



INAUGURATION OF MAYOR MICHAEL J. NICHOLSON

Entered into 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*.

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION AND RESULTS OF VOTES CAST

**GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
JUNE 30, 2020**

As a result of the votes cast at the Special City Election held on June 30, 2020, **MICHAEL J. NICHOLSON** was declared elected **MAYOR** for the term ending January 3, 2022.

OATH OF OFFICE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Worcester, ss. Gardner, Massachusetts July 13, 2020

I, ALAN L. AGNELLI, City Clerk of the City of Gardner, hereby certify that on the THIRTEENTH DAY of JULY, 2020 at eight 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 3, 2022.

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.

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/ Alan L. Agnelli, City Clerk

CEREMONIAL INAUGURATION OF MAYOR MICHAEL J. NICHOLSON

On the 14th day of July in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty at 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon, 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.

WELCOMING REMARKS

Master of Ceremonies, The Honorable Stephen J. Erickson, former Mayor of the City of Gardner, opened the Inaugural Exercises by welcoming officials and guests in attendance.

PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS

The National and City Colors were presented and posted by the Gardner American Legion Post 129 Honor Guard.



INAUGURATION OF MAYOR MICHAEL J. NICHOLSON

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable Stephen J. Erickson led the Assembly in the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

“THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER”

Mr. Gianni P. Davilli sang “The Star Spangled Banner.”

INVOCATION

The Invocation was offered by the Reverend Father Stephen E. Lundrigan, Pastor of Annunciation Parish.

“Gracious God, We give thanks for the many gifts that you give us - the gift of our lives, the gifts of freedom and peace, and the many unseen blessings that you bestow upon on us each day. Hear our prayers for our new mayor and be with us at this time. In ancient times, your people were entrusted by you with performing acts of consecration upon their leaders. As once they performed thee ritual acts, so be with us today, as we perform these acts of inauguration- formally entrusting our new mayor with leadership responsibilities on behalf of our community. I call down your blessing, O Lord, upon this whole group of persons assembled, especially on Michael Nicholson, that he be filled with your wisdom and with strength. The he be endowed with courage and prudence. That he be filled with your grace as he takes up this office on our behalf.

We ask this in the name of our son, Jesus Christ, and entrust our cause to your great love, and your mighty power. Amen”

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION AND RESULTS OF VOTES CAST

GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
JUNE 30, 2020

City Clerk Alan L. Agnelli announced that as a result of the votes cast at the Special City Election held on June 30, 2020, MICHAEL J. NICHOLSON was declared elected MAYOR for the term ending January 3, 2022.

CEREMONIAL OATH OF OFFICE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Worcester, ss.

Gardner, Massachusetts

July 14, 2020

I, ALAN L. AGNELLI, City Clerk of the City of Gardner, hereby certify that on the FOURTEENTH DAY of JULY, 2020 in the evening, I administered the ceremonial oath to Mayor Michael J. Nicholson for the term expiring January 3, 2022.

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.

INAUGURATION OF MAYOR MICHAEL J. NICHOLSON

And,

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

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/ Alan L. Agnelli, City Clerk

INTRODUCTION OF THE MAYOR

Representative Jonathan Zlotnik introduced the Honorable Michael J. Nicholson, Mayor of the City of Gardner, to deliver his Inaugural Address.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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

“Thank you very much, Good Evening,

Reverend Clergy, Elected Officials, members of the City Council and School Committee, family, friends, guests, and most importantly today, my fellow Gardnerites- Thank you for being here today for the City’s first summer and what was supposed to be our first outdoor inauguration ceremony. When we checked the weather today at three o’clock, we were told that there was a seventy percent chance of a massive thunderstorm going through the City. Well as you can see, the people upstairs had a different take on the matter, but I am glad we were able to come together – safely, while still following the Covid-19 regulations- and celebrate who we are as a City.

However, with that said, there are some certain individuals who I need to thank, because when you are told that you have to take everything that was set up outside on the front lawn to inside this auditorium, that does not get done on its own. So I’d like to thank Lauren Saunders, Roland Jean, Paul LeBlanc, Philip Houle, Colin Smith, Douglas Lepisto, Jaclyn Nicholson, Alan Agnelli, and Representative Jonathan Zlotnik for helping set up the hall that we are in at this time. Please join me in thanking them for their work to make this possible.

I would like to give a special welcome to the former mayors who are here with us, in whose place I now stand- Mayors Erickson, Agnelli, Manca, Kelley, and Mayor Hawke. I also feel as though it is also worth pointing out that we have the City’s four youngest Mayors in history here with us today. Mayor Erickson elected at 21 soon after graduating from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mayor Agnelli at 24, myself at 25, and Mayor Hawke at 33. Gardner has a long tradition of electing young, energetic Mayor’s, and I am very proud to be joining their ranks.

