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STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS  
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Thank you very much:

I want to thank the Bridgeport Regional Business Council and the Trumbull Chamber of Commerce for affording me the opportunity to deliver this, my sixth State of the Town address as First Selectman of the Town of Trumbull.

Since the last time we met, Trumbull has since lost one of our great leaders, former First Selectman Clarence Heimann. First Selectman Heimann's vision for Trumbull was one that focused on strong finances, a superior public school system and a strong quality of life. Today I remain committed to the ideals borne from First Selectman Heimann's legacy.

This past year, I learned a lot about Connecticut and its people. We are a small state with a big heart, with wonderful people who live here. And over the last year, I know this virtue to be true - - from Goshen to Groton, from Torrington to Tolland and from Stamford to Stafford Springs, I can say without hesitation that we live in the best Town in the State of Connecticut.

In fact, today I come before you humbled to lead the best Town in America and pleased to report that the State of our Town is the strongest it has ever been during our 218 years of incorporation.

Over the last six years, we have been guided by three core principles. Strength, conviction and reform.

Trumbull's motto is pride in our past and faith in our future. We will have pride in our past and faith in our future by having the strength to make the tough decisions, by having the conviction to pursue causes greater than our own self-interests as we continue to make meaningful reform that makes Trumbull an even better place to live, to work and to raise a family.

We are blessed to have dedicated public servants that have been guided by these principles, working side by side with me every day to lead this Town forward in a responsible manner.

Our new Police Chief, Michael Lombardo has done a tremendous job in less than three months. While we had very high expectations, Chief Lombardo has exceeded

those expectations by every measure. Chief Lombardo has realigned command staff duties and established more accountability and productivity of personnel. I would at this time like to recognize our new Deputy Police Chiefs -- Deputy Chief Ronald Kirby and Deputy Chief Thomas Savarese. They will join Deputy Chief of Police Glen Byrnes. Gentlemen, please stand to be recognized.

Chief Lombardo and his team are working towards state accreditation for the Trumbull Police Department, a worthy goal that is long overdue. They are also working collaboratively with the Town and Board of Education to improve upon security at all public facilities. Trumbull is a safe place to live and work and it is our goal to be a proactive twenty-first century police department. Safety is so important because a safe community encourages businesses and investors to give us a serious look when they are choosing a community to call home and provides a desirable place for their employees to live.

This is also why public education is vitally important. The quality of our public school system directly impacts our quality of life and attracts businesses and families to make the long term investment in Trumbull. The education budget I have proposed maintains and builds upon existing programs within our schools and also works to phase out and finally eliminate pay to participate fees. Let there be no mistake -- the quality of Trumbull's Public School System is strong and growing stronger every day. On the Connecticut Mastery Test for example, our students are outperforming students in Greenwich and Fairfield.

Our Town department heads have recognized the need to find efficiencies within their existing budgets and also look for ways to increase revenue to offset expenses. Our Public Works Department, under the leadership of John Marsilio, has identified millions of dollars in savings. Our buildings are now more energy efficient than they were six years ago. Our solid waste costs are now less than they were six years ago. Trumbull's efforts to be a regional leader in this regard will save Trumbull taxpayers millions of dollars over the course of the next decade. These savings have allowed us to refocus our efforts to improving our facilities and aging infrastructure. As a result, we have paved more roads in the last six years than at any time in the Town's history.

Employee labor agreements, pension contributions and healthcare related costs represent the largest drivers in any municipal budget. And before we arrived, the Town of Trumbull didn't have a qualified Labor Relations Department. So we hired a qualified professional and under the leadership of Jim Haselkamp we have saved nearly a quarter of a million dollars in less than one year.

We will continue to strengthen the leadership of our Town departments to provide all of our citizens the efficient and high quality municipal services they deserve.

On the financial front, under the leadership of our Finance Director Maria Pires and our Town Treasurer John Ponzio, we have brought meaningful reform that has set Trumbull on a path of financial security and prosperity. Over the last six years, we have been able to maintain an average tax increase of 2% a year, one of the lowest six year averages in all of Fairfield County. And we have been able to keep the tax rate stable while investing more money in public education, public safety and our infrastructure. We have also been able to fully fund our pension obligations.

