

2015 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 to speak about the state of our Town and to present my budget recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year. I address you tonight, for the fourteenth time in my career as Mayor, with great pride in our community and in its progress since 2011.

When I had the privilege of resuming office in late 2011, I came back to a Town reeling from a crippling \$5.2 million dollar deficit and struggling to recover from a national economic crisis that left everything from local storefronts to personal pocketbooks empty.

Just months later, our community and police department were shaken to their cores by civil allegations and criminal arrests alleging biased and unconstitutional policing. In the twenty-four months following these unprecedented challenges, natural disasters, two historic winters, and a tragedy on Charter Oak Avenue continued to test our resolve.

However, as I stand before you tonight and reflect back on these tests, I am immensely proud that in all respects, our community has overcome each and every one of these tests, especially the financial and cultural challenges that only 36 months ago rocked this Town. Division, decline, and despair have given way to peace, progress, and prosperity.

To quote Kathleen O'Toole, the former Joint Compliance Expert tasked as the independent broker between the Town and the Department of Justice, the turnaround for our community has been nothing short of "remarkable."

As a result, I am proud to report that the state of our Town, and the bond that unites us all as one community, has never been stronger.

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POLICE DEPARTMENT/DOJ/DIVERSITY

My last three addresses to this Council have begun with lengthy recaps of the turmoil and unrest faced by our Town and Police Department since 2011. While we will never forget those tests and the way they have forever changed the faces of our Police Department and our community, I am proud to say that with hard work, we have relegated those challenges to the past. At least for the purposes of this address tonight, I intend to leave them there in favor of talking about the incredible progress enjoyed by our Police Department since 2011, and especially in the past year.

Hard work and collaboration have defined the manner in which our Police Department has implemented the Town's agreement with the Department of Justice. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Chief Larrabee, Deputy Chief Lennon, and all of the men and women of our police family, our department is the only one in the country to have reached the 12-month, 18-month, and 24-month benchmarks of a consent decree on-time and in substantial

compliance. This feat is simply extraordinary and our Police Department deserves a round of applause for this amazing accomplishment.

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To quote the 18-month DOJ Progress Report, thanks to the new training protocols that have been implemented, “a solid foundation has been established, particularly with the development, training and ongoing review of the new Policies and Procedures Manual.” The 24-month DOJ Progress Report, filed just last week, puts it even better. The difference in our police department from 2011 to today is, and I quote, like “night and day.”

With the implementation of body cameras, and especially in light of recent events across the country regarding use of force, our department is considered to be on the cutting edge of the policing industry. Our Chief and Deputy Chief, who are continually sought out by other departments for their advice, are considered to be some of the most progressive police executives in the industry. We’re lucky to have both here in East Haven, along with Attorney Larry Sgrignari, helping to guide our Police Department as it continues its incredible transformation.

With the technical and legal aspects of the consent decree firmly under control, our Police Department has focused most recently on broadening its approach to community policing and to fostering greater daily interaction between residents and officers. To that end, we recently hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at East Farm Village for the opening of a Police Substation on Messina Drive. The substation, which will be a part of

officers' regular beats, will also be utilized for writing reports and meeting with residents. Additionally, as part of the Town's revised school district security measures, officers now patrol schools randomly, but regularly, as part of their beats. This program was established as part of a dual effort to both increase police visibility in schools and to foster better relations between our Town's youth and the police.

The department's success to-date, as validated by both the Department of Justice in their semi-annual reviews and by the opinions of our residents, demonstrates that our department has become one of the best small police departments in New England.

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TOWNWIDE IMPROVEMENTS

While we have invested extensive time and resources into our Police Department, we have also made numerous capital improvements and revised several town policies to better improve the services available to our residents.

(Town Beach Parking/Summer Congestion)

Over the past six months, we've taken concrete steps to address the parking congestion at the public beach during the summer and the safety concerns created by that congestion.

