

Swearing-in Ceremony

May 17, 2012

I would like to begin by thanking those closest to me for your encouragement and support. Thank you mother and father. And their mothers and fathers, and their mothers and fathers before them. You did your level best to raise me to have compassion for all people; to put others before myself; that I have a responsibility to provide for the greater good; and to live a life that will leave our community healthier, happier and stronger than before I joined it. All of my imperfections; my faults and my shortcomings are of my own doing and have nothing to do with your role as life-guides. Thank you for giving me the ability to recognize my flaws and the desire to improve upon them.

Thank you to my incredible wife Emily and my most perfect daughter Elizabeth. My success is measured by your encouragement and support. You keep me grounded. You always remind me that above all else comes family, and I am so blessed that you both are part of my whole.

Thank you to all my friends and supporters. You motivate me, counsel me, raise me up and knock me down. I am indebted to your wisdom and guidance. And thank you to those who challenge me. You help to more clearly define why I serve and further clarify the values that guide me.

My promise to all of you is that I will serve the greatness of Gainesville faithfully. I will provide the leadership you expect and deserve, as together we guide our city into civic exceptionalism.

We live in politically distasteful times. Cooperation is shunned at the expense of governing. Reason is the casualty of intransigence. This accepted condition of the state of our democracy sometimes reminds of the beginning of the book of Isaiah.

It is neither a bright nor encouraging portrait Isaiah paints of his people. The text begins with a community in despair, with little hope of finding their way to a better life. The story is grim. Grim as only the Old Testament can be. But a way out, a way up is professed. Suddenly, it is offered, "Learn to do good: demand justice, stand up for the oppressed;". The suggestion is made to "Come, let us reason together."

The political rancor that exists at all levels of government, as promoted and encouraged by the media and funded by increasingly shadowy figures and groups, asks that we ignore this option. We have been deceived into thinking that this is simply the way our government functions. That we are powerless and resigned to looking wistfully back at times greater than our own. But, in a representative government, we have the ability to rise above the rancor and do great work with our gift of reason. So as we look to the future of Gainesville, I ask you all to "Come, let us reason together."

Gainesville is abuzz with excitement. There is a shared enthusiasm amongst Gainesvillagers that great things are happening. We optimistically wonder where we are headed, how will we get there and what Gainesville Next will look like?

But to begin to understand the promise of our future, we must first understand the path that led us to this point. Gainesville has constantly reinvented itself; evolved as circumstances demanded. We are not nor have we ever

been a passive city, waiting to be effected by the tides of change. Gainesville's history is one of challenge, progress and triumph.

So, let us reason together to understand where we have come from so we can better know where are we going. The first diminutive seed that would grow to be Gainesville was planted in 1853. Gainesville became the Alachua County seat because of its location along the Florida Railroad line stretching from Cedar Key to Fernandina Beach. This positioning as a transportation hub would be a crucial event for the social and economic future of Gainesville. Gainesville became the center of a booming cotton industry. Later, we tried our hand at citrus, only to be wiped out by two brutal winters. We were then central to phosphate and timber operations, which helped Gainesville to grow to one of the largest cities in Florida by the early 20th Century.

Throughout this evolution, investment in infrastructure including transportation and utilities was central to Gainesville's success. Our city made early investments in paving roads with brick and later asphalt, creating and then expanding the utilities offered to our residents, and creating a professional fire and police department. These were all important elements in attracting economic development opportunities to Gainesville. And these investments were not without their critics, for it is not a new development that progress is view with contempt by those mired in the past.

But these investments were never more significantly realized that when we competed for and secured the location of the flagship university for the state of Florida. Since 1905, Gainesville and Gator Nation have been inseparable. And it is greater than ever to be a Florida Gator! Gainesville continued to grow and flourish during the 20th century. We have had our roadblocks and our celebrations. But it has been the collective dedication to an evolving Gainesville that has brought us to the crossroads of today.