I would also like to thank my family for their constant support throughout the course of the campaign and every day. Dad- you showed me the value in working for your community and of working hard to make a positive impact through helping others. Jackie – of all the things I have accomplished, I will never be prouder than when I can say that I am Jackie Nicholson’s older brother. You continue to inspire me every day and push me to be the best I can be.

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A mi madre, mis abuelos y toda mi familia nicaragüense. Les querría decir unas gracias especiales a ustedes también. Los cuentos de sus sacrificios- sobrevivir un terremoto y dos guerras, mudarse al nuevo país, aprender una nueva lengua, y empezar una nueva vida aquí en los Estados Unidos- son los cuentos en que trato de pensar todos los días. 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 abnegados sacrificios que puedo estar aquí hoy, el primer alcalde latino de la ciudad. Espero seguir haciendo que les sientan orgullosos de mi mientras añadimos nuestro cuento a la nueva capítulo de la historia de esta gran ciudad.

Previous Paragraph Translated:

To my mother, grandparents, and all of my Nicaraguan family. I would like to say a special thank you as well. The stories of your sacrifice- living through an earthquake, two wars, moving to a new country, learning a new language, and starting a new life here in the United States- are stories that I have tried to remember every day. Every opportunity that I have had in my life have been thanks to the opportunities that many of you gave up, in order for those of us in the younger generation of the family to have a better life. It is because of your selfless sacrifice that I can stand here today as the City's first Hispanic Latin-American Mayor, and I hope I can continue to make you proud as we add our story to the new chapter of this great city's history.

To all my friends, educators, mentors, and everyone else who has played a role in helping to get me here today, thank you for your constant presence and support in my life that helped shape me into who I am.

Thank you to the members of the City Council, the School Committee, and all of our elected and appointed officials here for the services that you provide for our community. In particular I'd like to thank Council President Elizabeth Kazinskas and Councilor James Walsh for filling the role of Acting Mayor of the City during the past six months. No one could have predicted that during your time as Acting Mayor, the world would go through a global pandemic like we haven't seen in over a century, and we owe you our thanks for helping to guide the City through these trying times. Please join me in thanking these two public servants.

I would be remiss if I did not say a special Thank you to the Town of Rutland, the place that has become my second home for the past two years. I cannot thank you enough for welcoming me into your town. Know that the geographic center of the Commonwealth will always be at the center of my mind with all the fond memories we made together and the accomplishments that we were able to achieve.

Thank you to all of those who helped make today's events possible. To our former mayor, Stephen Erickson: since I started working in local government, your name has come up numerous times. From the fact that we were both young when we were elected. Both being alumni of the Massachusetts Boys State Program, and both graduates of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, you have been a great role model for me and it is an honor to me to be able to have you here as our Master of Ceremonies. Thank you also to my inaugural committee for your support during this process, Representative Zlotnik, Former Representative Robert Rice, my sister Jackie, Mr. Brad Heglin, and Colin Smith. Mayor Hawke, thank you for taking me under your wing six years ago, and helping show me the ropes. I'll keep things going as best I can, but I'm hoping by the time I'm done that I won't have as many grey hairs on my head.

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Finally, I feel like we would be remise today if we did not give a special thank you to the administration and staff of Heywood Hospital. If there is anything that we have learned during the past five months, it is how lucky and blessed we are to have Heywood Healthcare located here in our community- and this is personal to me. On Wednesday, March 25th, my family was notified that my cousin had a confirmed Covid-19 test and was being admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Heywood Hospital, where he remained on a ventilator for the next four weeks. The professionalism and genuine care that the staff of Heywood Hospital showed my family during that time, coupled with the outpouring of support that the general public showed, are prime examples of how the work of everyone at Heywood Hospital impacts our community every day, before and after this pandemic that we currently find ourselves in. It also shows that everyone who works in those buildings down on Green Street are our local heroes among us.

It is no secret that times have been difficult during the past few months, but it has also helped define who we are as a City. We rise together as a community, and we fall together as a community. Yes, we have seen hard times lately. Unemployment claims went up, businesses were closed, relatives and loved ones became sick, and we had to change the way we live our lives. We even had fear to show the ones we love the most how much we care about them through our usual embraces, for fear signs of our affection would actually endanger them.