In point of fact, six years ago our pension fund was only funded at 27% -- the text book example of kicking the can. The mission was clear -- if we did not deal with this problem, it would directly impact our financial health and adversely harm every Trumbull taxpayer.

Since I took office in 2009, we have invested an additional 33.5 million dollars into our pension funds. The annual required contribution is fully funded for the first time in more than a generation. We have successfully achieved this while maintaining a healthy rainy day fund and lowering the levels of debt placed on the backs of every Trumbull taxpayer.

As a result of determined actions taken to fulfill these obligations, the financial rating agencies have upgraded Trumbull's credit rating to a AA+, one step away from the coveted Triple AAA.

In the budget I have proposed to the Board of Finance and Trumbull Town Council, debt service is down from the year before. There are less Town employees than when I took office in 2009. Many department budgets are less than they were the year before. This budget underscores our commitment over the course of the last six years to toe the line on discretionary spending, while funding our existing and future obligations. No gimmicks. No one time revenue. Just fiscal responsibility and honest accounting.

For all of these reasons, we are poised to encourage additional corporate investment and job relocation here in Trumbull. As we make the case to recruit new businesses from lower Fairfield County, we must emphasize that in Trumbull you get better value for your tax dollar.

A superior school system that is outperforming its peers in lower Fairfield County.

The second safest Town in Connecticut - - no small accomplishment given our adjacency to a large urban center.

A renowned park system and responsible land use plan that is forward thinking.

Businesses who take up residence in our corporate parks avoid bumper to bumper traffic or the constant problems with Metro North. And because we are committed to all of these things, if we keep the tax rate stable, this is how we will effectively compete, to retain, recruit and invest so we can win.

Six years ago when our Grand List was stagnant, we knew we needed a new approach. We reformed the Economic and Community Development Department. As a percent of our total Grand List, our commercial base has grown from 14% in 2009 to 21% today.

This upward growth is forecasted to continue over the next two years.

Trumbullites will notice activity in all the Towns commercial districts, and that's great news for amenities, jobs, and the tax base.

Cooper Surgical is expanding on the north side of town with an addition to their office headquarters and a brand new warehouse and shipping facility across the street.

On the east side of town, RD Scinto has undertaken a brilliant repositioning of one dreary office building into modern office facilities.

On the west side of town, steel is up for Yale's impressive cancer treatment facility on Park Avenue, and I am particularly excited about the Madison Village Retail Center, which will open in the fall. You will be particularly excited to hear, as I was, that the Sitting Duck Tavern will be a signature tenant of the plaza.

On the south side of Town, Westfield Trumbull is poised to begin their Phase 2 expansion and our mall has undergone a complete transformation that has attracted some of the finest retail and restaurants in America.

These are just a few highlights of the growth we have shepherded to town, and there is more great news when you consider existing tenants all over town who are expanding. It's in all quadrants of town and across all sectors. This is the direction we want to be headed in and it demonstrates that high-quality development services can make a measurable difference in attracting high-quality economic development. I heard the call from the people of Trumbull six years ago and my team has responded – now you're seeing the results.

But while we have had tremendous success on the economic development front, there remains one challenge - - Trumbull Center. A protracted legal battle over control and ownership of the plaza for the last several years has made our residents and small businesses casualties of the dispute. But I want to speak candidly to the people of Trumbull about this dilemma.

There are some things that government can do that we have done. Currently, the Town is working on a plan to improve cell service in the center - - which will improve the business environment as well as public safety. My administration is actively working with our regional planning agency to extend the Pequonnock River Trail through the center - - which will increase pedestrian traffic and new patrons to the businesses in Trumbull Center. This will also make the center more attractive to prospective businesses. Regional planning is also working with Town officials to secure funding to completely rehabilitate the visitors center located at the entrance to the trail in close proximity to the center.

Unfortunately, there are certain things government cannot do. We cannot dictate investment decisions of private property owners. We cannot negotiate lease terms and we cannot secure a Whole Foods or Trader Joe's merely by popular demand. Believe me, I wish we could.

I firmly believe that you cannot cure a problem unless you provide a proper diagnosis. Toward that end, my administration has commissioned a study of rental rates for all commercial properties in the Town. If private commercial land owners in Town are charging outrageous rents that deny businesses the opportunity to invest and grow, then it needs to be called to the light of day.

