
Mayor

Mayor Carl L. Sheline Inaugural Address January 3, 2022

Good evening, I am honored to be standing before you tonight.

I believe in Lewiston, and I am not alone. I kicked off my campaign by walking the streets and neighborhoods of this city. I knocked on over 2,000 doors which resulted in hundreds of conversations. I met people who just moved to town. I spoke with a woman who had lived here her whole life and has absolutely no intention of moving to Florida. I spoke with a man who moved here from Somalia and a couple who moved here from Quebec 40 years ago—their accents still as thick as ever.

I encountered college professors, electricians, and nurses. I witnessed the incredible diversity of this great city going street by street and door to door, and I am happy to report to you tonight that belief in Lewiston is rampant and unshakable. This unifying theme of pride of place knew no boundaries. It existed across all quarters of the city without regard to ethnicity or profession. Lewistonians are proudly so.

Where does this unfaltering faith in Lewiston come from? Residents are keenly aware of the challenges and obstacles that we face. Indeed, there were many conversations about our future as a city, what lies ahead, and the best ways to proceed. Even so, the optimism for Lewiston persisted. Why? I would submit to you this evening that the struggles we have faced collectively as a city make us who we are.

This city has been through so much. We've built mills for textiles and then rebuilt them for the information age. We welcomed people from other countries and then lived and worked with each other as partners in success. Over the past 200 years, Lewiston overcame adversity at every turn, and that process has yielded a strong sense of shared identity for all of us. From generation to generation, resilience has become the fabric of our society.

We believe in Lewiston. What does this really mean? It's the unspoken understanding that the number of opportunities we have ahead of us are far greater than the struggles we face. We believe that the scales are tipped in our favor, and this gives us hope.

We need everyone to help move Lewiston forward. The politics and policies of exclusion hold us apart and hold us back. Every single resident deserves respect and compassion. Regard and consideration need to be at the core of everything we do.

How do we lift each other up and by extension, raise the prosperity and profile of our entire city? This is what we need to think about, first as individuals and then together as a city. We need to start with the premise that every single resident has profound value. Worth is not measured by what street you live on or where you go to work. Value is not calculated by what you did in the past or what you plan to do in the future. Humanity has innate worth. This will become a guiding principle for this city.

Armed with our passion and ideals, how do we move Lewiston forward? What's the next step? From my perspective, based on the current times and where the city is at now, we need to start with economic development. If we want to move our economy forward, we need to make our city business friendly and encourage private investment.

I recently spoke to a local business owner. We were discussing property investments; *"Lewiston is turning a corner!"* I told him.

He replied back, *"Carl, we've been turning a corner for the past 10 years."*

Lewiston has changed so much, but his point is well taken. We need clear direction and decisive action to ensure our economic future, and so, tonight, as my first act as Mayor, I am announcing the creation of a Mayoral Committee on Economic Development. I will co-chair this committee with Mark Lee, an architect and the managing partner of Harriman Associates. Mark brings a breadth of experience to this committee, a deep commitment to the City of Lewiston, and I value his leadership.

This committee will take a comprehensive look at economic development for Lewiston. How can we encourage businesses to relocate here? How do we foster support for new businesses and encourage entrepreneurs to start a business? How do we help our current businesses expand? What improvements can we make in city government? How can we

streamline the permit process? We should examine our code and zone ordinances and determine what makes sense going forward. Make no mistake, we need rules and regulations, but we can facilitate the process and make it predictable to encourage growth.

Local businesses have a responsibility and a stake in Lewiston's economic development as well. How do HR managers and recruiters talk about the city with job applicants and new hires? What does your storefront look like? Does your building have graffiti? We need businesses and property owners to realize that they can make a difference too. In fact, the progress that needs to be made on economic development will need equal amounts of effort from both the city and public and private businesses.

The economic development committee will start work immediately. We will have a meeting to establish goals and areas of focus and then meet monthly moving forward to work on our objectives. Your input is valuable, and we anticipate holding public listening sessions in April through October. We will take a census of the progress in December and determine next steps from there.

In Lewiston, our future is bright, and we need to recognize that. I remember a spirited conversation I had with a resident while I was out meeting voters. He was emphatically listing all of the challenges and issues that our city is facing. I understand that we have many things to address, and the solutions to our issues will take real work. There is no minimizing that and I'm ready to put in effort and make difficult decisions, but acknowledgment of the hardships we face can never suppress the optimism that we need going forward.

My response to him was simply *"If you're asking me if we have a lot of challenges, the answer is yes, we do, but we also have an incredible amount of opportunity."*

Each one of us cares about Lewiston, and we will pour that energy into positive change for this city. We will take our belief in Lewiston and turn it into action. Together, we will move Lewiston forward.

Thank you.

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