



CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Dominick Pangallo

Mayor

Inaugural Address of Mayor Dominick Pangallo

Saturday, May 27, 2023, 2:00 p.m.

Bentley Academy Innovation School, Salem

Thank you, Council President Stott, for that welcome. And thanks also to your colleagues on the City Council, members of the School Committee, Representative Cruz, Senator Lovely, Sheriff Copping, Lieutenant Governor Driscoll, and other honored guests for joining us this afternoon.

To our community's Gold Star families and all those who have lost a veteran: on this Memorial Day weekend, I want to express our city's gratitude and respect for their service, and our everlasting commitment to honor their bravery and their sacrifice.

My thanks to all who made this afternoon's inauguration event possible, including the City and school district staff, and to the members of our Junior ROTC and the Salem High School Marching Band, for being part of today's program. A deep thank you to my family - especially Kristin, to Aurelia and Lucy for leading the Pledge so well, my parents Karen and Sal, and my brother Matteo - and all of my dear friends and family, who've been my bedrock, over these recent months in particular. I could never have stepped into this role with the confidence and optimism that I have without your support, encouragement, and faith in me. Thank you all.

And, last, I want to offer a very special thank you to my friend, our former Acting Mayor and the long-serving Councillor and champion of this Ward where we're gathered today - Bob McCarthy. Mayor McCarthy stepped up when his community needed him, and he provided a steady, compassionate hand in leading our city during a time of tremendous uncertainty and transition. We *all* owe him an enormous debt of gratitude and I hope you know, Mister Mayor, that everyone in this city will always appreciate what you've given to us through your service – not just as our Acting Mayor, but in your sixteen distinguished years as a City Councillor as well. On behalf of our city, thank you!

Salem has always been stronger when our public leaders are aligned in our dedication to moving our city forward. While those values are often, as they should be, tested and debated through the election process, we've always been a community that comes together when the times demand it. I want to recognize former Mayor Neil Harrington, who expressed to me that same commitment to unifying our city for the work ahead. Because today, these times demand a shared focus and renewed determination among *all* of our city leaders.

To our City Councillors and our School Committee members, to our state leaders: I am committed to being a constructive partner in this work, alongside each of you. And to our City

employees in every department and every building, my colleagues in public service, I am committed to being a leader you can rely on, one who will always have your back, and one who will always have an open door to you. Elected or not, we are all partners in the work ahead of us.

And Salem is a city on the edge of incredible opportunity. The promise of a new energy future, driven by the invaluable resource of offshore wind. A resurgent economy with small businesses that serve both residents and visitors; blossoming new industries, as well as support for the workers who make them successful; and a rich cultural and creative sector. Strong, resilient, and innovative schools, which encourage new approaches to teaching and learning that serve all our kids. Thriving neighborhoods, remarkable open spaces, an incredible waterfront, and a truly unique history. And the dreams of a generation of young people, forced to adapt and face unimagined trauma through the COVID pandemic, but *always* with their eyes set on the horizon and wide with hope and possibility.

How do we rise to meet these possibilities? How do we ensure that they become realities? It can't be with cynicism. It can't be with deliberate divisiveness. It can't be by closing our ears and our minds to voices and concerns we choose not to hear.

We need to recognize: Salem *is* thriving, but far too many feel excluded from that success. Whether they're new residents – even new arrivals to our nation – disconnected from the place around them, or lifelong residents who don't see themselves in the changes Salem has experienced over the past decades, or the poorest of our neighbors – working or unable to work – who aren't given the same opportunities to engage because of systemic barriers impeding them, or older residents already grappling with isolation only to have the pandemic further force them apart from their community.

They're all, just like all of us, looking for connection. They're hoping to be heard. They're seeking a seat at the table, to take part in the important work of making Salem even better tomorrow than it was yesterday.

They deserve to be heard and they deserve their seat at the table. When they're with us, the leaders of this city, and when we aren't making decisions about them *without* them, we'll make Salem a better place for them and for everyone in our community. We'll make it the kind of place I want Salem to be. The kind of place I know we *can* be.

That's why Kristin and I chose to move back here, to raise our own family in my hometown. Not simply because of what Salem had been, but because of what we *can* be.

