

### **VICE MAYOR TRENEY TWEEDY**

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am Vice Mayor Treney Tweedy, and I am honored to welcome you here tonight and to thank all of you for coming. Please join me in welcoming the Mayor of our great city, the Honorable Mayor Joan F. Foster.

### **MAYOR JOAN FOSTER**

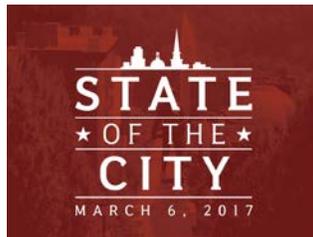
Ladies and gentlemen, members of Council, City staff, citizens and honored guests, welcome and good evening. Please rise and join Girl Scout Troop #440 with troop leader Sarah Muminovich and Girl Scout Troop #1361 with troop leaders Katie Cyphert and Erin Smith-Burt as they lead us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Please remain standing for the National Anthem played by Lynchburg College student, Mychael Ward. Let's give all of our young people a round of applause for a job well done.

I am especially proud of Mychael. He is a graduate of E. C. Glass High School and a success story for the Beacon of Hope. Mycheal will be graduating next year from Lynchburg College, and I know he has a bright future ahead of him. Thank you, Mycheal.

The Vice Mayor and I are honored to have the opportunity to stand before you tonight to talk about the City we all love. Lynchburg is a great place to live, work and play. Tonight, we will highlight a few of the many wonderful reasons why we love Lynchburg, and we will talk about a critical issue before us that we need your assistance in making a change.

Before we do so, we are going to pause to honor and recognize eight citizens who epitomize what it means to have a servant's heart. These citizens come from all walks of life and have individually found ways to make a difference in this community.

Some have been volunteering and working to better this city for a long time, while others are just beginning. But each of them has found a way to reach out, to give back and to make a difference. They challenge all of us to live a life of service and fulfillment.



My fellow members of Council will kick off this portion of tonight's festivities, beginning with Council Member Randy Nelson.

*Introductions of Mayor's Award of Excellence Recipients*

- Susan Ackley – Randy Nelson
- Chip Berry – Randy Nelson
- Rev. Dr. James Camm – Turner Perrow
- Carla Garrett – Turner Perrow
- James Hornsby – Jeff Helgeson
- Jim Webster – Jeff Helgeson

*Introduction of Vice Mayor's Award of Excellence Recipients*

- Nick George – Mary Jane Dolan
- Kate Sigler – Sterling Wilder

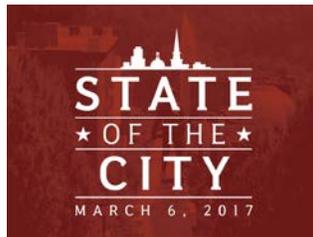
**MAYOR FOSTER**

Let's give our award recipients another round of applause! Thank you for all that you do for this community.

I know my fellow council members will agree that serving on Council is both an honor and a privilege and that it demands some level of sacrifice. The reason we are able to do what we do is because of our understanding families who support us. Anyone up here will tell you we could not do this job without them. They are our biggest supporters, our harshest critics, they ground us, and we love them for it. I ask those family members here tonight to please stand so we can thank you.

Several years ago, City Council established Town and Gown meetings with the presidents of our local colleges and Lynchburg City Schools. They, and the institutions of higher learning they represent, play such an important role in our community, and through Town and Gown, we have been able to forge strong relationships and partnerships with them.

