

Timothy M. Herbst
State of the Town Address
Marisa's Ristorante
March 27, 2013

Good Afternoon. Thank you, Bruce, for that kind introduction.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Trumbull Chamber of Commerce, the Bridgeport Regional Business Council and the Aquarion Water Company for hosting this event this afternoon.

Every day I am both honored and humbled to lead the best in town in America. During my time as First Selectman, I have had the opportunity to meet many incredible people who have truly exemplified courage and self-sacrifice.

We have many dignitaries and officials in attendance this afternoon, but there are two in particular I would like to recognize.

In the face of unspeakable tragedy, one first selectwoman and one school superintendent have led their community through its darkest hour and they have led with a firm resolve. They have not only consoled a community, but they have consoled a nation. The people of Trumbull stand with the people of Newtown. Ladies and gentlemen please join me in welcoming the First Selectwoman of the Town of Newtown, Patricia Llodra and the Superintendent of Schools for Newtown, Janet Robinson.

A Town is only as strong as the people who work for it -- those dedicated municipal employees who give their best every day to ensure that our residents receive the services that they expect and deserve. At this time I would like to introduce some of our newest additions to Trumbull's government. Please join me in welcoming Harriet Polansky, who has stepped in as the Executive Director of the Trumbull Housing Authority, Coleen Figliuzzi, our new Director of Nursing and Joseph Laucella our new Chief of the Emergency Medical Service.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate our school superintendent, Ralph Iassogna, on a distinguished 45 year career in education, the last 14 years as our school superintendent. Ralph, we wish you well in your retirement.

I would also like to congratulate our new school superintendent, Dr. Gary Cialfi, who will be assuming his new duties on July 1, 2013. Dr. Cialfi, I am looking forward to working with you to move our school system forward in a positive direction.

Today marks the fourth time I have come before you to report on the state of our Town. And over these last four years we have seen incredible challenge. We have seen firsthand the worst economic calamity since the Great Depression. We have seen unparalleled weather emergencies in the wake of Irene, Alfred, Sandy and Nemo, and just twelve miles away from here, all of us have been shaken by unspeakable tragedy that has hit so close to home.

Yes, we have been challenged many ways. But in the face of this challenge, I am pleased to report that the State of our Town is strong and growing stronger every day.

Our community is made stronger by our commitment to the three pillars – strong finances, strong schools and a strong quality of life. My administration has been devoted to making the pillars stronger and making our community better.

Over the last four years, working together, we have turned budget deficits into budget surpluses. These last four years we have stabilized the tax rate. The average tax increase over a four year period has been less than two percent and because of increased commercial growth, last year, for the first time since 1983, residential property taxpayers saw an average tax decrease of 3.5 percent.

This allows families and businesses to plan their futures with confidence. A modest and predictable tax rate encourages investment in our community, both personal and real.

For years, the Town's pension fund has represented an ailment that has affected our fiscal health. Four years ago, we made a commitment to deal with this problem, both short term and long term. Today, we are beginning to see the positive results of that action. In the budget that I have proposed for the 2013-2014 fiscal year, for the first time in a generation, the town has reached the adequate levels of proper annual pension funding. Our assets are growing and for the first time in recent history our net cash flows are positive. This has been the short term solution.

Long term, we have negotiated multiple employee labor agreements that have reduced the number of town employees that are pension eligible, with new employees participating in a defined contribution plan. This will reduce our unfunded pension liability.

While we have been committed to stabilizing the tax rate for every Trumbull resident we have also taken the necessary action to protect our most cherished residents, by doubling senior citizen tax relief. Now, the people who helped build this town can plan their futures with confidence knowing that they will be able to afford to stay in Trumbull.

As a result of the actions we have taken on the financial front, Fitch, Moody's and S&P have lauded the town's financial management.

Our residents have made an investment in Trumbull and their investment has resulted in a strong financial position for our Town. But the best rate of return we have received on that investment is in our future.

The quality of the Trumbull Public School System is important to me. It is personal to me. I am proud to say I am the son of public educators and a product of the Trumbull Public School System. And the state of the Trumbull Public School System is strong. Trumbull students are consistently out performing students in other Fairfield County communities that are spending more per pupil. Our graduation rate is 99.4%, with 94% of our graduates pursuing higher education. Trumbull kids are getting into some of the finest colleges and universities in the nation. Our two middle schools have been cited this year by the Connecticut State Department

of Education as schools of distinction and our elementary schools have been recently cited for exemplary CMT scores.

This does not happen without a strong foundation and over the course of the last four years I have spoken at great length about the importance of early childhood intervention and technology in the classroom. I firmly believe that the foundation that we provide to Trumbull's children in their early, formative years will propel them forward as they graduate, pursue higher education and enter a global economy.

Four years ago we told the people of Trumbull we would make full day kindergarten a top priority and technology in the classrooms a core focus. This afternoon I am pleased to report that we are well on our way.

