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MINUTES
REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING
STATE OF THE TOWN MEETING
DECEMBER 11, 2017

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular State of the Town Meeting was called to order at 8:05 p.m. by Donna Rajczewski, Town Clerk, who announced that District III and District V had each held a caucus this evening. District III has 2 new members, and District V has 4 new members. Both districts are now full. She welcomed and congratulated the following new members:

DISTRICT III
Scott Zimmerman
Peter Marousek

DISTRICT V
David Martin
Lindsay Kelly
Britton Costa
Frederick Herbert

The Moderator, Seth Morton, Assumed the Chair.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

** **THE AGENDA WAS ACCEPTED BY UNIVERSAL CONSENT.**

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 13, 2017 ANNUAL MEETING

The following correction was made: the spelling of "acclamation" was corrected throughout the document.

** **THE MINUTES WERE ACCEPTED BY UNIVERSAL CONSENT.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nina Miller, District II, said that there would be a district-wide district meeting on January 7, 2018 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the Louise Berry Meeting Room at the Darien Library.

STATE OF THE TOWN REPORTS

CHAIR, PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

John Sini, Chairman, made a Power Point presentation and read his report (attached).

CHAIR, BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tara Ochman, Chairman, read her report (attached).

CHAIR, BOARD OF FINANCE

Jon Zagrodzky, Chairman, read his report (attached).

FIRST SELECTMAN

First Selectman Jayme Stevenson read her report (attached).

** **UPON MOTION MADE AND SECONDED FROM THE FLOOR, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO ADJOURN AT 9:15 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco Blois
Telesco Secretarial Services

State of the Town of Darien Address
John Sini, Jr. -- Planning and Zoning, Chairman
December 11, 2017

[Slide #1 – Title]

Good evening Mister Moderator, Members of the RTM, town officials, and fellow community members here and watching via TV-79. I am John Sini. I will be serving as the Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission for my second year and this will be my fifth year on the Commission.

Like last year, I plan to share what is in store for Darien's future from a planning, development, and conservation perspective.

[Slide #1A – Champions]

Before I get to business, I would like to give a big shout-out to Coach Rob Trifone's Blue Wave Football squad.

After some late season challenges, this group of young men showed resilience, character, skill, and grit under scrutiny and staged a dramatic win over a favored Greenwich team to claim the Class Double-L State Title during Saturday's snow storm.

This is the football team's first three-peat state title in school history – a difficult accomplishment by any measure for our boys and one that has certainly delivered our community much pride.

[Slide #2 – 2018 Schedule]

I want to start my formal remarks by giving you an update on our Commission's membership.

After generously serving for eight years, Eric Voigt decided not to seek a third term on P&Z. I would like to offer Eric special thanks for his of dedicated service to our town. I will certainly miss his humor, wit and guidance during the years we served together.

Steve Olvany, the Commission's Vice Chair, Jim Rand, Liz Riva, and I were reelected to the Commission in November – Steve and Jim for four-year terms and Liz and I for two year terms. We also welcomed Jennifer Leahy as our

newest member who was elected for a four-year term. Kevin Cunningham, the longest serving member of the Commission, is now our Secretary. I deeply appreciate all of their assistance in running our meetings smoothly, efficiently, and effectively. I couldn't do it without them.

The Commission's meeting schedule continued to be quite active in 2017 -- logging 31 meetings. We also have scheduled another 31 meetings for 2018.

[Slide #3 – 2017 Actions]

As you can see from the slide, the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed 124 applications in 2017 -- 120 permits were granted among 80 different commercial, residential and municipal projects. Only four applications were withdrawn and none were denied. This is a testament to our staff's ability to communicate and guide applicants in the right direction before going before the Commission with a formal application.

Of course, P&Z is not the only land use board in town. The Environmental Protection Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Architectural Review Board were also busy, conducting a total of over 30 meetings in 2017. Their efforts are critically important for conservation and development activities throughout Darien and I thank all the volunteer members of the other land use boards for their time.

Our community is very fortunate to have such a dedicated team of Planning and Zoning staffers under the direction of Jeremy Ginsberg. Without their steadfast efforts planning and organizing our public meetings, site visits, applications, and conducting informal planning meetings with applicants, the four land use boards would struggle to fulfill their duties.

I would also like to thank Fred Doneit, the town's Senior Planner. He has been an integral addition to our staff and created tonight's power point presentation.

Much of the development progress that you are currently witnessing throughout town is related to the Commission's activity over the last 12 to 24 months.

I would like to remind everyone how privileged Darien is given so much interest for development projects within its borders. Many towns throughout our economically and fiscally challenged state would be tickled to see just one of the several construction sites we all are watching today in our town.

I would like to quickly review several of the key projects and site approvals of 2017 to remind you of the exciting activity in town.

[Slide #4 – Noroton Heights Shopping Center]

The site plan for the Noroton Heights Shopping Center, better well known as Palmers, was approved in May. This mixed-use project will bring 59 one and two bedroom units and 25,000 square feet of retail/personal service space and 8,700 square feet of restaurant space on the first floor within its four-acre property. The groundbreaking is expected in the spring of 2018.

For all the Palmers Market customers out there, don't worry -- there will be no change to the existing building as part of the project.

[Slide #5 – The Commons]

Just to the east, Federal Realty's redevelopment project, known as The Commons at Noroton Heights, was approved in September. This property will house 122 one and two-bedroom units and add an additional 30,000 square feet of retail/personal service and restaurant space. Its ground breaking is also expected this upcoming spring.

The zoning regulation changes that allowed these two projects to be brought forth were passed about ten years ago and the commission made modest revisions to the regulations in 2016.

The significant increase in Noroton Height's Business District's housing supply should attract empty-nesters, young professionals and Metro-North Commuters to the area. The commission worked closely with the developers to build flood mitigation systems and other drainage improvements.

Likewise, we worked closely with multiple traffic experts to ensure traffic and pedestrian improvements -- specifically on Noroton Avenue and Heights and Hollow Tree Ridge Roads. So, not only will these projects bring beautiful pedestrian friendly developments with several open spaces, they will also deliver much needed infrastructure improvements to the area.

[Slide #6 – Transitioning Downtown]

It's no secret that traditional "bricks and mortar" retailers are facing challenges throughout the U.S. as consumers look to Amazon and other online retailers for their shopping needs. Darien is no different. This has led to challenges in filling our vacant store fronts and a change in the type of commercial business applications we are seeing in our downtown and other business districts throughout our community.

