



2024 CITY INAUGURAL EXERCISES

To be entered upon the *Journals of the City Council of the City of Gardner* in accordance with guidance provided under Section 23 of *THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF GARDNER*.

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In accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the City of Gardner and Section 17 of Chapter 43 of the General Laws, the Mayor-Elect, Councillors at-Large-Elect, Ward Councillors-Elect, and School Committee Members-Elect, assembled in the Rotunda of Gardner City Hall on Monday, January 1, 2024 at 10:00 o'clock in the forenoon, to be sworn to the faithful performance of their duties.

**CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION & RESULTS OF VOTES CAST**

The CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION and RESULTS OF THE VOTES CAST were declared by City Clerk Titi Siriphan and entered into the journals of the City Council, as follows:

As a result of the votes cast at the City Election held on November 7, 2023, the following persons were declared elected:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| MAYOR                    | Michael Joseph Nicholson   |
| COUNCILLORS AT-LARGE     | Elizabeth J. Kazinskas<br>Judy A. Mack<br>George C. Tyros<br>Ronald F. Cormier<br>Craig R. Cormier<br>Carolyn A. Kamuda                                      |
| WARD COUNCILLORS         | David Thibault-Muñoz (Ward 1)<br>Dana M. Heath (Ward 2)<br>Nathan R. Boudreau (Ward 3)<br>Karen G. Hardern (Ward 4)<br>Aleksander Dernalowicz, Esq. (Ward 5) |
| SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS | Rachel A. Cormier<br>Robert J. Swartz<br>John M. Lafreniere  |

City Clerk Titi Siriphan called the Roll of Officials:

- PRESENT:
- |                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| MAYOR                | Michael Joseph Nicholson |
| COUNCILLORS AT-LARGE | Judy A. Mack             |



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George C. Tyros  
Ronald F. Cormier  
Craig R. Cormier  
Carolyn A. Kamuda

WARD COUNCILLORS

David Thibault-Muñoz (Ward 1)  
Dana M. Heath (Ward 2)  
Nathan R. Boudreau (Ward 3)  
Karen G. Hardern (Ward 4)  
Aleksander Dernalowicz, Esq. (Ward 5)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS

Rachel A. Cormier

ABSENT:

Elizabeth J. Kazinskas  
George C. Tyros

Robert J. Swartz  
John M. Lafreniere

**OATH OF OFFICE**

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Worcester, ss.

Gardner, Massachusetts

January 1, 2024

I, Titi Siriphan, City Clerk of the City of Gardner, in witness thereof, certify that on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January, 2024 at 10:00 o'clock in the forenoon, at a meeting of the Mayor-Elect, Councillors-at-Large-elect, Ward Councilors-elect, and School Committee Members-Elect, I administered the oath required by the City Charter to the following:

SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS

Rachel A. Cormier

COUNCILLORS AT-LARGE

Carolyn A. Kamuda  
Judy A. Mack  
George C. Tyros  
Ronald F. Cormier  
Craig R. Cormier

WARD COUNCILLORS

David Thibault-Muñoz (Ward 1)  
Dana M. Heath (Ward 2)  
Nathan R. Boudreau (Ward 3)  
Karen G. Hardern (Ward 4)  
Aleksander Dernalowicz, Esq. (Ward 5)



2024 CITY INAUGURAL EXERCISES

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Who severally solemnly swore that they would faithfully and impartially perform the duties of the office for which they have been elected in the City of Gardner according to the best of their ability and in conformity with law.

In testimony of all of which is required by the City Charter, I make this certificate to be entered on the journals of the meetings of the City Council.

/s/ Titi Siriphan, City Clerk

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Worcester, ss.

Gardner, Massachusetts

January 1, 2024

I, Titi Siriphan, City Clerk of the City of Gardner, hereby certify that on the FIRST DAY of JANUARY, 2024 at TEN o'clock in the forenoon, I administered the oath required by the City Charter to Mayor-elect **Michael J. Nicholson** for the term expiring January 5, 2026.

Michael J. Nicholson solemnly swore that he would bear true faith and allegiance to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and would support the Constitution thereof, so help him God.

And,

Michael J. Nicholson solemnly swore and affirmed that he would faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on him as Mayor, according to the best of his abilities and understanding, agreeably, to the rules and regulations, of the Constitution thereof, and the laws of this Commonwealth, so help him God.

And,

Michael J. Nicholson solemnly swore that he would support the Constitution of the United States, so help him God.

In testimony of all of which is required by the City Charter, I make this certificate to be entered on the journals of the meetings of the City Council.

/s/ Titi Siriphan, City Clerk

Officials were dismissed at 10:15am on January 1, 2024 after the oaths were sworn.