Early last fall, I created the Joint Subcommittee on Beach Parking, comprised of members of both the Town Council and the Board of Police Commissioners, which surveyed the streets surrounding the beach and re-located no-parking signs to the south side of Cosey Beach Avenue. This parking reconfiguration will keep cars away from the sidewalk closest to the beach and help ensure that visitors and children can navigate the area safely.

Next, at my suggestion, the Board of Police Commissioners and the Town Council revised the Town's parking regulations to provide for a hefty \$100 dollar fine for individuals who violate the "No Parking" regulations at the beach and across the Town. The combined effect of re-configuring the beach parking, increasing fines, and more strictly enforcing the use of beach passes is expected to significantly reduce congestion at the beach, increase safety, and prevent the mis-use of parking passes.

Finally, as part of this year's beach beautification program, the Town will be taking down the old fence bordering the beach and will be replacing it with a beautiful stone wall that will not only be a visual improvement, but will help prevent sand erosion and blowing into the sidewalk area.

(West End Revitalization)

While regulations at the beach have changed and new capital improvements to our shore area are on the horizon, we are continuing to pursue the third and final stage of West End Revitalization. West-end business owners had a chance to review initial plans for the West End last April when the Town held a "West End Summit," which provided these

business owners an opportunity to weigh in on the future of this important thoroughfare. Most recently, engineering and architectural plans for the final stage of West End Revitalization were finalized.

As of today, Sal Brancati, the Town's new economic development coordinator, reports that the Town has secured a \$500,000 dollar federal grant and has submitted an application for a \$1.6 million dollar state grant for West-End Revitalization. Upon approval of the Town's application to the State, the combination of these grant funds will allow the Town to begin the third and much-anticipated stage of the West-End Revitalization program.

(Improvements to North High Street/Coe Avenue)

Main Street is not the only thoroughfare slated to see improvements. Presently, we are also working on the reconfiguration of North High Street and the creation of sidewalks that will span from Route 80 to the center. Recently, the Town, in conjunction with the State, coordinated a public hearing for residents living on North High Street to discuss this project. Our office has secured a grant of \$1.5 million dollars for Phase 1 (of 3 phases) of this reconfiguration program and, subject to the outcomes of additional public hearings, we are anxious to begin this exciting project.

Additionally, the Town has been approved for a \$1.2 million dollar grant to raise Coe Avenue to mitigate flooding at the intersection of Coe Avenue and Short Beach Road. Presently, the Town is investigating using these funds to reconstruct dams along Meadow Street which initial studies show may have a greater flood reduction effect than actually raising Coe Avenue.

(911 Dispatch Center)

While improvements to North High Street and Coe Avenue are still in the review stage, the relocation and upgrade of the Town's 911 Dispatch Center was completed last summer. Our 911 dispatchers have always provided exceptional service to our residents, which they managed to do at the old center, despite significantly outdated equipment and in a facility that they had outgrown long ago.

Specifically, up until last summer, our 911 Dispatch Center was housed in a room smaller than the average American jail cell. It was only large enough for one individual and did not have access to adequate bathroom facilities. Since dispatchers worked alone, they ate lunch at their desks and would have to wait for bathroom breaks when calls weren't coming in.

Understanding that we could no longer continue with outdated equipment and an unsafe facility, the Town undertook a \$1.2 million dollar renovation project to relocate the 911-dispatch center to the Police Department. The new facility, which opened this past summer, is staffed by a full complement of certified, civilian dispatchers who are now using some of the newest computer technology. Dispatchers work in teams, which allows them to handle emergency calls more efficiently and safely. The new facility is handicapped-accessible and features break and bathroom facilities to support our dedicated and talented dispatching staff.

Perhaps best of all, the use of civilian dispatchers, as opposed to the old practice of using police officers to dispatch, has freed up an officer to return

back to patrol, increasing the number of officers on the streets and saving real taxpayer dollars.