Over the last couple years, the Commission has seen a greater demand for personal service venues which have included educational uses, various types of exercise studios and even new concepts like infrared saunas and salt caves.

The commission is committed to work closely with our commercial landlords to foster vibrant business districts throughout town, while ensuring that these businesses do not overwhelm our parking supply.

[Slide #7 --1950 & 1958 Boston Post Road]

One of the redevelopment areas I am most impressed with is at 1950 and 1958 Boston Post Road near St. John's Church in the Noroton section of town. By early next year, the two mixed-use, two-story buildings should be fully occupied.

The tenants for 1950 include Johnny's & Company, which is moving from the Heights, a new casual eatery called Roost and Danny's cycles, which is already open for business. By early next year, we will know more about the business tenant for 1958 Post Road.

[Slide 8 -- Shake Shack]

I would be remiss not to mention that, despite some concern related to our sign regulations, in 2016 the Zoning Board of Appeals ultimately approved a zoning variances for Shake Shack's signs, and the restaurant was up and running by early 2017. I will talk more about the Commission's efforts related to amendments of our zoning regulations a bit later.

[Slide #9 – Baywater]

While we approved zoning regulation changes to allow for substantial redevelopment of the Corbin Subarea – the block between Corbin Drive and Exit 11 -- the Commission is now reviewing further map and regulations amendments that would allow for the inclusion of the northeast side of Corbin Drive. This would allow for more comprehensive, yet a less intense development zone than we originally approved.

We hope to see a more detailed site plan application for the subarea by late spring.

[Slide #10 – DHS Lights]

In one of my proudest moments in the eight years that I have served as a public official, the Commission approved permanent lights at the Darien High School Stadium Field in January. This was a 22-year community effort in the making.

The state of the art LED lights and sound system were installed before the fall season began.

While our 8th grade Darien Junior Football League players were the first to use the lights for evening practice, on September 8th the varsity field hockey team was the first team to host a home game under the lights.

Since then thousands of community members have had the opportunity to come together numerous times under the lights for football, soccer and field hockey games – to spread their Blue Wave Pride and more importantly, foster our community-wide spirit. Needless to say, we shall never all travel to McMahon to host a home game again!

The town deeply appreciates the many volunteers and donors tied the Darien Lights Brigade, an offshoot of the Darien Athletic Foundation, Dr. Brenner and the Board of Education for their efforts in making this dream happen for our kids and community.

The DAF is of Darien's most successful private-public partnerships in its history and there's still much more projects to come. The Commission looks forward to seeing the application for next project in the works – an on-campus cross country running path so that we can reduce the number of student runners training on busy roads like Middlesex, Hanson and Hollow Tree Ridge Roads.

[Slide #11 – Mather Homestead]

Another treasured property in town is the Mather Homestead. Through the generosity of private donors and descendants of the Mather family, this national and protected town landmark will now be preserved and utilized for education purposes. The special permit allows it to host events and gatherings to enjoy the property and share its history for generations to come. This coupled with the Land Trust's meadows has made this northeastern corner of town very, very special.

I would also like to quickly call out the efforts of the Friends of Gorham's Pond, who have completed dredging the upper pond area and have received a zoning approval to dredge the lower pond in order to make it a more vibrant

environmental resource.

[Slide #12 – Parklands Redevelopment]

Any of you that have accessed Selleck's Woods over the past few months have seen the transformation of one of the buildings in the Parklands Office Park to a 105 unit assisted living and memory care facility. Like retail, suburban office buildings outside of downtown business districts are facing challenges for tenant demand. Things like telecommuting and denser, shared offices are negatively impacting the demand for suburban office space.

The Commission recently approved a regulation amendment that would allow daycare and preschool facilities in suitable first floor office space. The Commission will continue closely monitor the office park situation in Darien.

[Slide #13 – HTRR Storage Property]

The construction of the Hollow Tree Ridge Road storage facility is well underway, and we are expecting its completion by next summer. The project will also bring 16 privately managed commuter parking spaces for the train station.

[Slide #14 – DPW Garage]

On the municipal front, the Department of Public Works project is making great progress following the Commission's zoning and site plan approvals. It is scheduled to be completed by summer.

[Slide #15 – Ox Ridge Field]

In late 2016, the Commission issued a positive mandatory referral report for the acquisition of the Ox Ridge property, which has traditionally been an open field but used for numerous activities through the decades. The Commission's findings cited that the purchase and use of the land for various passive and active open space activities was consistent with the 2016 Town Plan of Conservation and Development.

I want to share a bit of history with you about this property: I bet many of you don't know that New Canaan General Loren Keyes and Darien Skipper Lindley Hubbard's troops clashed on the grounds of Ox Ridge Hunt Club on November 9, 1928. This was no ordinary battle, as it was the beginning of Connecticut high

school football's most celebrated rivalry, since labeled the Turkey Bowl. You will be happy to learn that Darien won the game by a healthy margin of 26-6 over New Canaan.

The Commission is currently awaiting a special permit application by the Board of Selectmen, which will outline usage of the town's Ox Ridge property. It is important to note that the Board of Selectman will be making the policy decision related to the site's use.

The Planning and Zoning Commission's role in this process is to ensure that any proposed uses are consistent with our special permit regulations within a residential zone, which will be covered during a public hearing. I'm sure Jayme will talk more about this later this evening.

[Slide #16 – Hunt Club]

And, just a few weeks ago, the Commission approved the redevelopment and transformation of the Ox Ridge Hunt Club to the Ox Ridge Riding & Racquet Club, which will allow the club to upgrade its equestrian facilities and add squash courts. The owners expect these improvements to make the club more financially sustainable for decades to come.

[Slide #17 -- Knobel Hill]

The town's first Active Senior Development, Knobel Hill at Settler's Trail is an example of adaptive reuse of the Knobel Brothers store property for residential housing. As you can see, it was an innovative way to transform a rundown property into a beautiful development serving demand for senior housing in Darien.

[Slide #18 – Atria]

Sticking with the senior housing theme, a modest expansion of Atria's Senior Living Facility yielded six additional units at the site.

[Slide #19 – Kensett]

The 14-unit expansion of the age-targeted Kensett development is well underway and completion is expected by the end of summer 2017.

What should not be lost in all these larger residential zoning projects is that Darien's Inclusionary Zoning regulation requires the creation of affordable

housing units among the market rate units, so that Darien does not slip backwards in its ratio for the state's affordable housing bogey.

