

JOINT STATEMENT FROM FIRST SELECTMAN VAVREK AND FIRST SELECTMAN HERBST ON THE DISSOLUTION OF THE TRUMBULL-MONROE HEALTH DISTRICT

June 30, 2015 - - Today, First Selectman Steve Vavrek of Monroe and First Selectman Timothy M. Herbst of Trumbull made the following statement regarding the dissolution of the Trumbull Monroe Health District:

“The job of town government is to provide quality services to residents and businesses and to do so within the confines of a budget they can afford, with openness and transparency,” said First Selectman Herbst.

“It is disappointing for both our towns that the Health District has opted to turn what should have been a smooth transition, into a contentious battle. Taxpayers should have faith that those in government service will do the right thing, and be good stewards of the people’s money and their trust,” added First Selectman Vavrek.

“We have worked through our towns attorneys to negotiate an agreement that would have provided both a smooth transition and restore faith in the taxpayers that town resources wouldn’t be wasted,” said Herbst. “Unfortunately, the District has rejected that offer, but we are hoping that a reconsideration by the full board, conducted in the light of day, will yield a resolution and a smooth transition.”

“When government agencies conduct secret meetings behind closed doors, and without public input, nobody wins,” said Vavrek. “We are hoping that the District board and staff will realize what’s at stake and make the right decision for the people they serve.”

In December of 2014, the Town of Trumbull and the Town of Monroe made individual decisions to withdraw from the Trumbull Monroe Health District. Since the beginning of 2015, both communities have consistently and deliberately attempted to work toward a reasonable resolution that would have accorded both communities with ample assets and equipment to properly re-establish their own health departments and meet the health needs of their communities.

Beginning in January, both towns have diligently sought to negotiate a transition that would divide files and records, properties, revenues and proceeds, vehicles, inspection and testing equipment, and office equipment fairly and equitably. Sadly, both communities have been met with roadblocks and resistance in obtaining necessary financial information from the health district.

Simultaneously, the Towns of Trumbull and Monroe have hired health directors and other staff to guarantee that the needs of their respective communities are fully met when their offices open in the new fiscal year. On June 24, 2015, the Towns of Trumbull and Monroe were notified by way of a letter from Health District attorney, Brian Smith, that the District board previously voted to provide a \$32,000 severance payment to the outgoing Director, Patrice Sulik, as well as granting her a Chevy Trailblazer, as part of her severance package. The Towns of Trumbull and Monroe were further advised that if they did not agree to these conditions, the staff of the district was directed to liquidate assets - - assets that have been paid for by Trumbull and Monroe taxpayers.

On June 26, 2015, as a result of several discussions with Trumbull and Monroe to effectuate the close out process and guarantee a seamless changeover, Trumbull Town Attorney Dennis Kokenos and Monroe Town Attorney John Fracassini, sent a proposed agreement to Smith. On that same

afternoon (June 26, 2015), District Director Patrice Sulik, and three board members, scheduled a special meeting to be held on Sunday, June 28, 2015. At that meeting, a decision was made to reject the transition agreement and proceed to sell district assets.

“No government agency should hold a public meeting on a Sunday afternoon, with less than two days’ notice, and without a quorum of the membership” said Herbst. “It’s not the way government agencies should be run, especially when significant taxpayer resources are at stake.”

“In essence, three people made this decision,” added Vavrek. “In the interest of openness and transparency, we are asking the entire health district to reconvene, and consider the terms of the transition agreement laid out by our towns.”

“This situation sadly underscores why both towns opted to dissolve the joint Health District and offer these services individually. Government agencies, whether local or regional, must recognize that they ultimately answer to the people. To disregard those that depend upon these services is a disservice to those that have funded the health district for many years,” said Herbst.