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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
EAST HAVEN, CONN

Lisa Balter
TOWN CLERK

Town Council Notice of a Special Meeting Minutes

The East Haven Town Council held a Special Meeting, Wednesday, March 30, 2022 at 7:00 p.m., at the East Haven High School, 35 Wheelbarrow Lane, East Haven in order to receive the following:

Chairman Deko called the meeting to order at 7:02

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call-12 Present 3 Absent (Santino, Ruggiero, and Pompano)

Item #1

Chairman Deko Received the Honorable Mayor Joseph A. Carfora's State of the Town Address and Budget Presentation Message.

Mayor Carfora

State of the Town Address

March 30, 2022

Mayor Carfora Welcomed everyone.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice-Chairman, members of the Town Council, our newly elected town clerk, Lisa Balter, Members of the Board of Education, Board of Education Chair, Superintendent of Schools Erica Forti, all members of the Board of Finance, our Town Department Heads, town employees; and, of course, the taxpayers of the Town of East Haven. I also want to thank those who serve and volunteer on our Boards and Commissions—they are an integral part of the engine that runs this town. They are way too often criticized for the work that they do—and that is unfortunate. It is my honor to be your mayor and to lead our cherished hometown.

As always, I want to first take the time to thank our first responders, and their families. They have difficult jobs, and in today's society they are becoming more so. Our thoughts, and prayers are always with them; it is my continued commitment to always provide them the tools to perform their jobs, so that they can protect us, but most importantly, return home safely to their families. I stand before you this evening for the third time as your mayor to deliver to you the mandatory state of our town and budget address. In past addresses, I have had to bring you not so positive news about the town's finances, its infrastructure, and of course COVID-19. My first budget address talked to you about the deplorable conditions that we inherited financially and throughout our town and recreational facilities; My Second address was given while we were still in the storm of a worldwide pandemic, and also reporting two significant budget deficits from my predecessor. But if you recall, I spoke straight talk, and presented truthful plans to move our town forward—remember I said together --- we march on? Well, we have, and we continue to do so----- My team, our team has presented, but also followed thru on plans that are responsible in their development, realistic in their goals and calculated in their execution. This budget plan which was unanimously approved by our Board of Finance is no different. What has, and is occurring is a change; a willingness to lead with responsibility, a will to make the tough, calculated decisions—and the fortitude to not succumb to petty politically motivated pessimists. Leaders lead! -- and

do so with conviction. I, along with my team, and your help have made thoughtful decisions--- that prepare our town for the future. And I ask for your commitment to continuing our course--- Even though we might not always agree in complete detail, we must stand together in our values, so that we can advance the best that this wonderful community has to offer. The first Carfora Administration budget ended in a certified audit surplus of 2.8 million- that's for our 20-21 FY budget. Our first decisions were difficult, but necessary—that audit provided us a stamp of approval. I cannot thank finance director, Jim Keely enough. Jim and I are attached at the hip. We meet multiple times weekly—and his direction and input are essential, valued, and one of the main reasons that we are on the road to solid financial stability. We expect positive results for our current 21-22 FY budget that will be closing this coming June. What I am presenting you this evening is similar in its thorough, calculated, truthful, and detailed content. It funds our most important services at responsible levels. It funds education, police, fire, recreation, IT, infrastructure, town beautification at levels never seen before. As we move thru this presentation, there is a PowerPoint slide review that highlights our goals and accomplishments.

Town Clerk

Lisa Balter, our new Town Clerk, reports that the transition in the Clerk's Office has been smooth and credits the current staff with the support they have shown. Lisa has been focused on moving forward and continuing to improve services to the community and maintain the preservation of town records. The 2021 State Grant project of preserving, scanning and indexing Military Discharge Documents was completed this month, dating from 1918 to Present. New shelving to assist with the proper storage of archival paper and supplies will soon be installed, paid for with Town Clerk Funds. Lisa is currently working on updating the Clerk's page of the website to add more information online for residents, looking into systems to streamline the process of managing Boards & Commissions, looking into new merchant providers to decrease credit card processing costs to the town and submitting her next grant request for scanning and indexing land records dating back to 1950 to improve full title search abilities for all. This project will be undertaken with State Library grant funds, and at no cost to taxpayers.