*However, we also saw that the community came closer together even as its people stayed apart. We saw our public officials, healthcare workers, political leaders, and so many others stand up to the challenge that was ahead of them, and we saw just how easy it was to see a smile behind a mask. When thinking of what to say in this address, I was constantly reminded of the words that someone who I view as a great mentor said recently. That in the past century, our nation and our city have “gone through two world wars, the great depression, a pandemic, social changes, a recession, and so much more,” *(Dr. Timothy Anderson, Director of the UMass Minutemen Marching Band) and yet here we are, stronger than ever because of the experiences that we have gone through together as a community. Two thousand- twenty has been a year of challenges and trials, but it has also given us a chance to start this new era with a strong foundation; with a diving board to show the strength that will define us for the next decade.*

It can easily be seen that the city department that has been impacted the most due to the current pandemic, has been our school system. It will not be until the year 2034, at least, that a student in our schools will not have had to experience a change in our usual educational practices that have been a direct result of the pandemic. This is a call that now more than ever we need to treat our school system for what it is - a way in which we make a permanent impact every day on the lives of our next generation, the most vulnerable people we have in the city, and shape who we are for the future. During the past decade we have funded our schools at a rate that is higher than we ever have before in our City’s history. We also have the construction of a new, state-of-the-art elementary school to look forward to with the construction beginning by this time next year. However, this pandemic has shown us that we need to continue to give our students and educators the resources they need to be able to be successful in these times, where plans are still being talked through as to how we can accomplish the goal of giving our students the top quality education they deserve in the next school year.

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This is also something that we should be looking at with our other departments as well. We should constantly be evaluating areas of improvement, especially those highlighted by this pandemic. One example of this can be our online permitting system. We have already implemented online permitting for our building department, some time ago when I was still an intern in Mayor Hawke's Office, but we should be continuing to bring the high-quality services that we provide in our City Hall out into the community so that people have the safe opportunity to access the services of our City offices from the comfort of their own homes.

We have made strides in the past few years in reducing our carbon footprint as a City. We have obtained Green Communities status, we're the second community to sign on to the Commonwealth Community Compact Best Practice Program, and have invested more in our infrastructure than ever before. However, we need to continue to adopt practices that enable us to be more sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change and the other challenges we are facing. By working together with our partners at the State and Federal level, we can find new ways and funding opportunities to help us stay strong as we work and plan for our future. In our downtown alone, we currently have new sidewalks being installed, have replaced the majority of our utility lines, and by years end will have the roadways in our downtown area repaved. This amount of work, in this short amount of time is something that the City has not seen in many years.

For many people, we see all the things that make us stand out as a community, and it just becomes familiar. We hide it in the background of our minds, because we see it so often. However, in reality we should be using these advances to help highlight who we are. Here in Gardner, we have an enviable community hospital, a college, 18-hole golf course, bike trail, Dog Park, radio station, Skate Park, library, Movie Theater, Dunn State Park, ice skating rink, a scout camp, and more. In the past decade, we have invested more into our recreational facilities and playgrounds than ever, including the new athletic field complex at Gardner High School and the recent upgrades to the Oliva Case playground that were done in partnership with the Solid As A Rock Foundation. When we work with our partners in the public and private sector, we can accomplish things greater than we could have dreamed of years before. We have even created a new recreation department that runs our summer programs for our City's youth to have a place to be outside and stay active- or as the mural at Jackson Park says, "Unplug and Play."

Our business community ranges from manufacturing, biomedical engineering, retail, healthcare, finance, and continues to grow. Established businesses have reached milestones- such as the Blue Moon Diner celebrating its 20th Anniversary this past weekend, Lakins Children Apparel celebrating their 85th year of service, and all of the events that Gardner Square Two puts on ever year to highlight our business community and show the community what we have here. We have seen companies like Tractor Supply and the 99 Restaurant open their doors here, with new opportunity coming at the Timpany Crossroads, the Garbose site, and S. Bent properties in the very near future. In fact, one of the first things I did after formally being sworn into office yesterday morning was sign a grant proposal to help grow our commercial base in the City and continue to diversify what we have to offer here. The work done by local organizations like the Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce, Gardner Square Two, and our Community and Economic Development personnel are vital to our success as a community and should be commended.

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We have so much here to offer to our residents, and to those looking to call this City their new home, but while we are marketing to others on the outside, we should not forget that we need to market to ourselves as well. When speaking to a group of high school students earlier this year, I asked them how many of them planned to stay in the City after they went on to their next endeavors. While a few hands went up, other – the majority of them- remained down. When I asked them why, they all had similar responses – “what is there to do in Gardner?,” “I want to go into a specialized field that just isn’t available here,” and “we seem to be declining and I am not sure if this is where I want to be later on if this keeps up.” After about five minutes of talking with them, you could see that they just did not know what was available here in their own hometown. Economic development is not just attracting new businesses into the city, but attracting our residents into what we already have here. I got to this podium today because there was an interest sparked in me in middle school during the Government Week at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Elementary School. Rather than have a usual student body government election, the students ran for “real world positions”- Mayor, City Council, School Committee, and those who either did not win, or chose not to run were “appointed” to various positions- “health director, city clerk, treasurer/collector,” and more. Students then got to spend the day shadowing the person who held that position in real life, learning just what our local government did. Well, back in 2009 when I was an eighth grader, I “ran for mayor” and got to shadow Mayor Hawke for a day. Fast forward to senior year in high school. In Mr. Gardella’s advanced placement US Government class, we were informed our class that we could either write a lengthy research paper for our final grade, or get involved in local government in some way – an internship or working on a local campaign. This is how I got my job in the Mayor Hawke’s Office. I did not know where I would end up after that, but I knew one thing from those experiences- the City I called home was a special place, and I wanted to work to help make a difference in it.

