering to this directive, and that I will reflect on our “yesterdays” as I work for our successful and prosperous “tomorrows.”

Earlier this evening, Mayor Cloutier welcomed our many distinguished guests. I want to echo that welcome to all of you, and I am especially honored to have the Governor of our great State present with us tonight. Many of you may know that Governor Mills called Lewiston home for many years. So, Governor ... to coin a phrase ... “Welcome Home.”

Please indulge me while I take a moment to thank some really important people in my life. As most of you know, serving at the local level can be very time-consuming, and local officials are pulled in many directions. After a decade of service to my community, I know it would not be possible for me to serve without the support of my wife Susan, my son Mark Jr. and his wife Katrina, and my son Michael and his wife Hannah. Also here tonight are Sue’s and my five grandchildren: Kiarra, Gavin, Mark III, Natalie, and Lexi. My family goes above and beyond supporting me so that I can serve our community. Sue, Mark, Katrina, Mike and Hannah – – – thank you and I love you all.

Oh, and for the record, we learned recently that Mike and Hannah will be adding another grandchild to our family. Rest

assured, Governor Mills, that my family is doing our part to help you meet your recently-released workforce goals!

Four years ago, I sat in the audience like all of you this evening and watched Kristen Cloutier be elected by her peers as the Council President. During her speech, she mentioned filling my shoes as my term as Council President ended. Then she became Mayor – – – and has served the city well. I now have some awfully big shoes to fill. While new leadership brings with it new goals and priorities, I recognize some great work started by Mayor Cloutier and I will support the ongoing work she started or supported dealing with questions of equity and with the problem of lead paint poisoning in our community. Please join me in thanking Mayor Kristen Cloutier for her past service and her continuing dedication to the City of Lewiston.

I also want to thank the many, many public servants that I have served with over the years.

While it would take too long to mention all of them by name, tonight I would like to single out a few special colleagues: former

City Councilors Senator Nate Libby, Mayor Kristen Cloutier, Steve Morgan, Renee Bernier, and School Committee members Monique Roy and Megan Parks. Each of these individuals challenged me, when necessary, to be a better servant to this community. Over the years, I developed a professional and personal friendship with each of them.

Our relationships were not built on our agreements. In fact, I think our bonds were made stronger because we didn't agree all of the time. We challenged each other in ways that showed great respect. At times we debated passionately, but we sought compromise – looking for lasting policy changes that benefited our community. I know that they have been, and will continue to be, powerful voices for our community, and I look forward to working with each of them over the coming years.

And finally, of course, I want to thank you, the many community members who are here tonight and to thank also the many residents and taxpayers who could not be here to celebrate with us. To them and to you I say that, over the course of the next two years, you will see a Mayor who focuses every day on the

future of our community. You will see a Mayor who truly is a champion for all that is good in our community.

That's not to say that we don't have our problems. Like many communities in our state and across the nation, we face challenges that must be addressed. So let's acknowledge these challenges and be accountable for them. Lewiston faces an above average poverty rate, we have a growing and more visible homeless population, some of our community members suffer from untreated mental health and substance abuse problems, we have children who continue to be poisoned by lead paint in some of the oldest multi-family housing stock in the state, we have some troubling crime patterns, and we – like the nation – have the hateful noise on social media coming at us from all directions.

With the acknowledgment of our challenges, we must all ask ourselves: “Do our challenges define us as a community?” If so, that sounds like a pretty negative definition!

I prefer to define us as a community in this way:

We are Lewiston, Maine, the second largest community in the state. We were for many years a cultural and industrial powerhouse, and like many other industrial cities suffered a decline caused by a number of socio-economic factors. But as a city, we diversified and bounced back from that decline.

Let's see what we look like today.

We are a racially and ethnically diverse community. We enjoy the richness and traditions of several cultures.

We boast a number of businesses, large and small, that do everything from building automated storage equipment, to baking bread, to publishing almanacs, to making world-class musical instruments.

We host the Historic Bates Mill Complex that in its hay day provided 6000 mostly low paying jobs. Today the complex provides over 3000 jobs that are mostly well above living wage. I expect that soon this complex will be at or near 4500 jobs with even more to come.

We receive excellent health care from two state-of-the-art medical centers: Central Maine Medical Center and St. Mary's Regional Medical Center,

We have a public library that houses nearly 160,000 items and is the home of the Marsden Hartley Cultural Center.

We have a local award-winning newspaper, the Sun Journal.

We are home to three museums: the Bates College Museum of Art, the Atrium Gallery at the University of Southern Maine, and Museum LA that celebrates the history of the textile, shoe, and brick-making industries in Lewiston.