Trumbull now has one of the strongest early childhood education models in the state of Connecticut. Our teachers and building principals are already telling us that student achievement is improving at incredible levels because of the investment we made in full day kindergarten last year. Without question, the foundation is strong but how do we make it stronger?

The Gibson Report that studied system efficiencies between our Town and our Board of Education revealed that our classroom technology is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of our students. Next month the Board of Finance will be presented with a technology package that repurposes our school computer labs, puts more laptops and IPADS directly in the classroom and equips a greater number of our classrooms with SMART boards. These types of investments directly and positively impact children and I am asking the Board of Finance to approve this important technology initiative. Learning begins with strong engagement and technology is a powerful tool to drive engagement for the way today's students learn.

We can pursue efficiencies and protect the Trumbull taxpayer without compromising the delivery of education. There are huge drivers in the education budget that do not directly relate to teaching and learning. This is where our collective focus should be to improve efficiencies and reduce costs. This year we have begun that process.

Health care is one of the biggest drivers in our Town budget. This year, working together, the Town and the Board of Education will work to implement a self-insurance model that will save Trumbull taxpayers 1.8 million dollars while maintaining quality health care for our employees. And while we must be committed to working together within our community, we cannot shy away from working together with other communities.

The time has come for Trumbull and other communities in the region to pursue system efficiencies in the areas of custodial maintenance and facilities management of municipal and public school buildings. Mayor Harkins, First Selectman Vavrek and I are committed to working with the Greater Bridgeport Regional Council to explore, examine and hopefully implement a regional model.

While we are on the topic of schools and school facilities, I would be remiss if I did not talk about the biggest issue on everyone's mind - - school security. December 14, 2012 will be day

that none of us will forget. We must be ready for the most unthinkable and give our Police Department and emergency first responders the adequate resources that they need to properly protect our residents, our children and our schools.

Next month the Board of Finance will act on a school security initiative designed to improve and enhance our security measures at all of our public school buildings. The security plan that has been recommended anticipates every variable and ensures rapid response. Parents should know that the plan we have spent the last few months developing placing the safety of their children first and foremost.

Besides the security upgrades we will make to our school buildings, under the leadership of Chief Kiely, we have reformed our emergency management systems to allow for better synergy between our service departments - - police, fire and EMS. The budget I am proposing puts more police officers on the street, aggressively increases funding for police training and calls for the replacement of critical life-saving equipment and vehicles.

We have also begun the process of reforming our emergency medical services to better serve and protect our residents in the event of a medical emergency and this has started with the hiring of our first chief of the EMS service. Under the leadership of Chief Laucella, our goal is to increase our volunteer corps, reduce the number of calls we outsource, improve call response time and build an EMS force that serves as a model that other communities will follow.

The safety and well-being of our residents directly impacts our quality of life and to enhance and improve that quality of life requires a shared commitment to enhancing our community's distinctiveness.

And we pursue that shared commitment by pursuing an economic development policy that encourages competition in the marketplace while valuing and incorporating our most valuable natural resources. We also want every resident and every business to have confidence in our infrastructure.

Trumbull has 11,000 residential properties. Up until July of last year, the oversight of zoning and blight enforcement rested on one part time employee – an impossible task. Now, we have a full-time enforcement official. In just nine months, he has addressed 160 blight and zoning violation cases. This is especially important in cases where blighted conditions represent a threat to community safety.

We have also pursued a comprehensive capital plan that includes an aggressive road repaving program. By the end of this year, over 60 roads in Trumbull will have been repaved in a two year period, representing 10% of all roadways in the Town.

On the economic development front, at the peak of the 2012 construction season, there were 68 separate commercial or industrial construction projects underway in the Town of Trumbull. These projects represent enormous private investment, occurring during a period when virtually no other communities in Connecticut are experiencing commensurate activity.

2013 promises to be equally exciting, with projects like Digital Realty's 70,000 square foot expansion in the Trumbull Corporate Park becoming fully operational in June, and new projects

beginning like the 90,000 square foot Norma F. Pfriem Cancer Outpatient Center on Park Avenue, a first of its kind, state of the art facility in Connecticut.

We are seeing consistent, positive Grand List growth and the recent business tax incentive plan that was passed last year will encourage additional business investment.

And right now, our downtown, Trumbull Center, is undergoing the most expansive and expensive redevelopment we have ever seen in the Town's history. Millions of dollars are being invested in redevelopment and we are beginning to see the fruits of that investment. As announced earlier this year, a new restaurant will be opening in the spring. The owners of Trumbull Center hope to have a new grocery store announced by the summer.

I know that residents are concerned about the future of Trumbull Center and are eager and anxious to see the new retailers move in. Large scale redevelopment does not happen overnight. It takes time, especially when the redevelopment requires millions of dollars of capital investment, comes in phases and attempts to improve facilities while allowing businesses to continue to operate simultaneously.

