

**Timothy M. Herbst**  
**Seventh State of the Town Address**  
**Tashua Knolls Golf Course, Trumbull, CT**  
**March 31, 2016**

Thank you very much:

It is indeed my honor and my privilege to appear before you this afternoon to deliver my seventh State of the Town Address as First Selectman of the Town of Trumbull.

For more than thirty years the Town of Trumbull has enjoyed a strong relationship with the Greater Bridgeport Regional Business Council and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank Paul Timpanelli on a distinguished twenty-eight year career leading this organization. Paul I wish you every success in retirement and thank you for your years of service.

When preparing a state of the town address each year, you have the occasion to reflect. I have reflected upon successes and challenges. I have reflected upon decisions I have made that I am proud of and decisions I wish I could go back in time and change. I have also had the occasion to reflect upon the people who have had a tremendous influence in shaping who I am today and the advice I have been given. When I took office, the best advice I received was from my late grandmother. She was a humble woman who spoke plainly and honestly. She said this: "People have elected you to do a job now go do it. Help the people you serve and leave it better than you found it. And most importantly, I have a lot of friends in Trumbull, so don't screw up." How I miss that blunt wisdom.

But in all seriousness, when I assumed this office, I didn't care whether a person was a Republican or Democrat when I asked them to join my administration. I have hired more Democrats than Republicans to work alongside me and for good reason. My litmus test wasn't their party affiliation. My litmus test was their ability to help me build a better Trumbull. I am proud to say that the department heads gathered here today are among the best department heads of any municipality in the State of Connecticut.

It is through their collective efforts and a team approach of moving Trumbull forward that I am pleased to report that the State of Trumbull is strong and growing stronger every day. With the dysfunctionality in Washington and Hartford, now more than ever, local government is where the buck stops. We can't shuffle our

challenges on to someone else. We are at ground zero, where the decisions we make every day affect people's lives in a profound way. At a time when people have lost their faith in government, we have provided a better example. In spite of the Great Recession, today we are more financially secure. With a growing economy and a nationally recognized school system, Trumbull is being quickly recognized as the community of choice in Connecticut.

In the budget I have proposed for fiscal year 2016-2017, for the second time in seven years we have reduced taxes. Over the last seven years, the average annual tax increase has been 1.65%, one of the lowest seven year averages in all of Fairfield County. We have kept the tax rate stable while improving services for our citizens.

We have increased funding for public education every year that I have been your First Selectman. Under the leadership of Dr. Cialfi and his team, today, the Trumbull Public Schools are now in the top ten for school districts in our district reference group. Over the last two years, six out of ten of Trumbull's public schools have been recognized as schools of distinction by the Connecticut State Department of Education. This is awarded to schools in the top ten percent in the entire State of Connecticut.

As a result of reorganizing our Board of Education Facilities Department, we have begun the process of aggressively modernized our schools to make sure each building is 21<sup>st</sup> century ready. Through performance based contracting, we are making our buildings more energy efficient while reducing our energy costs.

The budget that I have proposed fully funds Dr. Cialfi's requested budget and continues to make meaningful investments in teaching and learning. This budget funds improvements in curriculum, professional development and internal assessments that strengthen overall performance. For our students, this budget advances digital learning through technology intervention specialists, and makes additional investments in math, science and mental health.

As I have said before, public education and public safety go hand in hand. Over the last year, Chief Lombardo has been a leader in taking on a drug problem that has greatly impacted the State of Connecticut and our region. In this year's budget, I have proposed a school resource officer program in our middle schools and at Trumbull High School. Chief Lombardo and I both believe deeply in the worthiness of developing and building relationships with students early on. We need to have police officers working with our educators, teachers and administrators to identify

problems before they materialize. We need to root out drugs in our schools and I firmly believe this program is a necessary step in protecting the children Trumbull.

While public education and public safety are so important, we are also addressing all of the priorities important to our community. We are rehabilitating our aging infrastructure.

We have doubled senior citizen tax relief.

And perhaps most significantly, we have fully funded our annual required pension contributions for the first time in almost 30 years.

How has this been done? Very simple. We have cut out mountains of waste, inefficiency and duplication by reorganizing six town departments. The employee headcount is at a ten year low. With spending restraint and an economy that has grown every year, we have increased revenue enough to improve services while containing costs.

This year, our Commercial Grand List grew an impressive 9.5%. In 2009, our commercial Grand List as a percent of our total Grand List was 14.1%. Today, it is 22.3% and climbing. You can see this growth in every corner of our community. This year, Trumbull will welcome eight new restaurants. Growth and expansion is occurring all over Trumbull. We see it every day as we drive down Main Street, Madison Avenue and through our medical zones and corporate parks. I am proud of all of our permitting departments that have facilitated this responsible growth and development and I am pleased to welcome the newest member of our team, our new Economic and Community Development Director, Rina Bakalar.