(Road Paving Capital Program)

This past year, we continued to invest in our physical infrastructure with an aggressive road-paving plan in which the Town **milled and paved** six streets, and repaired three others. As I've indicated in past presentations to the Council, each year my public works supervisors assign grades to the conditions of every road in Town. After reviewing their reports, we develop a plan to pave those roads most in need of repair. Especially with this past harsh winter, the Town will be busy repairing our roadways as the weather warms. Despite the rough winter, 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.

(Capital Program for Town Fields)

In addition to continuing to repair our roads and sidewalks, this year's upcoming capital improvement program will contain funding for improvements to fields and facilities utilized by the Foxon and Momauguin Recreation Leagues. Countless residents use these facilities and, as a result, it is a priority for us to keep them in sound condition.

(Housing Rehab Program)

Additionally, the Town has submitted a \$400,000 dollar grant application to obtain funds so that it can continue lending housing rehabilitation loans to income-eligible residents. To date, this program has made over 110 loans to local families, has a waiting list of ten people, and has been rated by the

Department of Housing and Urban Renewal as a “High Performer” and a prime candidate to continue this great program.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

While we’ve invested in our infrastructure and pursued grants for large-scale capital projects, economic development by private businesses has also flourished in the past year.

This past year, the Town Council approved the sale of 620 Coe Avenue, known by many as the former “Apizza Grande” restaurant. The property was acquired by the Town for use as the site of a new firehouse. However, due to its location in the flood plain, the Town never developed the property. During the last four years while it languished and deteriorated, it generated no tax revenue. However, the property is slated to be sold to and developed by “Carrano Iron,” a New Haven company that is moving to East Haven to expand its ironworking business, which management indicates will bring new jobs to Town.

In addition, the Town Council has also approved a plan to sell a parcel of land in the Industrial Park to a company that plans to open a 24-Hour Veterinary Hospital. The facility would be conveniently located just steps from the Town’s animal shelter.

In addition to these additions to the Industrial Park, this year, the Hemingway and Coe Avenue corridor became home to “Dollar General” and “Papa Johns.” The Town recently approved plans for a new “Dunkin

Donuts” and another restaurant to be located next to “Boston Market” on Frontage Road. Also, thanks to the “Classic Rock Coffee House” at the Old Mill, residents have a hip new place to grab a coffee or listen to music.

Other restaurants that renovated or opened this past year include the “Beachhead,” “Abates Pizza,” “Alex Deli,” and “Hala Meat Market.”

Also, for those interested in fitness, “9 Rounds Kickboxing” opened up this past year directly across from Town Hall along with “Holz Hockey.” Other notable business openings this past year include “Sound Auto” on Frontage Road, the “SARAH Redemption Center” on Route 80, “Air Inc. Fireplaces” on Frontage Road, and “Image Paper” on Main Street.

Clearly, East Haven’s efforts to recruit new businesses, stable tax rate, and prime location at the intersection of Interstates 91 and 95 have businesses flocking to East Haven.

Looking ahead, the Town is currently working with engineers and architects to complete a 30-acre expansion of the Industrial Park. The Town is actively recruiting a large-scale manufacturing outfit as the prime anchor for this expansion. If successful, the company’s move to Town would create over 200 new jobs to the region along with hundreds of thousands of dollars in new tax revenue.

EDUCATION

While business flourished in Town this past year, our students, faculty, and staff up at the Board of Education also made some headlines.

In February, the “School-Based Health Center” opened at Momauguin School. In addition to vaccinations and dental check-ups, the center is particularly geared toward providing mental and behavioral health services. This new program is funded by local, state, and federal grants and has zero cost to the taxpayers. Best of all, while the center accepts health insurance, there are no co-pays or deductibles and those who are uninsured are still treated.

