

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

A JOINT MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BOARD

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Monday, March 20, 2023

6:00 p.m.

City Manager Belmore opened the meeting, welcomed members of the Council, School Board, Staff and the public watching, and introduced Mayor Dana S. Hilliard at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Hilliard presented his State of the City Address:

In 2014 our community began its journey: its journey to embrace itself, its history, its identity, and the foundation of its strength.

We united as Hilltoppers, no longer allowing others to create a superficial image, or reputation of un-truths, about our community. Instead allowing the Hilltopper spirit, of *neighbor helping neighbor*, to illuminate the path towards our new success.

In 2014, our tax rate was **\$30.47**; ten years later we stand at **\$28.09**.

In one decade, we have awoken our dedication to succeed throughout the 10 square miles we call home, and have delivered with results.

In one decade, we have invested \$23 million in road improvements, equating to 25.46 miles of new or improved roads within our community. We have risen our local economy from the tomb of despair, to attracting 185 new business, from Hampshire Pewter, to Smoke and Cream, to Hall at Great Falls, to a new regional state liquor store, and Pensole Shoes which opened today.

In one decade, we have re-affirmed our commitment to the safety of all Hilltoppers by ensuring that our first responders have 21st century equipment, training, and pay. This includes a competitive contract, new fire apparatus, a new fire station and fire equipment.

We have also stood by those who walk the thin blue line, by investing in a K9 program, a crime scene unit vehicle, wellness uniforms and body worn cameras. Our EMS responders, under the leadership of Paul Robidas, continue to be a model throughout our state by providing CPR and AED training for city employees and students, guiding our community throughout the pandemic, and being there quickly when our citizens are in need.

We have stood by our **PROUD PAST** by adding historic buildings to the national and state historic registry, by being approved for two state historic markers for the Forest Glade Cemetery and former Hilltop School, and by now working closely with the historic society to ensure the museum will be preserved and protected for all future generations of Hilltoppers.

The wheels of improvement have continued in motion in all aspects throughout our community. Upgrades to Jules Bisson Park, Mast Point Dam, Millennium Park, Noble Pines Park and Willand Pond have all occurred over the last decade. As a testament to those who

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served this great nation, in 2020 Somersworth completed its new Veterans Memorial at Stein Park. We also created a new space for the four-legged members of our Hilltopper family, with the creation of a dog park. The year 2020 also gave time to celebrate, as we reached our Vision 2020 goals completing our mapped-out vision to make Somersworth one of the most desirable communities on the Seacoast.

The State of our city is **STRONG**.

Strong because we believe in ourselves and our abilities to succeed.

Strong because of our commitment to each other.

Strong because we acknowledge that diversity and celebrating each other leads to universal success throughout our 10 square mile home.

With each flag raised at citizens place, we celebrate. We celebrate the Greeks, the Irish, the French Canadians and Penacook and Wabanaki People. We celebrate Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and non-believers. We celebrate straights and members of our LGBTQ+ community. We celebrate each other.

We are **strong**.

Strong, because of our commitment to the future generation of our city, state and nation, as a testament to how we stand by our public schools. Over the last decade each of our schools has received capital improvements from a CTE renovation, to upgrades at the Middle and High School. The results lay not only in the success of our students, but the accolades our schools have received for their dedication to their missions. In 2015 our High School was once again reaccredited by NEASC, an accreditation they have never lost. The middle school was named a National Distinguished Title 1 school in 2014, A NELMS Spotlight School from 2014- 2020 and New Hampshire Middle School of the Year in 2019. Idlehurst and Maplewood have continued to lead the way with their dedication to all early grade levels and SAU56 continues to unify by bringing the entire district together as **ONE**.

We are **strong**.

This is a snapshot of the progress which has been made over the last decade, a microbe of what we have done by creating a team approach to governing. It is our team approach that reflects the true spirit of democracy; the team approach that must be protected and preserved.

So tonight, Somersworth, sit back. Sit back, celebrate and watch some brief moments in time of our successes over the last ten years. For we, Somersworth, are truly ***“ON THE MOVE!”***

Mayor Hilliard shared a presentation of the City of Somersworth’s achievements to include each of the City’s Departments and Schools over the last 10 years. The presentation shared photos of the many events and festivals held within the City, projects and development, City Parks, City facilities and more.

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The state of our city is truly **STRONG**.

Our strength will continue in motion, and our team approach will continue to be a fabric of who we are and how we govern. Despite the naysayers, despite those who still do not believe in our progress or what we have accomplished, Somersworth, we are and will remain “*On the Move!*”. The story of our success is not fiction, it is the truth of what can be accomplished when individual agendas become extinct and replaced with the agenda of team.

Somersworth our PAST IS PROUD and Our FUTURE IS BRIGHT! What a decade it has been!

As the “EYES ON 30” commission continues its work, let us get excited, excited about what the next decade will bring for our home, excited about the journey we will continue to take.

The journey of celebrating all.

The journey of continuing to build excellence in our public schools.

The journey of modeling democracy through a team approach to governing.

THE JOURNEY OF BUILDING THE SUCCESS FOR ALL THROUGHOUT OUR COMMUNITY.

May God continue to shine his grace upon each of us and our 10 square mile home known as Somersworth for we Hilltoppers are on the move!

Thank you and the State of our City is strong.

God Bless the Hilltop City.

City Manager Belmore:

City Manager Belmore thanked Mayor Hilliard, City Councilors, and members of the School Board for their attendance; he thanked City and School staff as well as members of the public for joining.

The State of the City Address concluded at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen LaPanne, City Clerk

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