We *can* be a city that recognizes that our housing challenges aren't about buildings and zoning alone - they're really about people. People who are living here in Salem today, who grew up here and raised families here; who can't afford to remain in the place that they love. They were here for their city, strengthening our neighborhoods, opening businesses, teaching in our schools, and keeping our streets safe - now they need their city to be here for them. They need us to be here to speak up for real affordability, even when the conversations are hard. *Especially* when they're hard.

Because the way forward, to the Salem that we know we *can* be – it's a challenging road at times, and there are no shortcuts. But that *is* the path ahead of us, toward what's possible, and it's the one we're traveling on together.

We *can* be a city that chooses to act in the face of climate change, by investing in resiliency and taking bold actions to reduce our own contributions to the crisis. We *can* be a city that works for great parks and public spaces, high-functioning infrastructure and city services, clean and safe streets for all, and great neighborhoods in *every* corner of our community.

We *can* be a city that honors and respects the dedication of our teachers, our police and firefighters, and all our public workers. And a city that respects our taxpayers, with professionalism, responsiveness, and transparency in how we conduct City business - seeking ways to grow our tax base responsibly and leverage other funding opportunities beyond property taxes alone. A city that recognizes that by serving the most disadvantaged of our neighbors better, we're serving us *all* better.

And we *can* be a city that keeps working to provide public schools that meet the needs of every child - no matter their age, the language they speak, how they learn, or what struggles they carry into the classroom. Schools that are the envy, not just of the North Shore, but of the entire Commonwealth. Schools like this one.

Today's celebration is here, at Bentley, for a reason: To shine a spotlight on just a few of the many, *many* examples of how we're working toward the city that we *can* be. Bentley is the home of a remarkable dual language learning program – a model of education that, starting from kindergarten, immerses students in both Spanish *and* English every day. The benefits of this model are clear: Students in dual language programs achieve higher academic outcomes, not just in languages but in all courses. They graduate their elementary years not only bilingual but biliterate and bicultural. And, importantly, they gain a deep, rich appreciation for and comprehension of a different culture than their own. This opens the door to new friendships, new connections, and, down the road, new possibilities in life.

This model's success – for children from both Spanish-speaking homes and non-Spanish-speaking homes – is clear. And it's just one example among so many of how Salem schools and our community are willing to pilot an innovation, scale it up based on evidence of its success, and build on that foundation. There are other special, and successful, efforts underway under this roof, as well.

Our district's Early Childhood Center is on the other side of this very building. The ECC provides inclusive, full day, stimulating, and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for over a hundred preschool-age Salem kids. It's a strong model for early education that promotes cognitive, physical, and emotional and social development tailored to each child. And, just a couple years ago, that model served as the basis for a massive expansion of public pre-K here in Salem. In fact, we've doubled the number of seats since the 2020-2021 school year.

Now, three- and four-year olds across our city have access to equitable, high-quality, culturally-responsive early education programming - programming grounded in play and framed around

proven standards that provide the strongest possible foundation for future learning, growth, and personal success. And that programming isn't just within the four walls of our school buildings. With a mixed delivery approach that includes many of our public schools, family childcare providers, and center-based partners, we're tapping into the power of our whole community to give every Salem kid the possibility of a strong start.

That's how we guarantee our future is bright: by building the foundation for it today.

As we look toward that horizon, that's the Salem I hope we all see together. Home to one of the nation's - even the planet's - leading offshore wind terminals. And on the site, no less, of a former coal pile at what was once one of the dirtiest power plants in America. It's a Salem on the cusp of creating a new, world-class high school and strengthened by thoughtful investments in our infrastructure, parks, and public ways. It's a Salem striving to be more equitable and welcoming, and that's working with intention to be more affordable for those who live here and those who *want* to live here.

And it's a Salem ready to commemorate over 400 years of remarkable history. A history with infamous legacies that shaped American jurisprudence and our own spirit of inclusion to this very day, but also a history of entrepreneurship and innovation, of charity and compassion in the wake of great fires and terrible pandemics, of a city always striving toward a better tomorrow.

That's the Salem that's ahead of us: one that recognizes our past and is optimistic about our future. A city that finds inspiration in our history, and motivation in our possibility. And I am so incredibly honored to have your trust and your partnership to lead us there.

Now let's get to work! Thank you!