

Mayor Shaunna O'Connell

Inaugural Address: January 3, 2022

Today I am deeply honored to take the oath to continue to serve as your Mayor. I first want to thank my entire family, especially Ted and our daughters, for their support, patience, understanding, and love. They inspire me every day and I am blessed. I would also like to recognize our team in the Mayor's Office for the long hours they put in to serve our City and our residents.

As a new Mayor, I am proud of the caliber and dedication of every City employee. You have honored me with your cooperation and determination to always get the job done. I am extremely appreciative of those who have served and will be serving on City Council, School Committee, TMLP Commission, and Planning and Zoning Boards. I look forward to working with you all.

I took the oath of office in 2020 eager for our team to begin the work of positive change and reform. None of us could have imagined we would soon be facing a global health pandemic.

As this pandemic developed, we made it our mission to keep our City running as efficiently as possible so that Tauntonians knew they had a place to turn for help and guidance. Our City rose to the tremendous challenge. We kept the public informed of critical safety information, provided basic needs assistance to our residents, and helped our businesses keep their doors open. Our first responders and medical professionals worked 24/7 to keep us safe. Our entire City owes them an enormous debt of gratitude for serving on the front lines.

When the vaccine became available, Taunton was a leader in getting people educated and vaccinated. I am grateful to have worked with our amazing team of City employees, volunteers, Morton Hospital, Brewster Ambulance, and Manet Community Health Center to run vaccine clinics for Taunton residents.

I am proud of how our entire City worked together through the challenges we faced. It has truly been a team effort.

When I was first elected, I said I wanted to make Taunton a leading city for the Commonwealth. We have remained true to that mission. As we navigated through COVID, our team never lost sight of our priorities and promises to you. One of my favorite quotes is "You get what you work for, not what you wish for." At City Hall, we worked hard.

Faced with the closing of the landfill, lost revenue, and increased costs, we are now looking at new solutions to re-use that land, resolve our biosolids disposal issues, protect the environment, and keep Taunton affordable. We are thinking outside the box and looking at innovative technology. Our City deserves solutions that work.

Fulfilling our commitment to drive development and growth, we have re-established the Taunton Redevelopment Authority. With a focus on all sections of our City, we have recruited new developers, we have seen local businesses expand, and we have celebrated many new businesses opening in Taunton.

Our team worked hard to revive the Airport administration building project, and despite challenges and delays presented by the pandemic, the project continues to progress toward completion and will be a catalyst for growth and development.

To keep the economic momentum building, we are streamlining the City's permitting process. We want the business community to know that Taunton is open for business and we are collaborative partners. A strong local economy benefits everyone.

Of course, a leading city must have good infrastructure. We have invested millions of dollars into our roads and sidewalks throughout the City this past year. At City Hall we have been transforming how we conduct business with greater transparency, new technology and efficiencies, and better performance for Tauntonians.

We have created a new Elections Division that now brings the multi-facets of our local elections under one department. We also created a Procurement Office, and we now have a new Chief Financial Officer. I know that one year from now, we will be seeing even greater savings and efficiencies under his leadership.

Our hard work has resulted in being able to deliver a tax break to our seniors. This is especially important as they are being hit with high inflation.

For decades, our City Charter has needed updating. We assembled a working task force that took on this challenge. Their recommendations that were adopted by the City Council will allow for more public input, create greater accountability and diversity, and bring City governance policies up to date. The updated Charter will significantly benefit our entire City. We eagerly await its passage through the legislature so that our City as a whole will be allowed to have their say with a vote.

There is still work to be done to make Taunton a leading city, and we are well on our way. My goal is to keep Taunton moving forward in a positive direction. Over the next two years, we will continue to transform our neighborhoods, improve government operations, make progress on a public safety facility, and keep Taunton affordable.

With your dedicated support, we will achieve great things together and ensure a bright and prosperous future for Taunton. I am truly honored and grateful for the opportunity to continue serving as your Mayor.

Thank you.