



## CITY OF FRANKLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Pastor Carter, honorable members of the City Council for 2016 and 2017, City Manager Dragon and Department Directors, honored School Board members, friends, and fellow citizens:

This brief talk did not actually appear on our agenda tonight. I hope there was not a message to me implied there? It remains customary for the Mayor to offer a few remarks at this time on the state of our city.

In looking back at the past year's budget discussions, I can only say how difficult it was for me personally, and I know, for many of you. We observed problems that haven't been present here for many years. It's hard for those of us who deeply love this community to have outside circumstances place some of us at odds. I pray that the coming year will be better, but we must all recognize that severe challenges still exist.

It is very important, I think, to recognize the source of adversity when you face it. It does no good to create villains in our ranks where there are none. The City Council has uniformly increased the amount of local funds available for education, and this despite the dire need for infrastructure and equipment in the municipal departments. In the current budget, the City Council went to extraordinary lengths to assist the school department with a serious outside revenue shortfall, and redirected hundreds of thousands of dollars to education.

That shortfall was not caused by anyone in this chamber or this city. The departure of Hill students and declining State aid to education, whether in the form of lost stabilization grants, or in the form of lost aid due to lower enrollment, created the crisis for us. Those conditions still exist, and will require even more creativity and cooperation to overcome in 2017.

Some foresee a shift of emphasis, away from municipal needs, towards greater local funding of schools. You will hear in coming days what that shift would mean for our residents. Very recent events in Franklin have demonstrated the need for supporting public safety and municipal services, which receive hardly any State support. A large reduction to any of those departments is not a simple, nor a desirable answer. These very hard decisions will ultimately reside with the City Council.

*Franklin - The Three Rivers City*

All that said, this city government has taken a leadership role among New Hampshire communities to bring attention to this education funding dilemma. It is a problem that faces many other school districts in New Hampshire, and we should take heart from the fact that we are NOT alone.

While I acknowledge the great financial challenge that looms before us, one that we have been working to address constantly since the adoption of the current budget last summer, I don't want to leave the podium without sharing a message of profound hope and optimism for Franklin's future.

A brilliant transformation is taking place in our downtown, and will even accelerate this spring. The largest investment in the history of downtown Franklin has begun at Riverbend Mill, and I believe this will spark further growth and development. Todd Workman, PermaCity Life, Marty Parichand, Jo Brown, your city government, and a host of other community boosters are making downtown Franklin an even greater destination.

Beyond that - however you may have cast your ballots in the November election - I believe that the incoming administrations in Washington and Concord will make the construction of the Northern Pass project a virtual certainty. Despite the aforementioned financial concerns, that project promises a complete reset of our fiscal picture by essentially doubling the taxable value of our city, and yielding millions of new dollars every year for our school and municipal needs. Moreover, the construction process will breathe excitement and life into the greater Franklin economy. I, for one, cannot wait to see it happen.

Because it would bring justice to the good people of this city, the elderly, the young, the workers and their families, the entrepreneur and the wage earner alike - all deserve at least an equal starting point with people from any other community in the State.

And I believe this justification will come to pass for us, even as we optimistically strive with great creativity, determination, and resolution to solve every challenge before us, and to celebrate the unique, singular beauty of Franklin and its people - for the Prophet said in 40th chapter of Isaiah that "...those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles..."

So let it be for the good people of the best city on earth.

Thank you and God bless you.