Providing our students with real world experiences that gives them a taste of what they will be doing in their real lives is an invaluable gift we can use to help our students plan for their futures. We should be working with our local business communities and school system to help give our students the tools needed to participate in these experiences and inform them of the opportunities that are here right outside their door.

Yes- 2020 has been a hard year, but it is a year that helps define us and who we are for the next decade. And if how we have acted so far is any example of how we will be for this new decade, then I am the luckiest person in the world to be standing here today as the City’s next mayor. Though we have been facing unprecedented times, we stand at the door of an era of opportunity and success like we have never seen before, and no matter what challenges we face, we have shown how we can adapt to meet these challenges head on. We have seen church sanctuaries move to Facebook, restaurants move outdoors, retailers move curbside, meetings move to Zoom, movie theater popcorn served with drive-up service, office spaces moved to kitchen tables, graduations moved to parades, Gardner Public Schools started giving out meals to any child in the city – student or not - who was in need. This pandemic is something we are still in the midst of here, and will be dealing with for some time, but how we have come together so far gives us the hope that we will get through it. When times get tough, we stand up, and when we do, we bring us all up together.

Just a few weeks ago, we celebrated that over two centuries ago, the founding fathers of this nation took on the greatest super power in the world, and against all odds, forever changed the course of the history of the world through their courage, strength, and commitment to bring a better life for their new nation for generations.

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Those of you who look to the back of your program may notice that the last line of our National Anthem, which Mr. Davilli so eloquently performed for us moments ago, ends in a question. “Does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave, ‘or the land of the free, and the home of the brave?” This question is not meant to leave us with a sense of uncertainty, but is a challenge to all of us. A challenge to stand up and provide out fellow neighbors with the strength and courage that they need to meet the challenges of the world with renewed vigor, no matter how daunting the challenge or how much the odds are stacked against us, to continue the work the founders of this country started to change the world one person at a time—to make sure everyone in this city can feel happy, healthy, safe, and proud to call Gardner their home.

Just a bit ago, when I was sworn in, I took the oath on two bibles. One that my father’s family brought to Gardner when they moved from Canada, the other my mother’s family brought to Gardner when they moved from Nicaragua. When my father’s family moved to the City in the 1920s, they did so to find new economic opportunity. When my mother’s family settled here in the 1980s, Gardner provided them a new home free from war and oppression. In both of these cases, Gardner was their American dream- a place where they could live, work, and play, where they knew they could provide for their families, and better the lives of their loved ones for generations. As we stand here, on the steps of this new decade, it is our turn. When someone stands here ten years from now and are asked the question- “what does Gardner mean to you?,” their answer will be a direct result of what those of us here today do to shape who we are.

I could not be more excited for what is ahead of us – or prouder to call this great City our home.

God Bless you all, God Bless this City, now let’s get to work. Thank you.

BENEDICTION

The Benediction was offered by the Reverend David R. Cote, Chaplain of the Gardner Fire and Police Departments.

“Almighty and gracious God

Continue to bless this your servant, appointed here in this community to be a leader, and one who expresses your love in many ways.

We pray, O God, that in the exercise of authority to serve faithfully and enhance our common life here, Michael will be strengthened and guided by your grace. And give us grace to live and serve together in unity and in peace, as we continue our journey together in Gardner, we give thanks for the work of our City Councilors and educators, all of the board members, and those who labor on behalf of all of us.

Now bless, and strengthen Michael and those who work with him in this time of transition, of challenge, give them what is needed of patience and prospective, and assurance, and hope, and grant all who lead in this city with Michael, your guidance that we may share the gifts that you have given all of us for the good of all.

The Lord bless and keep you, Michael. The Lord let his face shine out and show the way with you and be gracious with you. May the Lord look upon you and give you his strength and peace. “



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GOD BLESS AMERICA

A recording of "God Bless America" by the UMass Minuteman Marching Band played as Officials and guests departed from the Auditorium.

A True Copy, Attest:

Alan L. Agnelli

Alan L. Agnelli, City Clerk