Between the several new private developments and the redevelopment of Old Town Hall Homes, the Commission's approvals over the last couple years should yield over 50 new affordable units in Darien. Our local regulations and policy decisions are clearly working on this front.

[Slide #20 – Grand List Chart]

Unfortunately, our commission can't affect what I call the "state's fiscal dumpster fire," which is making Connecticut far less attractive to live in given its high tax rates and low economic growth versus other states. Connecticut's fiscal ills are unnaturally influencing Darien by propelling both older and/or typically wealthier residents and businesses to move to lower-tax regions of our country. Jon and Jayme will shed more light on this ongoing budget challenge.

Redevelopment or what my fellow Commission members call "suburban renewal," continues to help increase the size of Darien's grand list. As this chart shows, the grand list has appreciated to just over $8.5 billion today. This kind of value creation is extremely important in offsetting some of our state's fiscal woes. The Planning and Zoning Commission is committed to maintaining Darien's economic vibrancy to the best of our ability using the zoning and regulation tools we have at our disposal.

[Slide #21 – TPCD cover]

The updated Town Plan of Conservation & Development was completed in June 2016 and is now about 18 months old. The Commission has already referred to the plan for several mandatory referrals and regulation changes.

With the help of consultant, Glen Chalder, the Commission's efforts to implement the plan are proceeding in three areas of our regulations: (1) Signage; (2) Residential building coverage and bulk; and (3) Our Business Zones. We are also considering implementing the Municipal Use zone for several of our town facilities to offer more zoning flexibility in the future.

Another issue the Commission has started to explore is broadening the age restrictions for senior living from 62 years-and-over to 55 years-and-over, so that we may offer additional housing options for our empty nesters and retiring baby-boomers. Please stay tuned on this front.

[Slide #22– Thank You/Contact Info]

One of the reasons that I decided to pursue my second term on P&Z is that I deeply appreciate working with the three other people that are presenting to you this evening. Jayme, Jon, Tara I would like to thank you for all your hard work and collaborative efforts on your respective boards. It would be a much less enjoyable volunteer role if I didn't have the opportunity to work closely with people like you and I look forward to working together in 2018!

Steve Olvany and I will continue to foster communication between our Commission and the Planning, Zoning and Housing Committee – which is the committee we both served on during our years on the RTM.

I want to leave you with the message that I'm always open to discussion. Our Commission can't run effectively without community feedback. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us with comments, concerns, or even criticism – although it would also be awfully nice to field an "atta-boy" once in a while as well!

Thank you again for your time this evening. I wish you all, Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, and a wonderful, healthy, and prosperous 2018!

Good Evening Mr. Moderator, members of the RTM, town officials, and the community of Darien, those here and those watching on channel 79.

The Board of Education is charged with that most important of missions; to educate and guide our children so they become contributing members of our society.

It carries the enormous weight of delivering educational needs inside of fiscally responsible budgets.

This is an all-important balance to strike. As we look back on how we have managed this past year, and we look to the future, it is fair to conclude the Board of Education and the Town of Darien are dedicated to our children and their opportunities in the future

We have much to be proud of, 95.8% of our students chose to pursue higher education after graduating Darien High School. For those students who chose another route, we are able to offer guidance and counseling to help meet their needs.

We continue to recognize the important need to reach our students on many levels, recognizing diversity in talents and interests.

Our Arts department has received accolades across disciplines; there were 17 nominations for HALO awards for our theatre students, multiple choral and instrumental awards, and visual arts students were selected to show at The Bruce Museum.

Darien High School earned a charter to open a chapter of the Mu Alpha Theta Mathematics National Honor Society.

Our Model Congress and UN clubs continue to achieve with student wins at Yale just last week, and our DECA business club has grown to one of our largest groups, with 11 students placing in the top 3 of their categories last year.

Our students along with the support of the administration and their teachers once again competed at a college level competition to design a car powered by fuel cell, travelled to China, participated in days of coding, and secured hundreds of internships high school seniors.

Our Athletics program is first class, with FCIAC, and State Championships to celebrate.

The Board of Education also held its first night games under the lights this fall -- including our first playoff game-- creating not only a student-centered activity but a community gathering place for all to enjoy. We, once again, thank all the private and public organizations who helped us make this a reality.

Our enrollment this year is approximately 4800 students. We continue to monitor our numbers using several models to anticipate growth.

The Darien school system has always attracted families to our Town. New developments are expected to have beneficial ripple effects throughout the community, but do make it hard to predict growth patterns with certainty. The District appreciates that it will need to adjust and address the associated educational and facility needs as these developments become a reality.

Enrollment numbers naturally drive school capacity conversations, coupled with building longevity concerns.

Our administration has become adept at managing class sections and neighborhood schools.

They have converted rooms, changed out locker pods and recognized the importance of learning as it relates to class size. Still, we have school facilities in need of attention.

The Board will continue the important conversations regarding major projects and projections. We recognize the desire to plan in a timely fashion to capture optimal bonding opportunities.

When we come to the Town for support on capital initiatives we will do so with sound thought and theory. We look forward to engaging you in a thoughtful dialogue.

Thoughtful conversations also continue around enrollment growth, and its impact on educational sectors; examining the associated costs is a responsibility we take very seriously.

Often times the cost of special education is discussed. Across Fairfield County Special Education identification percentages are rising above historical averages. Serving children with identified needs is federally mandated, and state funding formulas have become uncertain at best. The Board recognizes the obligation of these mandates and is committed to serving all children of Darien.

We have and will continue to find the best way to manage costs while always putting the needs of our students first.

Finding ways to best meet student's need is directly seen in the town decision to invest in Department Chairs this year. The District recognized that there was a need to ensure consistency in the delivery of curriculum across disciplines, as well as sequential curriculum planning throughout grades 6-12.

This may seem a simple task, but the level of coordination to manage these departments with our population of teachers and students is immense. We have been pleased with the reports made to the Board so far, and look forward to continuing updates throughout the year.

Lastly one of the great success of this year, the Fitch Academy, offers us all a powerful lesson going forward.

The Academy began as an idea from our administration. They identified students in need, and created a plan to address the concern. The Board understood the vision and the potential to support our children in a new, and important way.

We pushed to make sure that we could create a program that was effectual and practical. The Darien Library, stepped up to provide a home for the Academy in its pilot year.

It was backed by the Board of Finance, and, you, the RTM, in your vote to support the budget.

