

2014 STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, Town Council members, residents of our great community, and guests. Welcome to East Haven High School.

By Charter, I am required to address the Legislative Town Council each year regarding the state of our Town and to present my budget recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year. It is a privilege and honor to do both this evening for the thirteenth time in my career as Mayor of this great community.

A short newspaper headline, which appeared in the New Haven Register on August 11, 2013, distinctly summarizes the 365 days since my last address to this Council: "Courage, Unity, and Heroism in East Haven."

That headline, which referred to our residents' heartfelt response to the horrific plane crash on Charter Oak Avenue, perfectly describes the grittiness, hard work, compassion, and progress that have defined the last year for our great community.

Before I continue any further, I'd ask you all to join me in a moment of silence to remember the families impacted by that horrific tragedy, especially Sade and Madisyn, who forever remain in our hearts and prayers.

I am proud to say that in the last twelve months, in the face of relentless scrutiny from the local press, this administration has made incredible progress addressing the fiscal and cultural challenges that we were met with upon resuming office in November of 2011. Although we are still cautious of the challenges that lie ahead, I stand before you tonight confident that we have, indeed, put East Haven back on the right track.

No one person is to credit for our Town's remarkable recovery. We're blessed, here in East Haven, to have an abundance of residents, employees, and elected and un-elected leaders who continuously and generously give back to our community through their charitable, social, and professional endeavors. In my opinion, these individuals are nothing short of everyday heroes, especially in light of the fact that the vast majority of their work goes largely unnoticed, especially by the local press.

Tonight, I intend to talk about the progress we've made in the last year, some of the individuals who have been particularly responsible for that progress, and some of the critical challenges that still lay ahead for our great community.

With that said, let me begin...

[POLICE DEPARTMENT/DOJ/DIVERSITY](#)

Only 27 months ago, on December 19, 2011, the Department of Justice issued a 23 page civil findings letter to the Town East Haven, citing our Town's police department for alleged civil rights violations including claims of false arrest, excessive force, and biased policing. Just a month following issuing that letter, four of our officers were arrested on criminal charges related to the civil findings released just a month prior.

As you all know, in immediate response to these historic challenges, I formed the Law Enforcement Advisory Resource Network, recruited veteran police chief Brent Larrabee to restore stability in our

department, initiated a host of outreach programs and community meetings with minority business owners, formed the Town's first "Inter-faith Faith Council," and, most importantly, engaged the Department of Justice in negotiations to settle their civil claims by modernizing and revolutionizing our police department.

Negotiations to settle with the Department of Justice persisted throughout 2012, with the goal of avoiding protracted and costly litigation. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of Atty. Lawrence Sgrignari and our entire legal team, on December 21, 2012, the United States Federal Court approved the compliance agreement negotiated between the Town and the Department of Justice. Based on the progress we've made since that day and in such a short time, I regard that day as one of the single-most important and positive turning points in our community's history.

As part of the compliance agreement, the Town agreed to retain a "joint compliance expert," - a wonderful woman by the name of Kathy O'Toole. Her job is to be a mediator and broker between the Town and the DOJ. At the same time, she also oversees and reports on the Town's implementation of the settlement agreement.

I think I speak for the our entire team when I say that Ms. O'Toole has proven to be engaged and truly dedicated to helping our community succeed in satisfying the requirements of our settlement agreement. In many ways, her experience as a street cop, as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Massachusetts State Police, as an administrator in Boston, and as Chief Inspector with the Irish National Police Force, have proven invaluable in helping direct our efforts here in East Haven.

A brief look at Kathy O'Toole's first annual compliance report, released just two months ago, paints a clear picture of the astounding success our police department and Chief Larrabee have enjoyed since its compromise with the Department of Justice.

Specifically, our Police Department and compliance team have met every single deadline called for under the settlement agreement up to the recently passed 365 day mark. This feat is extraordinary, especially in light of the fact that, to the best of our knowledge, no other jurisdiction in the country has ever managed to meet these deadlines on time and in compliance. This is truly a remarkable accomplishment and then men and women of Police Department deserve a round-of-applause for this.

