

**REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING
STATE OF THE TOWN MEETING
DECEMBER 10, 2012**

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular State of the Town Meeting of the Representative Town Meeting was called to order at 8:10 p.m. by Donna Rajczewski, Town Clerk.

Upon Roll Call, the following members were present:

From District I, there were 8 members present, 3 absent.
From District II, there were 11 members present, 6 absent.
From District III, there were 10 members present, 6 absent.
From District IV, there were 10 members present, 6 absent.
From District V, there were 11 members present, 6 absent.
From District VI, there were 12 members present, 2 absent.

The absentees from District I were: Haas, Henderson, Schneider.
The absentees from District II were: Ebrahimi, Finn, Hilton, Marston, McNally, Mundt.
The absentees from District III were: Camuti, Cardone, Davis, Hegarty, Moore, Saksena.
The absentees from District IV were: Hardison, Millar, Morrison, Peters, Rayhill,
Rycenga.
The absentees from District V were: Boulton, Burke, Duffy, Lehan, Martens, Young.
The absentees from District VI were: Broecking, McLean.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 13, 2012 ANNUAL MEETING

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Moderator noted that, from now on, minutes will be sent by e-mail. The Warning and resolutions, however, will continue to be sent by mail. In addition, if any members change their e-mail address, they should notify their District Chair.

The Moderator recognized and introduced the following people:

- 1) Ed Schmidt, Associate Town Counsel
- 2) Donna Rajczewski, Town Clerk since 2000
- 3) Cheryl Telesco Blois, taking minutes for the RTM for more than 20 years
- 4) Jim Cameron, in charge of Channel 79

The Moderator next recognized the following District Chairs, and the Vice-Chairs for those Districts whose Chairs were not in attendance:

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>CHAIR</u>	<u>VICE CHAIR</u>
I	Reilly Tierney	
II	Cecelia Mundt	Nina Miller
III	Bruce Orr	
IV	Brian Rayhill	Sandra Savage
V	James Patrick	
VI	Janet Grogan	

Last, the Moderator introduced the chairs of the Standing Committees:

Education - Dennis Maroney	Finance & Budget - Bruce Orr
Parks & Recreation - Cheryl Russell	PZ&H - Joanne Hennessy
Public Health & Safety - Carolyn Schoonmaker	TGS&A - Frank Kemp
Public Works - Mark Adiletta	

James Patrick, District V, and member of the Advisory Board of Health gave an update on the, ABH which meets quarterly. He reported that Darien's Health Department has available, free of charge to residents, a number of tick kits and radon kits.

The Moderator noted that the Transfer Station Advisory Committee meeting can be seen on Channel 79.

STATE OF THE TOWN REPORTS

Fred Conze, Chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission, read the commission's report (attached).

Elizabeth Hagerty-Ross, Chair of the Board of Education, read this written report (attached).

Liz Mao, Chair of the Board of Finance, read the report of the Board of Finance (attached).

First Selectman Jayme Stevenson read the report of the Board of Selectmen (attached).

The Moderator said that the next meeting would take place on January 28, 2013.

**** 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 ADDRESS
FRED CONZE, CHAIR
DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 10, 2012

Good evening Madame Moderator, Members of the RTM, other elected and appointed officials, and the people of Darien. I am pleased to give you this annual “State of the Town” address, looking back on 2012, updating you on the activities of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the other local land use boards within the past year, and giving you a flavor for what is in store for 2013.

First, I want to acknowledge the transformative change and vibrancy we are witnessing in our central business district. This uplift has come about because of the commitment of energy and capital of our local developers, the hard work and dedication of my fellow members of the Planning and Zoning Commission and particularly our professional Planning & Zoning staff. Although not apparent to the public, the Planning & Zoning staff processes an enormous amount of applications and related paperwork. Over the past year, there have been over 25 Planning and Zoning Commission meetings as well as numerous meetings between commission members and staff; 16 meetings of the Zoning Board of Appeals; 11 meetings of the Environmental Protection Commission, and 9 for the Architectural Review Commission. Each the 61 formal meetings of these commissions required an extraordinary amount of preparation including meetings with potential applicants, surveys, plans, meeting agendas, preparation and delivery of meeting packets, subsequent resolutions, etc. - all in the service of public interest and an effort to arrive at the best possible decisions in each of the pending matters and fulfilling their respective legal obligations. I would also like to tip my hat to the folks at Channel 79 – our “eye in the sky” - who provide an invaluable service to us all.