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**2024 CITY INAUGURAL EXERCISES**

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**CEREMONIAL INAUGURATION**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of January in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Four at 6:30 o'clock in the evening, officials and guests assembled in the Honorable Fred E. Perry, Gardner City Hall, 95 Pleasant Street, to bear witness to the administration of the ceremonial oath of office to the Honorable Michael J. Nicholson, Mayor of the City of Gardner, members of the City Council, and the School Committee.

**WELCOME AND PROCESSION:**

Mr. Jacob Boucher Cormier, president and CEO of Boucher Funeral Home and member of the Board of Directors of Gardner Square Two, Inc., welcomed guests to the 55<sup>th</sup> City Inaugural Exercises and announced the entrance of the City Councilors-Elect and School Committee Members- Elect.

**“ALL HAIL TO MASSACHUSETTS”**

“All Hail to Massachusetts,” the official Anthem of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, was played as the City Councilors- Elect and School Committee Members- Elect entered the auditorium.

**ENTRANCE OF THE MAYOR**

Mr. Jacob Cormier announced that as had been done at the City’s first inaugural exercises in 1923, the Mayor would be escorted into the Ceremony by Chief Gregory Lagoy of the Gardner Fire Department and Chief Richard Braks of the Gardner Police Department.

Mr. Cormier then announced the entrance of his Honor, Michael J. Nicholson, 20<sup>th</sup> Mayor of the City of Gardner

**“GOD BLESS AMERICA”**

The Mayoral Honors March, consisting of “Four Ruffles and Flourishes” followed by “God Bless America” was played as Mayor- Elect Nicholson entered the Auditorium and took his place on the stage.

**WELCOMING REMARKS**

Master of Ceremonies, Dr. Stephanie Marchetti, Executive Director of the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center, opened the Inaugural Exercises by welcoming officials and guests in attendance.

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*“Good evening everyone, as stated my name is Stephanie Marchetti and I am honored to serve as the Master of Ceremonies for the 2024 Inaugural Exercises. Throughout my time working in public and human services in the city of Gardner, nearly 15 years now, first at Mount Wachusett Community College and now at MVOC, I have watched the city grow and change but one thing has remained constant and that is a commitment to the well-being of residents. It has been a privilege to collaborate with your elected officials over the years and I am honored to be inducting each of these individuals in office tonight. Like so many of you, I look forward to seeing what the next term of office brings to Gardner and I am excited to be part of the positive changes that are anticipated.*

*I would also like to recognize those members of the Gardner School Committee who are with us this evening who were elected to their current four-year term in the previous municipal election and is not being sworn into office this evening – Atty Jennifer Zlotnik Pelavin who serves as the Vice Chair of the School Committee, Anne Hurst, and Shannon Ward-Leighton.*

*I would also like to acknowledge Councilor-at-large-Elect Calvin Brooks who is with us this evening, who received the 7th highest votes in this last election. The City Council will be taking action to fill the recent vacancy on the Council and appoint Councilor-Elect Brooks according to the process outlined in the City Charter at their regularly scheduled meeting of January 16th.”*

**PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS**

The National and City Colors were presented and posted by the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical High School Marine Corps Junior ROTC and the Color Guard of the American Legion Post 129, Gardner.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Boy Scouts of America of Troops 9 and 49 led the Assembly in the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

**“THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER”**

The Gardner Middle School Select Choir under the Direction of Mr. Gianni Patrizio Davilli, performed “The Star Spangled Banner.”

**INVOCATION**

The Invocation was offered by the Reverend Pastor David Trolongo of Chair City Church.



## 2024 CITY INAUGURAL EXERCISES

*Good evening. Will you bow your heads to join me in a time of prayer? Heavenly Father, we come before you with thanksgiving for all those who gathered together here this evening to recognize and support those who have chosen to give their lives to serve our city. May your loving hand be upon each and every one of them. To our mayor, our city council, our school committee, to bring them calmness and comfort as they engage and endure the complexity of the challenges that await them and yet at the same time may your spirit Empower them as they together create new opportunities which will form and shape New Beginnings in our great City. God Almighty, we humbly ask that you would go before them to move the hearts and minds of those in our community towards kindness and support of each one of them as they dutifully serve our city. May your Spirit guide them to peace and unity in all they do together in their service of our city father Heavenly Father. We are grateful for your love of everyone in this room and that you have heard our prayer this evening. Amen.*

**CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION & RESULTS OF VOTES CAST**

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|--------------------------|--|
| MAYOR                    | Michael Joseph Nicholson   |
| COUNCILLORS AT-LARGE     | Elizabeth J. Kazinskas<br>George C. Tyros<br>Judy A. Mack<br>Ronald F. Cormier<br>Craig R. Cormier<br>Carolyn A. Kamuda                                      |
| WARD COUNCILLORS         | David Thibault-Muñoz (Ward 1)<br>Dana M. Heath (Ward 2)<br>Nathan R. Boudreau (Ward 3)<br>Karen G. Hardern (Ward 4)<br>Aleksander Dernalowicz, Esq. (Ward 5) |
| SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS | Rachel A. Cormier<br>Robert J. Swartz<br>John M. Lafreniere  |