Benchmarks achieved by our police department in the first 365 days include:

The complete revision of all of the Department's policies and procedures;

The development of approved testing procedures to ensure that all training is valid, reliable, and fair;

The development of a system to collect data on all stops and searches which can be easily analyzed and integrated into the Department's existing computer system;

The issuance of semi-annual reports regarding stops and searches;

And, our officers have completed all hourly training requirements. In some cases, the department has gone well beyond the number of hours requested by the Department of Justice.

To be more specific, our officers received training in no less than 16 different areas and countless sub-areas in the last year. To name a few prime examples...

The Internal Affairs Officer, members of the command staff, and all supervisory staff completed 40 hours of "Internal Affairs" training apiece.

Sergeants and all officers on the eligibility list for sergeant last year obtained 40 hours of “Line Supervisor” training.

One captain, most lieutenants, and one sergeant completed 40 hours of management training apiece. One Lieutenant attended the three-week Executive Education Program in State and Local Government offered at the Harvard Kennedy School – the equivalent of 135 hours of training.

All sworn personnel completed a combined total of 15 hours of training on the topics of “stop, search, and seizure,” “bias free policing,” and “eyewitness identification training.”

In addition to updating policies and obtaining critical training, our police department has continued to engage in outreach efforts with the community. We have hosted several open houses; the most was just this last month. They’ve completely re-designed their website to be more accessible, especially to individuals with limited abilities to speak English. Finally, they’ve been pro-active in addressing issues of everyday importance to our residents, including noise, ATV usage, and illicit drug activity.

The modernization and administration of our police department since over the past year has truly been a collaborative success. Despite manpower shortages that we are aggressively working to resolve, I am confident that our police department will continue to achieve success and is well on its way to being one of the greatest small departments in New England.

TOWNWIDE IMPROVEMENTS

While we have invested heavily in our Police Department since 2011, we have also made several significant improvements to the Town’s infrastructure, especially in the last year.

(Restoration of the Town Beach)

I have always said that our shoreline is one of our community’s greatest assets. As such, we’ve taken numerous steps to protect it and improve it. Back in May of 2013, the Town purchased 10,000 tons of new, pristine beach sand which was used to restore our Town Beach after it had been severely eroded by Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy. As a result of both storms, the beach had become so eroded that original piping and foundations were jutting out of the remaining sand. This restoration project was the first in the Town’s history and will ensure that this precious resource remains available for future generations to enjoy.

(ADA Wheelchair at the Beach)

In addition to restoring the sand at our Town Beach, the Town finally obtained and installed a special wheelchair that is capable of moving over beach sand. The wheelchair, which I personally tested along with our ADA compliance officer Candice Criscuolo, will allow residents who have trouble walking, or who would otherwise be unable to reach the water, to travel over the beach and enter the water.

(Renovations to North High Street)

While our Town Beach received a major upgrade over the summer, public hearings were held in June to discuss four different plans for re-designing North High Street. The ultimate goal of most of the designs is to connect the center of Town with Route 80 via sidewalks, bike lanes, or some combination of the same. Prior to the hearing, “CDM Smith,” the firm responsible for producing the four options, spent several months compiling traffic data, including locations of accidents between 1995 and 2009. The firm provided information, at the public hearings, about which design option might be best for residents. Best of all, the Town confirmed that a large portion of the financing for the project would be covered by the South Central Regional Council of Governments, a 15-town collaborative that includes East Haven.

Most recently, I was in contact with Carl Amento, of the Council of Governments, to confirm the Town's continued eligibility to pursue this project. We are continuing to work with COG to develop final plans, arrange financing, and begin this much-needed upgrade to our infrastructure.

(Cleanup of the Farm River)

While the reconstruction of North High street is a relatively new development, our commitment to cleaning the Farm River is one I've discussed on a number of prior occasions. Last year, as I have done in all my prior terms as Mayor, I dispatched public works crews to clean debris in and around the river (near Corbin Road, Hellstrom Road, and Willow Street) to help prevent long-term buildup and minimize flooding. Our team's extensive and aggressive clean-up work along the river banks, recently and especially during my previous 10 years in office, has had the direct effect of minimizing and preventing the serious flooding issues that our residents living in these vulnerable areas had to endure for far too long.

