

2019 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

April 29, 2019

Pre-event performances:

1. Kuumba Dance Ensemble (Under the direction of Sheron White)
2. Seven Hills Dance Studio (Under the direction of Brian Moody)
3. Inspirare, A part of the Spectrum Arts Society (Under the direction of Sumner Jenkins)

Pledge of Allegiance – Mayor’s Youth Council

Testimonials – Our Lynchburg Story

Michaya McMillan

Jannett Spearman

Aubrey Barbour/Rev. Kim Glenn

Alisha Meador/Terrell Clark

Introduction of Mayor/Vice Mayor/City Council

MAYOR TWEEDY

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Please join me in thanking Michaya, Jannett, Aubrey, Kim, Terrell and Alisha for sharing their Lynchburg Story. Thanks also to our opening entertainment, Kuumba Dance, Seven Hills Dance and Inspirare. Weren't they all wonderful!

This is a special night for the community as we gather here in this beautiful theater to celebrate this place we call home. Our opening speakers shared with you their Lynchburg Story. Each of their experiences was different, but each one shared a common love for Lynchburg and tonight, the Vice Mayor and I will share with you what we love about Lynchburg and our vision for Lynchburg 2025. We invite you to become part of the vision.

I want to recognize our fellow Council Members, Beau Wright, Sterling Wilder, Turner Perrow, and Randy Nelson. I thank each of them for their dedication to this community and the people who reside here. We also thank our families who make sacrifices so we can attend the many meetings, answer citizens' calls and pursue this business of governing. Thank you.

Before I go much further, the Vice Mayor and I extend our appreciation and respect to the hundreds of City employees who work diligently every day to serve the citizens in this community. This city would not be a great place to live, work, and play without you. Our employees play a critical role in this community whether they are picking up trash, cleaning our water, protecting our neighborhoods or processing our bills. We thank you for your commitment to the people of Lynchburg.

As has become custom during the State of the City Address, we recognize members of the community who have given their time, experience and skills to make a difference. We are proud to continue that legacy, but with a different twist. This year, we are focusing on our neighborhoods and the people who make a positive impact on those neighborhoods. Please join me in welcoming Vice Mayor Dolan back to the podium to tell you about it.

VICE MAYOR DOLAN

Thank you. As Mayor Tweedy said, this evening our awards have a neighborhood focus. The strength of our neighborhoods and the people who live there has a direct effect on the success

of our families, our economy and our general well-being as a community. This year, we are introducing the Neighborhood Achievement Awards. We put out the call to the public for nominations in several award categories including Outstanding College Student, Perfect Partnership, Lifetime Achievement, Neighbor to Neighbor and Neighborhood of the Year.

In addition to those awards, we are also introducing for the first time ever, the Artist Laureate Award, recognizing an individual who has made a significant impact on the local arts and cultural community.

In a moment, our fellow council members will take turns at the podium to speak about each of the recipients, but before they do, please welcome our 2019 Neighborhood Achievement Award and 2019 Artist Laureate recipients.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

BEAU WRIGHT

STERLING WILDER

TURNER PERROW

RANDY NELSON

VICE MAYOR DOLAN

Thank you, gentlemen and Mayor. This last award is being given to someone who has made a remarkable contribution to the world of dance and to our local arts and cultural community. Keith Lee is the recipient of many awards including Capezio Awards for distinction in both ballet and modern dance techniques. Upon graduation in 1968, Lee joined the American Ballet Theatre and was promoted to the rank of soloist.

His repertoire included the choreography of such luminaries as Alvin Ailey, George Balanchine, Agnes DeMille and Jerome Robbins. He is the founder of the former Dance Theater of Lynchburg and continues to teach students from Lynchburg and the surrounding area. In his over 50 years of dance, he has created over 125 original works of arts, taught almost 13,000 students and continues today choreographing, teaching and mentoring. Ladies and Gentlemen, join me in welcoming Lynchburg's very first Artist Laureate, Mr. Keith Lee.

(After Keith Lee receives his award and returns to his chair)

Everyone, please join me again in congratulating our award recipients for all they have done and continue to do to make Lynchburg a great place to live, work and play! Thanks also to our fellow council members for their support tonight.

MAYOR TWEEDY

Thank you, Vice Mayor and members of Council. How exciting is it to have the opportunity to thank this great group of people who are making a difference. This city has been blessed to have so many who are willing to go the distance to help their community. By now, you may have noticed that we are doing some things a little differently tonight. This event is a celebration, and it may seem a little over the top - but celebrations should always be over the top.