So where are we headed? How does Gainesville transition into a city that will not merely endure but thrive in the 21st century? I suggest that we come and reason together. The first point of reason, of fact is that the nature of transportation is changing. Miles driven per household are down and gas prices are up. Peak oil forecasts indicate that supply will begin to tighten. At the same time, international demand for oil is growing exponentially, causing upward pressures on prices that are consuming more and more of each family's paycheck. Families are now spending upwards of \$4000 a year on fuel alone.

It is then no coincidence that the vast majority of people (83% according to a recent poll), want more and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities, want to live within walking distance of restaurants and grocery stores and favor alternative forms of transportation. In 2011, transit ridership reached its highest levels since 1957. Gainesville's RTS service has grown more than ten-fold in the last decade. We see an undeniable link between time spent in a car and poor health. We must rethink our built community and enable families to have access to the new lifestyles they wish to lead.

The time to invest in transportation alternatives is now. We must come and reason together as a community in order to create a complete transportation plan that will serve the needs of our entire community for the next 100 years. This approach needs to include a comprehensive plan to maintain our roads infrastructure at a high

standard of quality in perpetuity. It also means developing a plan to expand transportation options. And these options need to include a premium transit service that connects our residents with employment and entertainment centers across the city.

We also need to find ways to better improve how we design our city to better serve our residents. Connecting Gainesvillagers to one another is one of the key factors to advancing a vibrant social, political and economic environment.

Artist David Byrne of the Talking Heads highlights the importance of connecting people when telling the story of his creative process. He used to bicycle around Manhattan and Brooklyn at night and stop when he heard music. He would post up nightclub to nightclub soaking in the rich musical styles from around the world. This tapestry of music would later be woven into the extraordinary compositions of Byrne's Talking Heads and solo work.

But it is not just important to connect people for artistic purposes. It is critical if we are to fully realize the potential of Innovation Gainesville. A recent study of patent citations shows that it is ten times more likely for a person submitting a patent to cite another patent from within his or her metropolitan area than from outside of it. Connectivity is the key to an energetic, creative and interactive economic ecosystem.

If we reason together, we will conclude that a first class transportation plan, including premium transit, will not only be a much less expensive means of providing transportation to our citizens, but it will help connect people and increase the freedom people have in their personal lives. A better built city will connect our innovators, artists, entrepreneurs and workers, and will in turn lead to greater freedom of employment, greater freedom of where you live and greater economic freedom.

If families are able to downsize their automobile fleet and live in a more connected city, they will suddenly be free to spend that money on things that will improve their lives and add to the economic vitality of our city. Imagine not having to make that second car payment, not stopping at the gas station every week, not making that insurance payment and not having to pay for that blood-pressure medication because of all of those other drivers on the road.

So come, let us reason together to create a transportation and development plan that is inclusive of our entire community. Help us reason together to bring people together; to increase choice; to mobilize, connect and empower our community. If we delay this investment in our community, we will do what Gainesville has never done. We will let opportunity pass us by.

Much of what I speak of is contingent on increased citizen involvement and in their government and overall community. I am reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King's call to action when he pointed out that "Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve." For Gainesville to truly become the city of our potential we need to evolve as a government. We need to facilitate and encourage more civic participation. We need to empower families to become the political process that is the life-blood of a healthy community. In essence, our city government needs

to be not just a participant in Innovation Gainesville, but a leader in the initiative. I will refer to the new approach as government 2.0.

Municipal government has evolved over the last 159 years of Gainesville's existence. We started as a tiny and insular organization, grew more professional with the manager-council system, added accountability through the Sunshine Laws and reached out to the community with traditional media like Channel 12 and our website.

But that was last century. We are building the Gainesville of the 21st century. At its most simple, Government 2.0 is an upgrade to the city's operating system. When fully implemented, it will serve three purposes: to increase government transparency, increase public participation and increase both internal and external collaboration as we solve the challenges of tomorrow. This will be accomplished through making available to the public useful data sets in an easy to consume format. The result will be a better-functioning government as well as a government that more fully engages its citizens.

