SEPTEMBER 11 MAYOR'S REMARKS

Good morning. Thank you all for gathering here on this day we all remember so vividly. And thank you Chief Newport, Chief McQuillen and the other members of our Police and Fire Departments for making sure this day is commemorated.

It has been twenty-two years – a generation, and for some, a lifetime – since that awful day. Those of us who experienced the attacks on the Twin Towers, the Pentagon and Flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania have images of those moments seared in our memories.

To ensure we 'Never Forget' we have this solemn 911 Steel Artifact Memorial to remind us, every day, of the price we sometimes must pay to keep America free and to ensure our democracy, the Open Door of Portsmouth and communities across the country, remains alive and well.

At each City Council meeting we have another silent sentinel watching our proceedings from the corner of the room. Sarah Haskell's weaving, "Each One: The Button Project" is a memorial to the 3,116 who died on September 11 – each represented by a white or bone-colored button and each with its own story that came from the donors of the buttons themselves. In 2011, the Portsmouth City Council voted to purchase the artwork in honor of Evelyn Sirrell, who was Mayor on September 11, 2001. One of those moments no Mayor wants to face but one of those responsibilities that keeps you awake at night, imagining the worst "what if?"

The ethnographer Senem Guler-Biyikli (SEN-em GOO-ler BYE-ik-lee) wrote that the web of local 911 memorials creates an enormous national memoryscape. She describes those who made the memorials possible — first responders, relatives of victims and others — as "agents of memory." And indeed, this steel artifact from Ground Zero – one of just 11 in New Hampshire and 1,890 nationwide– was arranged by our own first responders – Chief Steve Magnant and Chief Merner – and is sustained by our Fire and Police Department agents of memory who run into falling towers instead of away. It is uniquely part of our Portsmouth memoryscape, honoring our own Tom McGuinness who was co-pilot on the first American Airlines flight that was hijacked and flown into the towers.

Sarah Haskell says she chose buttons deliberately, for the symbolism of bringing pieces together. When I was inaugurated on this spot in January 2020, I said, “Portsmouth works because we work together. ... Together there is nothing we can’t solve."

Today, reminded of the sacrifices made on September 11th by those who died and those who kept on living, bringing the pieces of their lives together to honor their memory – and as we commemorate the 400 years of challenges and opportunities we have faced together -- I ask you to remember the ultimate sacrifice of those we lost by committing ourselves again to that common spirit of resilience.

One community, together -- and as we remind ourselves at the start of every Council meeting – “One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”