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INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF MAYOR MARTIN J. WALSH

As prepared for delivery

EMBARGOED until January 6, 2014, 10:00 a.m.

Good Morning.

Chief Justice Ireland, President of Boston College, Father Leahy, Cardinal Sean O'Malley and the other Reverend Clergy attending; Governor Patrick, Senators Warren and Markey; Congressmen Capuano and Lynch and Congresswoman Clark; Speaker DeLeo, Senate President Murray and all my former colleagues in the legislature, good morning to you all.

To the current members of the City Council, congratulations. I look forward to working with you for the people of Boston.

To the former members of the City Council, thank you for your service, and good luck in your new endeavors.

To the Mayors who have led this city before me, and provide me powerful inspiration, and to their families joining us today: Ambassador and Mrs. Ray Flynn; members of the Menino, White, Collins, Hynes, and Fitzgerald families, thank you for being here.

To all the people of Boston, and especially to the first responders who keep us safe, your heroism is what keeps Boston Strong.

We are a city of courage and champions ... of hope and heart.

We are city of second chances and redemption ... a place where hard times have forged character throughout our history.

We are a city of proud families, and neighborhoods with big hearts and welcoming arms that make everyone feel like family.

We are a city of high achievement and creative genius. Our educators, scientists, doctors, and artists are changing the world.

We are city of big dreams, and we have what it takes to make dreams come true.

And if you doubt any of that, look at this kid from Taft Street in Dorchester who's now your Mayor.

I know my mother's not the only one surprised.

Today, we are sworn in together.

Together, we are committing to do all we can for the city we love.

Together, we can move our great city forward.

This past weekend – even in the face of a blizzard -- we came together in community service. We painted our children’s schools, served meals to the homeless, shoveled out some of our neighbors. In the cold of winter, we demonstrated that every season is for service.

We brought our young people together and were energized by their hopes and dreams. On Saturday, I met a young man, formerly troubled, who is now an honor student, and spoke of young people standing up.

We shared a Sunday morning with our seniors, inspired by their experience and the lessons of their lives. I met again the 101-year-old woman who went out and voted for me on Election Day. She invited me to her hundred and second birthday in May. I will be there.

And, at Old South Church yesterday afternoon, we prayed – bringing together across different faiths and traditions, our shared hopes for our city.

Since Election Day, and during our transition, we have invited, welcomed, and applauded thousands of people as they have stepped up and spoken out. And we listened.

More than one thousand people came out on a snowy day to share their ideas at our town hall meeting at Roxbury Community College. More than one thousand people. And we listened.

At our town halls and community meetings; through letters, email and phone calls, you are making your voices heard. I am listening – and I always will.

I will listen. I will learn. I will lead.

The people of Boston aren’t shy about saying what they think – about everything from politics to the Patriots.

But I know you’re just as ready to back up the talk with action. I have seen it every day I’ve lived in this city. And that is every day of my life.

It is the fabric of this city, woven throughout our history.

Boston earned its reputation. This is the city that started the revolution that gave us a nation.

We fought tyranny.

We stood up to slavery.

We opened our doors to immigrants.

And when our gay and lesbian neighbors reminded us of the rights they were being denied, we backed their fight, and helped our Commonwealth become the first to protect those rights in law.

Boston has been called, a “City upon a Hill.” I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard someone use that phrase to make a lofty point.

But let me tell you what I think about when I hear it, with apologies to John Winthrop, the Puritan settler who said it first.

We are a City Upon a Hill, but it's not just the shining light of Beacon Hill.

It's Savin Hill, where I live. It's Bunker Hill, Bellevue Hill and Fort Hill. It's Pope's Hill, Jones Hill, and Telegraph Hill. It's Copp's Hill, Mission Hill and Eagle Hill.

So when I say we are sworn in together, it means we're in this together.

We are in this together – every neighborhood.

We are in this together – every race and religion.

We are in this together, every man, woman and child. For our seniors and our students, for rich and poor, and everyone in between.

We will expand opportunity so it reaches every person in every corner of our city. We cannot tolerate a city divided by privilege and poverty.

We will protect and grow our sense of community. For it is Boston's greatest source of strength.

And we will ensure equality for all: No matter your age, race, religion, sexual orientation. No matter what.