(Road Paving Capital Program)

Recognizing the need to continue to invest in our physical infrastructure, my 2013 budget included an aggressive road-paving plan in which the Town milled and paved sixteen streets. As you may or may not know, each year, my public works supervisors assign grades to the condition of each road in Town. After reviewing their reports, we develop a plan to pave those most in need or having special circumstances justifying their repair. Although the Town continues to patch problem areas as they are reported, I'm pleased to report that, overall, our roads are in excellent condition, primarily due to our Town's continued commitment to yearly paving and patching.

(New Speaker System at the Senior Center)

Additionally, this past year, our senior center received a small upgrade – in the form of new, wireless microphones. The new system, which has several more microphones, is both clearer and louder than our old system, and is utilized by most of the boards and commissions which meet at the Senior Center. For those who have difficulty hearing, the new sound system is a vast improvement over the old system.

(Looking ahead)

Looking ahead, the Town is continuing to explore the possibility of a second splash pad to be located in Foxon along with the development of a skate park to be located on the southern end of Town.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

While we've invested in our infrastructure, economic development by both the Town and private businesses has also flourished in the past year.

(200 Tyler Street)

After years of disagreement and delay regarding what to do with 200 Tyler Street, I am proud to report that we are making real progress with a plan for the property. I'd like to thank all of the Town Council members for their ideas, their personal visits to my office, and for the Council's bipartisan effort in helping to move this project forward. I am cautiously optimistic that concrete plans for the property will be announced as we move through the Spring and into the Summer.

(Shoprite)

In my speech before you last year, I announced that Shoprite would finally be opening its doors in 2013. As expected, Shoprite opened in the fall of and has been doing tremendously. They have also been very

generous in their donations to our Town's civic organizations and annual events. All indications are that Shoprite is poised to serve as an anchor in the Route 80 corridor for many years to come.

(Various Businesses – West End)

Throughout the past year, countless businesses decided to open up and make East Haven their home, with many opting to open up right on Main Street. East Haven will soon have its own local brew, manufactured by the soon-to-open "Offshore Brewing Company." Additionally, Main Street will soon feature a new deli which will offer authentic Latino and Italian deli cuisine. Main Street will also soon become home to a new hair salon and nail salon, which will be opening in spaces vacated last year.

Since 2011, our administration has worked hard to let businesses know that we are a business-friendly Town and, as you can see from the development in just the last year, it has really paid off.

EDUCATION

While the Town continued to invest in its capital resources and promote economic development, our Board of Education, along with our students, made some headlines as well.

Perhaps most noticeably, this school year began with a new Superintendent – Dr. Portia Bonner. She has been an absolute pleasure to work with. Based on the Board's development of a more concrete five-year plan, it is clear that her enthusiasm and vision have already begun to have a positive impact on our educational system.

On a similar note, this past year marked the return of Finance Director Paul Rizza as the head of the Board of Education's finances. During my first ten years as Mayor, Mr. Rizza managed both the Town and the Board's budgets. During my absence, these jobs were separated – creating an additional full-time salary and all of the benefit and insurance obligations that accompany another position. Last year, Mr. Rizza agreed to return to his dual role, saving both the Town and the Board of Education substantial monies. Additionally, he's done a tremendous job keeping the Board of Education financially on track.

However, our administrators aren't the only ones making news up at the Board of Education.

This past year, the East Haven High School Yellow Jacket Marching Band took second place out of nine bands appearing in their division in the annual State competition. In addition, they brought home the "Caption Award" for "Best Effect" in 2013's "U.S. Bands New England States Championship" in Bridgeport, Connecticut. All of the members of our marching band demonstrate incredible commitment each and every year – and their commitment truly pays off in the form of success at regional and national competitions. To all of the band members, band parents, and to Matt Laudano: Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication. We're all very proud of you. Let's give our marching band a much-deserved round-of-applause...

One thing I've learned in my time as Mayor is that we have some of the most patriotic students on the shoreline right here in East Haven. This past year's crop of students was no exception to the rule. In June, local students led residents in our celebration of Flag Day and partook in our Town's annual "Pause for the Pledge" ceremony on the Town Green. As you may or may not know, East Haven is one of the only municipalities in the State that upholds President Reagan's statutory call to pause for the pledge. It is a touching, time-honored ceremony which is only made more special as a result of our students' participation.

