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East Haven Mayor signs letter of intent to settle with DOJ, avoiding the cost of prolonged civil litigation

Mayor Joseph Maturo, Jr. announced today that he has signed a "Letter of Intent" with the United States Department of Justice expressing his intent to enter into a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice regarding the claims of biased policing contained in its December 19, 2011 Findings Letter.

Maturo explained, "Constitutional policing remains the cornerstone of our Department's goal of providing effective police protection. Entering into this agreement with the Department of Justice, and avoiding costly, prolonged, and protracted litigation, is in the best interests of the Town and the taxpayers. While the cost to implement the provisions of the agreement is expected to be significant, this agreement represents another step toward turning yesterday's challenges into tomorrow's opportunities."

On December 19, 2011, after being in office one short month, the Department of Justice released a "Findings Letter," indicating that it believed the Town engaged in discriminatory police practices. Since that time, under the leadership of interim Chief Brent Larrabee, the East Haven Police Dept has been working diligently to implement suggested reforms, and the Town has been engaged in negotiations with the Department of Justice to formulate a plan to address the remaining concerns contained in that letter.

Maturo continued, "The Town has worked cooperatively with the Department of Justice to formulate an agreement that is realistic, fiscally prudent, and which addresses the concerns contained in its November, 2011 letter."

Most notable about the agreement, is the provision calling for both parties to move to "conditionally dismiss the complaint," a measure which allows the Town to begin implementing the provisions of the agreement with less oversight than typically ordered in similar cases.

Maturo explained, "The 'conditional dismissal' is recognition that the Town is working diligently, and in good faith, to address the concerns expressed by the Department of Justice. As a result of the Town's cooperation and good faith efforts to-date, the parties jointly agreed that less court oversight and supervision would be necessary. The reduction in court-involvement will reduce the legal costs which would have been associated with more extensive court involvement and will allow the Town to stay focused on the task of revolutionizing our police department."

Maturo concluded, "This agreement marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the East Haven Police Department. It represents an extraordinary opportunity for our community to continue to grow together and move forward. I know that this agreement will revolutionize our police department and put it on track to being one of the best departments in the country."