



*Brockton, Massachusetts*  
*"City of Champions"*  
*Linda M. Balzotti – Mayor*

Good morning.

I'd like to begin by congratulating our City Councilors and School Committee on their election, and to applaud them for their willingness to serve. I want to recognize our legislative delegation – Representatives Christine Canavan, Geraldine Creedon and Michael Brady are here, as is Senator Thomas Kennedy. I'd also like to recognize former mayors Jack Yunits and Carl Pitaro and the Plymouth County officials that are present: Clerk of Courts Robert Creedon, John Buckley, Registrar of Deeds and County Commissioners Tony O'Brien, Jack Riordan and Tim McMullen. I extend my appreciation and thanks to the clergy – Rev. Brian Smith of St. Edith Stein, Rev. Michael Walker of Messiah Baptist Church and Rabbi Arye Berkowitz of Temple Beth Emunah. Thank you to all of you for your contributions to our city and for your dedication to its citizens.

Most importantly, I want to thank all of the voters who made this historic moment possible. Some of you have known me from my earliest involvement in city government 25 years ago, many of you helped me run for Ward 4 Councilor, encouraged me and supported me in my bid for Councilor-at-Large and I thank all of you who went to the polls in November to elect me the first woman mayor of Brockton.

This is an important moment for me, but also for all of us – and especially for my family, who have always supported me, lifted me up and made my dreams possible. My mother, Betty, is here, my sisters, Gina Sheridan and Mary Valente and my brother, James Balzotti, are here. My brothers-in-law Gary Sheridan and

Joe Valente, and my nieces, Katie and Emily Sheridan are here, and I just wanted to thank them for their love and support.

My father, Genesio, didn't live to see this day, but I know that somewhere he is watching and is so very proud. Like so many of my fellow Brocktonians, my father's family came to Brockton for a better life for their children. They didn't speak the language, they didn't know the customs, but they knew the importance of hard work and the value of education.

My grandfather worked in a foundry and my grandmother had a garden behind their house on Spring Avenue. They worked hard and saved what they could so that the next generation would have more. My father played football at Brockton High School, and when he graduated, he went to work in a foundry like his father, laboring long hours so that my sisters, my brother and I could achieve what we aspired to.

And here I am today, Mayor of the City of Brockton. I hope that my election inspires young women to go into politics, and resonates among our newest residents that if you work hard, anything is possible. To all Brocktonians, I say: Your voice is important, your opinion matters and your service is needed.

I will be walking into one of the worst financial situations our city has ever faced. Without any additional revenues, I will have to cut millions of dollars from our budget, while working to maintain core services.

As your mayor, I am always going to tell it to you straight, so let's all walk into Fiscal 2011 with our eyes open.

That said, let's also remember that Brockton is – and always has been – a city of great promise. It's true, we're going to have to do more with less, but I believe

that it is how you face adversity that shapes your character, and that in times of struggle, leadership and a true sense of community is born.

I am asking everyone to pull together – to put our differences aside and to truly work together. Brockton is at a turning point: we will reach our lowest point financially in the summer, but if we come together for the collective good, we will come out of this crisis a stronger, tighter and better city. And I pledge to you that I will do everything in my power to retain every important service, every necessary program and every essential worker.

#### **STABILIZING NEIGHBORHOODS**

Brockton has been hit harder by the foreclosure crisis than any other community in the state: 44 per 1,000 housing units, according to the Federal Reserve. We've all seen the results in our neighborhoods: abandoned homes, overgrown lots, public safety hazards. As a City Councilor, I worked with my colleagues to introduce home rule petitions asking the Legislature to put a 180-day moratorium on foreclosure proceedings to allow homeowners an opportunity to access mortgage assistance programs and to give renters the flexibility to find new housing, without being turned out onto the street.

Whole neighborhoods suffer when houses are abandoned, and I believe that if Brockton is to rebound, our neighborhoods must be strengthened. I will work with banks, mortgage lenders, the Brockton Housing Partnership, the Brockton Interfaith Community and other outreach agencies to help homeowners explore every possible avenue to avoid foreclosure. I will work with our Code Enforcement Task Force and Board of Health to address safety and health concerns caused by abandoned or neglected properties, and I will work with the City Council on ordinances to force lenders to maintain bank-owned properties.