Pension reform has been a focus of this administration from day one. Six years ago, we were only funded at 27%. The financial rating agencies told us we were sitting on a ticking time bomb. Today, the annual required contribution is fully funded for the first time in more than 30 years. We have successfully achieved this without large tax increases and without borrowing money to meet pension obligations. Trumbull has invested an additional \$40.8 million dollars into our pension fund in the last seven budgets. Through collective bargaining, we have reduced the number of employees who are pension eligible. We had to reduce our unfunded liability to protect our creditworthiness and protect our financial stability and strength. Unfunded liability is code language for future tax increases.

Two years ago, Trumbull received an upgrade to our credit rating due in large measure to the pension reform and debt reform we have championed since 2009. We are now within striking distance of achieving a Triple A credit rating. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss two recent legislative initiatives that will facilitate the highest credit rating possible.

Today, as a matter of law, we now must maintain our rainy day fund at ten percent of our total operating budget. Second, the Town of Trumbull must now fund the annual required contribution for our pensions each year in the operating budget. To override this provision it will now require a 2/3 vote of both the Board of Finance and the Trumbull Town Council.

Here are some important factors to consider:

While the political parties in Trumbull have debated the merits of this legislative initiative, let's first examine how we got to this point. If elected officials in both parties who came before us confronted this problem rather than kicking the can, we wouldn't even be talking about this ordinance.

If you need proof of why this is necessary, simply look 60 miles to our north. Connecticut is in fiscal peril in large measure because we have the second most underfunded pension system of any state in the nation. We made promises that we couldn't afford. At the same time and for an extended period our state government didn't think we had to pay our bills. Well, we are not in Hartford. We are in Trumbull. We confront our problems head on and solve them.

This ordinance stands for three basic principles: 1.) You have to pay your bills, 2.) Pension contributions are mandatory, not discretionary 3.) Fully funding the ARC reduces the burden to taxpayers' long term.

As we fund these long term obligations, we must be focused not on the next election, but the next generation. Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's have supported similar efforts across the country, undertaken by state and local governments to tackle this problem in the same way. Other state and local governments who have achieved these financial reforms have attained a Triple AAA credit rating.

And why is a Triple AAA credit rating so important?

Our town buildings and perhaps most importantly, our schools buildings, will require necessary and needed renovations over the course of the next decade. There

are five elementary schools and two middle schools in the Town of Trumbull that are older than Trumbull High School. Parents want their children learning in a safe and modern environment and this is measured against our ability to afford these capital investments. The only way we will be able to address and afford these capital upgrades is to guarantee that we have the capacity to borrow to make these capital investments. If we achieve a Triple AAA credit rating before that time, we will borrow money at a lower interest rate, representing millions of dollars of savings to the Trumbull taxpayers.

You have heard me spend considerable time today talking about the need to make investments in our infrastructure, most importantly our schools. But there is another facility that is in need of a comprehensive investment as we plan for the future and that is a multipurpose community center that serves the entire community, with a focus on our seniors.

Trumbull's senior citizen population is growing at rates that outpace the rest of Fairfield County. By 2019, 27% of Trumbull's population will be over the age of 65 and by 2019, 37% of Trumbull's population will be over the age of 55. As our population is growing older we must be proactive in planning for the future. Currently, the Trumbull Senior Center is in a building that was erected in 1920. The building is not special-needs friendly, severely lacks adequate program space and amenities for our senior population, and is vulnerable to a host of safety and security issues.

To prove this point, we've determined more number of Trumbull senior citizens who go to senior centers in other communities rather than use our own. Imagine if more Trumbull kids went to private schools than our own? Imagine if more Trumbullites used the parks and recreation facilities in neighboring communities rather than our own? Our senior citizens deserve better.

Seventeen years ago, First Selectman Ken Halaby had this same vision. Our community was surveyed, a building committee was impaneled, a site was selected, and money was raised to fund this project. Despite the support from the community at the time, subsequent decision makers shelved the plan. And again, from 2011-2012, multiple public hearings and community meetings were held as we updated our Plan of Conservation and Development. This plan is a 10 year blueprint for where the community needs to go. The first recommendation in this plan is the construction of a community center. The second was a senior center.

In the last seventeen years, our community has been surveyed and resurveyed on this issue – much more so than when we pursued the \$73 million like new renovation of Trumbull High School.

The time for talk and dithering is over. It is a time for action. My vision is a community center that is centrally located in our community that serves our senior citizens during the day, as well as our residents, our youth, community organizations, civic organizations, town boards and commissions, and the community at large in the afternoon, evening and weekends. This is a center that can be multigenerational and serve so many needs that are currently not being met. The model followed by other towns like Glastonbury is the model that we should follow in Trumbull.

I will not allow politics to subvert this good and noble goal, and I will not allow this process to pit seniors against parents with school aged children. We are one community of shared values, young and old alike and we should be committed to being one community that works for the betterment of all our citizens.

This brings me to a larger point. When I watch what is going on in this presidential campaign, in Washington, in Hartford and yes even in Trumbull, I get discouraged with the lack of civility in society today. I cannot believe how some people speak to others on social media, saying things through a keyboard that they would never say to a person's face. Even at the local level, I am shocked how well respected business and community leaders, volunteers and everyday citizens are vilified and used as political scapegoats for the furtherance of a political agenda. I'm especially concerned with what our youth are witnessing today - - on the internet, on television and perhaps most significantly, the example that is set by some adults.