Much has been written about Fitch and many formal updates have been provided, but no feedback has been more valuable then to hear from those most affected by our decision to try something different: "You gave me my child back." "The benefit these children are receiving will be life altering as they navigate their journey through high school", "My child feels valued and safe."

There should be nothing more gratifying to anyone in public service than to hear this type of feedback; and it happened because we all took a leap of faith together. We reasoned, we questioned, we debated; but in the end, we worked together to make it happen.

With the uncertainty in Hartford, a call for solutions is paramount. By staying open to new ideas, we can break stale paradigms and find new ways to enhance our children's education while capitalizing on wise fiscal opportunities.

By respecting roles and remaining within the processes outlined in the Town Charter and by State law we can create success that is healthy, constructive, and collaborative

Personally, I would like to thank, the School Administration under the leadership of Dr. Daniel Brenner; and, my fellow board members; Betsy Hagerty-Ross, Katie Stein, Duke Dineen, Michael Burke, Christa McNamara, and Jill McCammon. We welcome Debra Ritchie and Dennis Maroney as the newest members of our Board.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Michael Harman, our former chairman for everything he has done for our Board and our Town.

There is an amazing amount of work that goes into being on the Board of Education. It is incredibly time consuming and rife with difficult decisions but, that is also what makes it the best kind of work.

The Board and the Administration are dedicated to providing an excellent public education to the school children of Darien.

We believe that schools exist for children and we look for your support as we continue chart this course forward.

On behalf of the Darien Board of Education, we wish you and your families very happy holiday season, and a healthy New Year.

STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS
DARIEN BOARD OF FINANCE
JON ZAGRODZKY, CHAIRMAN
MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2017

Good evening. My name is Jon Zagrodzky, and I'm chairman of the Board of Finance. Once again, I'm glad to be here tonight and have a chance to offer some thoughts, on town finances and maybe a few other things.

I'd like to start by referencing the materials that you have in front of you today. As we have done for a long time, these pages represent our five-year financial forecast for the Town. The output you see is result of some assumptions we made about various elements in the budget.

Exhibit B is the first slide. For those of you watching on TV, these materials are available on the Town website. In terms of headlines, expenditures in the current fiscal year total about $145 million, of which $31 million is the Town, about 22%, $96 million is the Board of Education, about 66%, $11 million is debt service, about 8% and $6 million is capital spending for which we don't borrow, about 4%. Interestingly, we were able to pull up records from 1990 and look at these same percentages: back then, Town spending as a percentage of the total was higher – 32%, while education was lower at 60%. And that's reflective of the fact that education spending has grown more quickly over time.

Exhibit B shows the current year budget versus the actual numbers from the prior year. The first number I'll point out is the total operating budget, which is the Board of Selectmen budget excluding debt service. It shows a $2.2 million jump, or 7.7%. This may seem alarming, and a much higher percentage than we talked about at budget time last spring. The reason for the big number is that the Board of Selectmen actuals for last year came in lower than what we forecast: a surplus in contingency, a renegotiated waste hauling contract, and some police vacancies and retirements – all in all, this meant lower than expected costs. If you compare our budget to the forecast at the time, the projected increase was just 2.2%.

Anyway, I promise that we didn't mean to raise spending by the percentage shown! It's just a math problem. The other numbers you'll notice are the lower debt service figures for the next two years. We actually planned this in case we faced some costs from the State, so this gives us a little breathing room for these two years.

The rest of the columns on this page are the five-year forecast. This forecast reflects some things we know, like service on existing debt, some things we think we can reasonably predict, like maintenance costs, and some things about which we have no clue, like state reimbursement for excess special education costs. I'm not going to go through Exhibits C, D

and E, but I hope the takeaway from all this is that our financial situation is relatively stable, as it has been since at least 1990.

I would like to spend a minute on the last page, though, which is new. This page is a scenario page. What you're seeing on top is the baseline forecast, which draws its numbers from the earlier exhibits. The bottom half of the page, however, shows an alternate view with two key changes. The first assumes that the state's reimbursement for excess special education costs, about $2.5 million for next year, is reduced to zero. The second is that the state begins requiring us to contribute to teacher pensions, and the number they talked about was $4.5 million. The bottom line is that instead of a roughly 3% estimated mill rate increase for next year, we'd have a nearly 8% increase. And that's assuming they don't impose more teacher pension costs – remember, the $4.5 million is only one-third of the annual contribution they're supposed to make on our behalf.

You will recall that we talked about all this last year. We even thought about assuming no special education reimbursement in this year's budget. But the budget the state finally approved lacked the costly changes that we worried about. As a result, I am not having to stand here and talk about interim tax increases or mid-year budget cuts, which is great.

However, this is not the time to relax. The State's financial problems did not go away. Yes, there were clear improvements passed as part of the budget, like requiring legislative approval for union contracts, but the central problems of inadequate funding for generous benefits combined with ongoing revenue shortfalls have yet to be solved. In a way, I am not surprised. In my presentation to you last year, I talked about "sustained unsustainability" and how the state seems to keep going along despite financial problems of cartoon-like proportions. I also said that "I suspect I'll report next year that all this unsustainability has been sustained for yet another year." I am happy to say that at least in this one case, my prediction has come true. And I am modestly confident in affirming this same prediction for next year.

Another point I made, however, is that all this will continue, until it can't, and when it can't, all bets are off. In the meantime, we owe it to taxpayers to maintain tight local discipline on all spending while this gets sorted out. And don't forget, local taxes are about to get more expensive given the elimination of state and local tax deductibility in the recently-passed federal tax reform legislation in Washington.

What does this mean in terms of guidance for budgets this year? Without stealing her thunder, Jayme is asking Town departments to target a zero percent increase, which we should applaud. I don't think Dr. Brenner is going quite that low, but I know he is focused on it.

I think aggressively low percentage targets are fine, and I look forward to seeing what both Boards suggest in their draft budgets. I also recognize that we have union contracts, facilities to maintain, and lots of other costs that aren't static – I get it. That said, my further guidance for your consideration would be as follows:

First, now is not the time to start programs or initiatives. It's not to say that the answer should be no in all cases, but we should scrutinize any plans to start something new, whatever it is.

Second, all the professionals who lead the schools and Town departments are striving for efficiency, but I would invite both Boards to challenge these professionals to go further. What's the most radical thing they can propose to deliver services more efficiently? Even crazy ideas should be on the table. Maybe there should be a prize.

