

**Newburyport Choral Society
Remarks of the President
2019 Annual Meeting**

Intro: Share story about when you found out about George's resignation over dinner. End with the following:

It was a long ride up Route 93 back to Andover. I told myself that it was okay be sad; a phenomenal music conductor and close friend would be leaving. This is a natural part of all life cycles: all good things must come to the end. And that is okay. In fact, I'm more energized to make next season that much more special; I want the send off that we give George to be nothing than a blowout barnburner, "the stuff that dreams are made on," so that the memories that we make together bring us a sense of joy and accomplishment, snuffing out how we feel now.

We have created a Music Director Search Committee, and will be comprised of both Board and Non-Board Members. I have appointed two stellar individuals as Co-Chairs of the Search Committee: Mary Ann Lachat and Maryellen Moreland. The preliminary work has already been completed, including a complete timeline, application materials, and all of the rubrics and evaluation forms that we will need in assessing the candidates. The Board is committed to hiring a phenomenal Music Director (albeit, who could possibly top George?), and ensuring a smooth transition as we move into a new chapter for NCS. The Search Process is a community process, and though the Search Committee, along with the Board, may do a bit of the heavy lifting, I invite anyone who wishes to help in the work ahead to speak with either of the co-chairs, or with me.

During meetings of our Board, I developed short, descriptive monikers for each year since I was elected President.

"Transition" and "Stabilization" were the themes of the first year. We transitioned from an outstanding, veteran President to a new President, borne out of a different generation and school of thought. And folks that were brand new to his or her respective roles occupied a significant number of Directorships. We all grew into our roles, found our footing, maintained stability in operations, and began to think about how to better "do" our roles.

This past year, the second year, was focused on "Building." We focused immensely on building a solid infrastructure backbone, providing the tools that Directors desperately needed. We made significant leaps with the integration of technology into our routines, and with providing sophistication and definition to the many processes and procedures that were much simpler in years past, when NCS, and the world around us, seemed smaller and simpler.

The upcoming year will be the beginning of our "Growth," a moniker that has a bit of a different meaning than it did when I introduced the concept to the Board five

months ago. As we grow, we will continue to build, and transition to new tools and new ways of thinking and collaborating.

To effectuate that growth, I will be propose to the Board that we completely overhaul and revamp our current website. It is time for a facelift with a fresh, eye catching, and modernized design template. It is time to utilize the many apps, plugins, and software designed to drive traffic to our website, both in number and in diversity of the visitor. Our website must help in funneling our target audiences towards the actions we wish for them to take: purchasing concert tickets, giving donations via sponsorships, and engaging with us in meaningful ways, so that we are relevant, fresh, and in the forefront of our community. And, of course, our website will be integrated into our existing infrastructure.

Next year is our second year as a recipient of the MCC Gateway Grant. We will be engaged in repeating the grant application process that we successfully completed in the 2017 – 2018 season. This time, the stakes are higher: we are competing to join the Cultural Investment Portfolio, giving us access to grant funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council equal to 3% of our operating budget each fiscal year. As we grow, so does the amount of the grant. Our Vice President has her work cut out for her, as she leads the Grants Team in writing our grant application, and preparing us all for a site visit that will be even better than the last one!

Next season is the eighty fifth season for NCS. It's our eighty-fifth. I want this season to be the season that we bust wide open the income side of our ledger through a surge of engagement and action.

At the Board Meeting next Monday night, I will call upon our Revenue Team to immediately begin meeting to work on a strategy on increasing our top line revenue. There is plenty of runway to grow our sponsorship base, business and individual. We have digital properties that are not monetized, and new infrastructure yet to be deployed. And there are new fundraising strategies worthy of serious consideration.

Our eighty-fifth anniversary will only be as successful as we dream it to be. And that will require every one of us to do what we can to help.

I challenge us all to:

- Become an individual sponsor, giving whatever amount is comfortable and makes sense, and/or
- Get a new individual or business to donate this season, or help us close an ad sale.
- Find a way to say, "Yes!" when asked to help, or, even better
- Don't wait to be asked! Volunteer once during the course of the season to work on a task that you find enjoyable and that fits your talents and skill set.

- Seize on a single moment each week to share with someone something about who we are, why you sing with NCS, what about NCS do you particularly like, or about our upcoming concert.

My friends, this next year is going to be so special, and so much fun for us. We will relish each moment that we make music with George, and cheer together when the final chord of Elijah rings through Belleville, and George lowers his baton one last time. I don't think I'll be sad when that moment comes. I imagine that I will be standing just a little bit taller, beaming with pride.