Later in the summer, students from Tuttle School marched to Town Hall waving flags in a somber remembrance of the September 11th tragedy. Once at Town Hall, students led attendees, including the Superintendent, Police Chief, and Fire Chief, in a touching ceremony. The ceremony concluded with a custom version of “God Bless America,” revised to be “God Bless East Haven.”

Also, if you didn’t see the New Haven Register this past week, East Haven middle school students recently raised more than \$1,500 dollars for our animal shelter. Just last Friday, 11 members of Joseph Melillo Middle School’s student council unloaded countless boxes packed with kibble and Milk-Bones to be donated to the Shelter. The Student Council adopted the animal shelter as their community project and, for next year, has set a goal of doubling this year’s donation.

Finally, you may remember the “Bridge Brigade” – a group of local students that began a letter-writing campaign when the Town received news that the State planned to demolish the historic Main Street Bridge near the Branford border. The bridge, which was built in 1900, has significant local historical value. As a result of the work of the “Bridge Brigade,” and with some urging from my administration, I am happy to report that the State has revised the transportation plans for the “Route 1” project to preserve and renovate the existing historic bridge.

As you can see, patriotism and civic awareness are sentiments that are alive and well among our Town’s students.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION/RESIDENTS

It’s clear that our students have picked up on the example set by their parents, some of whom also made headlines in the past year.

Over Memorial Day Weekend, East Haven honored all of its fallen veterans at its annual Memorial Day ceremony at the Town Green. At the same time, we honored veteran and community activist Ralph "Butch" Mannoichi. At that ceremony, I personally presented Butch with his award, along with a certificate from Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro.

Additionally, the East Haven Garden Club re-organized this year as the “Shoreline Community garden Club” and is headed by new president Lois Ruocco. We can look forward to the club continuing to work to make our Town more beautiful.

Finally, following last November’s mayoral debate and election, a group of ten residents organized a local “League of Women Voters” chapter here in Town. The League of Women Voters has always been active in our community as far as organizing debates and raising political awareness. It is an added benefit that we will now have our own local chapter right here in East Haven.

While we recognized countless residents last year for their civic contributions, our Community also celebrated the lives of many who left us, but whose contributions to our Town and state continue to make a difference.

Just after the Fourth of July, residents, fellow police officers, and firefighters gathered on the Town Green to dedicate a park bench to former police Sergeant Joseph Buonome, hailed by friends and family as “a beloved son of East Haven.” Joe Buonome, who died in February of 2013, spent the vast majority

of his life serving with the Police Department. Joe was loved by all and known for his infectious smile, wit, and for having won almost every award given by almost every local community and civic group. He was as an incredibly dedicated public servant and he will always be remembered as such.

Additionally, this past fall, our Town said goodbye to former Police Commission Chairman Pete Lougal, husband of Jan Lougal – the director of our senior center. Pete, and the entire Lougal family, is known for their civic and charitable contributions to East Haven. He will be sorely missed.

I'd ask you to all to join me in a brief moment of silence in honor of Joe and Pete.

Moving on... Our Town employees and department heads have also worked incredibly hard throughout the past year to continue to offer exceptional services and resources to our resident and continuing to do more, with less.

WORK OF DEPARTMENT HEADS/CURRENT PEOPLE

Town Clerk – Stacy Gravino

The Town Clerk's office, which is headed by Stacy Gravino, continued to make capital and technology upgrades, most of which have been completed with grants and at no cost to the taxpayers.

For example, her office has started to undertake the process of back-scanning our land records. At present, the project is funded to complete the scanning of all land records dating back to 2004.

New cabinets in the vault have made access to vital records and indexes more convenient. Further, the public now has the ability to access any indexed and scanned land records entirely via the Internet. In the coming months, maps filed with the Town Clerk's Office will also become available for viewing and printing.

Assessor – Michael Milici

Every year, the assessor's office works diligently to ensure that all property in Town is being fairly assessed. This year, the assessor's office justified and enacted several higher assessments on various properties after investigating and confirming that significant improvements to the properties (additions, etc.) were not reported to the Town. In addition, the assessor's office continues to crack down on vehicles registered out-of-state for the purpose of evading local taxes.