Together, we can create ONE Boston ... one Boston, a hub of opportunity, community, and equality for all.

The work starts now.

My priorities are clear:

Strengthening our economy and creating jobs,

Improving public safety and stopping senseless gun violence;

Ensuring our schools help every child to succeed, and,

Increasing trust and transparency in city government.

These are big goals, but as President Lincoln said, "The best thing about the future is that it comes ONE DAY AT A TIME."

On Day One, today, I will convene a meeting to begin to address senseless violence that scars our city.

I will bring together mothers of children killed by that violence, with members of the law enforcement community who work hard to stop it. Members of the recovery community, who know too well the hard road back from drug and alcohol abuse, and how such abuse contributes to the violence and crime. And people who know what it takes to move away from a life of violence to become productive, contributing neighbors in a safe community.

There were fewer murders last year – 40 homicides in our city. And while that lower number is good news, and a testament to the hard work that has been done, we know, as Acting Police Commissioner Evans said the other day, 40 homicides still represents 40 grieving mothers too many. And I agree.

We know what works. We know there are steps we can take now. We must redouble our efforts, and recommit ourselves to the safety of every citizen in our city. We will do that today and every day I am Mayor.

No parent should worry that a bullet will stop a daughter or son from coming home. No woman should be scared on our streets. No senior should be afraid in their home. And no child should be forced to live with the trauma and the indelible scars of violence.

We must find a way to provide our families and our communities with the help they need when they need it.

Imagine if these kids, these parents had people to help them in times of trauma. Health care professionals and community members serving as volunteers, answering the call whenever a life – and with it, a family and a neighborhood – is torn by violent crime.

We have to make our communities safer to secure a future of opportunity for our kids. But that's not all. We have to make sure every kid gets a great education.

We are known the world over for our great colleges and universities. It's time we had a world-class public school system too.

Every kid in every neighborhood deserves the chance for a pathway to higher education or a good career.

Every kid in Boston deserves a great education that will give them the opportunity to get ahead.

Tomorrow, I will begin conversations with our school committee to launch a nationwide search for the next Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools.

Our acting Superintendent, John McDonough, deserves our thanks for his capable, steady leadership in a tough job – he has earned mine.

I want our next superintendent to be a proven urban education leader who shares my commitment to eliminating the achievement gap, universal early education, high school reform, inclusion programs, dual language programs a new approach to school construction, and expanded, high quality career and technical training.

These are goals we can reach.

Madison Park High School in Roxbury already is being transformed into a world-class career and technical school, by partnering with Roxbury Community College, the business community and the Building Trades. That's the start of realizing my broader vision: I want more kids in more high schools in every neighborhood to have that kind of opportunity, that level of career and technical training.

Study after study has told us that universal early education and these other changes can be transformative. They give every child a more equal chance to thrive and succeed. Yes, these things cost money – but we must find a way.

Education spending is the biggest piece of our city budget. So we start with this principle: Every dollar we spend on education must be put to best and most effective use. That's why I will work with the school committee and acting superintendent to commission a Performance Audit of our school department – a close look not just at where the money is going, but whether it is being spent most effectively and efficiently.

And we can change the way Boston pays for school construction, renovation, and maintenance – another major expense. As a legislator, I supported the creation of the Massachusetts School Building Authority to ensure a fair, transparent and accountable process to make quality school buildings available to every child. Now, as Mayor, I will work to make sure Boston secures its share of equitable state funding as part of a plan to rebuild its long-neglected and antiquated school buildings.

We must take some kind of fresh, innovative approach when it comes to our investments in job creation and economic development.

Different pieces of the economic development puzzle are spread across city government. Too often, it's hard to fit them together. There's duplication and confusion. It's difficult for the city and for the businesses and workers we're trying to help.

I am committed to restructuring the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and to bringing together in a smart, rational and effective way all the parts of city government dealing with job creation and economic development. We can make Boston a leader in streamlined, transparent, and effective job and business growth.

We have to make clear to everyone that Boston is open for business.

That means attracting and growing new businesses and strengthening those already here – from big corporations to small start-ups. It means making certain that all businesses, including minority and women owned companies, have access to opportunity.