My last bit of budget guidance pertains to headcount. As I pointed out in my address to you two years ago, the long-term cost of hiring someone is shockingly high. You'll recall that just two union employees with salaries in the mid-$50s and employed over 20 years cost as much as the $7 million Shuffle project financed over the same period. So, we will ask both Boards to analyze their headcounts and be prepared to defend any net increases for next year. I would like to see headcount budgets as well as dollar budgets. And don't replace headcount with consultants – I'm watching for that, too.

Let's talk now a little about town debt and capital spending. There's great news, good news and no news. First, the great news.

Moody's conducted a ratings review in August, and they had a lot of questions, particularly around the potential impact of state financial dysfunction on Darien's finances. Despite the state problems, Moody's sees that Darien is a well-managed town with adequate resources. As a result, they affirmed Darien's Aaa rating and stable outlook. This means that we'll continue to have the best terms when borrowing, something many other towns no longer have. We have some work to do to maintain this rating, like ensuring that our Fund Balance reserves remain adequate, but we are in good shape.

Next, the good news. We started this fiscal year with about $62 million in debt, the sum of both town and school projects. This is down from a high of just under $100 million in 2012, when the high school debt was bigger, and we had just finished Tokeneke. This year, we've added a little over $12 million in debt for the Ox Ridge land acquisition and the public works garage, but with scheduled principal pay down, we'll be at about $65 million next June. Assuming no major school projects, we'd be down below $50 million in about three years – pretty good.

And now, for no news. Senator McLaughlin and I were talking the other day, and we both remarked at how long it seems that we have all been talking about plans for major school capital projects – at least five years. I know there have been studies, meetings and discussions, but after all this time, we still do not have a complete proposal to consider. In other words, no news. I think we would all benefit from coming to an agreement as to where we need to make major investments in our schools. Low interest rates won't last forever, and our debt load is approaching a point where we are in a position to make needed – and smart - investments. When we get to this point, there's a lot we can do to ensure good communication and financial planning, so I look forward to talking about this.

As an aside, I'm personally not supportive of considering other major capital projects, like those envisioned in the very expensive-sounding Parks Master Plan, until we have potential school investments sorted out.

Finally, the best for last. The best thing about Darien is the people, and I'd like to mention a few. First, my gratitude goes to two outstanding members who have left our Board, Bruce Orr and Dave Lopiano. Bruce has been part of Darien's government since it was invented, and I suspect he'll be involved in something else soon. Dave is life-long resident of this area and a great family friend. Both contributed in valuable ways to our deliberations and will be missed. At the same time, a warm welcome is due for Rob Cardone and Paul Hendrickson. Rob more recently served in this august body as a member of F&B, so he brings great experience to the table. Paul served previously as a Selectman and Board of Finance member, and most recently as the Director of Finance for the Ridgefield public schools.

Darien works because talented people like these gentlemen, and like all the terrific individuals in this room, step up to make a difference – and for that, I am truly grateful.

That's all I have to say. Thank you for indulging me. Happy Holidays. JZ

Town of Darien
Five-Year Financial Forecast 2019-2023
Assumptions

Note - This is a forecast. It is not the adopted budget. It is provided for financial planning purposes only.

1. The general rate of increase is expected to be approximately 3.0% over the term of the forecast. Personnel costs are projected to increase at a rate of 2.5%, based on current contracts. Medical insurance is forecast with an annual increase of 10.5% for the Town and 8.50%-9.00% for the Board of Education. As of June 30, 2017 there were about 143 Town employees and 802 Board of Education full time equivalent employees.

2. Medical insurance rates are projected to increase from 8.50% to 10.50% over the period of this forecast. Liability insurance costs are projected to increase 5% per year.

3. The forecast assumes the continuation of Special Education reimbursement and does not include a teacher's pension contribution. The combined impact of these items is approximately $7 million.

4. The Grand List is projected to have modest growth over the period covered by this forecast. The estimated Adjusted Grand List assumes a property tax collection rate of 98.9%. Two significant redevelopment projects have been approved with work expected to begin the coming months. A third significant project has been proposed but is not yet approved. The Grand List impact of these projects is not currently known and is therefore not reflected in the forecast. Additional increases in the Grand List will decrease taxes at the rate of .02 mills per $10,000,000 of increased assessed value.

5. Sewer bonds issued will be repaid by an assessment levied on the benefiting property owners. The Sewer Operating and Sewer Assessment Funds transfer money to the General Fund each year, shown in the forecast as income item labeled Transfers-In, representing repayment of debt that was incurred by the General Fund on their behalf.

6. The forecast reflects $25 million in bonding for anticipated school projects, final financing of previously approved projects and $8 million for potential Town projects. The forecast assumes these bonds will be 20 year bonds with level principal payments, issued at a rate of 2.90-3.40%.

7. General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance may be adjusted from year to year to help level tax rate increases or to maintain reserves in accordance with the fund balance policy adopted by the Board of Finance. This forecast projects that the Fund Balance will remain level throughout the five-year period.

8. Post-retirement benefit plan contributions are expected to increase 3.0% per year.

9. For purposes of this forecast, projected capital expenditures are based on the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education capital forecasts dated February 2017.

Exhibit B

Town of Darien, Connecticut
Five Year Financial Forecast
Expenditures & Transfers (000's)