City Clerk Titi Siriphan called the Roll of Officials:

PRESENT:



2024 CITY INAUGURAL EXERCISES

MAYOR Michael Joseph Nicholson

COUNCILLORS AT-LARGE Elizabeth J. Kazinskas  
George C. Tyros  
Judy A. Mack  
Ronald F. Cormier  
Craig R. Cormier

WARD COUNCILLORS David Thibault-Muñoz (Ward 1)  
Dana M. Heath (Ward 2)  
Nathan R. Boudreau (Ward 3)  
Karen G. Hardern (Ward 4)  
Aleksander Dernalowicz, Esq. (Ward 5)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS Rachel A. Cormier  
Robert J. Swartz

ABSENT: John M. Lafreniere\*

\*Mr. Lafreniere took his Oath of Office at the Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting of January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

**MUSICAL SELECTION**

The Greater Gardner Community Choir then performed its rendition of “Joy to the World,” by George Frederick Handel, Arranged by Pink Zebra, under the direction of Mrs. Dianne Cushing

**OATHS OF OFFICE**

The Honorable Mark Goldstein, First Presiding Justice of the Gardner – Winchendon District Court administered the Oaths of Office to City Councilors and School Committee members.

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**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Worcester, ss.

Gardner, Massachusetts

January 4, 2024

I, Titi Siriphan, City Clerk of the City of Gardner, in witness thereof, certify that on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2024 at six-thirty o'clock in the evening, at a meeting of the Mayor-Elect, Councilors-at-Large-elect, Ward Councilors-elect, and School Committee Members-Elect, The Honorable Mark Goldstein, First Presiding Justice of the Gardner – Winchendon District Court, administered the oath required by the City Charter to the following:

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SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS

Rachel A. Cormier  
Robert J. Swartz

COUNCILLORS AT-LARGE

Elizabeth J. Kazinskas  
Judy A. Mack  
George C. Tyros  
Ronald F. Cormier  
Craig R. Cormier

WARD COUNCILLORS

James M. Walsh, Esq. (Ward 1)  
Dana M. Heath (Ward 2)  
Nathan R. Boudreau (Ward 3)  
Karen G. Hardern (Ward 4)  
Aleksander Dernalowicz, Esq. (Ward 5)

Who severally solemnly swore that they would faithfully and impartially perform the duties of the office for which they have been elected in the City of Gardner according to the best of their ability and in conformity with law.

In testimony of all of which is required by the City Charter, I make this certificate to be entered on the journals of the meetings of the City Council.

/s/ Titi Siriphan, City Clerk

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE CITY COUCNCIL PRESIDENT

The Honorable Elizabeth J. Kazinskas, City Council President of the City of Gardner, delivered the following Address:

*“Thank you, Stephanie, for the introduction, and thank you for your important work at the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center. We are lucky to have such a valuable resource right here in Downtown Gardner to serve our area’s veterans.*

*Good evening. On behalf of the Gardner City Council, thank you to all of you for being here – elected officials, family, friends, clergy, community performance groups, and citizens of Gardner.*

*To my family - Thank you for listening, understanding, cheering me on, taking care of me, and for your support of my passion for all things black and orange, all things Wildcat and all things Gardner...and what that means is*



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*every gift that they receive from me is the latest black and orange apparel from John's Sport Shop in downtown Gardner, with the expectation that they will wear it as often as possible.*

*Representative Zlotnik – You have turned countless possibilities into reality for Gardner through your work and advocacy at the State level. Thank you for your friendship and continuing to be a reliable State partner to our City, and for your many years of dedicated service to the Commonwealth.*

*Vice Chair Pelavin – Congratulations on your re-election as Vice Chair once again, and thank you to you and the Members of the School Committee for your hard work and service to our schools.*

*Mayor Nicholson – Thank you for working alongside the City Council in our City government – this is how it is supposed to work, and we have proven in Gardner, that it does work. We don't have to agree all the time, but it is ok if we agree some of the time. We don't have to respect each other, but we choose to do so. We can have different roles that serve different purposes in our City government, and still share a common goal. Your strong commitment to transparency is appreciated, and I look forward to all that WE as a City Council, will accomplish TOGETHER with YOU as our city's Mayor, in our respective roles, over the next two years.*

*Judge Goldstein – Thank you for administering the Oath of Office to the City Council this evening. Also, thank you for recognizing the needs of our community and serving those needs through your work at Gardner District Court.*