Police

Our department is led by Chief Edward Lennon. Our police department is one of the finest in the state. In December of 2020 the Washington Post had recognized our department as a role model for the United States along with the NY Times in 2021 with the same distinction. We continue to fund it at levels that ensure our officers have the tools to do their jobs and to return home safely, this includes from training to equipment- they need our support. We have hired and trained nine (9) new officers, fully implemented a School Resource Officer (SRO) program in both the high school and middle school. Our department has assigned an officer full time to address summer beach issues, as well as worked incredibly hard to implement a new parking program to improve the quality-of-life issues throughout the Town, especially at the shoreline. Our officers should—and will - always have the vital and appropriate firearms to do their jobs. To meet that standard, we have purchased new firearms to replace 10+ year old firearms – this new equipment will be issued, and training started in the coming weeks. Similarly, -- we purchased active shooter kits – they will be arriving soon, and will be placed in every vehicle. And something that I am so very pleased with --because this is something that we promised from the beginning--- this department hunts grants —the department has applied for --- and/or received grants in excess of \$70,000. That's takes effort.

I do not want to forget to thank Chairman Deko, East Haven Memorial Funeral home and all those who worked so hard to make sure that all of our K-9's will receive the recognition that they have earned and deserve with a new K-9 monument. We look forward to a Spring ceremony for that. Finally, on behalf of the town of East Haven, my heartfelt appreciation to the entire department—while we sleep, they work to protect us—last year they responded to almost 30,000 calls to service. Thank you Chief Lennon.

Fire

Our fire department led by Chief Matthew Marcarelli. Along with our police department, our fire department is at the top of any list. In this department we have hired and trained 7 new Firefighters. We also promoted an Assistant Chief, a Fire Marshal, a Training Officer and a Captain. Engine 5 in Foxon has been totally refurbished. For safety and protection, we installed specialized fire gear dryers at all fire stations which will aid in the proper laundering of firefighter PPE, reducing the risk of occupational cancer. And no department has made more of a commitment to hunting grants than Chief Marcarelli – seeking and receiving a total of more than a million since 2017. Most recently including a \$136,000 Assistance to Firefighters Grant for Thermal Imaging Cameras for all department apparatus.

Public works

Our public works department is led by Superintendent Charlie Coyle. Our public works department continues to be a model organization. Our department has committed and skilled workers. Their ability to do more work “in house”, saves us money, and it allows us to plan not only for new projects, but to also put together longer-term maintenance plans for all areas of town. Also, thru grants, and responsible budgeting we are rebuilding our fleet of equipment. Our slides outline what we have done and what some of our plans are. (slide 2) We are purchasing two new pieces of equipment so our workers can clean and maintain the Farm River and Tuttle Brook that drains into our lovely Long Island Sound. (slide 3) Our public works department never had the proper equipment to perform this necessary task which also has environmental impacts.

(Slide 4) We have an incredible group of talented workers which allows us to do so much in house. It saves us money and these projects are completed with sense of pride.

ARPA and Cares Act Funding

We are receiving 8.4 million dollars total—4.2 million this past summer, and this summer an additional 4.2 million—it must be spent by 2026. This money cannot be used for legal settlements, paying down of debt, or lowering the mill rate. (slide 2) Our goal is to use these funds for effective longer-term assets to benefit generations to come. We put in a protective process from the very beginning to allocate these funds, a process that protects our town. One that requires approval of expenditures thru a professional national consultant, paid from the grant, with expertise in this area. You will not see our community caught up in the controversy of whether we are using these funds appropriately for projects. The federal regulations are overwhelming, and they are always changing. We along with North Haven, and other communities, felt that this was the most responsible way to protect the use of this money, and to protect our community from future federal audits of these funds. (Slide 3) They are being used for great projects from our town green to park refurbishing, and, where allowed, to enhance our buildings, our IT infrastructure and the overall community. While my administration worked hand and hand with our consultants to vet projects for approval, we also needed to be sure that any use of these funds would not create an added expense for the town in the future.

