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Good morning:

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

Being the first selectman of the Town of Trumbull is the opportunity and honor of a lifetime. It is humbling to lead the Town where you were born and raised. When I sought this office in 2009, I recognized that the challenges we would face would be daunting, but I always believed we would see light at the end of the tunnel.

As we meet this morning, I am pleased to report that the Town of Trumbull is positioned to become the community of choice in Fairfield County and Connecticut. It is no coincidence that the Town of Trumbull last year earned accolades from *Family Circle* Magazine. We were ranked as the 7th best Town in the nation to raise a family. Our school system earned a 9 out of 10 for educational excellence. This most recent recognition of our community did not happen by accident. It happened because of our unfaltering commitment towards enhancing the three canons that make a community secure: strong finances, strong schools and a strong quality of life.

Two years ago, when we met, the Town of Trumbull was facing a \$3 million dollar budget shortfall, a pension fund on the brink of insolvency and levels of debt that risked the Town's financial position. It would have been very easy to succumb to the status quo and allow our problems to escalate. We did not succumb to the pressure and together we made a conscious commitment to turn Trumbull around.

This year, I have proposed a budget that maintains core services, makes meaningful investments in public education, in public safety, our pension fund and our infrastructure. And, for the first time since 1983, as a result of a redistributed tax structure, a majority of Trumbull residents will realize a decrease in their residential property taxes.

Today, our fund balance is strong. Through sound financial planning, this year our Town realized a 2 million dollar savings in the refinancing of our debt. At a time when 13 Fairfield County communities were placed on negative watch by financial rating agencies and risked having their bond rating downgraded, all 3 rating agencies affirmed Trumbull's bond rating, citing strong financial health, robust economic development and an aggressive plan to deal with our pension fund.

The plan we have implemented to deal with our pension difficulties has yielded incredible results and our pension fund has improved at remarkable levels. Two years ago, we were only contributing 47% towards our annual pension obligations. We were \$ 2.5 million behind the actuarial recommended levels of funding. If we did not take bold and immediate action, our Town's financial health and our bond rating, would have been compromised. Under the budget I have proposed, I have recommended increasing our annual Town pension contributions another \$700,000, for a total contribution of \$3.7 million, bringing our annual funding level to 83%. We are now \$700,000 dollars away from reaching the yearly funding levels that have been recommended by our actuaries and financial rating agencies.

Increasing our pension funding levels in the annual operating budget has been the solution short term. Long term, to further reduce our unfunded liability, as our collective bargaining agreements are up for renegotiation, we will insist that new hires enter into an employee defined contribution plan. The Town Clerk, Town Treasurer and I have elected to lead by example. The three of us have opted out of the traditional pension plan afforded to Town employees and the three of us will participate in the Town's new defined contribution plan to set an example of fiscal reform for our Town that other new employees can follow. Going forward, all elected and non-union appointed officials will also enroll in the defined contribution plan.

Dealing with the Town's pension is only part of an overall strategy to strengthen the Town's financial position. The amount of debt Trumbull incurred over the last decade was simply too high. We are seeing the effects of this accumulation of debt in this year's budget. On the expense side of our budget ledger we have seen an increase of \$ 1.3 million dollars in debt service to pay for the high school renovation.

My core principles tell me this - - government should spend only that which it can afford. You borrow only what you can afford to pay back. Trumbull is not the Federal Reserve. We do not print money and the taxpayers wallets are not a bottomless pit.

Over the last two years, we have reduced our anticipated debt service by \$9 million dollars. And through a measure approved by the people of Trumbull last November, any capital expenditure in excess of \$15 million will go directly to the voters by way of a referendum.

Let me be very clear. Trumbull's financial health is strong and growing stronger every day. Trumbull has turned the corner and our economic recovery is sustained and real.

If we are to maintain strong property values, it comes with not only strong finances, but also a strong school system. There is no question that these current economic times have tested all of us and for those of us managing municipalities and school districts, we have been faced with the difficult task of maintaining a strong school system in the face of an economic reality that has been profound and long lasting. The defining challenge of our time will be to deliver public education that maintains our competitive edge in a fiscally challenging environment. I believe we can improve an already superb school system in a fiscally responsible and austere manner. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive.

Here is where our collective focus must be - - we must explore a joinder of services between the Town and the Board of Education in non-education related areas without compromising student or taxpayer needs.

Our School Superintendent Ralph Iassogna and I are mutually committed to doing everything we can to produce savings in these areas. And that is why we have appointed a special commission to study system efficiencies between the Town and the Board of Education. Over the next several weeks, this commission will enlist the assistance of qualified experts to study system efficiencies between our Town government and our Board of Education. I want to thank Daniel Shamas, Paul Timpanelli and Joseph Peddle for their willingness to serve on this task force. Let me be clear - - our goal is to find savings in non-education related areas so our administrators and teachers have the resources they need to educate our children and maintain our standing as the school system of choice in the region.