Additionally, thanks to monies obtained by the Town through the “Smart Start Grant,” the Board of Education will be expanding the Town’s pre-school program. As a result, Momauguin School will have two new preschool classrooms in the next school year,

Looking ahead, the District will also be expanding its nationally recognized band program. As most people know, the East Haven High School Marching Band is one of the most successful programs in the country. It consistently wins national competitions and, only a few years ago, was invited to perform in the Electric Parade in Disney. The Superintendent indicates that moving forward, we will be implementing a District-wide elementary band and chorus program to complement our already-successful middle school and high school programs.

On the technology front, the District is continuing its implementation of “Chromebooks” throughout our school system. The Superintendent reports that the Board’s goal is to reach “one-to-one” distribution of these laptops to all students in grades three through eight this year, with the goal of expanding the program to the high school next year.

Finally, the Board of Education is continuing to draft a Master Facilities Plan geared toward consolidating buildings, reducing operating costs, and making renovations and upgrades that will provide better learning opportunities for years to come. While the plan is still in its infancy, it will be complete and ready to present to the public by the end of May

SPECIAL RECOGNITION/RESIDENTS

Over the past few weeks, East Haven native Nick Fradiani has garnered national attention for his “million dollar smile” and vocal talent, both of which have landed him in the “Top 9” of Fox’s hit TV competition “American Idol.” Of the hundreds of thousands of people who tried out for a chance to be the next “Idol,” Nick has cruised to success. On February 25th, in honor of Nick’s first live performance on the show, I declared the day to be “Nick Fradiani Day.” Students at Momauguin School celebrated the day by creating home-made signs and holding an assembly which was attended by Nick’s family and friends. At the assembly, the Town presented his father with an official Mayoral Proclamation. With the competition heating up, I want to congratulate Nick on his tremendous success and wish him luck as he continues on. All of East Haven is behind you Nick! But remember, no matter what happens, you will always be East Haven’s idol.

Also, while the Town and its various civic organizations recognized countless residents this past year for their volunteer efforts, our Community also celebrated the lives of many who left us, but whose contributions to our Town and State continue to make a difference.

This past year, the Town mourned the loss of a visionary and a close friend in Arthur DeSorbo. Arthur was instrumental in the formation and success of the East Haven Industrial Park. Until his untimely death, he served as the Town's Economic Development Coordinator and was one of the primary catalysts to bringing businesses like Shoprite, Hobby Lobby, and Carmax to East Haven. In addition to his work for the Town, Arthur was a dedicated volunteer, especially for Rotary. He was a devoted husband and a loyal friend to many. He continues to be sorely missed.

At this time, I'd ask that you to all to join me in a brief moment of silence in honor of Arthur...

(PAUSE FOR 5 SECONDS).... Thank you.

Moving on... Our Town employees and department heads have worked hard throughout the past year to continue to offer exceptional services and resources to our residents

WORK OF DEPARTMENT HEADS/CURRENT PEOPLE

Website Committee – Frank Gentilesco/Paul Rizza/Danelle Feeley

Recently, the Town contracted with Virtual Towns and Schools to re-design the Town's website. The site is expected to go "live" at the end of April and will offer a fresh, new design along with a host of features for residents including a "How do I?" section for referencing common questions and the ability to sign up for E-Alerts so that residents can stay informed about Town events. With the upgrade of the website, we are changing the nature of the site from a standard website to a "citizen service portal." That will connect our residents with the information and services they need efficiently and easily. I'm confident it will be a tremendous success.

Town Clerk – Stacy Gravino

The Town Clerk's office, headed by Stacy Gravino, has continued to make capital and technology upgrades, most of which have been completed with grants and at no cost to the taxpayers. This past year, her office continued the process of back-scanning our land records, which are now scanned all the way back to 2004. Additionally, the map indexing and scanning project that began two years ago is nearing completion and will be available to the public within the month and a new wide-format printer will allow large-scale printing of all digital maps.

Assessor – Michael Milici

This past year, the Assessor's Office, headed by Mike Milici, worked in collaboration with the Town Engineer and the Zoning Officer to implement the Town's new "Graphic Information System," which is a digital mapping system for the entire Town. The project, which was funded almost entirely with a grant from SCROG, only cost the Town \$6,000 dollars and should be up and running next month. When it is complete, each individual parcel in Town will be linked to our assessment property database, which will facilitate easier research of properties in Town.