A Look Back

Our downtown continues to become more user and pedestrian friendly with numerous new restaurants and other retail establishments. The commercial base continues to grow, and will generate additional tax revenues over time through its redevelopment. A number of commercial projects are underway including:

- 20 West Avenue, across the street from the Darien Train station, where significant renovation has occurred to occupy this 18,000 sq. ft. building which had been vacant for over a year;
- The new development which has just started at the corner of Day Street and Boston Post Road that will result in two new mixed-use buildings including six market rate apartments ;
- Another new mixed-use building is underway at 745 Boston Post Road at its intersection with Academy Street . This project will include eight market rate residential units. Under our recently enacted Inclusionary Zone regulation, this project will generate a \$360,000 contribution to a trust fund for the development of affordable housing in our town. Both the Day

Street and Academy Street projects will each result in a number of new market-rate apartments within walking distance to the Train Station, as well incremental commercial space.

Outside of our commercial/retail areas are a number of other projects underway:

- The redevelopment of Allen O'Neill Homes off of Noroton Avenue continues.

This project will provide more than 106 units of affordable housing. The first units are expected to come on-line in the spring. Work on this project will continue into 2014.

- The development of Kensett, at the former Procaccini property off Hoyt Street, will result in 62 new 3-bedroom market rate condominiums. Buildout of this project will take at least 2-3 more years. For those of us who remember this property as an old gravel pit, the change has been eye-opening.

- Maplewood of Darien at 599 Post Road has just opened as Assisted Living Facility on the former Mediplex site. This project fills a need in the community, and at the same time, is providing an added increase to the Town's grand list.

In addition to the above, the Commission continues to assist property owners in responding to ever changing market conditions. Recently, we rezoned the back of the Thorndal Circle office park to allow more flexibility in attracting office tenants.

Of course, the big news of this year was the storm Sandy in late October. There are many in our community who were greatly affected, and have had to make serious decisions about their homes. The Planning and Zoning office has had numerous meetings with property owners, and is working with many of them on reviewing available options and assisting in the application preparation and permitting process. The Planning and Zoning Commission is sure to see many applications submitted over the next few months for proposals to elevate and rebuild houses. While it is an unfortunate that this storm had such an impact, we are hopeful and optimistic, that elevation of homes will help minimize the future impacts of any storms down the road.

A look ahead

As stated, numerous applications of those properties affected by Sandy are on the immediate horizon. Rebuilding can be a daunting process and I urge those dealing with this issue to work closely with the Planning & Zoning staff to help in this regard.

Second, is the next phase of the "shuffle". The renovation work at 35 Leroy Avenue will be done in spring 2013, and the Board of Education will be moving out of Town Hall at that time. Renovation work will then begin in the former Board of Education wing at Town Hall, which is the other side of this building, to create a new Community Center.

Third, the Commission will be reviewing zoning regulation amendments. Staff is now in the process of receiving input from the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Architectural Review Board. The Planning & Zoning Commission's subcommittee tasked with updating our 2007 affordable housing study will be submitting its review in the next few weeks. The Commission will be reviewing regulations that have proven to be troublesome to implement; or that should be changed in response to new State Statutes or court decisions.

In late 2013, or early 2014, the Commission will be embarking on its ten-year update of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. We'll start some of the basic legwork on this

multi-year project late this year, with the expectation that the Commission can adopt the final product in 2016. It gives us an opportunity to address a number of relevant issues before the town including density, infrastructure capacity, land use, etc. all impacting our objective of maintaining the residential character of our town.