Senior Center

Our senior center is led by Bob Petrucelli.

I am so proud of the programming expansion, and the continuing development of our Senior Center. Bob continues to do a great job. The East Haven Senior Center was selected to receive a cash grant from the Connecticut DOT for a second Senior center bus. This bus will primarily be utilized to transport seniors to area medical appointments, prescription pickups, tests, and to/from the Center. We anticipate receiving the bus in early 2023 and then starting all of these services.

Recreation Dept

Our department is led by Liz Franco-Spano.

We are re-evaluating our entire recreation department -- new programs, new heights, new expectations. This is a new time in this department. The energy and level of commitment by Liz Franco, our wonderful new Recreation Director, brings to us is breathtaking. Liz and I are working hand in hand to improve and

to grow our recreation department. From smaller programs, like yoga, pickle ball, arts/ crafts- to long term planning. This department will be a shining star for our community, and along with our public works department, we will be undertaking a comprehensive overhaul of all our parks and fields with the use of federal and state grant funds- that will start immediately. (General slide 2) APRA funding will be used to fund most of these improvements. Our recreation director was given the task on day one to assess all the towns fields and playgrounds. Liz, a thirty-six-year physical education and recreation teacher and Charlie Coyle our superintendent of public works visited all the recreation facilities together, evaluated the current equipment and grounds. The results were clear, many of the playgrounds needed a significant overhaul due to deterioration and lack of maintenance over the years. We plan on improving Michael Street Park, Memorial Field, Massachusetts Street Park, Warwick Street Park, Deer Run Field, The PIT and Momauguin Fields. However, when they arrived at the skate park, it was very evident that all the efforts to maintain this space were not working. The skate park ramps are covered in graffiti, and often profanity and racial slurs. The grounds were often found littered with liquor bottles, drug paraphernalia such as hypodermic needles and evidence of sexual activity. The town had put in measures to stop these illegal behaviors, such as fencing, a keypad for access and ample signage, but those who wanted access gained it by cutting the fence multiple times. These actions caused a grave safety concern for visitors, students in the nearby schools and the neighborhood. Liz called around to neighboring towns inquiring about their skate parks. What she found was these towns also faced similar issues and removed their skate parks as well. The park was often utilized by out of towners. Did you know that our skate park was the ONLY one in the state with lights? Did you know that on more than one occasion, there have been “parties” held there? Most recently a couple weekends ago, there were at least 30 people from Norwalk hosting a skate party. We know this because Liz spoke to them directly. It goes without saying that activities like these create a huge liability. Did you also know that a majority of those voicing their opposition are not East Haven Residents? I know this because our beloved recreation director has received multiple threats of harm, even death against herself, her family, and her pets which is sickening. I know the residents of East Haven would never behave in such a manner. Our plan for this space will certainly be inclusive, safe, family oriented and a welcomed addition to our recreation offerings in East Haven.

Our ice rink an asset to our recreation department and a sense of pride for our community. Another systematic approach to creating a facility that we can again be proud of. The degradation of a facility, thru wear, and tear, and because of a lack of scheduled maintenance- over the years leads to the need to close it – which is unfortunate. We saw that with our rink and our pool. Bringing the rink project like this does not happen quickly—but again, thru thoughtful and responsible planning we are on our way to having this building up and running. Bids have been opened--Work has begun, dasher boards being removed, chillers removed. Our design build group is SLAM. They are one of the premier rink design groups in the country. It has been a pleasure dealing with them and their professional team. We are looking forward for a grand re-opening this fall.

East Haven Animal Shelter

Our department is led by Owen Little.

Its mission statement says: *“Strive to enforce all animal control laws and to serve the community in a professional manner. Ensure that all animals and residents are treated with respect at all times.”* Owen Little, Sean Goodejohn and Emily Higgins do just that – they work so hard every day to make this shelter a special place. Owen’s reputation throughout the state is something for our community to be proud of. He is waiting to take delivery of a much-needed van which was procured thru grant and donated funds. Also, upgrades are currently underway at that facility.