*To the citizens of Gardner – The City Council's role in serving you is important, and your role in electing us to do so is equally as important. Thank you for giving this City Council the opportunity to work for you.*

*To my fellow City Councillors – I am grateful and humbled by your unanimous vote to re-elect me as City Council President. Your confidence in my ability to serve you and our community in this position holds significant value to me. Thank you all.*

*To our families - City Council business is a huge commitment. It takes away from time with you, it follows us everywhere we go – to the grocery store, family dinners, on social media. Your support is important to us, and to the community. Thank you for all that you do to keep us afloat.*

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*City Clerk Titi Siriphan – Thank you for being the backbone of the City Council and always rising to the occasion. You never complain, you always deliver, and you take your job seriously. It is an honor to work with you, and sit next to you at each and every City Council meeting.*

*During this term, I look forward to the City Council continuing to do great work to give Gardner all that it deserves. We have a lot of work behind us, and a lot of work ahead of us, and I am confident that we will get it done.*

*David Thibault-Muñoz joins the City Council as Ward 1 Councillor, for his first term. Calvin Brooks will fill the Councillor at Large vacancy, and be sworn in officially during the next regular City Council meeting, to begin his first term. Congratulations, and welcome to you both.*

*Dana Heath is serving his second term as Ward 2 Councillor. He was the only new City Councillor this past term, stepped up to the plate, and took it on with success.*

*Ward 5 Councillor Alek Dernalowicz, Councilor at-Large Judy Mack, and Councillor at-Large George Tyros are serving their third term. All three Councillors have served as Chairs of City Council Standing Committees and on multiple committees.*

*Ward 3 Councillor Paul Tassone has served multiple terms as a City Councillor and Gardner School Committee member.*

*Ward 4 Councillor Karen Hardern and at-Large Councillor Craig Cormier also bring multiple terms of City Council experience, and have served on many of our Standing Committees.*

*At-Large Councillor Ronald Cormier is the longest serving City Councillor in the history of the City of Gardner. Ron brings valuable experience and knowledge to the Council. He has more experience in City Government than the rest of us combined. To put things into perspective, I will be 41 years old after this term, and Councillor Cormier's career on the Gardner City Council will be 38 years old after this term.*

*Our City Council should reflect the citizens of Gardner. Some of us are new, some of us are seasoned, but regardless of our experience, the expectation from*

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*the people that we represent should be the same of all of us – that the integrity of the Council is incredibly important and taken seriously by its members. I am excited and proud to lead this Council, and confident that we will serve Gardner honorably and responsibly over the next two years. Thank you.*

**MUSICAL SELECTION**

The Greater Gardner Community Choir then performed its rendition of “A Glad New Song,” by Gwyneth Walker, under the direction of Mrs. Dianne Cushing

**REMARKS BY REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN ZLOTNIK**

The Honorable Jonathan D. Zlotnik, State Representative for the Second Worcester District, delivered the following remarks:

*“Good evening, it’s my pleasure tonight to introduce Mayor Nicholson at the start of his 2nd term in office.*

*In Mike, those of us on this stage who hold public office, have a genuine partner who comes to the table eager to collaborate, be flexible, and get things done.*

*I attended a City Council Meeting in November, because there was an item on the agenda that would be coming to the legislature. But while I was there, there were several instances of the Mayor providing information on issues that will come up in the future, or may come up, as well as updates on matters the Council had previously voted on. He’s not required to do that, but that’s the norm he has adhered to for the last 3 years.*

*Those of us who live in the City benefit from that way of doing business. It means that the Council, School Committee, is better informed, more in advance so when an issue does come up, and needs to be voted on. They have been there every step along the way.*

*You can point to many positive developments over the last 3 years, but if I can highlight one thing. It is Mike’s willingness to work with others. To put in that effort to take in other opinions, that really produces results, especially in the long term.*

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*That vote that brought me to the Council meeting a couple of months ago, was the latest step in amending the City's Charter. Something Mike spearheaded this last term. It was something that has been on the back burner for a while, failed at least a couple times before. But over the course of more than a year, many conversations, and more than a few compromises, it passed the Council, passed on the ballot, and is now HD4729 awaiting approval from the Legislature.*

*Now it is my honor to introduce to you all my former colleague and current friend, Jen Flanagan who will administer the oath of office to Mayor Nicholson. Following the Oath of Office, Mayor Nicholson will deliver his Inaugural Address."*

**REMARKS BY FORMER STATE SENATOR JENNIFER L. FLANAGAN-LONG**

The Honorable Jennifer L. Flanagan-Long, Former State Senator for the Worcester-Middlesex District, then delivered the following remarks:

*Good Evening. It is a pleasure, an honor, and a privilege to be standing here and to be asked by Mayor Nicholson to deliver to administer the oath of office to him, while I also get the non-distinguished honor of trying to get every elected official in this room and get their names right. I'm no stranger to Gardner. For almost 9 years, I was fortunate to be the state senator from this city and the one thing that I can tell you is that the themes that are going through the speeches tonight are working together, mutual respect, common denominator, and really a common purpose. As the City Council President said, everyone has their individual roles but at the same time there's a common goal to move Gardner forward. When I was the state senator in the district included Leominster and Fitchburg, we used to call ourselves the Tri Cities and we prided ourselves in the fact that we were North County, we were the north county part of Worcester County and when you called one of us you called eight of us because geographically, we all knew that we had the same struggles. We all understood that one of the most important issues to us was the train and getting people back and forth to Boston. Making sure we had enough services for substance use disorder, making sure people had health care as close possible as they can to their homes and not having to travel near and far, and at the same time, we all took that lonely ride down Route two to go to Boston to fight for the people of Gardner, and tonight you have before you school committee members, City councilors, State officials and a mayor, who if I'm being completely transparent was my intern, all working together to*

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*benefit the community of Gardner. If you look around this room, you see how full it is of people, there's older people, and children, and families, and adults, and business people, and healthcare workers, all coming together to celebrate the mayor and also getting out before the snow storm comes on Sunday. So with that, I have the honor of introducing many of my former colleagues, many of whom I still consider friends, that are standing here in the audience tonight we have:*

- Auditor Diana Dizoglio
- Senator Peter Durant
- Former Senator and Director of Rural Affairs Ann Gobi
- Former State Representative Hank Naughton
- Worcester County Registrar of Deeds Kate Toomey
- Worcester County District Attorney and my favorite DA Joe Early
- Worcester County Sheriff Lou Evangelidis
- Mayor Christian Dumais of Marlborough
- Former Mayors of Gardner Alan Agneli and Dan Kelley
- Randolph City Councilor Ryan Egan
- Former Braintree City Councilor Michael Owens
- Chair of the Lancaster Selectboard and Chair of the Massachusetts Democratic Party Steve Kerrigan
- Rutland Selectman Paul Matson
- Templeton Selectman Matt Revard
- Milbury School Committee Member Nick Lazzaro
- Rutland Town Administrator Austin Cyganiewicz
- Mount Wachusett Community College president Dr James Vander Hooven
- We have MART President and CEO Bruno Fischer and
- We have the Heywood Healthcare President and CEO Rozanna Penney

*Thank you all for coming here tonight and celebrating our elected officials here in Gardner.*

*Would Mayor Nicholson and Jackie Nicholson please join me at the podium to take the oath of office?*

**OATHS OF OFFICE**

The Honorable Jennifer L. Flanagan-Long, Former State Senator for the Worcester-Middlesex District, administered the Oaths of Office to Mayor-Elect Michael J. Nicholson.



2024 CITY INAUGURAL EXERCISES

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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Worcester, ss.

Gardner, Massachusetts

January 4, 2024

I, Titi Siriphan, City Clerk of the City of Gardner, hereby certify that on the FIRST DAY of JANUARY, 2024 at six-thirty o'clock in the evening, Honorable Jennifer L. Flanagan-Long, Former State Senator for the Worcester-Middlesex District, administered the ceremonial oath to Mayor Michael J. Nicholson for the term expiring January 5, 2026.

Then,

Michael J. Nicholson, who solemnly swore that he would bear true faith and allegiance to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and would support the Constitution thereof, so help him God.

And,

Michael J. Nicholson, who solemnly swore and affirmed that he would faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on him as Mayor, according to the best of his abilities and understanding, agreeably, to the rules and regulations, of the Constitution thereof, and the laws of this Commonwealth, so help him God.

And,

Michael J. Nicholson, who solemnly swore that he would support the Constitution of the United States, so help him God.

In testimony of all of which is required by the City Charter, I make this certificate to be entered on the journals of the City Council.

/s/ Titi Siriphan, City Clerk

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS**

The Honorable Michael J. Nicholson, Mayor of the City of Gardner, delivered the following Inaugural Address:

*Good Evening,*

*President Kazinskas and the Members of the City Council, Vice Chair Pelavin and the members of the School Committee, Judge Goldstein, reverend clergy, elected officials, family, friends, relatives, fellow Gardnerites, and those visiting, including those who wished they could be here but were not able to for whatever reason and are watching this later on.*

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*To all of you - Thank you for joining us this evening.*

*Mom, Dad, and Jackie, all of my family, friends, and loved ones; I cannot thank you enough for always having my back. The gratitude I have for the love and support you have shown me is something I'll never be able to express in words alone.*

