



Inaugural Address
Mayor Nic Hunter, City of Lake Charles
July 1, 2017

Outgoing Mayor Roach, members of the city council, other elected officials, family, friends, citizens of this great city, my wife Becky, without whose support and love I would be lost, I thank you for this honor to stand before you today.

In Matthew, Chapter 5, Verse 14, Jesus tells his listeners, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." Now, where we live, we do not have many hills, but we do have a beautiful lake. So allow me to offer a path forward, for a great city on a Lake. Today, Mayor Roach passes a torch to a new generation. When a torch is passed, we do not lose the light of he or she who passed it. The light of Lake Charles is bright and alive. This is a testament to the stewardship of Mayor Roach, Mayor Mount, the city council, but most importantly, to all of you, the great people of Lake Charles. I am absolutely humbled and grateful to inherit this responsibility.

History is very important to me. It is vital that we understand where we have come from, in order to know where we are going. Lake Charles has shown her vibrancy and strength throughout her one hundred and fifty years. She has remained steadfast and determined, unwilling to capitulate, unwilling to allow a great fire, multiple hurricanes, or economic downturns to dampen her spirit.

Today we find ourselves at the brink of greatness. The next decade is perhaps one of the most important in our history. Growth of our economy and population present unparalleled opportunity. It also presents very real, very tangible challenges. I stand today, firm in my conviction that these challenges are worth having. With the cooperation of the council and the community, these are challenges we can meet. These are challenges I welcome. These are challenges we can overcome.

Lake Charles is a great city on a lake with twenty first century opportunity, yet unfortunately, all too often a city living with mid-twentieth century infrastructure. We must direct ourselves into a new age of investment. Investment, first of all, in what makes good cities, great cities. Again that infamous, yet inescapable idea of infrastructure. Our drainage, roads, waterways, sewer and water lines, pedestrian and bike-friendly accommodations, and public transit all desperately need upgrades. We must be creative in our solutions. We must, in some cases, reinvent our governmental philosophies. Through innovative partnerships, and good budget policy, we can accomplish success without surrendering to excessive financial burden for our citizens or acceptance of the status quo.

Infrastructure cannot be limited to a conversation about bricks and bridges, nor streets and sidewalks. Cultural infrastructure is another vital and inherent component. Our modern, great city on a lake will embrace her cultural heritage and cultural diversity. A celebration of these assets empowers citizens to know Lake Charles as not only a geographic residence, but a genuine home. Our culture also

says to our visitors, "Welcome, we are unique. Come visit Lake Charles, and enjoy our gumbo, our Zydeco, our art, our festivals and, most importantly, our people."

Under my administration, a renaissance of our arts and culture, a renaissance of volunteerism shall be achieved not by increasing government bureaucracy, but by partnering with, empowering and inspiring the private, philanthropic and community-based sectors; encouraging them to realize their full potential.

As we contemplate the progress of our great city on a lake, this cannot be an exclusive conversation. A modern city realizes that opportunity and advancement should stretch from north to south, west to east. We cannot be a city that accepts a successful path for some, without giving everyone the necessary tools, the chance to achieve that same success. Access to affordable housing, quality education, medical care and good jobs are all part of an essential recipe for self-sufficiency and betterment.

While we edge into this modern era, we must be cautious not to lose our sense of self, our character. Protecting our neighborhoods' sense of identity and our historic structures reaffirms to us and the rest of the world that embracing our present and our future should also include building off of and learning from our heritage and our history.

Our assets are many in this great city on a lake. Our I-10 & I-210 corridors, the Port of Lake Charles, Chennault, petro-chemical investment, the gaming and tourism industries, McNeese State University and SOWELA, along with our downtown life, are all part of the economic fabric that fuels our success. We must continue to foster these engines while keeping an eye to economic diversity, ensuring that our future is not dependent on one commodity or one industry. We must never be stagnant. We must never be complacent. We must always be vigilant and always strive to make this great city on a lake even greater.

I ask for your prayers. I ask you to get involved. If you love Lake Charles as I do, do not only talk about it in your homes or at your work. This torch should not be carried by one individual. This torch should be carried by a community. These goals we have set forth cannot be accomplished by one man. For just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to raise itself. In the twilight of my life, I want to look back and reminisce about how we, not I, made these ideas come to fruition. We can only do this together. Rather than accept mediocrity, rather than accept business as usual, remember "Far better is it to dare mighty things." I ask you to join with me in helping our great city on a Lake enter into a new era of prosperity. We are the light of the world. We are a city on a lake that shall not be hidden. God bless Lake Charles, and God bless all of you. Thank You.