Additionally, in May, the Assessor's office will begin the next revaluation. This year, the Town was able to negotiate a better price for this important project, cutting the total cost from \$220,000 dollars to \$180,000 dollars.

Senior Center – Jan Jougat

Our Senior Center, headed by Jan Jougat, enjoyed another busy year. This year, the Senior Center received a new Flat-Screen HDTV from the Town and new tables and chairs, donated by the wonderful people over at the Village at Mariner's Point.

As usual, this past year, seniors enjoyed the daily lunch program, aerobics, line dancing, knitting, card games, monthly movies, and many day/overnight trips. Additionally, the Center continued to offer a variety of educational and health programs including include a wellness clinic featuring area doctors who donate time for free screenings. Also, the Center offered free income tax services and "55 Alive" safe driving classes, both provided by AARP.

Social Services/Youth Services– Bob Petrucelli

Bob Petrucelli is the head of both our “Social Services” and “Youth Services” programs here in Town, both of which had busy years.

Last year, Bob’s office processed 550 rental rebate applications, netting residents over \$275,000 in savings, a 10% increase from the last fiscal year. For those unfamiliar with the rental rebate program, it provides an annual rebate to elderly or disabled East Haven renters.

Additionally, through the CT Energy Assistance Program, Bob’s office processed over 500 applications for fuel assistance, netting over \$375,000 in assistance for residents who participated in the program.

This past year, the Youth Services Department expanded its summer art program into a yearlong program at the teen center involving 35 teens.

At the same time, Bob’s office partnered with the East Haven Police Department to implement the Town’s first “Juvenile Review Board,” which aims to divert East Haven youth offenders from the Court system. The program is a novel one that further demonstrates the Department’s efforts to expand community policing and employ progressive policing strategies.

Tax Collector – Lisa Basilicato

Moving on... This past year the tax department, led by Lisa Basilicato, set a record for delinquent tax collections, tipping the overall tax collection rate above 98.25%. Additionally, Lisa reports that the Town’s website continues to feature the ability to view and pay taxes online with any major credit

card, debit card, or by E-Check. The system also features the ability to view your prior payment history, which is incredibly useful when filling out your tax returns. Although the E-Payment system has only been in place for a few years, its usage has increased substantially.

Animal Control – Owen Little

This past year, the East Haven Chamber of Commerce honored our Animal Shelter, led by Owen Little and Anthony Purifiacto, as the “Non-profit Organization of the Year.” Also, this past year, longtime shelter volunteer Lesley Simoni was chosen as the State’s “Animal Control Volunteer of the Year” and received a plaque at the annual conference.

In addition, the Animal Shelter has developed a social media page on Facebook that has grown to almost 4,000 fans. Thanks to the use of its Facebook and Petfinder pages, the Animal Shelter has been able to achieve an astounding 96% adoption rate.

Looking ahead, the Shelter plans to construct a pavilion located at the Shelter so that potential adopters will be able to meet and play with pets. The pavilion will be entirely paid for by donations raised by the Shelter.

Planning and Zoning – Frank Biancur

Throughout the past year, the Planning and Zoning Department, led by Frank Biancur, oversaw the opening of countless new businesses and continued to be a resource for residents whose homes were damaged by Sandy and Irene. In addition, in the past year, the Zoning Department has

taken on a number of new administrative programs that have helped improve public safety, clean up the Town, and save money.

For example, last year the Town passed a “Landlord Registration Ordinance” that requires all non-resident landlords to provide the Zoning Department with contact information so that the Town can reach them in cases of emergencies or if a blight issues arise.

Additionally, the Zoning Department, in conjunction with other Department Heads, participated in the Mayor’s “Code Enforcement” program, which functions as a supervisory monthly meeting that handles resident complaints about zoning and code issues. In 2014, the committee addressed over 210 separate incidents, including one on Borrmann Road that had been the subject of countless complaints by residents for years.