*A mi familia nicaragüense, cada oportunidad que he tenido durante mi vida ha sido por las oportunidades que se sacrificaron ustedes para que la generación menor de la familia tuviera una vida mejor. Es por sus sacrificios que puedo estar aquí hoy, como el primer alcalde electo latino de esta ciudad.*

*A ustedes que son nuevos residentes de nuestra ciudad, y en algunos casos, de este país, es mi honor y privilegio oficialmente decirles a todos BIENVENIDOS. Es mi esperanza que podamos construirles una comunidad que quieran llamar su hogar, donde puedan vivir, trabajar, y encontrar nuevas oportunidades. Mi familia encontró su sueño americano en Gardner cuando mi madre y su familia dejaron su hogar devastado por la Guerra y buscaron una vida mejor, y esa es mi esperanza para ustedes.*

*Previous section translated:*

*To my Nicaraguan Family- every opportunity that I have had in my live has been because of the opportunities that you sacrificed so that the younger generation of our family could have a better life. It is because of these sacrifices that I can stand here today, as the first Latin-American Mayor and Elected official of this City.*

*To those of you here who are new residents of our City - and in some cases, this country - It is my absolute honor and privilege to officially say to you all as the Mayor of this City – welcome. It is my hope that we can build you a community that is welcoming and that you can look forward to calling your home- where you can live, work, and find new opportunities. My family found their American Dream in Gardner when my mother and her family left their war torn home and sought a better life, and that is my hope for you.*

*Judge Goldstein - Thank you for being here with us this evening. Having a local Gardnerite serve as the first presiding justice of our local court has been a benefit to this City. You truly know Gardner and its people and your work on the bench has helped people get back on their feet when they need it the most. In particular, I would like to thank you for the vital role you played in bringing a Veterans Treatment Specialty Court to the*

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*Gardner/Winchendon District Court - the only one to exist in Worcester County - to help bring new forms of treatment and rehabilitation efforts to our veterans in particular those dealing with issues of substance abuse and addiction.*

*Representative Zlotnik and Senator Flanagan – Thank you for joining us this evening. I learned a lot when I interned for you both before when I was a college student, and I truly appreciate your continued friendship, guidance, advice, and partnership since then to now.*

*Father Thiago and Pastor Dave- Thank you for your prayers tonight, and for the guidance you provide to residents of our City through your work at your respective churches.*

*Dr. Marchetti- Thank you for the work you do every day for the veterans in the Montachusett Region and the advancements you made in improving access to veterans housing in the area.*

*Lastly, scattered throughout the hall this evening are our city department heads, employees, and first responders. Please join me in a round of applause for these individuals who work tirelessly every day to provide top quality services to all of our residents.*

*I would be remiss if I did not thank in a special way, Rachel Roberts from my office, and back here joining us this evening, Colin Smith, who recently left for a new position elsewhere. Thank you both for all you helped me with this past year, and to all of my former interns who have joined us here this evening as well. I truly appreciate you all.*

*When I gave this address at the beginning of the last term, we were on the doorstep of celebrating our 100th anniversary as a City. We talked about goals of economic growth and revitalization of the downtown. Ideas of increasing our outreach efforts were just starting to transition into discussions.*

*Plans were being put in place to provide our public safety officials with the tools they need to do their jobs in the most efficient and effective ways possible. Concerns were being raised about the demand for housing we were seeing in Gardner. And the questions that were being asked as we approached our last inauguration ceremony were “how do we meet these challenges?”, “Are we doing everything we can to be proactive not only to address the situations at hand, but also to plan for the future so we don’t end up back where we started in just a few years?”, and most importantly, “are we doing everything we can to seize every opportunity available to us and to the people who put us into office?”*

*Standing here now and reflecting on these times- Gardner’s been pretty busy, and our efforts are bearing fruit.*



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*We've continued to make strides in upholding our fiduciary responsibility to our residents. For the third year in a row, we have received a perfect audit report from the external auditors who review the City's financial statements on an annual basis. Additionally, our stabilization account is the highest it has been in decades and our new growth revenue continues to come in well over budget, showing our strong financial promise for the future.*

*Because of this strong financial standing, we have been able to invest more in our programs, initiatives, and infrastructure - and the return we have already begun to see on that investment is unprecedented.*

*In our public safety departments, we purchased new equipment, re-vamped programming, and created new positions to ensure our first responders have the tools and resources they need to do their jobs in the most effective manner and keep the public safe.*

*This includes purchasing a new ambulance, fire engine, heavy rescue and ladder truck for the fire department - all of which are currently being constructed.*

*For our police department, we purchased a new drone with infrared, spotlight, and speaker technology, portable radios, sidearms, and eight new cruisers- half of which are hybrid.*