Many of them have joined us tonight, so at this time, please welcome Dr. Ken Garren with Lynchburg College (soon to be University of Lynchburg) and his lovely wife Sheila, Dr. Jerry Falwell, Jr. of Liberty University, Dr. John Capps with Central Virginia

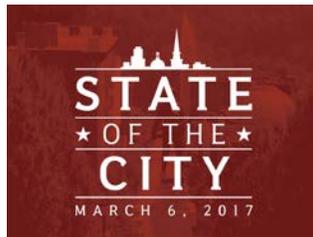


Community College, Dr. Wes Fugate who is standing in for Dr. Bradley Bateman of Randolph College, and Dr. James Coleman, who is representing Dr. Kathy Franklin of the Virginia University of Lynchburg, and of course Dr. Scott Brabrand with Lynchburg City Schools. Thank all of you for joining us tonight. Dr. Phillip Stone of Sweet Briar could not be with us tonight. My thanks also to Council Member Randy Nelson for his leadership with our Town and Gown effort. City Council and the School Board recently held a joint work session to discuss the achievement gap, and I am encouraged that we are taking steps to build a stronger partnership and to work together to find solutions. If you are a member of the School Board, please stand so we may recognize you as well.

We are pleased to recognize District Representative Aaron Van Allen who is here tonight on behalf of Representative Bob Goodlatte. Thank you for coming. There are so many others here tonight, like the Mayor's Youth Council, a great group of young people from private and public schools as well as a homeschool student. These outstanding young people give me their unique perspective on matters of our city. We also want to welcome the ladies dressed in pink and green from Gamma Iota Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha who are here in support of our city. Welcome all members of the business and healthcare communities who are present tonight. I won't even try to name you all, but please know that we appreciate your attendance. If there are any former City Council members with us tonight, please stand so we may recognize you.

Lastly, I want to call attention to the men and women sitting to my right who really should get the credit for the great things our local government has been able to achieve. They are our department directors and represent the over 1,000 city employees who provide services to all of us every day. They are led by our new City Manager Bonnie Svrcek, our new Deputy City Manager Charles Hartgrove and our new Assistant City Manager John Hughes. Although these three are new to their respective positions, they bring with them a combined total of over 70 years of public service. I'd like all of the Leadership Team to please stand, and thank you for your service.

Thank you for indulging us as we recognized everyone. I want to make it clear that, although there are seven of us on City Council, there is really a whole army of



individuals who make it possible for Lynchburg to be a great city to live, work and play.

I hope that those of you here tonight took the time to visit the exhibits out in the lobby on your way in. They represent just a small sampling of the work being done every day to serve the citizens of Lynchburg.

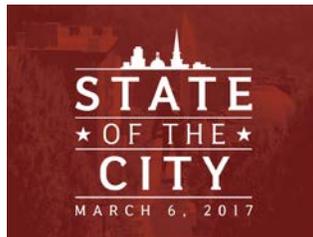
We are proud of their many accomplishments because it means that they are working hard to better serve the 79,000 citizens of Lynchburg.

Last year, Lynchburg was recognized as #2 of Kiplinger's Best Places to Retire, #2 in the national Digital Cities ranking and in the Top 40 Small Cities to Make a Living. Just a few days ago, we learned that we were ranked 75<sup>th</sup> out of 461 small to mid-sized cities nationwide as a 2017 Overlooked Dream City. The ranking was based on our affordability, low crime rate, walkable neighborhoods, and plentiful amenities.

While we celebrate our accolades, now I want to address you all with an issue that weighs heavy on my heart. Lynchburg has a rich history, and I believe we can have an even better future. But if we want all of our citizens to pursue the American Dream in a thriving community, we must seriously address the work that must be done.

Author and historian, James Truslow Adams first coined the phrase 'American Dream.' In his 1931 book, *The Epic of America*, Adams wrote, "Life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of social class or circumstances of birth." In other words, a great place to live, work, and play. However, as great as this city may be, we know that it is not that way for all of our citizens. It is seldom that the Vice Mayor and I have such a large captive audience, and we are going to make the best of it this evening. At our fall retreat, all of City Council identified the reduction of poverty as a priority.

Tonight, we are going to speak to you about poverty and its impact on our community, and we are going to ask you to help us as we move forward to finding solutions to reduce the level of poverty in our city. It is unacceptable for Lynchburg to have a poverty rate of twenty four percent.



Thirty percent of that number is children, many of whom will not be able to reach their full potential because they are living in poverty without the resources they will need to thrive.