Finally, this past year, the Zoning Department in conjunction with Public Works, stepped up the Town’s blight enforcement efforts and began cleaning up properties if and when owners refused or were unable to do so. To recover the costs of the cleanups, the Town Attorney placed blight liens on the properties. To-date, the revenues from the blight liens have completely offset the costs of cleaning up all of the properties and have actually turned a small profit for the Town.

Civil Service – Andrea Liquori

The Civil Service Department, headed by Andrea Liquori, had another busy year as well. According to Andrea, looking ahead, the Town plans to test

for Firefighter/Paramedic and Police Officer Grade C positions within the next 6 months. In addition, the department has begun using an online application service. The program allows the Town to manage recruitment and hiring procedures more efficiently and to electronically collect application fees. In fact, last year, we actually collected enough money online to actually cover the cost of the Police Officer C Exam.

Building Department – Jim Bassett

Our Building Department, led by Jim Bassett, shares an office with the Zoning Department and the two work closely on a consistent basis. In addition to everything reported by the zoning department, our building official reports that in calendar year 2014, the Town issued 980 permits for just under \$11 million dollars in construction work along with 14 permits for the complete rebuilding homes. In addition to the grand list growth generated by these improvements, permit fees alone totaled over \$196,000.

Public Services/Engineering – Kevin White and Bob Parente

Our Engineering and Public Works departments, headed by Kevin White and Bobby Parente, had an incredibly busy year. In addition to converting the records room at the Police Department into the new Dispatch Center and paving nine roads, the department diligently responded to 17 winter snow events and cleared over 60 inches of snow in East Haven.

Additionally, the department completed drainage projects on Kimberly Avenue, Pine Street, and Cherry Street along with traffic signalization projects at Main Street/Hemingway Avenue, Hemingway Avenue/Dodge Avenue, and Mansfield Grove Road/Short Beach Road. This past fall, the department also saved the Town over \$600,000 by repairing and reconditioning three of its large Mack trucks. Finally, at Momauguin field, the department constructed a new bathroom, and installed a new boiler and scoreboard.

Counseling and Community Services – Beth Trotta

The Counseling and Community Services program, headed by Beth Trotta of BHCare, Inc. continued to offer quality mental and behavioral health counseling services while continuing to increase revenues to the Town. Over the past year, the level and quantity of services offered by the department has continued to expand, even with the large turnover in staffing. 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

While on the topic of medical services available in Town, I want to briefly update everyone on the Town's Prescription Discount Program – a program available to residents at no charge or cost to the taxpayers.

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 798 claims using the card and saved over \$39,800 dollars on medications. Average price savings as result of using the card was 57%. I encourage anyone who has not used the card to obtain one.

Recreation Department – Lou Pane

Our Recreation Department, headed by Lou Pane, offers a number of youth and adult programs each and every year. This year, the Department will be offering many programs, including Beach Yoga, Beach Zumba, Beach Aerobics, and Beach Volleyball along with a variety of youth camps with art, sports, and recreational themes. In addition, the Department has announced that it will be launching two exciting new programs this year – Horseback riding lessons as well as artistry lessons.

The Recreation Department also reports that Ice Rink will generate a profit to the town for the 3rd consecutive year. Countless teams, including those

in Town, use our rink and Lou has done a tremendous job of making sure that the rink pays for itself and generates a profit.

Police Department – Chief Brent Larrabee

Although I already discussed the renovation of our dispatch center, our implementation of body cameras, and the Police Department's hard work on the consent decree, I also want to highlight some of the great work our police department is doing on an everyday basis.

This year, Chief Larrabee formed the Town's first Citizens Police Academy which seeks to educate participants about how our department functions. The ten-week program covers everything from the consent decree and court procedures to accident reconstruction, domestic violence, use of force, and firearms safety. As I stated earlier this year, I am incredibly proud that we are now in a position to be teaching others, including our residents, about the trends and best practices in law enforcement.

