



Speech Delivered by Bob Kiss at Kiss for Mayor Campaign Kickoff Rally

January 7, 2009

Welcome. Thank you for joining me tonight to help kick-off my re-election campaign. I want to continue serving as your mayor for the next three years. We have accomplished a lot, but there is more to do. Under my leadership, we have created a strong, responsive, and efficient government that has served Burlington well. This City has thrived. And, we've solved many of the daunting problems the City faced in the spring of 2006. Over the past few years Burlington has created jobs at a faster rate than the rest of the state and those jobs are paying higher wages.

But now more than ever, we can't lose ground. We must continue to use taxpayer dollars wisely, build our economy and create even more jobs. My record over the past three years speaks for itself.

We built three sound and sustainable city budgets while providing effective, high quality services and programs. For the past two years there has been no increase in the general city tax. And, I will not propose an increase this June for fiscal year 2010. We've held spending growth in the general fund operating budget to below the rate of inflation. We've restored the City's financial health, increased the City's reserve fund, proactively addressed problems with the City pension fund and we preserved the City's high bond rating. For the first time we've established a method for systematically prioritizing how we will spend our million dollar capital fund to make major capital improvements in general fund departments. We've relieved the tax burden on residents now and into the future by negotiating ground-breaking "fee for service" agreements with UVM and Champlain College. And,

for the first time in 20 years, with support from Burlington taxpayers, we have been able to address critical infrastructure issues and develop a comprehensive plan for rebuilding our streets.

We promoted sustainable economic development. This past year, we completed the Zoning Rewrite. The new zoning ordinance provides for economic growth and density downtown but at the same time preserves the character of city neighborhoods. We negotiated a settlement agreement with Westlake developers that delivered the highest ever payment to the Housing Trust Fund for affordable housing and also brings a new hotel to the downtown. We're moving forward on developing the property at Brown's Court for mixed rate housing. Last March, Burlington residents gave overwhelming approval to our plan to revitalize the Moran Plant. Now more than ever we need projects like this to provide new jobs and invigorate the economy.

We have taken steps to protect and preserve the environment. We negotiated the sale of 179 acres of farm land in the Intervale to the Intervale Center. This will forever secure local food production and recreation in the Intervale. The Energy and Environmental Coordinating Committee (E2C2) and the Burlington Sustainability Action Team are in the process of revising the City's Climate Action Plan. The Mayor's Storm Water Task Force developed a comprehensive storm water ordinance that will protect Lake Champlain. The City is working on an innovative financing mechanism that may provide new resources for property owners to make energy efficiency improvements. And, the BED bond approved by voters last November made improvements to the Mc Neil plant that dramatically reduce air pollution and will earn millions of dollars to hold down electric rates.

This administration has worked hard for everyone in the community. As Mayor, I supported substantial funding to keep the City's two senior centers going last year so they could provide vital services to seniors in Burlington. I created a position in the City's Legacy Project dedicated, for the first time, to social and economic equity issues. In the last year, the City initiated a major new AmeriCorps volunteer program aimed at creating a more inclusive community in Burlington. The City's lead program received new federal funding [obtained in partnership with our congressional

delegation] to address lead safety issues for Burlington's children. Under my leadership Burlington will always be committed to building a better future for everyone in our community.

This administration, more than any other, has encouraged citizen participation in government. We know that this makes Burlington a better city. For the past three years, we've developed the city budget with the assistance of the Citizen Budget Task Force. Including citizens in the budget process has demystified the budget for a growing number of Burlington residents and provided the City with an important perspective on how to spend taxpayer dollars. We established the Moran Advisory Group made up of residents from across the city who asked and answered questions that helped us gain broad support for the project from city voters. We hired a new police chief using a comprehensive interview process that included thirty city residents. We've created numerous and meaningful opportunities for citizen involvement, such as the Mayor's Stormwater Task Force, Environmental and Energy Coordinating Committee, and Mayor's Retirement Task Force.

It is clear that this administration has a demonstrated track record of bringing the residents of Burlington into government decision-making. However, we cannot compromise important policies around privacy and confidentiality that serve and protect the interests of the people and City of Burlington. We should not and will not politicize personnel issues.

Progressive government encourages citizen participation because it puts people first. It delivers effective and efficient public administration and services, protects the environment and builds good jobs with good benefits. Progressive leadership reaches out to Democrats, Republicans and independents to move forward based on issues not politics, based on what's good for the people of Burlington not what's good for the politicians.

This long-standing commitment to Progressive values has put Burlington in the forefront. We have successfully addressed many of the challenges faced by cities across the country and we are consistently recognized for our vision and hard work. Most recently Burlington was named the "Healthiest City in the "US" by the Centers for Disease Control. The Marketplace/Church Street was named "One of the Top Ten Spaces" by the American Planning Association. *Country Home*

Magazine named us “America’s Greenest City.” And, *Business Week* named Burlington one of “America’s Best Places to Raise Your Kids.”

We all know that Burlington is a great place to live. But, we cannot take this for granted. It will take leadership, vision, commitment, experience and hard work to keep us moving forward. My record shows that I know how to deliver efficient and effective government. I know how to build coalitions across party lines. I know how to include citizens in government. I know how to lead while encouraging an open and respectful exchange of ideas. I know how to focus on issues not politics. I know how to get things done. And, I am ready to build on our accomplishments.

Again, thank you for joining me here tonight and thank you for your continued support. I look forward to the campaign and I look forward to serving as your Mayor for the next three years.

Bob Kiss, Mayor

January 7, 2009

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