On the positive side of what we are creating with retail development, the Long Hill Green represents the best opportunity to create a new Town Center that will give the residents of Trumbull the downtown they deserve. A 7,200 square foot retail center in the Long Hill Green Marketplace is under construction with half the tenant space already leased. The property formerly housing Luigi's will undergo a comprehensive revitalization this spring and will open this fall. In fact, we estimate 3 million in private investment on the development horizon at Long Hill Green, and the Town is responding in kind by planning a complete facelift, making it a dynamic space for community events. I expect additional commercial redevelopment in this area over the course of the next five years. Competition in the commercial retail market forces all stakeholders to raise their standards and deliver.

When private owners, brokers and investors work in concert with town officials, we can bring wonderful new development to town, and the examples I have cited all across our community prove that we have. I extend my sincere gratitude to the business who have chosen to locate, grow and invest in this great town.

From the onset of my address today, you heard me talk about reform. Reform is defined as making change in something in order to improve it. What we do today is important, but what we leave behind is even more important. I take no obligation more seriously.

Throughout the last five and a half years when we have pursued reform, we have been guided by the principle of making something better than how we found it.

When our WPCA mismanaged taxpayer money and violated the public trust, we took immediate action and brought reform.

When senior citizens were left to fend for themselves during a massive hurricane, we knew it was essential to bring reform to Stern Village and we did, working to make it a model for public senior housing.

When our Board of Education Facilities Department needed a complete overhaul, our Board of Education hired a reformer like Mark Deming to get it done and he has done a tremendous job.

When our Emergency Medical Services were in dire straits, we took the problem head on. Today, our emergency medical service is a statewide model, earning the Governor's Award for Excellence in 2014. We have improved call response time and increased call coverage. This year, their budget is less than the year before, reducing the cost to every Trumbull taxpayer.

Two years ago, I met an elderly man at Councilman Joe Pifko's home who had suffered a fatal heart attack. He was brought back to life within minutes because of our quick response. In that moment I saw the fruits of reform.

And this year, I am committed to bringing meaningful reform to our parks and recreation systems. In 2011, the voters of Trumbull approved a consolidation of the Parks and Recreation Commission and the re-organization plan I have proposed completes this consolidation. This plan is consistent with the systems and staffing models followed by virtually every other community of similar size. The salaries I have proposed for these positions are lower than the norm. On this point let me be very clear - - political posturing in an election year will not prevent us from doing what needs to be done for the betterment of our citizens.

Thousands of Trumbull families use our recreation programs and park system. The leadership of virtually every sports organization and system user have said that this re-organization is necessary and long overdue.

Just like the WPCA, Stern Village, School Facilities and EMS, there are deficiencies that need to be addressed. This administration does not ignore problems. We solve them.

We need to properly report and account for revenues and expenditures. We must increase the program offerings we provide to our residents, young and old. We must make this department self-sustaining so there will be no impact to the Trumbull taxpayer. We must have equity and fairness in how we make available our public fields and facilities.

Independent studies have concluded that quality parks and recreation programs improve the tax base, increase property values and generate money that is spent in the local economy. Quality programming provides places for health and well-being that are accessible for all people, especially those with disabilities. Access to these opportunities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and to reduced juvenile delinquency. I would rather have a student participating in an after school recreational program with his or her peers than being exposed to the dangers of what lies on the internet or social media.

My friend Bill Sherlach is in the audience today. Our counseling center is named for his late wife, Mary. Mary dedicated her life's work to being a school psychologist that helped children in need. Thanks to the help of our legislators, we have recently upgraded the Mary Sherlach Counseling Center and in this budget provide additional funding for counselors. This hits close to home for all of us - - mental wellness has never been more important than at this moment in our history. As Dr. Cialfi often reminds us, it's about prevention before intervention. I believe quality recreational programming administered by a qualified professional supports and assists a community in advancing this important ideal.

As we talk about meeting the needs of our children, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about our senior citizens. A few years ago, we doubled senior citizen tax relief, to allow our most needy seniors the ability to age in place and stay in the community they helped to build. By 2019, more than 25% of the Town's population will be over the age of 65. To build upon our senior citizen tax relief, I am confident that the Town Council will act in short order to approve the volunteer senior tax relief credit my administration has proposed. We can enlist the talents and skills of our Trumbull retirees while giving them meaningful tax relief at the same time.