I will work to revitalize our Main Streets Program and launch Neighborhood Business Districts, which will provide wider access to city resources. We must help job-creating small businesses plant themselves and grow in every neighborhood of our city, not just in some.

And I am committed to permitting and licensing reforms that streamline what is now a complicated maze of rules and regulations. Permitting and licensing should protect consumers without strangling our small businesses in red-tape.

And we've got to take action to finally realize the full economic benefit of our city's many underutilized neighborhood assets. For example, Dorchester's Strand Theater.

The Strand is part of my family's history – a place I walked past countless times as a kid. And just recently, I began and ended my own campaign for Mayor within its storied walls.

Now, as the Strand approaches its 100th anniversary, it can once again be an economic engine for the neighborhood, an education resource for our teens, and a new performance and gathering spot for our entire city.

We have a responsibility to every generation.

Too many of our seniors are struggling. Too many of our seniors face difficulties they can't overcome on their own. It's time we really understand the problems they face so we can find solutions.

We will release and examine closely a new comprehensive report on Boston's seniors: about where and how they live, employment and income, nutrition and health, mobility and language.

In February, we will begin a new survey by the Boston Housing Authority, to understand the needs of seniors and the disabled living in city housing.

We know we've got to find new options for creating more housing for seniors in the wake of deep federal budget cutbacks.

And I will commit Boston to joining the Alzheimer's Early Detection Alliance. We will release a Blueprint for Action for the city, to raise awareness through education and outreach, and to connect those with the disease to the resources they need.

For me, this is personal. My grandmother and our family suffered from this disease.

All of this – everything we aim to accomplish, every dream we work to realize – requires the faith and trust of the people of Boston.

We must increase transparency and make clear that Boston's interests come first. Always.

I will set tough, new ethics standards for my staff: new rules against conflicts of interest and new requirements for wider and more detailed annual personal financial disclosures.

I will work to create a new city Ethics Committee so we can establish and enforce stronger ethics rules and more disclosure for city elected officials and senior level employees.

Faith and trust are earned. We must do what it takes to earn both, from the people we serve.

Together we have much to do. And a lot of hard work ahead.

It's appropriate that we start today here at my alma mater, at the Conte Forum, home to the Boston College basketball and hockey teams.

Whether on the hardwood or the ice, this is a place where teamwork matters and makes a difference. This is a place where you win when you work together – even when it means taking a few elbows under the basket or in front of the net.

I stand here today profoundly grateful to the team that brought me to this moment and to all the people of Boston I am honored to serve.

To my family: my mother who stands here proudly, and my father, who is in my thoughts every day, and to my brother Johnny. Your love, your unrelenting belief in me – through sickness and health, through hard times and good, helped me understand that anything is possible.

To Lorrie and her daughter, Lauren, who believed in me every step of the way – thank you for standing by me as I followed my dream, and for being part of this incredible journey. I am so proud and lucky to have you by my side. I love you.

As a citizen of Boston, I am grateful for the lifetime of outstanding civic leadership by my predecessor, Boston's longest-serving Mayor Tom Menino, and his wife Angela. As a legislative aide who started his political career in the same building where I started mine, to a district city councilor, to Mayor of our beloved Boston, his legacy is already legend and his vision is all around us. I am grateful for his support, and his advice as I go forward. Thank you, Mayor and Mrs. Menino.

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To everyone who knocked on doors in blazing heat, braved cold mornings, held signs, made phone calls, voted, and convinced their friends and family to vote – even if it WASN'T for me – thank you. You made Boston a stronger city and reminded us of our shared values and aspirations.

Together, we are all taking an oath to make our beloved city even better. Because that's what it will take – all of us, working together.

Young people working hard in school for a future they can only imagine.

Entrepreneurs in small start-ups, with big dreams.

Parents working two and three jobs to make ends meet, because they don't want their kids to have to do the same.

Soldiers home from war, looking for work.

My sisters and brothers in the Labor movement, who fight every day to build the middle class.

Immigrants, new to our city, looking for opportunity.

Seniors hoping for a secure retirement and a safe place to live.

I am inspired every day by the people of our city – by your hopes, by your dreams, by your determination. I am listening. I will keep on listening.

We will move Boston forward together.

Thank you.

God bless you.

God bless the great city of Boston!

And God bless the United States of America.

Thank you.