

Inaugural Ceremonies: January 7, 2008 – 6:00 p.m. Centennial Auditorium, Somerville High
Remarks by Dennis M. Sullivan, President & Alderman at Large, Board of Aldermen

Thank you very much, Howard, for your kind introduction, and thank you all for your warm welcome.

I hope you'll be patient with me this evening. I'm very excited about my new role as president. This is a much tougher job than being Santa, and I have no red suit, white beard and pillow to hide behind.

Mayor Curtatone and elected officials, department heads, staff members, friends, family, guests, Citizens of Somerville, thank you for being part of my success.

I'd also like to thank my family for their continued support, especially my mother. Thanks mom!

To be chosen by my peers to serve as Board President – and take on a leadership role with the Board, and the School Committee, as we continue Somerville's march of progress and renewal – is a great honor for which I am deeply grateful.

Of course, my succession to the Board Presidency was not without controversy.

When the vote was announced, Bruce Desmond immediately demanded a recount – but after careful review of the ballots cast, I actually picked up a couple of votes.

I realize that my job has been made much easier by the good work of my immediate predecessors, who have led the Board so effectively, shaping a set of prudent policies and principles that will serve the Board well in the year to come.

I want to thank Alderman Bob Trane for leading the Board in 2007 – and I want to assure him that I am committed to expanding his innovative efforts to make Somerville a national model in environmental policies and programming.

In this season of political change, we can hope for new democratic leadership at the national level. A changing climate, threats to air and water quality, and the crippling effects of soaring energy costs are devastating our way of life and our abilities to provide basic services.

Let's not wait for change in Washington.

We must be creative, aggressive and committed at the local level, where these issues affect every aspect of our economic and fiscal future – and the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Last month, the children and teachers of the ESCS lost their school in a devastating fire. The entire community came together to help the students and teachers get back on track and return to teaching as quickly as possible.

This fire hit especially close to home for me. I was part of the first kindergarten class at the ESCS in 1972. And before being elected Alderman at Large, I was the Ward 1 School Committeeman. I've worked with the parents and teachers of the ESCS on a number of issues through the years.

I want to work with the School Committee, and lead this Board to the complete rebuilding of a new efficient and revitalized school. After all, our school system, and the kids who attend it, are the cornerstone of our community and deserve no less.

Public safety will be another key priority for me. I want to thank Chief Bradley for his many years of service to this City; he will be missed.

I look forward to working with the new chief of police to re-establishing community policing. I feel that the east and west substations should be implemented as soon as possible to improve communications and form cordial relationships for our residents and other neighborhood issues.

Last year, Massachusetts saw a spike in fire related deaths, the highest number since 2000. Here in Somerville, the horrific fires these past few months have reminded me of the importance of response time. I feel that staffing engine 4 on a full time permanent basis is necessary for the safety of our residents.

Those are just a few of my priorities.

There are, of course, many tough policy issues and difficult fiscal choices that lie ahead of us in the coming year.

It's an open question whether we will see more help from the state in the form of local option taxes, increased aid, or even a share of casino-generated revenues.

But I am an optimist, both as matter of temperament and of experience, and it is clear to me that this Board, the School Committee and Mayor Joe Curtatone have formed a strong and successful partnership that is up to any challenge.

Somerville is a wonderful city in which to build a life, a career and a family – a city that enjoys a well-earned and growing reputation for innovation and excellence in municipal government.

I am truly excited to be part of that government for another two years – and I am eager to get down to business. And that starts with hearing from you.

Four years ago this month, I held my very first Neighborhood Office Hours. Since then I've held more than 70 office hours on street corners, at the supermarket and in the library, to give residents a sounding board to tell me what they like, and what they don't like, about the City.

I'd like to close by inviting everyone to, what some would now call "world famous" office hours, this Saturday, January 12th, from 10 am to noon at the library next door.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to working with you throughout the year to make Somerville an even better community!

Thank you.