*Aside from these capital investments, we also invested in our programming to help increase our outreach opportunities in these departments. We reinstated the Domestic Violence Advocate position in the Gardner Police Department, that had originally be cut in 2010, as well as launched our two K9 programs with Rocky, our patrol dog for the Police Department, and Sully, our Fire Department Comfort Dog to help assist in the operations of both of these departments.*

*We continued these investments in our recreation and infrastructure. In doing so, we have not only set an example to others by showing them that we are willing to invest in ourselves, but we have also planned for our future with a growing population.*

*Gardner now has new pickleball courts and our first playground graded for ages 5 and under at Bailey Brook Park, the new park and walking path at the old Park Street National Grid Substation location, and our new fitness court, done in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield, located at Gardner High School next to our newly refurbished tennis courts.*

*Additionally we have paved 20 miles of roads (almost a quarter of our entire city) in just the last three years, installed new sidewalks, lighting structures and crossing ramps throughout the downtown area and at Monument Park, and new runway replacement and building upgrade projects at the Gardner Municipal Airport.*

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*Our School System has seen significant achievements in recent years. Since 2019, just 5 years go, the number of students enrolled in Gardner Public Schools has increased by almost 400 students. At the same time, the number of students choosing to school choice out of Gardner to another district has declined by over 50%.*

*We have made significant efforts to bring our schools' curriculum into a full 21st Century learning environment - particularly in our early college program and through our new innovative pathway courses. Currently, approximately 30% of our juniors and seniors at Gardner High School are taking advantage of our immersive Early College Program with Mount Wachusett Community College and our newly added partner, Fitchburg State University. As a result, this last spring, over 50 students graduated with a high school diploma and a college associates degree at the same time.*

*Additionally, we have invested in new equipment for our innovative pathway classes, traditional school version of trade classes that we offer in manufacturing, automotive, robotics, woodworking, business and finance, healthcare, information technology, and engineering all of which now have state of the art equipment to work with, making our students' transition to college or employment easier, by giving them hands on learning while still in our classrooms.*

*And the most significant achievement we had in our educational efforts was the opening of our new Elementary School, where our students in preschool through fourth grade can have a modern learning environment that meets their needs and helps them best prepare for their futures.*

*Some of the most visible accomplishments we have seen over the last few years have been in our economic development endeavors. In the last two years, over 50 businesses have either newly opened or expanded their services in Gardner and almost 20 buildings in the downtown area alone have changed ownership and are under renovation. This has opened up an unprecedented amount of opportunity for Gardner.*

*We also made a concerted effort to hold ourselves to the same standard we hold the private sector to and make sure that we as a City do not become our next absentee landlord. We reviewed the properties owned by the City that were underutilized, put them on the market, and got them back onto the tax rolls - not only bringing in new revenue as a result, but also helping ensure that these properties can be used to their fullest potential through private sector investments.*

*However, the economic goals that we have met only bear true fruit if people can access them- which we have accomplished through the advancements we made in our transportation efforts.*

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*One of the biggest complaints we used to receive at City Hall was the fact that Gardner no longer had a taxi cab service and getting around the City was difficult for many people. For some, getting to doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, visiting loved ones, and many other instances, were almost impossible. To help meet this need, Council President Kazinskas and I put forward ordinance legislation that was unanimously approved by the City Council that made it easier for people looking to open and operate rideshare services in the City. Then, working with Woods Ambulance, we launched the first phase of Woods Plus - "SwiftRide." This new, locally owned ride-share service now allows our residents to get anywhere around the City at an affordable rate to fill the gap in transportation that we saw before.*

*We have also begun the process with MART to update and re-route our fixed bus routes around Gardner that haven't been reviewed since the 1980s. This allows us to truly capture the growth that we are seeing in our population and plan for it the most efficient and effective way possible.*

*This all started when Councilor Dernalowicz first approached us to inquire about adding additional bus stops in South Gardner particularly at the former Prospect Street School location. As a result, not only has this stop been added but other stops received new signage and shelter structures. For the last two years, have been in constant conversations with MART about improving services in Gardner. As the Mayor of this city and the Chair of the MART Advisory Board, I'd like to thank MART's Administration for the new energy they've placed into improving access to public transportation in Gardner, most recently with the new fare free initiative that was launched for all fixed routes in the MART district earlier this week for the next six-months.*

*Lastly, we made sure to break away from the "that's how we've always done it," mentality and see if there were any updates that could be made to improve our operations.*

*This is why Councilor George Tyros and I were able to put forward legislation to revamp our vacant, abandoned, blighted, and nuisance ordinance to give our City personnel in the health and building departments the tools they need to prevent properties from becoming problems and incentivize property owners to keep their buildings up to a standard of care.*

*Most notably in this review and update process, after an almost eight year process, the proposed amendments to the City Charter are on their way to Boston for consideration by the State Legislature, to make sure Gardner has a 21st Century Government that meets the needs of a modern, growing community.*

