

**REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE ALLISON SILBERBERG
MAYOR OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA (2016 - 2018)
COUNCIL INSTALLATION
January 2, 2019**

Good evening and congratulations to all of you who just took the oath and will serve our city in the coming Council term. Let's have another round of applause for our new Mayor and Council!

I have been honored to serve as Mayor of our beloved city, and we had quite a productive term. I would like to thank my colleagues on the Council as well as our City Manager and our city staff for all their dedication.

While the job as Mayor is serious, there are also unexpected moments of levity. The comments of our schoolchildren have kept me grounded, including the 2nd grade students at Charles Barrett who cheered exuberantly when I asked for chocolate milk with my lunch, or the 3rd grader at Lyles Crouch who asked me when I visited their Halloween celebration, "Are you really the Mayor, or are you just dressed up to look like the Mayor?"

This is an exciting time to be an Alexandrian.

To the new Council and Mayor, I wish you all good things and hope that the game-changing work that the Council and I did in the last term will give you a firm foundation upon which to build. We tackled a range of environmental and infrastructure issues that had been neglected for years. We approved the plan to finally address our four sewer outfalls, and now you must ensure that the construction begins and continues to meet our deadline. We approved and built three new schools for the first time ever in one term, and you will need to find more solutions for our capacity and maintenance issues that require close partnership with ACPS. Our children deserve no less. We tripled the dedicated funding for the Affordable Housing Fund, and we approved the Potomac Yard Metro Station.

One of my goals has been to diversify our economy so we are not so tied to the ups and downs of the federal government. In that regard, we took a giant leap forward as an innovation hub when our joint HQ2 proposal with Arlington was successful, and Amazon selected Arlington for its HQ2, and Virginia Tech selected Alexandria for its \$1 billion Innovation Campus.

Innovation and technology are our future, and this deal has solidified that future for generations.

I began my term as Mayor pushing for an ethics reform and transparency initiative, and I am proud of the ethics reform we passed and that this is the first time the ethics pledge has become part of the Council installation. These words are not hollow. As the pledge states, you will put the public interest first, and serve with integrity, impartiality, and transparency. As I stated at the last Public Hearing, I hope you will further strengthen our current ethics standards during your term.

I am proud that during my term as Mayor, we adopted the Statement on Inclusiveness, which I initiated and drafted and is posted across our city and begins with the line that Alexandria is a city of kindness and compassion. I hope this Council will quickly reaffirm your commitment to this Statement. Diversity is a core value and speaks to who we are as a community.

We are a city where everyone has a place at the table and where all voices must be heard. City Hall is not separate from the people. City Hall is the people. As important as it is to serve with an eye on our budget, it is also incumbent upon all of us to serve with one's heart.

As Alexandria moves forward to embrace its exciting future, we must continue to be good stewards of our unique history that is really our nation's history. Millions of visitors come to Alexandria each year, and this has fueled our economy for decades. While technology and innovation will help build our future, our wealth of historic resources is a significant part of our future and the envy of communities across our country. I am proud that we have found new ways to tell all aspects of our city's history, whether at the incredibly moving Freedom House Museum or at Fort Ward Park.

Above all, I would especially like to thank the people of Alexandria for giving me the incredible honor to serve as your Mayor. I have loved hearing your concerns and working toward solutions with you. You devote thousands of hours to serve on boards, commissions, civic associations, and nonprofits on behalf of our city. I am grateful to you, because you make a huge difference in our city.

I have reveled in the joy of business owners as they were finally achieving their lifelong dream of opening a business. I have celebrated marriages,

rejoiced in new births, and shared the birthday celebrations for our oldest residents. I have attended religious services for all faiths.

I have visited our schools and hosted countless school groups at City Hall so our children can better understand and feel more connected to their government. I have been inspired by the depth of their questions and the goals they seek to reach. I was deeply moved to bear witness at George Mason Elementary School when students staged a walkout in silent protest for gun reform after the Parkland High School shooting.

I have also stood with people in times of unthinkable sorrow when they have lost loved ones.

And we all remember that fateful morning in June 2017 when the horrific shooting took place at Simpson Field. As soon as the all-clear was given, residents immediately ran out of their homes and brought the first responders cold water, refreshments, and hugs. That is our community. We stood strong that summer morning, and later that afternoon, we marched in solidarity to candlelight vigils across our city. I am so proud of the resilience that our community demonstrated at that dark hour, for we would not and did not let the shooting define us. And we will always be grateful to all our first responders who ran toward danger and saved lives.

Alexandria, we are a tight-knit community, a city of great neighborhoods, a city with a golden, historic past, and a city with a bright innovation future. We're a great city with a small-town feel that loves its annual traditions like the Del Ray Halloween parade, the Scottish Christmas Walk, the George Washington Parade, and the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

In a world that can seem disconnected, we are blessed to have strong ties that bind, ties that most communities can only dream of. And we must continue to nurture those ties and remember that what we say and do has the power to strengthen or fray those ties. We must continue to strengthen the ties that bind. And I believe we must always govern with a moral compass.

For me, this is a time of gratitude. I am grateful to have been your Mayor and that we accomplished so much together. I am grateful to all those who encouraged and helped me every step of the way. I look forward to seeing all the good things unfold for our beloved city. And I look forward to the next

chapter of my life and as always, making a difference especially when it comes to helping the most vulnerable.

I wish all the best for our newly elected leaders.

Thank you very much.

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