

## **Board Chair Libby Garvey's Jan. 2, 2020 Remarks**

Board colleagues, I thank you for your confidence in me. This is one of the best Boards I've served with over the past 23 years. I look forward to what we will do together this year.

County Manager and staff, thank you. It is your work that makes the vision of this Board and our residents a reality. It is a privilege to work with you every day.

Welcome everyone. We are glad you are here with us as Arlington enters its 100th year of being called Arlington. This is also the 100th year of women having the right to vote and the 61st year of our schools being desegregated. We just adopted our Equity Resolution last fall.

Today, many people and businesses in Arlington are excited about the change and growth spurred by Amazon's arrival. And today, many people and businesses in Arlington are concerned about, or even fearful of, that same change and growth.

We've been managing change and growth for some time, and doing it well, but the arrival of Amazon has made the scope of our current challenge large and clear. We need to change a paradigm: the paradigm that the most vulnerable in a society are the first to suffer from change and the last to gain from it -- if they ever gain at all. Economic change tends not to be equitable. That's the old paradigm. We want a new one.

We want to be a model of progress and growth with equity. That's a tall order.

I think focusing on three areas in 2020 will help.

First, Equity. We must commit to an Arlington where progress benefits everyone, not just some. That especially includes our older residents, the people who built the Arlington we have today.

Second, Innovation. We need to double down on innovative thinking. We can't always keep using the same solutions.

Third, Resilience. The solutions we find must not only be equitable, but they need to last over time.

So, as Board Chair, I will continue to focus on equity in 2020 like our Chair did in 2019. We have a lot of work to do. It is outlined in the resolution we adopted and includes 4 simple questions:

Who benefits?

Who is burdened?

Who is missing?

How do we know?

I plan to use these questions as a guide in our decisions this year. If we make it a habit to ask these questions, we will truly start changing that old paradigm.

However, it will take more than just a focus on equity. If we want to find new solutions, we will need to innovate. There are different definitions of innovation, but I like our Manager's best: "Innovation means removing the barriers to our thinking that keep us from seeing solutions"

One of the greatest barriers to seeing solutions is the "isms": racism, sexism, ageism, tribalism, etc. These "isms" are part of the air our society breathes, so we often don't even see them. Another barrier is the natural caution of doing things "the way we've always done them." These are ingrained barriers to innovative thinking and neither will fall easily.

Innovation means taking risks, calculated risks, but risks none the less. If you innovate and try something you've never tried, or that NO one has tried yet, you are going to make some mistakes. The more successful companies, individuals and communities know this. They take calculated risks, so they can learn from the experience to improve next time.

We've been innovating some already. It hasn't, of course, always gone smoothly.

For example: The innovative on-line snow map we introduced during the blizzard of 2016 let everyone see which streets had been plowed and which had not. Unfortunately, exhausted snow plow drivers were the source of that information and they made mistakes. Frustrated residents saw their unplowed street marked plowed. It was painful. But we used the lessons from that storm to improve. Among other things, we now use GPS, not exhausted drivers, to tell us where a snow plow has been.

And we were reminded of another important lesson: It's always wise to test innovations first with pilots or demonstrations. By this summer, we hope to have some demonstration projects right here at the Bozeman Government Center, including one with streetlights that can charge electric vehicles. We will learn from that and perhaps have a solution for how to charge large numbers of electric vehicles throughout the County.

Sometimes, though, you can't really pilot, you just have to try it. About two years ago we decided to work directly with Montgomery County, Maryland and jointly hire a contractor to help us in our effort to reduce noise from planes flying in and out of National Airport. Neither of us has the expertise to effectively analyze the data available and argue our case to the FAA. A joint contract across state lines like this has not really been tried before. It's now clear why. We embarked on a painful process of joint procurement with two different legal departments and two different purchasing departments in two different jurisdictions in two different states. Elected officials, board members, staff and especially residents have all have become frustrated.

People are not always patient with the inevitable mistakes or stops and starts of

innovation, nor do they always understand the need to do things differently. Their upset can create a lot of pressure to fall back on old ways of doing things. In this case, we are finally close to signing a contract with a consulting firm that can work with both our communities and has the expertise we need. The lessons learned should help us moving forward. More and more the big systemic challenges we face will require innovation and cross jurisdictional cooperation. That's why we held a rare joint meeting with Alexandria last year and agreed to work together on affordable housing, workforce development and supporting small businesses, especially those owned by women and minorities.

Likely there will be bumps along the road with this joint effort, too. We can navigate these bumps if we maintain good communication with our public... and if we all keep our sense of humor and good will.

Which brings me to my third major focus this year: resilience. The challenges of our future require that we be resilient, so we can bounce back from setbacks of all kinds.

Like climate change. Our July 8 storm showed clearly that our 20th-century infrastructure will not work well for 21st-century storms. When we begin work on our CIP this spring, I expect to see some very different solutions to storm water management. These solutions might look risky to some but will be what we need for resilience in our future climate.

To be resilient, you should be healthy. The work of Destination 2027 showed clearly large disparities in health equity here in Arlington. We need to look at community health differently, too.

Resilience also means being emotionally and socially resilient. That's why the city of Boston identified equity as their major resilience issue. If inequities create resentment and division, people can't pull together like they need to in a crisis.

Arlington's excellent schools, theater and art programs enrich our community and help pull us together, be resilient. But growth is straining them as well. Sustaining their excellence for everyone will take innovative approaches in the future.

Equity, innovation and resilience all fit together.

As we celebrate our 100th anniversary throughout this year with panel discussions, films, book talks, and, yes, a birthday cake on March 16, we will be looking both ways, to our past and to our future.

I'm looking forward to working with everyone to help make that future one in which Arlington thrives and no one is left behind...for at least another 100 years. Happy New Year!