It prompted me to reflect upon the words written more than a decade ago by Peggy Noonan. Following the Columbine shootings, Peggy Noonan described our world as the oceans in which our children now swim. She described a culture of violence, drugs, indolence and perversions and described the young men who performed the shootings as having “inhaled too deeply in the ocean in which they swam.”

Twenty years ago, our country debated the question of whether it takes a village or whether it takes a family to raise a child. Twenty years later, I can tell you that it takes a community of shared values. Parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, religious leaders. Everyone. It is time for us to work together to clean up the oceans in which our children now swim.

To do that, we must first clean up the oceans in which we swim. Not everyone in this room voted for me and, that's okay...that is the democratic process that we embrace. We have many diverse opinions represented in our community. At the end of the day, irrespective of party or opinion, we still have to move Trumbull forward. And that is why each year, this event is a time to reflect upon accomplishments, acknowledge our challenges and together, lay a roadmap that clearly articulates a path forward.

Earlier this year, I invited the minority party to share their legislative priorities so we could develop a bipartisan legislative agenda. I encouraged my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to develop and present an alternate budget so we could find common ground. I supported the election of two Democrats to chair the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Police Commission. I also supported the appointment of my former opponent to the Board of Finance. I believe actions speak louder than words.

To my disappointment, the response I received came in an open letter to the Trumbull Times, where the minority party said "our job is to represent the 5,500 people who did not vote for the current administration." That statement does not represent the civility that some call for, yet never practice. Representative government is not demonstrated by representing people based upon groups with a litmus test that those groups share in the same opinions. Representative government is understanding that you represent all of the people, including the people who didn't vote for you. So long as I am the First Selectman, this government will not represent factions or groups. We will represent and work for all 36,000 people that call Trumbull their home.

Today, I renew my call to the loyal opposition. Replace social media rants with face to face conversations. Please tell the people of Trumbull what you stand for rather than what you are against. Please present your legislative agenda. Provide an alternate budget and tell us what you would do differently. Tackle issues – not people. When you are prepared to do that, then, and only then, will we begin the process of cleaning up the oceans in which we swim.

At the end of the day, I know in my heart that the strength of Trumbull lies in her people. The people of Trumbull are good, decent, generous people. I see their acts of kindness and compassion every day. And that is why each year, I remain committed to honoring their contributions through the Clarence Heimann Leadership Award.

Named after our former first selectman, this award is given each year at the State of the Town, to a Trumbull resident, Trumbull employee or Trumbull official who demonstrates leadership and self-sacrifice.

Last year, Trumbull hired a new Chief of Police. He was given an ambitious agenda by the Town and the Police Commission. I am exceptionally proud of Michael Lombardo because he has exceeded every expectation by every measure. Since taking command, he has reduced overtime costs, realigned command staff to better protect the public, developed a bike patrol program and made the commitment to equip officers with body cameras. As a member of the First Selectman's Drug Prevention Task Force, Chief Lombardo has taken a lead role in the region for taking this drug problem head on. He has improved morale and has the respect of his men. The first recipient of the Clarence Heimann Leadership Award is Chief Michael Lombardo.

On February 3, 2016, our Town Clerk Suzanne Burr Monaco and her husband were involved in a serious car accident that was almost fatal. By the grace of God and Suzanne's quick instincts, she and her husband survived, but both sustained serious injuries. Thankfully, they are on the road to recovery and I can say that their condition was made better by the extraordinary job of our first responders who responded to the scene of the accident that night. Our EMS Chief Joe Laucella was on scene with his crews within minutes. Our police officers and firefighters moved quickly to extricate the Monaco's from their car. The quick response allowed expedited medical attention and saved both of their lives. That night when I went to the emergency room with Chief Laucella, I saw the best of our police officers, firefighters and emergency medical responders. They make me so incredibly proud to lead this community. The next Clarence Heimann Leadership award is presented to all of the first responders who helped to save Domenic and Suzanne Monaco.

Finally, I am proud to say that one of the most innovative cancer treatment centers is currently located in and expanding in the Town of Trumbull. The Smilow Cancer Hospital Care Center on Park Avenue is providing revolutionary cancer treatment to those that live both in Connecticut and outside of Connecticut. As the leader of this community I am exceptionally proud that this facility is in our Town. On a personal note, I am grateful for the care that the doctors at this center, specifically Dr. Jerry Malfatto, provided to my late grandmother, Mary Zmary. In June of 2014, they didn't think she would be able to leave the hospital and because of your good work, we were blessed to have her with us for another two years. On behalf of my entire family, we are so grateful for all that you did to help her. I am proud to present the final Clarence Heimann Leadership Award to two Trumbull residents: Dr. Jerry

Malfatto and Dr. Guido Napolitano. To accept the award on their behalf and also for himself, is the President of Bridgeport Hospital, Bill Jennings.

So many of our citizens embody the fundamental principles of leadership and self-sacrifice. From the strength of our municipal workforce, to our strong fiscal condition, to our superb schools and quality of life, we will move forward together having pride in our past so we may have faith in our future.

Thank you.