Celebrations should be big, and visions for the future of this community should be just as big. I once talked to someone who said Lynchburg's greatest detriment is a collective feeling that being good enough is good enough. I don't buy that, and I hope that none of you do either. We say that Lynchburg is a great place to live, work and play, but I challenge each of us here in

this beautiful theater and those of you watching from home to help us make this community even greater.

Every day, I am blessed to see the amazing work being done in this community. It is the people and getting to see every day what we are capable of that is the source of my faith in our city and in our potential. So, what will people say about us in the future? Certainly, not that we are just good enough. That won't be our Lynchburg Story.

Tonight, we want to take the first steps in the journey of achieving a community vision for 2025. Just think! What will our Lynchburg Story be in the years to come? Let's have some audience participation. I'll make a statement and I want you to respond and loudly.

Will Lynchburg's Story be one of mediocrity? – **NO**

Will Lynchburg's Story be one of just being good enough? – **NO**

Will Lynchburg continue to flourish and grow? – **YES**

Will we aim higher, work harder, and make sure every single person in our city gets a full, fair shot at opportunity? - **YES**

Give yourselves a round of applause!

City management is working with departments on The Lynchburg Plan which is based on the **11** goals that City Council identified during our yearly retreat. Tonight, we are going to speak to four of those goals.

The first goal is: Expanding and Coordinating our Workforce.

Our world is changing rapidly, and in order to stay vibrant, our workforce must change to meet the needs of today and the expectations of tomorrow. Just a few short years ago, this is what manufacturing looked like. This is what it looks like today.

Our Office of Economic Development and Tourism continues to be diligent in its efforts to work with our local employers to better understand their needs. What we know is that due to the advancements in technology, there is an even greater demand for a skilled workforce. That's why we want to partner with our schools to develop work-based learning and training initiatives so our children are better prepared to enter the workforce. We are strengthening our partnership with Workforce Development

so citizens are trained and in some instances, re-trained in order to be able to meet the needs of employers.

In our efforts to make sure that no one is left behind, there are programs like Tech Hire that connects moderate to low income citizens with potential employers who are willing to hire and train them. This two-year old program has resulted in 40 participants and 20 employer partners. We have seen nine total graduates with six or more months of gainful employment. Their average wage increase is \$1,200 a month per individual. We understand that nine might seem like a small number, but we count it as a success.

Our economy is strong. The Lynchburg business community leads the regional economy with significant capital investment and job creation. Commercial building permits totaled more than \$148 million in real property improvement in 2018. Over 350 jobs were created through programs tracked by the Office of Economic Development, and \$3.4 million was made available from local, state, and federal programs to city businesses. When our economy is strong and our businesses thrive, our citizens have more opportunity to become gainfully employed.

Our second goal is Investing in Infrastructure and Connectivity.

Do these pictures look familiar? I know all of you have seen a lot of this lately because some of you have called me to complain. When some people see these construction projects, they see disruption and inconvenience, but I see progress and investment. Last year, we completed the Main Street Bridge Project. The old bridge was a major gateway into our downtown, but it had exceeded its functional life and required replacement. The location of the bridge replacement made it difficult for the businesses in that area, and we certainly appreciated their patience. In the end, this \$6.85 million dollar project was completed on time, within budget and is a beautiful gateway into our city.

In FY 2018, the first phase of the Downtown Utility Line and Streetscape Improvements Project was completed as was the extensive work on the Timberlake Road and Logan's Lane intersection, *yes, another roundabout*, and the widening of Wards Ferry Road. Another major project is the improvement at our Wastewater Treatment Plant located on Concord Turnpike.

In October 2018, Water Resources began a \$52 million dollar upgrade project at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The upgrades ensure the reliability of the plant, especially during major storms. Just this past weekend, over 950 cubic yards or—to put it in better perspective—100 truckloads of concrete was poured at the Wastewater Plant as part of the upgrade project! That’s a lot of concrete by any standards.

This upgrade is the final major project of the Combined Sewer Overflow Program which began in 1979. Since the beginning of the CSO project, the City has spent over \$238 million dollars to close 112 overflow points where combined sewage and stormwater was discharged into the watershed. Once this project and several smaller ones are completed next year, the City will be in full compliance with state and federal standards, and the CSO program will be complete.

This major accomplishment not only benefits the City, it protects our environment. We owe all involved a round of applause.

Infrastructure isn’t just about asphalt and buildings. Lynchburg is blessed with wonderful parks and trails. Last year’s flood

caused over \$5.3 million dollars in damage to miles of trails. Thank you to the many citizens who have stepped up to clean up debris and make monetary donations. It will take a true community effort to restore Creekside Trail, but we are a community that comes together to get things done. I know we will do so again. Lynchburg is a great place to play!

