

As I See It: Certainties and Uncertainties

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By Mayor Joseph M. Petty

After fifteen months of dangerous rhetoric and acrimony, I am glad to see the end of a truly contentious election cycle. Like many of you, I was surprised by last week's national election.

We strive to look ahead, but I have heard the anxious concern in your voices. I have heard it from our teachers and I have heard it from their students. I have heard the concern from your faith leaders and from those in the LGBTQ community and their allies. I have heard unease from our sisters and daughters and mothers.

There was a small gathering on Tuesday night at City Hall of concerned neighbors, people who are lifelong residents and some who are newly arrived to our country. And I had one simple message that I want to share with all of you: **I've got your back.** I am the Mayor of all of Worcester's residents and when I hear the anxiety and the fear in the voices of our most vulnerable citizens, it is my duty to speak out.

And let us be clear about the national political conversation: this not about who won or who lost or a partisan divide. This is the out-sized voice of a small ideology that does not share **our values**.

Your values are **my values**.

And **I believe** that our daughters and our wives and our mothers have the right to feel safe from violence and sexism. **I believe** that

our children should be able to go to school and not be bullied because of the color of their skin or their religion or gender or their sexual preference. **I believe** that it is our moral duty as Americans to welcome the refugees who arrive in our City legally every year. **I believe** that every successive wave of immigrants that comes to our city makes our city stronger and more prosperous.

As a country and as a city, we have done well by doing good. Let us continue to do so. Let us recognize that bigotry does not make our country or our city more free, affluent, or safe. Let us be stewards of our highest American ideals of tolerance, acceptance, and freedom.

Unlike former presidential elections that created a decisive vision for what's next, this year's result has come with so much uncertainty. I have heard it from business owners who are concerned about tariffs and taxes. I have heard it from our colleges that attract the brightest minds from across the globe. I have heard it from women, from people of different faiths, from economists, from veterans and military families. And I share your uncertainty. I do not know what is next for our country as a whole, but I know what is true for Worcester.

Here is what I am certain of:

I am certain that we will continue to invest in our schools and improve graduation rates and standardized testing scores. **I am certain** that we will continue to live in the safest mid-sized city in New England because our police officers work in partnership with community members. **I am certain** that we will continue to revitalize our downtown with a thriving restaurant scene and public art that is the envy of many cities. **I am certain** that we will fight for

all of our city's residents and we will move our city forward, together.

I closed my inaugural address last January by saying that the words of our elected officials matter. We need to remember that the words we say during campaigns are not forgotten once the election is decided. They echo miles beyond our city limits and for years after Election Day. People are listening and they do not forget. To those people who are afraid, be assured we will stand with you.

As long as I am Mayor, I will have your back.