Recently, Mike Milici was named the President of the Society of Professional Assessors.

Senior Center – Jan Lougal

Our Senior Center, headed by Jan Lougal, enjoyed another busy year. In 2013, the senior center was visited by an average of over 100 clients daily and provided lunch for up to 25 seniors each day. The Center served over 5,000 meals in 2013, many of which were made on-site.

This past year, the Senior Center offered various seminars and services including a mammogram bus and flu clinics. The Town also re-instated the senior medical bus, which takes seniors to and from doctor appointments every Tuesday and Thursday.

The Senior Center also offered a variety of workshops and activities including parties, line dancing, aerobics, knitting classes, and of course, Bingo. It held a number of day-trips as well as overnight and week-long trips.

Social Services – Bob Petrucelli

Just recently, the social services department was joined by new interim-director Bob Petrucelli. Bob is no stranger to the Town. He is presently the Youth Services director and will be heading both the youth and social services departments moving forward. He assures me that residents can continue to expect the same quality help obtaining fuel and rental assistance from his office.

Tax Collector – Lisa Basilicato

Moving on... The tax department, led by Lisa Basilicato, continued to work hard to ensure that the Town collected the revenue it needed to fund the services that it provides.

This past year, working with the office of the Town Attorney, the Tax Department exceeded the delinquent tax collection goal of \$575,000 dollars by over \$275,000 dollars – or almost 50% more than expected.

This year, the tax collector and town attorneys are poised to shatter their goal for this year and the prior year's record, having already collected an astounding \$766,000 dollars with several months remaining.

Additionally, while residents continue to be able to pay their taxes online, they can now look up their current and prior tax information online as well. Residents can log on to the Town's tax collector home page to view real-time tax information.

Animal Control – Owen Little

This year, the Animal Control department teamed up with North Haven to form the first Mutual Aid Compact in the region for animal control services. The compact will allow both Towns' animal control officers to train collectively on a regular basis and spells out the allocation of any future grant funds obtained as part of the compact. Most importantly, the compact allows for the sharing of human and capital resources when cruelty or hoarding situations arise that cannot be handled by either Town alone. The compact is the first of its kind in the region.

Owen also reports that the shelter's adoption rate has remained at over 92% percent again for this year!

As always, I'd like to remind you all that the Shelter takes monetary donations as well as donations of supplies and gently used toys, blankets, and beds. Any donation you can make is greatly appreciated.

Planning and Zoning – Frank Biancur

Throughout the past year, the Planning and Zoning Department has made great strides working with both the Planning & Zoning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals to facilitate the opening of countless new businesses.

The Zoning Department continues to work with residents who are rebuilding along Cosey Beach Avenue and other storm damaged areas. Many residents who live in flood zones have raised or are in the process of raising their homes to meet FEMA standards and the Zoning Board of Appeals has not denied a single resident who has come before them to do so.

In August, the Planning and Zoning Dept. completed an Affordable Housing Plan for the Town that was adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission and has now become part of the Zoning Regulations. Most recently, the Zoning Department developed a "Downtown Planning and Design Standards" for the West End of Main Street. The goal of the zoning standards is to promote downtown revitalization and facilitate linking the West End with the Central Business District.

Finally, along with the cooperation of several elected state officials and the DEEP, the Planning and Zoning Dept. was successful in helping get a stone wall built at Victoria Beach Condominiums which will help protect those condos in the event of another hurricane.

Building Department – Jim Basset

Our Building Department shares an office suite with our Zoning Office and the two work hand-in-hand. In addition to everything reported by the zoning department, our building official reports that in calendar year 2013, the Town issued permits totaling \$16.6 million dollars in construction value – a sign that the market for new and remodeled housing is improving.

Perhaps most importantly, the building official reports that our shoreline is approximately 80% rebuilt from Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy.

Public Services/Engineering – Kevin White and Bob Parente

In addition to performing the cleanup work around the Farm River and restoring our beach with over 10,000 tons of new beach sand, our Public Works and Engineering Departments have been extremely busy as of late.