We have other exciting projects on the horizon. Just to name a few: a much needed new \$39 million dollar headquarters for our Police Department, a \$48 million dollar College Lake Dam and Bridge Project, \$4.4 million dollars for the next phase of the Main Street Renewal Project, \$10 million dollars for the Florida Avenue Sidewalk Plan, the possible construction of one new school and major renovations to several others. City staff led by our Deputy City Manager Reid Wodicka, spent a tremendous amount of time to complete a major revision of our Capital Improvement Plan which provides us with a clear plan and funding strategy to accomplish these projects. This was no easy task and their work is much appreciated. During a recent session of our current Citizens Academy, a participant asked why we couldn't do fund raisers to pay for some of these projects. I'm not sure staff thought of that as an option but maybe she was on

to something. So tonight we will be passing around the collection plate for donations or if any of you have a few extra million you want to give us -- that would be great! Seriously, these are all necessary projects but they represent just a few of the issues before us. As an old but growing City our needs are many, but I have faith that one of the chapters in Our Lynchburg Story will be that, as a community, we persevered and we found a way.

As Vice Mayor Dolan comes back to the podium, let me say that while it is a pleasure to work alongside all of my colleagues on Council, it has been a special honor to have her serve a Vice Mayor. She is a quiet but thoughtful force, and I appreciate her counsel. *Ladies and Gentlemen, Vice Mayor MaryJane Dolan.*

VICE MAYOR DOLAN

Thank you, Mayor Tweedy, for those kind words. Good evening again, Ladies and Gentlemen. What a great night! It is my pleasure to speak to you briefly about our third and fourth goals **Creating a Supportive Learning Environment and Assessing and Understanding Neighborhood Strengths and Challenges.**

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

Our vision is to have strong schools that meet the needs of all of our children, both now and in the future. A quality education is one of the most important avenues to future success, and it is a pathway out of poverty. A strong public school system has an impact, not only on our economic well-being, but also on the financial health of our families, and it has the potential for providing our businesses with access to a ready workforce. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson, a proud Virginian, argued that public education was critical for the success of democracy by creating an informed and committed citizenry.

We all know that our schools can be stronger, but it is imperative that City Council, the School Board, our local businesses, our institutions of higher learning and most importantly, our community, work collaboratively to ensure our public school system is of the quality that our children deserve.

The School Board is responsible for operating the school system, but the City has a responsibility to create an environment in which learning is supported for both traditional academic and vocational/jobs training. Our vision is to have an

environment in which our children receive a superior education and that the best educators see Lynchburg as a professional destination in which to educate.

School leadership has been having conversations with the community about special education, alternatives to suspensions and family and community engagement. I am pleased that the Schools and the City have just recently formed a taskforce to address the present state of our schools and to recommend changes where necessary. There are many difficult conversations and decisions ahead. We must question whether reducing the number of school facilities is warranted. How do we make sure that neither race nor economic status plays a part in which students are successful? What barriers can we remove to make it easier for families to be involved in their schools? How can we pay our teachers better? These questions and many more must be tackled in the near future.

I believe in the midst of all of these questions, there is some great news. In September 2018, Lynchburg Beacon of Hope made an unprecedented public announcement regarding the creation of a life-changing program.

Lynchburg Beacon of Hope, alongside individuals, businesses and foundations of Lynchburg, launched **Stay Close, Go Far**, and the first Promise Program of its kind in Virginia. **Stay Close, Go Far** provides last-dollar scholarships to Lynchburg City Schools' seniors in the classes of 2019-2024 to attend Central Virginia Community College for free or to attend one of our regionally-accredited local colleges, universities or technical certification programs. Stay Close, Go Far is a collective initiative to maximize the potential of our young people and is a bridge to greater economic stability for our youth and our community. This clearly is an excellent example of what can happen when public and private partnerships come together to address a concern.

From the "Kids to College" initiative in the elementary schools to the pro-active future centers at E. C. Glass, Heritage and now CVCC, Beacon is laying a strong foundation for the future. Lynchburg's Promise represents a tremendous investment in the young people of Lynchburg with the expectation that the students benefitting from it will one day pay it forward by

mentoring other young people as they journey through the process.

I'd like to ask Lynchburg City Schools' Superintendent Dr. Crystal Edwards, Laura Hamilton, Executive Director of Lynchburg Beacon of Hope and any of the college and university presidents, Beacon of Hope board members and other partners with Lynchburg's Promise to stand so we may recognize you. On behalf of this community, thank you for your vision, your hard work and your commitment to an initiative that is truly life changing for our students and a game changer for this community and the Vision for 2025.

The next goal we want to highlight is **Understanding Neighborhood Strengths and Challenges.**

It is perhaps human nature to look at a moderate to low income neighborhoods and see only challenges and shortcomings.