The Hagaman Memorial Library

Our library is a beautiful facility and a high light of Main Street. It is an asset that serves young and old alike with an impressive array of programs. It will be receiving a new roof thru a state grant program. Bruce and his staff are doing a wonderful job.

Information Technology

Our town's technology was dangerously and irresponsibly behind the times. East Haven is a 100-million-dollar corporation, we need an IT structure that adequately protects our users, our information, and one that affords our employees the best opportunity to do their jobs, which is to service our taxpayers. From upgrades to our phone systems, to greater online accessibility. A new town Website, abilities for remote access by our employees when needed and also cybersecurity. This is an area that cannot be compromised and is always evolving daily.

Our Beach Permit System

Another well thought out and strategically planned program- some were frustrated and claimed that we were taking too long--. Again—a problem that is created over decades, and left to fester for almost as much time, isn't solved overnight. But again, by bringing the right people together and fully evaluating the problem, initial reviews of the system seemed very positive. (Slide 2 of another beach picture) This will be our second season with our permitting system. We look forward to working with the residents, and making it even better this year. We have a beautiful beach area which we want everyone to enjoy, but we also must be fair to the residents who live near and around our shore. We did numerous renovations and upgrades to our beach area and look forward to our community enjoying our beautiful shoreline for many years to come.

Re-valuation

Property values increased greatly over the last few years. Our re-valuation is complete and it confirmed that housing values are up, like those across the state and the region. Re-valuation is mandated by our state. While increased value in our homes is overall a good thing for those who own, as leaders we have a responsibility to make sure that such value increases do not crush a hard working families pocket book. So, I am recommending lowering the mill rate to offset as much of that increased value as we can, so your tax burden is limited. My recommendation is to lower the mill rate almost 3 full mills to 31.30. This is a very challenging formula for all Connecticut municipalities. With that said, I can easily say that most municipal leaders are calling for property tax restructuring, and relief at the state level, and I am no different—something needs to be done to relax the burden for local taxpayers. I will continue to lobby our state leaders for a fair and equitable overhaul of the Connecticut property tax system. I look forward to continuing to work with our elected officials on behalf of our residents.

DC Moore

The town still owns this property – It *has not* been transferred. I have been told, and now expect, that the potential bid winner intends to sue the town to enforce the August 2019 Maturo Administration ordinance. Should this occur, our legal staff will be coming to you with procedures, and updates.

Tax Department

Our tax collector Anna Delrosso has done a fantastic job. Tax Collection has been extremely strong. She is firm, but fair, while doing her job with compassion during these unique times.

TWEED New Haven Airport

From the beginning, I have approached this project with great care, and paid it every bit of the attention that it requires and demands. I have not, as others have- to make this political, and I never will. Tweed New Haven Airport Terminal East Haven –

formally known as Terminal Alternative 3 Eastside Terminal is the most transformative project in our town's history. From a business standpoint this move works for some. But my view has to be broader than that, and it is. From attending the public hearings, having staff in important briefings and meetings, we have been, and continue to be wholly engaged. I personally have had multiple meetings, phone calls and briefings regarding Tweed on issues from traffic to public safety. Our legal, police, fire, PW and

engineering leaders have had meetings to ask specific questions, and when necessary requested additional and supplemental data. I, we, this administration, is handling Tweed as I have everything else -- infrastructure evaluation, to budgeting, to our extremely coordinated COVID responses, - from the start of my administration--- we are consistent, deliberate, and thorough. With each decision, project and each step, we determine what is best for our community long term. And Tweed terminal expansion to East Haven is no different. I am quite sure that my decision will disappoint some, and even create discord with some very influential people. That is not my concern, and if there is one thing that I have proven as your mayor and as the leader of this community, is that I am no shrinking violet, nor will I back down from a tough decision. And there may be ramifications as a result, including that they may try to force this upon us.