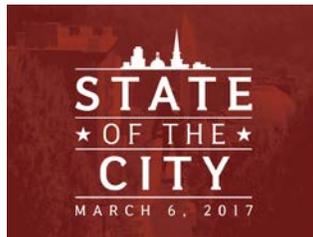
We know that there are many of you out there, individuals and organizations, who are working to address poverty in this community. I submit to you that now is the time for us to seize the opportunity and take collective action to address this issue and all that it entails. We must work together, set actionable goals and hold each other accountable. We cannot afford to work in siloes. The only way for us to make a sustainable difference is by working together, government and private sector, businesses and non-profits, colleges, neighborhoods and houses of worship, individuals and groups. We are going to need each of you to work with us as we move from poverty to progress.

Please welcome back the Vice Mayor to the podium - Vice Mayor Tweedy.

### **VICE MAYOR TRENEY TWEEDY**

Thank you, Mayor Foster. Let me add my appreciation for all of you joining us here tonight. I am so proud to be able to serve as your Vice Mayor and have been honored to meet so many wonderful citizens. You have opened your places of worship, your homes, and your hearts to me and I have been humbled.

So, what does poverty look like in Lynchburg? If we just look at the numbers, it's a four-person household comprised of two adults and two children. They would be deemed to be in poverty if the family's annual income falls below \$23,624. In people terms, if you drop your child off at daycare, the daycare worker may be living in poverty. The Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) who works hard every day or the fast food worker who hands you a hamburger may be living in poverty. The child that sits next to your own student in the classroom may come from an impoverished home or perhaps even the person picking up your trash every week. You may not realize it, and you may not think about it on a daily basis, and if you are lucky, your family may not be touched by it, but it exists. They are the working poor, not the poorly working.



Urban sociologists like Harvard's Robert Sampson and New York University's Patrick Sharkey have shown how concentrated neighborhood poverty shapes everything from higher crime rates to limited social mobility for the people - and especially the children - who live in these neighborhoods.

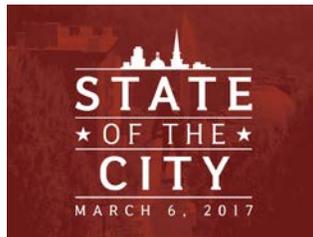
The National Center for Children in Poverty says that children growing up in low-income families face many challenges that children from more advantaged families do not. These children are more likely to experience multiple family transitions, move frequently and change schools. The neighborhoods they live in are more disadvantaged. The parents of these children have fewer resources to invest in them or in their education. The stress of living in poverty and struggling to meet daily needs can take a hard toll on parents.

Please understand that we are not saying that every person who is raised in poverty will stay in poverty. What we are saying is that a person in poverty will have a much harder time trying to get ahead than a more advantaged person will.

"So what?" you may ask. "Why should we care?" I have heard arguments from all sides of this issue, and I am sure, at one time or another, you have as well. Some say that poverty is a moral problem. "We've already tried everything and nothing works. We will never get rid of poverty because after all, the Bible says the poor will be with us always. Still, others believe that the "blame the poor" perspective is stereotypical and not applicable to everyone in poverty.

Studies show, and I know from my own work in this community, that not only are most poor people willing and able to work hard, they do so when opportunities are available to them. The real trouble has to do with problems like minimum wage jobs, the lack of skills necessary to obtain better paying jobs, and a lack of access to other resources.

We can waste your time tonight arguing each of these points, but the fact remains that we cannot, we will not, be a great place to live, work and play for everyone if 24% of our citizens are living in poverty and we stand by and do nothing to change it.



So, you may ask, “What do we do?” I’m glad you asked. Organizations across this community, along with staff and City Council have been working to plan a course of action. There are no easy answers, nor is there some magic bullet that we can use. It will take everyone working collectively to make a difference. Tonight, the Mayor and I want to share with you how, with the collective help of all of you, we can move forward. Mayor Foster, please join me at the podium.