*We certainly have accomplished a lot in the last term, and we have set the stage for us to continue with that momentum as we move Gardner forward.*

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*Our economic development efforts continue to move forward with new advances set to take place in the next few months. Work in the downtown area is continuing to move forward with renovations being completed to the facades of several buildings, interior renovations and build outs expected to begin, and over 225 housing units expected to be constructed in the downtown alone.*

*New businesses - like Aldi, Chipotle, Five Below, and others, like Jersey Mike's, announced today for the Timpany Crossroads Plaza – are set to open their doors in Gardner in 2024.*

*Construction projects will soon be starting on Rear Main Street, Rome Square, the Greenwood Pool, Maki Park, the Uptown Rotary, Ovila Case Playground, the North Central Pathway Bike Trail, and more.*

*Perhaps the most significant construction project we have ongoing for the new year is our continued work renovating the former Waterford Street School location to house our new non-profit community center. This project will surely bring new opportunities to the area by bringing all of these services under one roof and allowing them to expand their collaboration with each other.*

*Growing Places, a local non-profit focused around access to healthy and affordable food, has already received their zoning approvals, is just about ready to move in and begin operations, and has also begun working with a newly formed group of farmers on ways to promote local agriculture and create new farmers market opportunities at the site.*

*Over and over again, we have seen that when we as a City invest in ourselves - our infrastructure, economy, facilities, residents - the return we receive on that investment exceeds our expectations. Tens of millions of dollars of private sector investment have poured into Gardner in the last two years, because we were willing to hold ourselves to a high standard and set that example for others. If we want to continue the successes that we have seen - we still have work to do.*

*One of these investments we know we need to look at is the Gardner Fire Headquarters Building. The roof of the fire station is original to the building's 1978 construction and currently is experiencing large issues with leaks. These issues need to be addressed in order to make sure we are providing our employees with an adequate, livable, workspace that meets the needs of a modern fire department.*

*We have also begun to study the feasibility of new investments in our parking and solar canopy infrastructure to better help plan for the future in Gardner- in particular in the downtown and at our public buildings.*

*Aside from these goals, we also need to review our processes, procedures, City Code, and other documents to see if our operations are working or if we are getting in our own way of*

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*progress. We cannot just sit and hope that the way we have always done things is meeting the current issues that arise in the here and now, or may arise in the future.*

*To begin this review, earlier this week, I directed our City Department Heads and the Chairs of all of our Boards and Commissions to review our City Ordinance Code - both general and zoning - and to submit any changes that could be made to improve the way we operate in the City. These changes will first be reviewed by my administration with a final version submitted to the City Council as a comprehensive package for consideration later this year.*

*The work that we've done and the successes that we've achieved is entirely thanks to the amount of collaboration and cooperation that our officials at all levels of government have had. I would like to thank the members of my administration, our department heads and employees, the members of our City Council, School Committee, our state and federal legislative delegation, and all our partners in government for constantly coming together to build a community that the people we represent can truly be proud to call their home.*

*This is how the government should work. Far too often, people view political office as a theater for character assassinations, false claims in social media posts, and deliberate misrepresentations for political gain and click bait. However, we have not let that get to us here. Even in the face of what goes on elsewhere, here in Gardner, when a problem arises, we come together, find a solution, and just do what needs to be done.*

*As we move into this new year, and the next century in our City's history, I look forward to us continuing to work together for what our City needs and setting the example for others to follow. It is my true and firm belief, that continuing with that momentum and guided by God's grace we'll be able to accomplish things beyond what we dreamed of and build a better city for it.*

*God Bless you all, and God Bless this Great City.*

*Thank you.*

**MUSICAL SELECTION**

Surround Sound then performed their rendition of Frank Sinatra's, "America The Beautiful-Overlay."

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**BENEDICTION**

*Please bow your heads and pray for God's blessing. Let us remember we are in the presence of God.*

*Almighty God, we come before you first to praise your name and thank you for the opportunity of being here tonight witnessing this beautiful moment in the history of the city of Gardner. We thank you that we are free and able to choose the people who lead our community. Thank you. Thank you for your servant, our Mayor Michael Nicholson, who was elected to guide and govern the City of Gardner. We ask you Lord to continue to bless him, to bless all the members of the City Council, and the School Committee who make a commitment this evening to serve this community. Bless and protect our city as we enter in this new beginning. May we prosper, being proud of living here. We ask all those things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Benediction was offered by the Reverend Father Thiago Rodrigues Ibiapina, Associate Pastor of Annunciation Parish.

**RECESSION OF OFFICIALS**

Officials recessed from the stage accompanied by a Musical Selection of "Trumpet Voluntary."

Accepted by the City Council: January 16, 2024

*A True Copy, Attest:*

***Titi Siriphan, City Clerk***