Expenditures & Transfers	Actual 15/16	Actual 16/17	Budget 17/18	Projections 18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Board of Selectmen Operating	$ 23,653	$ 23,498	$ 25,410	$ 26,046	$ 26,697	$ 27,364	$ 28,048	$ 28,749
Town Energy Exp.	623	604	651	700	752	808	869	934
Pension & Police Retiree Medical	1,761	1,100	1,107	1,140	1,174	1,209	1,245	1,283
Town Prop & Liability Insurance	470	515	562	590	620	651	683	717
Town Workers' Comp	680	700	704	722	740	758	777	796
Town Medical & Dental (note 2)	2,894	2,718	2,937	3,246	3,587	3,963	4,379	4,839
Total Operating	30,081	29,137	31,371	32,443	33,569	34,754	36,003	37,320
% increase		-3.1%	7.7%	3.4%	3.5%	3.5%	3.6%	3.7%
Debt Service (notes 5 & 6)								
Existing: Schools	7,025	7,683	7,194	6,431	5,797	5,306	4,115	3,700
Town	3,140	3,059	3,727	3,631	4,046	3,925	4,655	3,728
Sewers	686	804	818	700	705	778	305	281
New: new debt				-	250	1,590	2,945	2,887
Total Debt Service	10,851	11,546	11,739	10,762	10,798	11,599	12,020	10,596
% increase		6.4%	1.7%	-8.3%	0.3%	7.4%	3.6%	-11.9%
Total Board of Selectmen	40,932	40,683	43,110	43,205	44,366	46,353	48,023	47,915
% increase		-0.6%	6.0%	0.2%	2.7%	4.5%	3.6%	-0.2%
Board of Education Operating	82,018	84,998	86,949	89,294	92,110	95,024	98,089	101,271
Utilities	1,937	1,725	1,831	1,857	1,950	2,047	2,150	2,257
Workmans Comp	305	348	349	366	384	404	424	445
Health Insurances	10,672	10,840	10,670	11,577	12,561	13,629	14,856	16,193
Revenue (note 3)	(4,395)	(4,547)	(3,924)	(4,141)	(4,166)	(4,192)	(4,218)	(4,245)
Teacher's Pension (note 3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Board of Education	90,537	93,363	95,875	98,953	102,839	106,912	111,301	115,921
% increase		3.1%	2.7%	3.2%	3.9%	4.0%	4.1%	4.2%
Transfers to RFCNRE /Other Capital	4,961	6,067	6,319	7,516	3,914	7,150	8,476	6,170
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$ 136,430**	**$ 140,113**	**$ 145,304**	**$ 149,674**	**$ 151,120**	**$ 160,415**	**$ 167,799**	**$ 170,006**
		2.7%	3.7%	3.0%	1.0%	6.2%	4.6%	1.3%
Estimated Outstanding Bonded Debt as of 06/30	71,566 **15/16**	62,212 **16/17**	65,026 **17/18**	59,354 **18/19**	66,759 **19/20**	73,529 **20/21**	63,616 **21/22**	54,848 **22/23**

Exhibit C

Town of Darien, Connecticut
Five Year Financial Forecast
Revenues & Transfers
(000's)

Revenues & Transfers In	Actual 16/17	Budget 17/18	Projections 18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Licenses & Permits	3,427	4,264	3,590	3,590	3,590	3,590	3,590
Intergovernmental	979	220	25	25	25	25	25
Charges for Services	1,853	1,728	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750
Fines & Forfeits	47	31	31	31	31	31	31
Investment Income	193	125	125	125	125	125	125
Miscellaneous	475	399	399	399	399	399	399
Transfers In	663	639	639	639	612	612	612
Appropriated Fund Balance	-	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100
Total Revenue & Transfers In	7,638	8,506	7,658	7,658	7,631	7,631	7,631
Prior Years' Property Taxes	446	360	360	360	360	360	360
Interest and Lien Fees	400	300	300	300	300	300	300
Supplemental Taxes	-	640	640	640	640	640	640
Telecommunications Property Tax	62	58	58	58	58	58	58
Total Supplemental Taxes	908	1,358	1,358	1,358	1,358	1,358	1,358
Total Income Before Current Property Taxes	8,546	9,864	9,016	9,016	8,989	8,989	8,989
Current Property Taxes	131,482	135,440	140,657	142,104	151,426	158,810	161,016
TOTAL INCOME	$ 140,028	$ 145,304	$ 149,674	$ 151,120	$ 160,415	$ 167,799	$ 170,006
Y/E Unassigned Fund Balance	18,427	18,437	18,437	18,437	18,437	18,437	18,437
as % of Revenues	13.16%	12.69%	12.32%	12.20%	11.49%	10.99%	10.84%
Adjusted Grand List (note 4)	8,313,281	8,379,204	8,425,714	8,475,164	8,524,614	8,574,064	8,623,514
Mill Rate	15.77	16.16	16.69	16.77	17.76	18.52	18.67
% Increase		2.47%	3.30%	0.44%	5.94%	4.27%	0.81%
Restorative Taxes Required			$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Restorative Tax Mill Rate			-	-	-	-	-

Exhibit D

Town of Darien, Connecticut
Five Year Financial Forecast
Board of Selectmen and Board of Education
Capital Projects Schedule
(000's)

	Budget Fiscal 2018	Fiscal 2019	Fiscal 2020	Fiscal 2021	Fiscal 2022	Fiscal 2023	Total
Per Selectmen's Six Year Projection	3,456	3,402	2,549	2,542	2,736	2,795	17,480
Board of Ed Projection	3,255	4,616	1,867	5,110	6,241	3,876	24,965
(Deferred)/Reinstated Projects	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Capital Projects	6,711	8,017	4,416	7,652	8,978	6,671	42,444
Capital Costs Applied for Funding:							
Reserve Fund for Capital Exps.	6,711	8,017	4,416	7,652	8,978	6,671	42,444
Total	6,711	8,017	4,416	7,652	8,978	6,671	42,444

Note: The BOE estimate is from the 17-18 budget request. The Selectmen's estimate is from the Selectmen's 6 year plan.

Exhibit E

Town of Darien, Connecticut
Five Year Financial Forecast
Capital & Non-Recurring Expenditure Fund
(000's)

	Budget Fiscal 2018	Fiscal 2019	Fiscal 2020	Fiscal 2021	Fiscal 2022	Fiscal 2023
Beginning Available Capital Balance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Added (A)	6,319	7,516	3,914	7,150	8,476	6,170
Other Transfer	-	-	-	-	-	-
Interest Income	30	30	30	30	30	30
Inter Governmental	337	447	447	447	447	447
Bond Proceeds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	25	25	25	25	25	25
Ending Available Capital Balance	6,711	8,017	4,416	7,652	8,978	6,671
Appropriations	(6,711)	(8,017)	(4,416)	(7,652)	(8,978)	(6,671)
Undesignated Balance	-	-	-	-	-	-

(A) Transfer from the General Fund.