**MAYOR FOSTER**

Thank you, Treney. Tonight, Treney and I are breaking with tradition, and we are standing side by side to issue this call to action. We want to make it clear to all of you here and watching from home that we are united in this fight to make a change in this community and we are united in our plea for you to join us.

**VICE MAYOR TWEEDY**

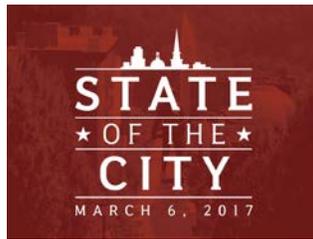
First, workforce development is critical to the success of this initiative. Businesses have told us they have jobs available but no one with the skills to fill them. We are reaching out to our public schools, institutions of higher learning and non-profits to work together to strengthen already-existing workforce development opportunities. We want to make sure these development opportunities can lead to real jobs that pay decent wages. We are asking business owners to work with us, to provide training opportunities when possible and to be willing to take a chance on someone who may not have a stellar work history. We need people, as I call it, to skill up!

**MAYOR FOSTER**

Secondly, many families, especially those experiencing intergenerational poverty, need wrap around services, so we are asking our social services and mental health agencies and the medical community to work together to provide the services necessary to remove or lessen the barriers that hold people back.

**VICE MAYOR TWEEDY**

Parents, you must be involved in your children’s education. I know it’s easier said than done when you have two and three jobs and you are struggling, but we must do what is necessary to help you because their education is of paramount importance. Schools, you must be innovative in your thinking and make sure your practices and



policies make it easier for parents to become involved and you must redefine parental engagement.

### **MAYOR FOSTER**

Churches, synagogues, temples, mosques and other houses of worship, thank you for being generous with your time, treasure and talents, but it is time we looked beyond just feeding the poor. I ask you to work together across denominations, theologies, beliefs and non-beliefs so there can be a long lasting change. Just think if every community of faith adopted one family living in poverty and wrapped services around them, we could move many more families out of poverty.

Lastly, to those of you who are living in poverty, you have the most important role to play. You must be willing to take the initiative to work to make your future and that of your children the best it can be. If you are willing and able, we want to work with you so you can realize your American Dream. There is hope!

### **VICE MAYOR TWEEDY**

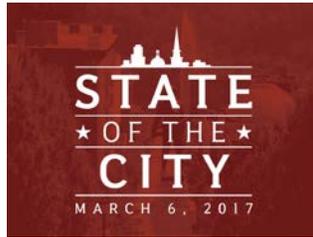
Let me make it plain in case anyone is confused. We don't want you to get the message twisted! We are not talking about giving a hand out. What we need is for you to help us pave a way out!

Nelson Mandela said during a 2005 Make Poverty History speech that, "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life."

### **MAYOR FOSTER**

If you have an interest in making this community better, please fill in your information on the program insert you received tonight. There is a table in lobby staffed by members of the Mayor's Youth Council where you can either leave your completed insert or fill in a sign-up sheet. We will use this information to contact you about becoming a part of the solution.

On May 4, at 6:30 p.m., we invite you to the E. C. Glass Auditorium for the kickoff of ***From Poverty to Progress***. Please put that date on your calendar now and join us.



Ladies and gentlemen, this is our call to action. It is the first step in the journey. Poverty is a community issue, and it will take the community to make a difference. We are issuing a call to each of you this evening to rise up! I know that if we work together, all of us—government, faith leaders, non-profit organizations, schools, private citizens—we can do it.

Your community needs you—step up, rise up, and let's work together to create a great place to live, work and play for all citizens. Together, we will!

**VICE MAYOR TWEEDY**

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome eighth grader, Maya Lewis.  
(*Rise Up* sung by Maya Lewis)

**MAYOR FOSTER**

Thank you, Maya. That was beautiful. I invite everyone to join us in the Galleria for a *Taste of Lynchburg*. Thank you, and good night.