Additionally, the Police Department has almost completely recovered from the significant number of retirements that resulted in crippling overtime over the past few years. Every funded patrol position has been filled and the department is now promoting from within to fill key detective and leadership roles. After the next series of promotions, one last round of hiring will have the department fully staffed for the first time since 2009.

Also, last year, the New Haven Register conducted a survey of local police departments to measure their compliance with the State's Freedom of Information laws. I'm proud to announce that our Police Department

received a grade of “A-” in the study, with only one minor discrepancy preventing the Town from a perfect score. This score speaks volumes about the department’s efforts to function transparently and efficiently.

Finally, for those who have not heard, I’d like to announce that Chief Larrabee will be receiving this year’s “Distinguished Chief Award” from the Police Commissioner’s Association of Connecticut for his numerous accomplishments as East Haven’s Police Chief. In selecting the Chief, the committee was particularly impressed with his handling and oversight of the implementation of the consent decree here in East Haven.

Fire Department – Chief Doug Jackson

Our Fire Department, which is headed by Doug Jackson, responded to a record number of medical calls last year while accomplishing several more CPR saves than in prior years.

Also, the department updated Squad 5 with a new, all-wheel-drive chassis, which proved invaluable during the winter and which now gives the town a total of two all-wheel drive paramedic units available at all times. Additionally, the department placed a new Car-1 SUV into service which was used to address multi-jurisdictional and mutual-aid incidents.

Last year, when they weren’t saving lives, career fire personnel, along with volunteers, participated in countless fundraising activities including MDA, the American Lung Stair Climb, and the St. Baldrick’s fundraiser.

FINANCES

While our department heads reported a host of accomplishments in the last year, our Finance Director helped guide to yet another budget surplus. 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 \$900,000 dollars in the last fiscal year, bringing the Town's fund balance to over \$2.6 million dollars – its highest level since 2008.

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As many of you know, the fund balance was allowed to slip to negative \$5.2 million dollars just five short years ago. And after just two terms in office, we have managed to stabilize the Town's finances and put us back on the right track.

Also, last year, the Town received an upgrade of its bond rating from "Standard and Poor's," one of the world's foremost credit rating agencies. As a result of the upgraded rating, the Town was able to restructure a significant portion of its long-term debt, resulting in substantial savings for our taxpayers.

IMPORTANT DATES

Before I conclude, I'd like to remind everyone of the dates of some of the great upcoming events scheduled across Town.

The National Day of Prayer is Thursday, May 7th.

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

The VVA Chapter 484 Fireworks and Beach Party is scheduled for Saturday, June 27th with a rain date of Monday, June 29th. The feature act is going to be the Bronx Wanders, a favorite to all who have watched them at our annual Fall Festival.

Senior Day will be held August 22nd on the Town Green.

The East Haven Fall Festival is scheduled for September 11th, 12th, and 13th on the Town Green. Saturday Night's feature act is going to be "Tony Orlando."

Finally, East Haven will play host to the region's Columbus Day Parade this year, which will be held on Sunday, October 11th.

CONCLUSION

In closing my fourteenth State of the Town Address, I want to emphasize that it has been an absolute privilege to spend 14 of the last 18 years fighting for the best interests of our citizens and our community.

Looking back, it is clear that our commitment to fiscal responsibility and conservative management principals has made us a more prosperous community than we were just four years ago.

Although there were times that we struggled in recent years, we are both stronger and more unified for having faced and overcome those challenges.

Moving forward, our community's future will be shaped by the values we embrace and the fiscal and social policies we advance. East Haven has returned to being the "Shining Star of the Shoreline" and it is our shared responsibility to ensure that we shine for years to come. I am confident that with continued hard work and cooperation, our Town will only continue to shine more brightly.

Thank you all, God Bless our Community, and God Bless our great Country.