Over the last decade, we have placed an emphasis on making investments in the infrastructure of our schools. We have built a new elementary school, a new pre-school and currently we are in the process of completing a comprehensive renovation of our high school. To maintain our school system's strong position, I firmly believe we must have a renewed and refocused commitment to comprehensive early childhood intervention.

Many of you have seen the green buttons that say, "Education is the Foundation." How is foundation defined? Foundation is defined as "the basis on which a thing stands, is founded, or is supported." My fellow citizens, early childhood intervention is the foundation which fosters a more comprehensive educational experience for children as they mature. Children who participate in comprehensive early childhood education and intervention are more likely than not to have the critical skills which will make them even more prepared as they go through their formative years of education. It is critical that children at an early age learn abstract reasoning, problem solving and communication. These are the skills that are critical to meet the demands of tomorrow's workforce.

And that is why I firmly believe the time is now to implement full day kindergarten in the Town of Trumbull. Full day kindergarten is an investment that will provide prevention, before intervention.

Our kindergarten teachers tell us that the current half day program does not provide sufficient time to implement curriculum, while at the same time developing social and emotional skills for young children. Full day kindergarten allows for greater academic emphasis and reinforcement of social skills and will foster better student preparation for first grade. Trumbull is blessed to have one of the best pre-school facilities in the region, which is currently a full day program. A full day kindergarten program is a natural bridge between our comprehensive pre-school program and first grade. Once full day kindergarten is implemented, Trumbull will have one of the strongest early childhood programs in the State of Connecticut.

Superintendent Iassogna and Dr. Cialfi, along with the Kindergarten Study Committee have worked too hard and come too far. I am grateful to them for their strong leadership and determination on this important issue.

If there was ever an issue that could bridge our political divide, it should be this one. Over the last several months, I have seen five board of education members cross the partisan divide to focus on completing the mission. They have set an example that all of us should follow. They aren't thinking about politics and they certainly aren't thinking about themselves. They are thinking about the children and how to make this important early childhood initiative a reality.

If my late football coach Jerry McDougall were here with us today, he would be telling us that we are on the ten yard line and the two minute warning has sounded. My fellow citizens, it's time to put this one in the end zone and get the job done. If the Town Council adopts the budget I have proposed, I have every confidence that together we can make this important initiative a reality.

Our finances and our school system are only as strong as our quality of life.

Trumbull has one of the largest senior citizen populations of any community in Fairfield County. Over the last few years, many of our seniors have lost their savings and seen virtually no increase in their Social Security. Time and again, I meet Trumbull seniors who will tell me without hesitation the struggles they face in affording to stay in the Town they helped to build. The

Hartford Courant recently reported that Connecticut is the worst state for seniors to retire. The article cited five factors in giving Connecticut this unwelcomed recognition - - fiscal health, property taxes, income taxes, cost of living and climate. Given these harsh realities, and given the fact that our seniors have been hit with a whole host of new tax increases at the state level, the time has come to increase the amount of senior tax relief we provide for our residents at the local level. Under the proposal my administration has submitted to the Town Council, which will be acted upon next week, we will simplify the senior tax relief code, provide an even greater level of senior tax relief for the lowest income earning seniors and increase the qualifying income levels by an additional \$9,000 dollars. This is by far the most aggressive senior tax relief program the Town of Trumbull has seen and I am asking Republicans and Democrats on the Town Council to reach across the aisle and pass this important and meaningful piece of legislation.

Increased pension contributions, increased debt service, contractual obligations, full day kindergarten, additional senior tax relief - - how will we pay for it?

We pay for these services by continuing on the positive track we have seen these last 2 and a half years by moving forward with continued and sustained economic development and Grand List growth. A new medical office building is under construction in Quarry Road. The construction of a new commercial center on Route 111 is close to commencing. Two businesses are expanding in our Corporate Park. The Long Hill Green will realize substantial redevelopment in the next two years. Our Mall continues to welcome new businesses, with the recent opening of LA Fitness last month. A state of the art cancer facility is being proposed for the Park Avenue professional building by Bridgeport Hospital, which will generate an estimated \$700,000 dollars of additional tax revenue for our Town. A new medical office building across from Trumbull Town Hall is close to opening. As other communities see a declining Grand List, we see measureable and sustained growth.