Five Year Forecast Summary

Baseline

	Actual	Budget	Projections				
	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Total Expenditures	$ 140,113	$ 145,304	$ 149,674	$ 151,120	$ 160,415	$ 167,799	$ 170,006
Expenditures % Change		3.70%	3.01%	0.97%	6.15%	4.60%	1.31%
Current Property Taxes	$ 131,482	$ 135,440	$ 140,657	$ 142,104	$ 151,426	$ 158,810	$ 161,016
Restorative Taxes	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Base Mill rate	15.77	16.16	16.69	16.77	17.76	18.52	18.67
Restorative Mill Rate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Mill Rate	15.77	16.16	16.69	16.77	17.76	18.52	18.67
Mill Rate % Change		2.47%	3.30%	0.44%	5.94%	4.27%	0.81%
Year-End Uanssigned Fund Balance	$ 18,427	$ 18,437	$ 18,437	$ 18,437	$ 18,437	$ 18,437	$ 18,437
Unassigned Fund Balance as % of Revenues	13.16%	12.69%	12.32%	12.20%	11.49%	10.99%	10.84%
Existing Outstanding Debt	$ 62,212	$ 65,026	$ 56,194	$ 47,257	$ 38,510	$ 30,405	$ 23,445
New Debt Outstanding			$ 3,160	$ 19,502	$ 35,019	$ 33,211	$ 31,403
Total Debt Outstanding	$ 62,212	$ 65,026	$ 59,354	$ 66,759	$ 73,529	$ 63,616	$ 54,848

Alternate

	Actual	Budget	Projections				
	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Total Expenditures	$ 140,113	$ 145,304	$ 156,758	$ 158,341	$ 167,778	$ 175,309	$ 177,665
Expenditures % Change		3.70%	7.88%	1.01%	5.96%	4.49%	1.34%
Current Property Taxes	$ 131,482	$ 135,440	$ 147,741	$ 149,325	$ 158,789	$ 166,319	$ 168,676
Restorative Taxes	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Base Mill rate	15.77	16.16	17.53	17.62	18.63	19.40	19.56
Restorative Mill Rate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Mill Rate	15.77	16.16	17.53	17.62	18.63	19.40	19.56
Mill Rate % Change		2.47%	8.51%	0.48%	5.72%	4.14%	0.84%
Year-End Uanssigned Fund Balance	$ 18,159	$ 19,269	$ 19,269	$ 19,269	$ 19,269	$ 19,269	$ 19,269
Unassigned Fund Balance as % of Revenues	12.97%	13.26%	12.29%	12.17%	11.48%	10.99%	10.85%
Existing Outstanding Debt	$ 62,212	$ 65,026	$ 56,194	$ 47,257	$ 38,510	$ 30,405	$ 23,445
New Debt Outstanding			$ 3,160	$ 19,502	$ 35,019	$ 33,211	$ 31,403
Total Debt Outstanding	$ 62,212	$ 65,026	$ 59,354	$ 66,759	$ 73,529	$ 63,616	$ 54,848

First Selectman's 2017 State of the Town Remarks

Jayme J. Stevenson
12/11/17

Good evening Mr. Moderator, members of the RTM and fellow colleagues and volunteers. A special welcome to newly-elected RTM, Board and Commission members including the Board of Selectmen's newest member, Pam Sparkman. I congratulate Pam on her successful election as well as my fellow board members, Susan Marks, Kip Koons and Marc Thorne, on their re-elections. We thank Rob Richards for his time on our board and we mourn the loss of our friend and colleague Kip Hall. The Board of Selectmen is looking forward to working with all our town colleagues in 2018 on policies, projects and a budget that will ensure Darien remains one of the best communities in Connecticut to live in, raise a family, educate your children, and run a business.

Thankfully, Darien's local election wasn't diminished by the negative political influences that continue to plague our country. Community engagement on local, state and national issues is, in my opinion, at an all-time high. This is a very good thing and foundational to a successful democracy. But essential in our engagements is respect, an open mind, compassion, empathy and the ability to take personal responsibility for our words and actions. As parents and educators we work hard to instill these building blocks of strong character in our children and we should strive to role-model these qualities in all of our interactions.

Tonight is my 7th State of the Town address as your First Selectman and I'm grateful for the strong community support this past November. I always enjoy this annual opportunity to reflect on our notable accomplishments. It's exciting to hear from Chairmen Sini and Ochman about the many positive developments moving through our land use boards and happening in our schools. Chairman Zagrodzky articulated well the fiscal challenges ahead and how we can work together to sustain the elements that define us as a premier community. Setting aside the State of the State for a moment, I want to share what our town boards, community partners and exceptional staff have accomplished but first and foremost, congratulations to our Blue Wave Football team on winning, in a nail biter, the Class LL State Championship against the Greenwich Cardinals. Hard fought and well deserved. Congratulations to all!

Darien continues to benefit greatly from important public/private partnerships. We are deeply grateful for The Depot and The Community Fund's work supporting positive youth development, the Darien Land Trust's land investment partnership, the Darien Athletic Foundation's investments in our athletics facilities, the Darien Foundation's investments in our emergency response equipment and our schools, the Tree Conservancy's town-wide tree planting program, At Home in Darien's Senior advocacy work and Person-to-Person's support of our most vulnerable residents. A newly constituted Monuments and Ceremonies Cemetery Committee has taken on stewardship of our historic cemeteries. On behalf of our town fathers and mothers, I want to express my gratitude for the yeoman's work by Sharon Kells and her committee. The Darien Public Library is a critical partner in hosting our community on a wide variety of important topics like the January 2017 "Health Needs Assessment" series, Emergency Preparedness Forum and, of course, as the inaugural-year home of the Fitch Academy. We are so fortunate to have a resource the caliber of the Darien Public Library, made possible with a substantive taxpayer grant and very generous contributions from the Library Friends. Our work with the Friends of Gorham's Pond continues on the permitting to dredge our two sedimentation basins. On a holiday note, the Friends of Gorham's Pond invites our community to come together for the first annual Christmas Carol sing on Ring's End Bridge on Sunday, December 17th at 5:00pm.

Public health and safety are the primary functions of government. This has been a rebuilding year for the Darien Police Department administration and staff. Chief Ray Osborne was promoted by the Police Commission after Chief Duane Lovello's retirement and along with Captains Anderson and Lawlor, they bring extraordinary professional experience to their leadership roles. A host of other promotions sets the stage for many years of exceptional policing. As they say in sports...we have a deep bench - which will serve our town very well. Darien Police continue to strengthen their relationships with the youth in our community. This year, DPD instituted a Juvenile Review Board to help some of our kids avoid the judicial system.

We're blessed to have 3 well-staffed volunteer fire departments who continue to be integral members of our emergency response team. We greatly appreciate their willingness to work with our finance department this year on a new bill-paying system.

Our in-town Stamford EMS Paramedics are serving the town and Post 53 very well. With legislative support, paramedics can play an important role in delivering medical services traditionally reserved for doctors and nurses which could help offset the high cost of healthcare. At my request, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) has added this initiative to their 2018 legislative agenda.

