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Office of the Mayor

# Inaugural Address – November 2, 2026 – Mayor Peter Wainwright

Thank you to everyone who's here tonight including those watching the webcast and to those who may watch the recording later.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the previous members of Council who chose not to run again: Councillors Sara Duncan and Chad Rintoul, and Mayor Cliff McNeil-Smith. At their last meeting, Mayor McNeil-Smith gave of fulsome description of Councillors Duncan's and Rintoul's service and thanked them behalf of the community. I'm not going to repeat that tonight. I'll only add that I valued the opportunity to work with them and the contributions they made.

At the same meeting, Councillor Rintoul described the numerous positions Mayor McNeil-Smith held on boards, commissions and committees during his term, including his role as CRD Chair. I'd like to offer a different perspective.

Cliff McNeil-Smith was elected by a landslide in 2018, as a first-time mayor along with four first-time councillors and a mandate to bring change. The new council was only a year into an ambitious agenda which included updating the Official Community Plan, when news began to emerge about COVID-19. In March 2020, Sidney launched the OCP process. The same month BC declared a state of emergency and we went into lockdown. Mayor McNeil-Smith led us through the transition with meetings being webcast and people participating remotely. Something we now take for granted. Other events to finish up his first term as mayor: the state of emergency ended, then we had the heat dome and the atmospheric river.

His second term began with David Eby becoming premier. Economic recovery from the pandemic was still underway. Then came the seismic shift with Bill-44 and NDP initiatives upsetting plans and priorities, with less funding and more

downloading. And finally, Trump, the trade war, geopolitics, and our economy pivoting to new trading relations.

All of that is in addition to the good things Councillor Rintoul said about Cliff. That was certainly not an easy time to be Mayor. Please join me in expressing our thanks to outgoing Councillors Sara Duncan and Chad Rintoul, and Mayor Cliff McNeil-Smith.

I've had the opportunity to listen to a few first-time mayors give their inaugural address. They all had a platform they were given, a mandate to implement and they spoke about how they were going to do that. My situation is different. Voters didn't give me a mandate. And, the new council hasn't met yet to decide what it wants to do. However, I can talk about what I heard during the election campaign and how I intend to approach my new role.

All of the new council spoke about the need to improve community engagement and ensuring meaningful opportunities for participation, particularly for major projects. This is one of my priorities. It will involve some additional cost. I expect the new council will be discussing this during our strategic planning session in January.

While the new council hasn't met yet, my expectation from what I've heard is for a list of potential priorities to be made public and an opportunity for input on potential priorities before our strategic planning session. Strategic planning will start with an in-camera session where we're briefed on confidential or sensitive matters. My expectation is that we will report in a transparent manner, to the extent possible, on these discussions and any decisions made. Subsequent strategic planning sessions will be held in open sessions with opportunities for public participation. Council will discuss and announce details for this in the near future.

All of the new council spoke about financial challenges facing the Town. We expressed a diversity of ideas. I expect our budget discussions will be challenging. I will be advocating for longer-range planning and making more conservative assumptions.

Looking ahead, I see challenging times. Canada and BC's economy and trading relations are changing significantly. We have 2 more years of uncertainty in

Trump’s presidency. Upcoming decisions about the replacement for Town Hall, and the future of Beacon Wharf and the Anacortes Ferry Terminal will shape our Town for generations. And, we have a new Provincial government with an aggressive agenda for change. We may wish to take advantage of opportunities if legislation is amended or repealed. We don't know how that might affect our priorities or much effort might be involved. I expect that whatever plan we come up with will need to change in response to events.

I will be advocating that Sidney needs a long-term vision to guide our decision-making over our 4-year term. I have some suggestions about process and that I’ll be asking the new council to consider during strategic planning.

This seems like a good place to stop. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues on Council and collaborative relationships with neighbouring Councils. Thank you.