As the owners of Trumbull Center invest in the rehabilitation of their property, our Economic and Community Development Department has applied for and secured in excess of \$1 million dollars to extend the Pequonnock River Trail through Trumbull Center, as part of a collaborative planning process. The Town has secured this funding with the intent of creating a river walk at the rear of the property. Doing so will encourage more pedestrian traffic and more citizens to come to Trumbull Center, further enhancing the marketability of the center to potential tenants that are looking to invest in Trumbull.

The Department of Transportation and the Greater Bridgeport Regional Council recognize the monumental significance of integrating the Town's greatest natural resource with an area of Town that serves as a linchpin for our commerce.

We will also make Trumbull Center better by diversifying the locations that provide our residents with the retail options they expect. When you diversify the areas of Town that provide retail options, you encourage competition in the marketplace which in turn forces every commercial retailer to raise the bar in the delivery of commercial venues for our residents. The proof is on the Route 111 corridor, where we will soon open a new commercial center that will include two new restaurants.

As the Planning and Zoning Commission updates the Plan of Conservation and Development, the expectation is that certain strategic areas of the Town not previously open to commercial investment will be re-zoned, maintaining the economic development momentum we have enjoyed.

We want every developer, small business owner and restaurateur to be drawn to Trumbull because it is not only business friendly, but allows business to be conducted in a cost effective manner.

Like many communities, Trumbull has dealt with ever-rising costs and continual uncertainty related to the handling of our waste stream and the expense of our electricity. These costs have always had a major impact on our Town budget, and I know that businesses in Trumbull have dealt with the same expenses and uncertainty for a very long time. Trumbull pays a high price for the disposal of its solid waste, which directly impacts our taxpayers. And, Connecticut pays the highest utility rates of any state in the continental United States. What business will want to come to Trumbull or Connecticut for that matter, if their costs far exceed their profit? So, at the local level, we must come up with creative solutions to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings while utilizing our solid waste in a manner that can and will reduce our utility costs. Under my administration, Trumbull has assumed a leadership role in the region in addressing these issues.

The plan we are currently working on, if successful, will allow us to utilize our waste stream in a manner that will lower and stabilize our energy costs for a decade or more. By breaking away from CRRA and forming a broad coalition of communities in Fairfield County, we believe we can negotiate a better rate, which in turn will reduce costs for Trumbull, our residents, and our businesses.

The plan will not only provide significant savings to the Town, but has the potential to create savings for Trumbull businesses as well, in the form of reduced property tax burdens and more affordable electricity. This will encourage businesses to come to Trumbull and invest here for the long term. Additionally- the plan will allow us to surpass the commitments we've made to green energy purchases, several years ahead of schedule. I believe environmental stewardship can always be compatible with sensible economics if you are tirelessly committed to both. In the coming months, you will not only hear more about the plan, but I believe you'll be given the option to participate in it.

The three pillars are made strong by the people of this great community and that is why I am optimistic about the future of Trumbull - - because I believe in the people of Trumbull. Our Town is made strong by those residents who demonstrate courage and self-sacrifice by their work, their deeds and their sacrifice.

At this time it is my honor to present the Clarence Heimann Leadership Award. Named after our former first selectman, this award is given each year to a Trumbull resident or Trumbull employee who demonstrates leadership and self-sacrifice.

The first two recipients have been by my side in the emergency operations center during the worst weather related emergencies that have ever plagued our Town. They have provided exemplary leadership to our police department and our public works department. On December 14, 2012, both of these men, without hesitation, stepped forward to offer mutual aid from their respective departments to the people of Newtown. I have worked closely with both of these men and I can tell the people of Trumbull that when faced with crisis and emergency, we are in good hands. Today, they accept this award on behalf of all of the men and women that comprise their departments. Please join me in congratulating the first two recipients of the Clarence Heimann Leadership Award, our Chief of Police, Thomas Kiely and our Public Works Director, John Marsilio.

The third recipient of the Clarence Heimann Leadership Award is a Trumbull resident who exemplifies all the character traits you want in a public employee - - honesty, dedication and a strong work ethic. As the Director of Facilities for the Newtown Board of Education, the next recipient spent his Christmas holiday working to move Sandy Hook Elementary School to the Town of Monroe. As his family gathered for the holidays, he worked around the clock to ensure that when the teachers and children of Sandy Hook Elementary School started school again, they would return to a safe and secure environment. His leadership in moving the school so quickly helped families and victims heal. Please join me in congratulating our next recipient, Gino Faiella.

The next two recipients are long time Trumbull residents who put both of their children through the Trumbull Public School System. One of those recipients gave her life to the cause of education as a school psychologist. On December 14, 2012, she courageously gave her life in defense of the children of Sandy Hook Elementary School. This spring, we will name the Trumbull Counseling Center in her honor.

Her husband now continues her work. Mary's Fund will be dedicated to continuing the work of providing mental health services to children and teens. As we seek to support them, their unwavering commitment to helping others serves as an example to us all. It is my honor to posthumously award this year's Clarence Heimann Leadership Award to Mary Sherlach and also to her husband, Bill Sherlach.

These recipients represent the best of Trumbull and we move forward today confident in our cause, with pride in our past and faith in our future.

Thank you.