

**MAYOR SALVATORE J. PANTO, JR.
CITY OF EASTON PENNSYLVANIA
INAUGURAL ADDRESS JANUARY 4, 2016**

In this new City Hall and Council Chambers, among this distinguished crowd of dignitaries, community leaders, family, friends and fellow citizens, I am both honored and humbled to place myself at your service again as the mayor of our great city. I am grateful for the trust you have again bestowed in our team and the support you have given me. I am excited about today's Inauguration and the next four years.

Tonight as I stand before you, it is difficult for me to express the feelings of humility, pride, and most importantly, the excitement that I am experiencing to begin another term. My enthusiasm has not waned. I can promise you that no one will work harder for you on a daily basis than I will.

I stand here today, a wiser man, learning as much from the mistakes of the past as from the successes. I bring an awareness of our fragile economy - both here and nationally; a deeper understanding of the needs and challenges we must meet, a personal commitment to the highest standards of excellence and ethics and an even greater respect for the voice of the people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my father and family who have been so supportive --- and specifically my wife Pam who has stood beside me and has been a big help, and now for another four years.

I also believe it is important to take this opportunity to thank our two council members who are leaving the council this evening. For her efforts on environmental issues and the well-being of the city I wish Dr. Elinor Warner best wishes in future endeavors. For her youthful wisdom and insight thank you Melanie Mauro for her contributions to our city. At the same time I welcome back Council member Ken Brown and our newest members Peter Melan and David O'Connell.

I wish to thank the voters who have elected me as your Mayor for another term. My pledge this evening is that I will continue to do my best to provide you with good governance and leadership.

Over the past eight years we worked together to create a foundation of enthusiasm, inclusion, and progress from which future dreams can now take shape. For the first time in 50 years, the city's population is growing and poised for more growth; we worked with the FOP and the police administrative staff to reduce and have pretty much eliminated potentially debilitating lawsuits; we maintained structurally balanced budgets eight years in a row without an increase in real estate taxes or major increases in sewer or trash and no increases to our senior citizens on fixed income; we managed finances so well that we ended every year with a surplus and improved the city's finance rating from a triple B to an A+, one of the few cities in the state with such a designation; we aggressively searched for and secured a wide range of federal and state grants which has resulted in more than \$75 million in grants which have leveraged more than \$470 million in economic development and public improvements; we continue to increase funding for an aggressive road paving program; we reduced crime in each of the last eight years and we now look forward to implementing programs designed to further improve the quality of life such as the landlord training program, stricter code enforcement on derelict owners and vacant properties; we look to expand our housing rehabilitation program and additional façade grants for residential units and at the same time work regionally to create more sustainable jobs for our residents and increasing their earning capacity. We have developed a working relationship with the school district because nothing is more important than the education of our youth. Our town/gown relationship with Lafayette College has never been better and the college under the leadership of Alyson Byerly; I am pleased to announce this evening that in addition to the grants and financial support the college gives to other local organizations Lafayette College will be providing the \$550,000 funding for the city's new fire pumper. In the next few weeks we will also be announcing several major projects that will come to fruition in the coming months, including the much-awaited Easton Public Market.

Creating a healthy, vibrant and livable city takes hard work and dedication, and today Easton is blessed with a strong foundation to build upon. Our city is moving forward, making investments that have paid -- and will continue to pay -- dividends for our sustainability, livability and quality of life. When I look at our city, I see our great potential. I can't tell you how many times I've heard from

people who haven't been to Easton for a while say how impressed they are at how far we've come. But there is still so much work to be done.

The credit for our success goes to a professional, dedicated administrative staff. I cannot thank enough my Directors, both past and present for their tremendous accomplishments that have benefited our residents. I would also like to thank our staff and employees, as well as the hundreds of volunteers who are helping to make our city a better place for all. As a result of this involvement and success, the elected officials here today have the opportunity to govern a city that is in great shape, one that has recovered economically faster and better than most cities in Pennsylvania.

But today I cannot.....and will not... be satisfied with where we are. I will not be satisfied with the status quo. We remain clear in our resolve to move forward and achieve even bigger goals.

Our team manages the city well but we must continue to keep a firm hand on the finances. The same principles that carried us through the challenges of the last eight years must be the principles that guide us through further recovery.

But to truly succeed we must have the involvement of the state and federal governments. Today local governments are taking on more and more services and programs that were provided by other governmental entities. We need a state legislature that truly wants to reform municipal pensions and takes action and doesn't just talk about it as they have for the last 25 years. When we took office eight years ago our pension legacy costs were \$600,000 and today they are \$6 million. This is not sustainable and its not just cities – it's all local governments.

The things we do in the next few years -- the efforts we undertake together, as a city -- will determine the fortunes of generations to come. Easton has given the nation and the world the governmental framework on which an entire nation was built through the efforts and courage of individuals like George Taylor and Robert Levers having the courage to sign the Declaration of Independence and read it publicly in our Square; industrial giants like Edwin Binney and Harold Smith, whose company today manufactures 3 billion Crayola crayons a year and attracts more than 400,000 visitors annually to the Crayola Experience; the great canal builders like Josiah White and Erskine Hazard who engineered and built 47 miles

of canals in two years, without modern machinery; visionaries such as Herman Simon for his vision of making world renown silk in Easton or Hugh Moore who not only invented the Dixie Cup but gave to the city the natural resource of the canal park; or Governor George Wolf for public education; champions like Larry Holmes who continues to bring international attention to our city and Bobby Weaver our Gold Olympian – both had their start at St. Anthony’s Youth Center; healers such as Florence Seibert who perfected the intravenous process and our new pioneers and leaders making their imprint not just on Easton but the world – Frances Hesselbein, Phil Richards, Tom Curley, Billy Snyder and our own Gretchen Wrenshall Award winners this year Tom Urglavitz and Stephen Flowers. Or people like our retiring Deputy Fire Chief John Price who dedicated his life to serving the public. Or Charles Chidsey, Easton’s first Mayor when we became a city in 1887. Tonight representing their parents Michael and Denise Glovas are their children Sondrine and Shay. I would like to present them with this certificate for their parents contribution of the roll=top desk Mayor Chidsey used when he was mayor (*present certificate*).

Like those that preceded us, we have a moral obligation to return with interest to generations yet unborn. We must live in the present with our eyes fixed on tomorrow. We must remember our impressive history, but never at the risk of forgetting our future.

This city has made visible progress in many areas over the past eight years. Taken together, these accomplishments have helped renew both civic pride and trust in city government. Visitors coming back remark how much the city has improved.

The challenges that lie ahead are many; our collective abilities to address these challenges are strong; the opportunities that will be realized from our efforts are great.

To paraphrase Robert Kennedy “I see what Easton can and will be, and say ‘why not?’

Thank you