This past year, the Engineering Department coordinated recovery efforts with DEEP, and more recently the Army Corp of Engineers, to help over 30 homes & businesses in the Cosey Beach, Ellis Road, and Morgan Point areas. Kevin White reports that future, protective measures are being looked at as we speak

Also, in conjunction with the Public Works Department, the Town continued the clean-out of marsh areas around and along Catherine Street and Brazos Road.

In addition, the Public Works Department performed improvements to both the Momauguin & Foxon Sports Complexes. The department also made improvements to Desert Air System at the Town Pool and expects that installation of a brand-new system will commence in the summer of 2014. Best of all, the funding for this new system will be coming from a grant from United Illuminating due to emergency conservation credit the Town has earned as a result of completing various energy saving projects across Town.

At the Town Landfill, the Public Works department installed new fencing and landscaping around perimeter. The Town also began a program of recycling electronic waste. In fact, the Town has scheduled a "Residential Electronic Recycling Collection Day" for Saturday, May 31st in the Town Hall Parking Lot, from 8AM until 2PM. At this event, residents can dispose of electronic waste, including old computers, televisions, monitors, and other electronic devices free of charge.

And, although I mentioned it earlier, I'd like to note again that our Public Works department, this past winter season, responded to over 20 snow events, keeping our roads safe for residents and emergency personnel.

Counseling and Community Services – Beth Trotta

The Town continues to benefit from having BHCare manage the East Haven Counseling and Community Services program. Since the Town contracted with BHCare for the management of our counseling center, revenue has more-than doubled. Through the mid-way point of FY 12-13, revenue was \$57,000 dollars. Through that same point in the current fiscal year, revenue is \$134,000 dollars. The increase in revenue is a direct result of more accountability and the efficient stewardship of the department's resources.

While the department is generating more revenue, it is also providing a higher level of service to clients. While there used to be an extended waiting list to receive care from our facility, the department's revised referral and intake system has completely eliminated the backlog of clients. Under the department's newly revised procedures, residents seeking care are contacted within 48 hours of making a request for care and are immediately scheduled for a group appointment.

Town Wide Health – Mayor's Office

Following up on the topic of medical services available in Town, I want to briefly discuss the Town's Prescription Discount Program – a program available to residents at no charge and at no cost to the taxpayers.

If you are unaware, all residents in East Haven, especially those who are uninsured or underinsured, are eligible to receive a prescription discount card which entitles them to over 50% off various medications (and even some pet medications).

Last year alone, residents made over 1,290 claims using the card and saved over \$64,000 on medications. Average price savings as result of using the card was 57%.

I encourage anyone who has not used the card to look into the program as it is truly a fantastic program, which again, does not cost the taxpayers a dime.

Youth Services Department – Bob Petrucelli

Our youth services department does so many great things with very limited resources. Bob Petrucelli reports that this past year, 25 middle school students completed an annual week-long leadership training program that focused on communication and problem solving skills.

In conjunction with the Police Department, the Youth Services Bureau re-started the Juvenile Review Board, which offers appropriate first-time offenders positive community alternatives to Juvenile Court.

Finally, the Teen Center was successfully moved back to the old high school from the Hobby Lobby space on Frontage Road. The new Teen Center, which features the Lizard Lounge Juice Bar, re-opened in time for its third annual summer art program for teens.

Recreation Department – Lou Pane

Our recreation department offers a variety of youth and adult programs each and every year. In fact, it publishes a pamphlet containing all of the wonderful summer programs it offers annually. To name a few, the Department will be offering Beach Yoga, Beach Zumba, Beach Aerobics, and Beach Volleyball this upcoming summer along with a variety of youth camps with art, sports, and recreational themes.

The Recreation Department also reports that the Ice Rink is busier than it has ever been. Presently, the rink is utilized by four high schools, three youth hockey programs, as well as an adult league. The rink is also open for public skating. The Department reports that, for the second year in a row, the rink had a positive cash flow and turned a profit.

Police Department – Chief Brent Larrabee

Although I spent a significant portion of my speech discussing the Police Department's success implementing the recommendations of the Department of Justice, I also want to highlight some of the everyday work our police department is doing.

In June, the Town conducted its first-ever "Gun Buyback Program" at the East Haven Beach House. As part of the program, residents were encouraged and allowed to turn in unwanted or potentially illegal firearms with no-questions-asked. The goal of the program, most obviously, was to reduce the number of dangerous weapons on our streets.

