

April 16, 2015

East Haven Legislative Town Council
c/o Danelle Feeley, Clerk
250 Main Street
East Haven, CT 06512

Re: Public Comment for 4/16/15 Public Hearing

Dear Chairman Anania and Honorable Council Members:

Tonight's public hearing regarding the Town Council's funding allocation to the Board of Education in the upcoming budget is of paramount importance to the community and to our children, especially when you consider the fact that the Board of Education budget constitutes 52.96% of the total Town budget in the upcoming fiscal year. In light of this and other factors which I intend to discuss, kindly accept this letter as my "public comments" for your consideration tonight.

Let me begin by reminding you and everyone in attendance tonight that this year's proposed budget represents a reward to the taxpayers of our community for their patience over the past three years while we have worked to reduce our debt and restore our savings. Specifically, over that span, we've balanced all three budgets, paid off nearly \$20 million dollars in debt, and earned an increase in our credit rating from Standard and Poor's, all while upgrading our 911 Dispatch Center and revolutionizing our Police Department.

In attaining these accomplishments, our key focus has been on lowering operating costs and becoming more efficient with the money that the taxpayers entrust to us each year. Since 2011, we've re-negotiated utility contracts, bargained fairly, but vigorously, with our unions, and reduced our total number of employees with the goal of retaining and actually increasing the services we offer residents. To name a few things, since 2011, we restored our beach for the first time in the Town's history, upgraded the 911 Dispatch Center, revolutionized the Police Department, reactivated the K9 unit and DARE program.

I mention these things and this track record of success because I believe it provides a roadmap for the Board of Education and guidance to the Town Council on how to address the budget request of the Board of Education this year.

First and foremost, I want to make it clear that our children are the future of our community and we must do all that we can to safeguard our their futures.

This year, the Board of Education comes to the Town Council in transition. It is exploring a reconfiguration that will change the entire educational philosophy of our district for years to come. With that in mind, the goal for the next fiscal year, as we begin to put that transition into motion, should be to do so with the least disturbance or impact on the education of our children or the resources available to them.

Although the present State budget does not call for an increase in ECS or state funding for education, the proposed budget, which I crafted with the advice of the Superintendent and Board Chairman, calls for an allocation of \$750,000 dollars in new monies to the Board of Education. In addition, I am told that unspent Alliance Grant monies (presently totaling about \$400,000 dollars) from this year may be rolled into the next fiscal year and used for appropriate grant-related programs and services. As a result, the Board of Education is looking at an increase in funding equivalent to \$1.15 million dollars under the proposed budget.

If the Board of Education needs additional monies beyond the increase being proposed, I believe it is incumbent upon our Board of Education Administrators to lower operating costs and find new efficiencies similar to those that we have found on the town-side of the budget. However, I want to make it clear that I would not support any action by Board of Education Administrators that would reduce the services, programs, or resources available to our students or that would unduly shuffle them around. If the Board needs to make cuts, those cuts need to come from overhead - not from the resources available to our children, especially in light of the fact that the total number of students in the district is down by almost 600 in recent years,

When I met with the Superintendent a few weeks ago, she indicated that with \$750,000 dollars in new funding, she could operate the Board of Education with minimal or no changes and without eliminating any resources available to our children. With that said, I urge the Council to approve an increase of \$750,000 dollars in this budget for the Board of Education on the condition that during the consolidation process, district administrators must identify and enact measures that will allow the district to run more efficiently and to actually increase the services available to our students.

If there is anything I or my office can do to facilitate the process of setting the Board of Education budget allocation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank you for your time tonight.

Yours,

Mayor Joseph Maturo, Jr.