Unfortunately, government often takes the stance "***You are broken. We will fix you.***" We tend to look at a high income neighborhood and see only strengths. The truth is that every neighborhood, regardless of the socio-economic condition of its residents has both assets and challenges, and as a community,

we must begin put aside our preconceived notions, make it a priority and listen to the neighborhood residents. Whether we acknowledge it or not, every neighborhood has gifts, skills, passions and knowledge which contribute towards the collective well-being of the community.

The City's Department of Community Development is just beginning its efforts to update the Tyreeanna/Pleasant Valley Neighborhood Plan and has initiated to work on creating the Dearington Neighborhood Plan. Both neighborhoods have long histories and a collective sense of community. There will be significant public outreach, and I encourage those of you who live in these neighborhoods to be active participants in the process.

We must begin to look at all neighborhoods as important assets to our community whether the neighborhood is located Downtown, Midtown, Windsor Hills or in the Timberlake corridor. We must find better ways to engage, listen and work with all of our residents, and we must encourage a stronger connection between them. Every person has value, and every neighborhood is important, and until we operate under that

belief, we can never reach the goals of having exceptional neighborhoods and strong families. Let's all work together to build a stronger Lynchburg.

My time before you tonight has been a privilege. The Mayor is returning to conclude our evening, but before she does, I want to thank you all for your support, for holding me accountable and for the role you are playing in strengthening our community's social, economic and environmental well-being.

MAYOR TWEEDY

Before we end this portion of tonight's celebration, I would be remiss if I did not mention the wonderful work being done with the poverty initiative. We have a great journey ahead of us and though the path is not always clear, I believe that there have been great partnerships and collaborations formed in this community as we attack poverty.

We have had positive results through the 16-week Getting Ahead classes with individuals whose income is at poverty level.

They go through the process of self-discovery and receive the tools to build financial, social and emotional resources.

Bridges of Central Virginia and Poverty to Progress have joined forces to become Bridges to Progress and just recently, had a 90-day report out to let the community know the progress that has been made in this effort. Throughout the City, both individuals and organizations have kept the conversation going and are working collaboratively to address the issues that impact poverty in this community.

Employment, transportation and housing are three major barriers for individuals in poverty. We have talked about the efforts being made to help pave the way for individuals to find and retain meaningful employment. If you have a job and public transit is your only form of transportation, it can be difficult to maneuver around the City. The Greater Lynchburg Transit Company understood this and in order to better meet the needs of their customers they conducted a survey. This resulted in GLTC adjusting some of their schedules in order to better meet the needs of the riders. In most cases, these changes made it possible for people to get to work, doctors' appointments and

other places they needed to travel. It was a good first step to address the needs of our citizens. Groups like Oasis is continuing to address food deserts, Park View Mission, the Lighthouse and other groups too many to name are actively working to address the issues surrounding poverty in this community. In addition to transportation and employment, affordable housing is also a critical component in strengthening our neighborhoods and our families.

City Council recently received the report from the Housing Collaborative concerning affordable housing and the City is now working with the Collaborative on ways to incorporate the needs of the community and how to impact housing affordability in our community. City staff is also researching best practices so we may learn how other cities have addressed affordable or workforce housing. When we say ‘affordable housing,’ we are speaking about individuals and families who currently spend from 30 to 50 % of their salaries on housing. This causes housing insecurity which in turn affects all aspects of a family’s life.

One successful program that is addressing the need for housing, specifically home ownership is the First Time Homebuyers Club

operated by Lynchburg Community Action. The First Time Homebuyers Club is a yearlong club that works with clients to improve their credit scores and save to buy a home. Currently they have 21 clients and 15 of the 21 have been able to raise their credit score and paid off all of their debt. The group will graduate in August and many of them will become first-time homeowners. If you are interested in participating in the program please contact Lyn-Cag because the next class also begins in August.

Homeownership is desirable because it provides social benefits beyond pure financial and economic benefits. But it is not the answer for everyone, which is why we will need the assistance housing organizations, developers, realtors, citizens and others to work with us to address this issue. Our vision for 2025 is that housing insecurity is a concern of the past and our families are able to thrive in safe and affordable housing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Our Lynchburg Story has many chapters and many authors and a vision for 2025. It is one that values all people and leaves no one behind. Our story is one that appreciates history but embraces change. It is a story of

innovation and heart. Come let's take this journey together, chapter by chapter and let's see what the end will be. I believe with all my heart that in 2025, no one will be able to say that we believe Lynchburg is just good enough – Lynchburg has new history to make! Thank you for listening tonight, and I hope that you will want to be part of the vision!

We will close with two selections by the New Heritage Singers after which, you are invited to a reception in the lobby. Thank you and Good night.

(New Heritage Singers)