The opioid crisis demands sustained action by healthcare providers and government at all levels. With over 1000 deaths per year in Connecticut and 65,000 nationwide - nearly double the deaths from car accidents and more than were lost in the Vietnam War - the opioid crisis is the #1 public health emergency of our time. No town or city has been spared from the impacts of this crisis and we must dedicate whatever resources are necessary to save lives.

In the second half of 2017, we implemented the OpenGov cloud-based performance management and transparency software tool. Staff is being trained and we expect to utilize some of its capabilities during the coming budget cycle. Our goal is to have full implementation by the 2019-20 budget cycle. Finance Director Jenn Charnesky and Town Administrator Kate Buch deserve tremendous credit for championing OpenGov for Darien. It's noteworthy that Darien is a statewide leader in this initiative. Our great hope is that the Board of Education will see the value in this tool and jump on board in 2018. OpenGov implementation is the beginning of a more comprehensive technology plan for our town to drive efficiencies and enhanced customer service. Online permitting, a renovated website, use of social media and an expansion of our QSend software platform across departments are just the beginning. You can now follow TownofDarienCT on Twitter and Facebook!

2017 was also the year for planning and infrastructure projects. The Public Works Garage renovation is moving forward on time and on budget. This project is setting a new standard of accountability for town capital building projects. A new Parks Master Plan is almost complete and our community will soon be able to more fully enjoy our newly acquired land at Ox Ridge. The very complex Abbey/Intervale drainage project was completed; Aquarion replaced 5400 feet of water main; the state-managed Noroton Heights Platform replacement project is moving along (albeit slowly); Route 1 was repaved and new fog lines were installed creating a "road diet' of sorts along the corridor. To help improve pedestrian safety, the Local Traffic Authority and State of CT approved new dynamic speed signs, crosswalks and 'slow school' markings at Hindley School, new pedestrian signaling has been approved for the Hecker/Post and Noroton Ave/Post intersections and a recommendation for a new traffic signal at Thorndal/Post has been submitted to CTDOT for review.

In spring 2018, a new sidewalk will be installed from Old Kings Highway South under the I-95 overpass on Tokeneke Road. The Board of Selectmen understands that pedestrian safety is a top priority for our residents and we remain committed to this effort and

ask that our colleagues on the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Finance also commit to this priority. As we begin our commercial development renaissance, let's lean forward to create the pedestrian-friendly town we all desire.

An overheight warning system is in construction at the intersections of the Post Road, West Ave and Tokeneke Road. In partnership with WestCOG and the State of CT, design for an improved Norton & West Ave. intersection is underway and the Noroton Heights Access Study is nearing completion. Repairs are in progress on the Old Kings Highway North Bridge and the Norton River Bridge on Route 1 will be fully reconstructed beginning in 2018. The long-anticipated gas expansion project should begin in 2018 as the commercial developments you heard about from Chairman Sini move forward.

Though not traditionally considered "municipal infrastructure", I'd like to acknowledge our exceptional staff. We continually ask these incredible people to do more with less, address dynamic regulatory and fiscal situations and to provide excellent "customer service". I'm extremely proud of our staff and all they accomplish on our behalf. Please take a moment to thank them when you have the chance.

My tenure as your First Selectman has given me the opportunity to represent our town beyond our borders. I've had the privilege of serving as Chairman of both Western Connecticut Counsel of Governments and our federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that manages federal transportation funding in our region. Since its inception in 2015, WestCOG has provided tremendous assistance to our town on transportation-related issues, GIS data aggregation and legislative advocacy. There's no doubt that the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and majority leaders want to use COGs for regional service delivery. This would allow the state to move certain expenditures, like social and health services, off the state's balance sheet. Fortunately, the consolidation of local health districts didn't move forward and an analysis of regional tax assessors showed zero potential savings. I'm a strong voice against mandated service sharing but believe cities and towns should be encouraged to voluntarily partner if they can pass on meaningful savings to taxpayers.

I'm also honored to continue to serve on the board of the state's largest municipal advocacy group, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) and their insurance arm, Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA). Having a leadership role in these regional and statewide organizations allows me to represent Darien well beyond our borders on a wide variety of critical issues.

2018 will undoubtedly pose new opportunities and challenges for us. I'm proud of the conservative assumptions we made regarding Education Cost Sharing (ECS) revenue in the 2017-18 budget. This proved to be a very wise decision. After 10 months of state budget chaos, legislators finally passed a budget on Halloween (some irony there) that was immediately out of balance and guaranteed over $3.5 billion dollars of out-year deficits.

As I noted last year...our best defense is a good offense...continuing on our path to fiscal self-sustainability is the best protection against wild swings in state policy and changes in the federal tax code - specifically the possibility of sharing in the cost of teachers' pensions and the potential loss of state and local tax deductions. 2018 is also a revaluation year for Darien. Market conditions will produce new values that may be favorable for some and burdensome for others. We must be mindful of the compounding effect local, state and federal tax changes will have on Darien taxpayers. To that end, Kate Buch, with the support of the Board of Selectmen, has directed town department heads to budget for no increases in their 2018-19 requested budgets. This may be difficult to achieve but it's the right place to start.

I want to thank the RTM for your support of our Blight Ordinance and Veteran's Tax Relief. The Blight Ordinance is working exactly as you intended and is showing very positive results. Supporting modest tax relief for our Veterans is a wonderful, inexpensive way to express our gratitude for their service to our country.

Building on the great work of the Energy and Recycling Advisory Committee, we must continue to support 'sustainability' initiatives that reduce energy use and waste disposal costs. By using fuel cell, solar, geothermal and natural gas technologies, I challenge us to work towards net zero energy consumption for at least one of our town buildings. Water conservation through mandatory 2-days-per-week irrigation is our new normal. Aquarion's data trends show that we are nearing the 1960's drought levels. Lawn irrigation is the single largest draw on our public drinking water supply. I would like to dialogue with the Planning & Zoning Commission to see if there's an opportunity for land use regulations that provide incentives to businesses and homeowners for low impact development. Water conservation is an integral part of the new State Water Plan.

Two final requests tonight…we are looking for enthusiastic volunteers who will help us continue our Memorial Day Parade and Town Fireworks events and we will soon be forming a Bicentennial Committee to plan our celebration honoring the Town's 200 year birthday in 2020! Please email me or call my office to volunteer.

The November 2018 election for new state leadership is critical for Connecticut's and Darien's successful future. Please take the time to learn about the candidates and what they stand for – the status quo or taking those difficult but necessary steps to right the ship.

I wish everyone here and watching from home a joyous holiday season and very happy, healthy 2018!

Thank you.