In late-October, working with the Town Council, the Police Department began enforcing a new ATV ordinance aimed at cracking down on illegal ATVs, dirt bikes, and mini-cycles. The ordinance provides for stiff fines and the potential seizure of unregistered ATV's. Just eighteen days after passage of the ordinance, Police arrested three out-of-town riders and charged them with reckless driving after neighbors reported spotting them speeding unregistered off-road vehicles near Proto Drive. The arrests were the first following passage of the new ATV ordinance and proved that our department is ready to respond to the challenge of illegal ATV's as we approach the springtime.

Finally, just last week, our Police Department was awarded an A- in the New Haven Register's regional Freedom of Information Act Test. The test was intended to measure various departments' compliance with state laws requiring the disclosure of certain arrest information. I am proud of our Department's excellent score, especially in light of the host of reforms we have been enacting in conjunction with the Department of Justice.

Fire Department – Chief Doug Jackson

Perhaps the biggest news relating to the Fire Department is the Town's decision to civilianize the Town's emergency dispatch center and combine police and fire dispatch into one facility. The combination of the facility will result in better, more efficient response to emergencies and will reduce costs in both the police and fire departments. Best of all, our emergency response center will remain right here in East Haven.

In addition, this past year, the Fire Department purchased new protective clothing for its volunteer and career companies along with a new Paramedic Rescue Truck for the Foxon section of Town that will soon be in service. The Department is also waiting to hear on whether it has been awarded a large grant to replace cardiac monitors used by the Department.

As the Town's Emergency Coordinator, Chief Jackson also finalized some grant projects that would help residents recover from Superstorm Sandy.

Finally, at the East Haven Firefighters Annual Holiday Breakfast in December, I had the privilege of swearing in new firefighters Christopher Guilfoil and John Coughlin, Jr.

FINANCES

While our department heads reported a host of good news for the last year, perhaps some of the best news was the Town's continued financial recovery.

Although I will give a complete report regarding the Town's financial situation shortly, I am proud to confirm that the Town produced a surplus of over \$1.1 million dollars in the last fiscal year, bringing the Town's fund balance to over \$1.6 million dollars – its highest level since 2008.

As many of you know, the fund balance was allowed to slip to negative \$5.1 million dollars three short years ago. And after just one term in office, we have managed to stabilize the Town's finances and put us back on the right track.

IMPORTANT DATES

Before I conclude, I'd like to remind everyone of some great upcoming events scheduled across Town. This Friday and Saturday, the East Haven Drama Club – which is anxiously waiting for this meeting to finish so that they can use this stage for practice – will be putting on a performance of "Young Frankenstein" right here on this very stage. Tickets can be purchased at the door and I encourage all of you to attend.

The National Day of Prayer is May 1st.

The Pause for the Pledge of Allegiance is June 14th.

The VVA Chapter 484 Fireworks and Beach Party is scheduled for June 28th, with a rain date of June 30th. The feature act is going to be "Bon Jersey," which is billed as "The Ultimate Bon Jovi Tribute Band."

Senior Day will be held August 23rd on the Town Green.

And the East Haven Fall Festival is scheduled for September 5th, 6th, and 7th on the Town Green. Saturday Night's feature act is going to be "Herman's Hermits starring Peter Noone."

CONCLUSION

I have to acknowledge that the State of the Town Address gets harder to deliver every year because the list of accomplishments of our residents and department heads continues to grow. The ideals of hard work, civic duty, and dedication are clearly alive and well here in East Haven.

As we look ahead to the 2014-2015 fiscal year, it is clear that state and federal financial challenges, resulting in diminished aid, will require our Town, like most municipalities across the country, to do more with less.

However, I have never been more confident than I am right now that East Haven is both prepared and equipped to address these challenges head-on.

Since 2011, we've faced fiscal, cultural, and managerial challenges never before faced in our community. Despite these challenges and, perhaps, directly because of them, I am proud to say that the State of our Town is strong – and continues to grow stronger because of the dedication, commitment, and compassion of our employees, residents, and civic organizations.

Thank you all, God Bless our Great Town, and God Bless our Country.