To educate our citizens, we have four Colleges and Universities, a respected Regional Vocational Technical Center, a High School, a Middle School, and five Elementary Schools with one of them being the largest elementary schools in the state. We have an adult education system that contributes to a work ready workforce every day.

Our rich heritage is reflected in the fact that we have no fewer than 44 listings on the Register of Historic Places.

We boast a vibrant arts scene that includes the Public Theater, LA Arts, the Bates College Dance Festival, the Olin Arts Center, and The Gendron Franco Center. We have a working community of local artists and artisans with many renting studios within our downtown.

We have celebrated our interests and diversity as a community at the Emerge Film Festival, the Great Falls Balloon Festival, the Liberty Festival, the Greek Festival, World Refugee Day, and maybe one day we could bring back the Franco Festival or better yet a festival that truly celebrates all of the diversity in our community.

We raise money for cancer patients by hosting The Patrick Dempsey Challenge.

We have a top-notch Police Department, Fire Department and Public Works Department that are second to none. These

being our three largest departments, but rest assured all of our departments and employees are respected statewide.

We have a public school system with new and exciting leadership. Our schools are filled to the brim with talented and caring teachers and support staff.

Most of us live in quiet neighborhoods, on clean, tree-lined streets.

We recreate in several parks, big and small, scattered throughout the city, including Marcotte Park being home to the first-in-Maine universally accessible playground. In addition, Simard-Payne Memorial Park, on our riverfront, is dedicated to two fallen local heroes.

Our downtown and outlying regions boast a variety of restaurants, shops, and small businesses that encompass everything from Halal markets to ice cream shops and much more.

We are home to the only Basilica in Maine, the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, and several other places of worship. Most are active, but some have been transformed for other cultural uses. You're sitting in one right now.

We host the largest Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce in the State and an active Downtown Business Association both doing amazing work for our local economy. The downtown is the heart of our community and must be vibrant, but let us remember the backbone of our business community reaches far beyond our downtown.

Our residents are kind, welcoming, talented, and industrious. We have passionate advocates working hard every day to better our community. We have talented city leaders and department heads who work every day for the same purpose.

THAT'S who we are! And more! And, as a city, THAT'S how we should define ourselves.

Let us all remember that our commitments, our attitudes, our values, and our words all count.

As many of you know, during my journey to become mayor of Lewiston I personally knocked on over 4000 doors. I heard many community members' opinions and hopes for our city. After the election, I continued to meet with community members, with local developers, with leaders of nonprofits, with both hospital presidents, and with most of our higher education leaders including President Spencer of Bates College. I have commitments from all of them including the hospitals, Bates, and USM to strengthen our partnerships. For the next two years, I will continue to work with all of them in order to make our city an even better place.

As the Mayor leading us into the next decade, I understand that economic development and community well-being are two very different things, but neither can be sustainable without the other. As a community, we must focus on enhancing a strong and vibrant local economy that's built to serve our residents; we must enhance our place by investing in ourselves first.

The Healthy Homes transformation plan is an excellent start at improving our community well-being, and a great example of investing in ourselves, but we must remember that community well-being goes beyond the “Tree Streets.” Every neighborhood in our community has its strengths and challenges. Every neighborhood must feel as important to the community as the next neighborhood—because they are!

For our downtown, with Lewiston’s available mill space, we have the perfect location for artisans and entrepreneurs. Lewiston is ideal for companies large and small looking to relocate. When developers and visitors from around the state see that our community supports and values a strong local economy, those developers and investors will take notice. We must, as a community, make sure that our positive message is heard and that it drowns out any negative voices coming from within.

For our long-time local businesses, it’s time to find ways to restructure our investments so that they are just as accessible to local investors. Let’s create small TIFs and TIF districts that are

designed to enhance our local economy first. When we roll out that red carpet for that potential outside investor or developer looking to relocate to Lewiston, let us not forget to roll it out for the local artist, artisans and entrepreneurs looking to start a new locally grown business.

And we must ask ourselves, in our efforts around economic development, planning and code enforcement are we treating local investors and landlords like the customers they are? These are all questions that should be addressed.

As you can see, we – the Lewiston City Council, the School Committee, as well as our dedicated city and school leaders and staff – have our work cut out for us. But we can't do it alone.

Achieving our goals will take a community excited about being a community. It will take a community coming alive to create and support a strong local economy. It will take neighbors helping neighbors to create community well-being.

And so, we (all of us on stage tonight) ask you to join us, to share your ideas, to contribute your talents, and to help us create a rich, – diverse, – inviting, – exciting, – and prosperous future for the City of Lewiston.

Thank you.