And the time has come to finally give our seniors the community center they deserve. My administration welcomes the opportunity to work with the building committee and the Trumbull Town Council in making this vision a reality.

Larry Heimann wanted very much to build a senior community center before he left office but didn't have the opportunity. And just as I began this State of the Town address invoking his memory, I will conclude this State of the Town address in honoring his legacy, as I present the Clarence F. Heimann Leadership Award.

Named after our former first selectman, this award is given each year at the State of the Town, to a Trumbull resident, Trumbull employee or Trumbull official who demonstrates leadership and self-sacrifice. I am going to ask Chief Lombardo and Dr. Cialfi to come forward and assist me in the presentation of these awards.

Although not surprised, I am continually amazed at the numerous talents of Trumbull's students. The first recipient of this award is a junior at Trumbull High School and I believe him to be the youngest recipient of this award. This recipient volunteers in our community, is an honor student at Trumbull High School, is a member of the THS Thespian Society, a Cadet Sergeant with the Trumbull Police Explorers Post 659 and belongs to Connecticut Yankee Council Pomperaug District Troop 67, recently achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

For his Eagle Scout project this young man secured over 20 participating departments from Trumbull and the State of Connecticut that provide public safety. The groups included; police, fire, senior services, American Red Cross, United Illuminating and a helicopter. The culmination of this young man's efforts came together this past October at a highly attend Public Safety Day to educate the public at the Westfield Trumbull Mall. It is because of this young man's leadership and commitment to duty that Ian Maloney is the first recipient of this year's Clarence Heimann Leadership Award.

According to recent statistics approximately 120 people die every day from prescription drug or heroin overdoses, while 6,700 people are treated daily in hospitals. Connecticut Ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the US for overdose deaths. Accidental heroin deaths in Connecticut have increased 48% from 2012 – 2013. The typical user is a young suburban male between the ages of 18-25. The Town of Trumbull is not immune to this problem and over the past year the Town of Trumbull has lost three of its young residents to a heroin or drug overdose.

This past January a mother of one of these victims reached out to Police Chief Michael Lombardo and myself to discuss the heroin epidemic in our state and

community to raise awareness and asked us what we can do locally. Rather than being consumed by grief, this mother was dedicated to helping others and preventing future overdoses. She has been a voice and an advocate in Hartford and is a co-founder of the Connecticut Heroin Task Force for State of Connecticut

Going forward, all Trumbull first responders will be carrying and trained in how to administer NARCAN. NARCAN is a drug that has been proven to immediately reverse the side effects of an overdose and save lives. The second thing we will do is create the First Selectman's Drug Prevention Task Force. This Drug Prevention Task Force will consist of members from the Trumbull Police Department, Trumbull Public Schools, the Mary Sherlach Counseling Center and members from our Trumbull Community. Because of this mother's commitment to create awareness of drug usage and drug prevention in the State of Connecticut and the Town of Trumbull, I am pleased to award the Clarence F. Heimann Leadership Award to Theresa Doonan.

Finally, Trumbull has had many challenges with respect to traffic safety and the responsiveness of state officials in addressing these concerns. 75% of Trumbull's legislative delegation is in their first term, yet our legislative delegation has been bipartisan and effective. They have checked their party affiliations at the door to get things done for Trumbull. As a result of their efforts, our traffic concerns are being addressed and problems are being solved. Because of their commitment to the Town of Trumbull I would like to present the Clarence F. Heimann Award to State Senator Marilyn Moore; State Representative Laura Devlin; State Representative Ben McGorty; and State Representative David Rutigliano.

These fine people represent the very best and that is why I am so optimistic about the future of Trumbull, because I believe in the people of Trumbull. We can have pride in our past and faith in our future because our cause is noble and our purpose is clear. The remarkable people we honor here today are a reflection of the thousands of people who live here. So many of our citizens embody the fundamental principles of leadership and self-sacrifice. From the strength of our municipal workforce, to our strong fiscal condition, to our superb schools and quality of life, we will move forward together with strength, conviction and reform to make sure the reality of Trumbull lives up to the promise of Trumbull.

Thank you very much.