We cannot rest on our laurels. We need to maintain our competitive edge. We need to provide incentives for businesses to come to Trumbull. For the last year, the Economic Development Commission have been hard at work in developing a targeted business tax abatement, geared

towards specific industries making a meaningful investment in our most under-utilized areas of Town. This is a good plan that long term will grow our tax base in a responsible manner. Next month, this plan will go before the Town Council for their consideration. I am asking the Town Council to make passage of this important piece of legislation one of their highest legislative priorities next month.

Targeted business abatements represent a short term solution to part of a long term strategy. The Plan of Conservation and Development represents our best opportunity to create a blueprint for our future that will utilize innovative practices to grow our Town, without compromising the character of our Town.

Last week, we announced the appointment of a new Director of Planning. Next week, we will announce the appointment of our new Director of Economic and Community Development. And next week, with our team in place, we will begin the process of revising and updating our Plan of Conservation and Development. We must examine targeted areas of our Town, most especially our corporate parks, Route 111, Route 25, Trumbull Center, the area around Town Hall, Reservoir Avenue and Lindeman Drive. These areas represent our best opportunity to change Trumbull's economic identity for the better. If this revision is done appropriately, Trumbull can serve as an economic linchpin that connects the tri-state area to the rest of Connecticut. My vision is for Trumbull to be a regional leader that other community's look to as a model.

As we look at ways to stimulate our own identity in the region, we must also look to regional cooperation among our neighbors. There has been a core focus on regionalization over the course of the last few years. Regionalization requires more than cooperation. Regionalization requires honesty and a shared obligation.

Here is how I view regionalization. One community should not reap the benefits of a regionalized model at the expense of the other and one community should not supplant the obligations of another. As we debate the merits of regionalization, we should heed the words of

Henry Ford, who said, “[c]oming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”

There are so many regional approaches we should examine - - regionalized purchasing, regionalizing pooling of municipal healthcare, regionalized emergency dispatch centers, regional recycling programs and yes, a regionalized sewer authority.

Our contract with the City of Bridgeport will expire in June of 2012. Trumbull is faced with a critical choice and a choice that will inevitably require a regional solution. The question becomes what is the best solution. On this point, let me be very clear. Trumbull’s solution on this matter will not be influenced by special interests and will not be made by editorial boards. This decision will be made by the leaders of Trumbull and the people of Trumbull, where we arrive at a collective decision that is in the best interests of the taxpayers of Trumbull.

Trumbull is a community rich with tradition. Our Town’s motto is pride in our past with faith in our future. We can have pride in our past because of the leaders who came before us and we can have faith in our future, where so many more future leaders will follow. This is the second year I will present the Clarence F. Heimann Leadership Award. First Selectman Heimann was the longest serving First Selectman in the Town of Trumbull, serving 12 years. The Town moved forward in a positive manner as a result of his sound and steady leadership. This award, given each year by the First Selectman at the conclusion of his or her State of the Town address, honors Trumbull citizens or Trumbull employees who demonstrate leadership, sacrifice and compassion for Trumbull citizens through their good work and deeds.

Our first recipient this morning was instrumental in developing the Trumbull Underage Drinking Forum. The Trumbull Forum is a model that has been replicated in Monroe, Fairfield, Newtown, and Milford. St. Joseph’s High School of Trumbull will run a similar program in April.

More than 1,000 Trumbull students and parents have attended the event each year. Based on the Trumbull Partnership for Underage Drinking (TPAUD) and the great work of the Trumbull Police, reported underage drinking in Trumbull has decreased over the past few years. Innovative

and comprehensive approaches, like the Underage Drinking Forum, are helping to reduce opportunities and community tolerance for underage drinking.

And this underage drinking forum was made possible in large measure because of the vision and foresight of people like Town Councilwoman Vicki Tesoro. (APPLAUSE).

Our second recipient has served the Town of Trumbull in various capacities for 31 years, as a member of the Town Council, Board of Finance and Golf Commission. After completing a successful career as a corporate executive, he decided to give the Town of Trumbull one more tour of duty. This person has been one of the principal architects of the Town's financial turnaround. Through helping to develop a strategy of sound cost containment, long term financial planning and aggressive strategies to deal with our unfunded pension liability and debt service obligations, the Town of Trumbull has maintained its position and favorable reviews from financial rating agencies. This individual has helped to chart a course that will place our Town in a strong position over the course of the next decade. I personally want to take this opportunity to thank our Town Treasurer John Ponzio for his help and support these last two and a half years. (APPLAUSE).

Please join me in saluting these outstanding public servants.

As we continue to work together, confronting the challenges that lie ahead with a resolute commitment to lead our Town to better days, I have every confidence that the reality of Trumbull will live up to the promise of Trumbull.

Thank you.