Let me give you a few examples of how Government 2.0 can work. This is the story of the possum and the Good Samaritan. A resident of South Boston walked out to her back yard on a cold winter evening to find a Possum in her trash can. The resident was quite alarmed and unsure what to do. Like many people in times of confusion and desperation, concerned citizen turned to their government. The following post appeared on Boston's *Citizen's Connect* smart phone app: *"Possum in my trash can. Can't tell if it's dead. Barrel in back of 168 west 9th. How do I get this removed?"*, to which a stranger yet fellow Southie replied: *"11:15PM Walked over to West Ninth Street. It's about three blocks from my house. Locate trash can behind house. Possum? Check. Living? Yep.*

Turned the trash can on its side. Walked home. Good night, sweet possum."

Progressive cities have started to use government 2.0 to create mobile apps for public art and historical buildings. Honolulu has created the 311 Dashboard, a one-stop resource for citizens to report graffiti, potholes and abandoned cars, or to give public input on urban design or budget priorities. Boston has implemented a mobile app that allows citizens to adopt a fire hydrant in the winter in order to keep it free of snow for the fire department. Denver and Philadelphia have unveiled a citizen engagement project called Beautiful Streets. Residents are able to view a wide variety of streets online and then vote for their preferred design.

By creating the opportunity to crowdsource ideas and solutions for Gainesville's challenges, we empower our residents and expand the innovative ecosystem exponentially. I look forward to hosting our first hack-a-thon that will engage our community. This solutions-based data-engagement festival will unleash Gainesville's creativity in exciting and productive ways. And we will see new greatness because they were giving the opportunity to serve.

I will be aggressively pursuing the implementation of a Government 2.0 strategy. I will be meeting with our private code-writers and tech developers to recruit them to this upgrade. I will lead the development of an interactive civic commons. Within three years, I fully expect to see Gainesville's operating system installed, upgraded and facilitating a more transparent, participatory and collaborative city government. And then, all of our citizens can be great because any of them will be able to serve.

And this newly engaged community will lead to a greater Gainesville. In the Zulu tongue, the typical greeting is Sawubona, or "I see you". It does not mean the superficial "Yup, there you are, right there in front of me...", rather I acknowledge your significance, I see your dignity, I see your potential, I see your humanity. I see your uniqueness. I see your importance in the health of our community. It is a greeting of inclusiveness, of oneness and respect. And the typical response is "I am here". It means that I am ready to be accepted, to be included, to be a part of doing great things. So to our Gainesville community, I see you.

To our civic leaders at all levels of government, I see you.

To our leaders at the University of Florida and Santa Fe College, I see you.

To our neighborhood leaders and activists, I see you.

To our artists who inspire and entertain, I see you.

To our teachers and mentors, I see you.

To our public servants, I see you.

To our innovators and entrepreneurs, I see you.

To our disadvantaged and helpless, I see you.

To our children, I see you.

To our mothers and our fathers, I see you.

To our students and our retirees, I see you.

To our outspoken and to our underrepresented, I see you.

To straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered, I see you and I hope you are not Against Me! but with me.

To all races, creeds; to those of great faith and no faith, I see you.

To our Democrats, Republicans and Independents, I see you.

To our wealthy and our poor, I see you.

To our connected and marginalized, I see you.

To every last thread in the fabric that is Gainesville, I see you.

I honor your dignity, I celebrate your diversity, I am inspired by your contribution and I am awed by your greatness. And from this boundless respect I have for you, I too have great expectations. I expect you to honor one another.

I expect you to honor the high road and cast off those who would ask you to walk along any other path. I will hold you to the highest standards, as I expect you to do to me. And together, all of us, we will create a Gainesville worthy of our grandchildren.

So Gainesville, I see you. You are great because you can serve. Will you come with me so we can reason together? If you agree to do this, we will surely achieve the promise of our forefathers and foremothers, and we will be most proud to call ourselves Gainesvillagers.