As mayor of this community there are things that **I CAN CONTROL** with respect to Tweed, and some things that **I CANNOT**. Runway lengthening, more flight decisions are things that **I CANNOT CONTROL**, as we all can see those things are happening. Avelo is moving forward with its plans to offer more flights to more destinations. But those business decisions are made outside of my input and are distinctly different pronouncements than Tweed terminal expansion to the East Haven side. The terminal expansion to the East Haven side is the acceptance of the 70-million-dollar terminal to our community – which is one of three options in the master plan—frankly; the option that the powers that be seem to feel fits best for Tweed and the region. The Avports, Avelo's , and the City of New Haven's business model is surely driven by the need for flights to desirable destinations. New Haven, Yale and the regions will benefit enormously from the potential economic impact – that is clear. We as a community do not benefit economically as they will- that is clear. My concerns **CANNOT** be what fits best for Tweed, New Haven, Yale, or the region, each stakeholder is making decisions based upon what they believe is in their best interests, and collectively, some undoubtedly have a common interest, and I understand that. East Haven is also a stakeholder, but our interests simply do not share similar commonality, and I have a duty to protect our community. My concern is that the burden to East Haven that this terminal will bring—traffic, flooding, environmental, public safety, operational costs and capital necessities are monumental, and they far outweigh any direct, limited economic benefit that that East Haven will gain. There is **NO** tax revenue for East Haven, but the burdens are vast, with potentially irreparable impacts. Our beach community will be impacted by traffic. We inherited a poorly designed and continuing flooding quagmire at the intersection of Hemingway Avenue and Short Beach Road. A design fix that was created by agents of the previous administration, but shut down by the state of CT, because from the very beginning in 2016-2017 it wasn't going to work. Jonathan Bodwell, our town engineer, continues in attempts to get answers, and we are working hard to get additional funding to clean up this mess. That intersection is not passable on too many occasions. Our wonderful town green and the events that are historically held there will be impacted traffic will flow down Hemingway to our Main Street intersection. For 30 years we have closed parts of Hemingway Avenue for the events leading to and around our Fall Festival; that would no longer be possible. The burdens on our police, fire and dispatch will grow tremendously. There is a position that more flights, and additional operations translate into additional jobs, and to the extent that East Haven residents will be hired is a positive thing. As I have said business travel is important to the region. And so is the convenience of flights to desirable vacation and family destinations—that is not my decision, as indicated I have no input into that.

New Haven is the great beneficiary in this operation. Listen to this—New Haven's PILOT which stands for - Payments in Lieu of Taxes- THEIR PILOT money will be increased by 50 million dollars each year for the next 3 years. Ours PILOT money was flat lined at 462k for each year for the next 3 years. You heard that correctly. I am not saying that this is related to Tweed—I do have concerns about the inequity- and where does it stop.

I have been cordial and inviting from the very beginning regarding the evaluation of this project. I have been willing to listen—But one thing has been crystal clear, and consistent— I have always said that this project **WILL NOT** be placed on the backs of the Town of East Haven—and it is clear that the burdens will.

That's is why I am announcing tonight that at this point **I CANNOT** support, nor can I recommend to our TC that we accept and support the terminal expansion/move –to the East Haven side. The burdens are too great, and the impact at this time on our community are simply too transformative. Those who benefit should shoulder more burden—not just the Town of East Haven. I will be formally presenting a letter to the Tweed Authority in the coming days. We have to look out for the interests of our shoreline community, and the burdens that this terminal, as proposed will place on us are simply too great.

In closing, I want to thank everyone for coming. I want to acknowledge our department heads and my staff for their hard work on this budget. Without a doubt we have the finest finance director in the area. Jim is thorough and extremely organized, but also a pleasure to work with. I'd like to thank the members of the BOF for their service. Like you, they give their time to this community to make it better. Mr. Chairman - I have completed my presentation and turn the budget over to the Council. Good Luck and thank you. –

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to adjourn at 7:48 p.m.

Councilwoman Cesare second the motion.

Voice vote-All in favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta A. DeLuca
Town Council Clerk