Summary

In closing, our town seems to be doing well. It is encouraging to witness the invigorated heartbeat found in our commercial areas. As an almost forty year resident of Darien, I can recall a time when you would rarely see a car on the Post Road after 7PM unless there was a traffic jam on I-95. Now you have to look for a parking space.

We continue to have substantial issues on our plate including affordable housing and related litigation, the development of an affordable housing strategy using various zoning techniques such as overlay zones, and balancing infrastructure capacity with issues of land use and over development. I would like to leave you with an interesting statistic: from 1990 to the year 2010 the number of school age children in Darien increased 80%. There is a reason for this growth. Darien has a lot to offer. We must, however, be ever mindful of our objective of maintaining the residential character of our town. Thank you, and good evening.

2012 State of the Town - Board of Education Report

Good Evening, Madame Moderator, members of the RTM, fellow elected officials and the Town of Darien. On behalf of my colleagues on the Darien Board of Education, it is my pleasure to report to you that the current state of the Darien Public School system is excellent, and that our schools remain among the top public school districts in Connecticut.

Before discussing the 2012 achievements, I would like to give you an update on our enrollment statistics.

Enrollment

The official October 1, 2012 district enrollment, including the ELP Pre-Kindergarten program, was 4,846 students, representing an increase of 29 students.

- Elementary enrollment is at an all time high of 2,381, an increase of 45 students. The number of classroom sections increased by 5 to 116 sections. The cost of these additional sections was covered by funds in budget control and savings associated with teacher turnover.
- The middle school population decreased by 20 students this year, as forecast, bringing our total number of students to 1,135.
- There was a slight increase of 4 students at the high school, bringing enrollment to 1,330.

For 2013-14, we are currently projecting 4,906 students, or an increase of 60 students. We are anticipating a continued increase in our elementary population with 43 additional students. The Middle School is projected to decline slightly by 10 students and the High School will increase by 27 students. I will return to enrollment at the end of my speech; however, it is important to note that Darien remains a very desirable small town with a low mill rate whose residents place a high value on education. Our community will

continue to draw young families who wish to take advantage of our fine educational system.

Accomplishments

Much was accomplished in 2012 both by students and by administrators.

Student Achievements

- In standardized testing our students favorably compared with our District Reference Group. (DRG)
- The Connecticut Academic Performance tests (CAPTs) are administered to all 10th graders. Our students either met or exceeded the DRG averages in Math and Writing.
- Enrollment in the advanced placement courses continue to increase with 603 tests taken. The percentage of Darien students posting a 3 or better on their AP is at a 5-year high of 95% as are the percentages of students posting a 4 or better (82%) or 5 (52%) proving that as we have improved access to these courses our students have met the challenge of these intellectually rigorous classes.
- Darien students continue to do well on the SATs, achieving an average composite score of 1,764 out of 2400. The number of Darien students choosing to take the ACT continues to grow.
- 305 students graduated from Darien High School last June, with 96.2% planning to attend two or four-year colleges after high school. Over 2600 college applications were submitted to over 380 different colleges and universities.
- 36 members of the Class of 2013-were recognized in the National Merit Scholarship program, 31 as Commended Scholars and 5 as National Merit Semi-Finalists.
- On the athletic fields, Darien High School continues to be successful. In the school year ending June 2012, DHS fielded 63 athletic teams in 21 different sports. Nearly 83.7% of the student body participated in at least one sport. The Blue Wave once again won state titles in Boy's Cross Country, Girl's Swimming

and Boys Lacrosse. Laurie LaRusso, long-time Darien Blue Wave's Volleyball coach, was inducted into the FCIAC Hall of Fame.

- Darien Students artwork could be seen at many art shows and exhibits throughout Connecticut. Our music department was busy with concerts and competitions. Participation in Band and a variety of music courses is at an all-time high and students continue to reach high levels of accomplishment. For the first time a Darien High School student was selected to perform in the All National High School Honors Choir, at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC.

District Achievements

The 2011-2012 school year continued with the theme of learner-centered instruction achieved in a collaborative, respectful atmosphere where students are encouraged to develop “ deep understanding of concepts, critical and creative thinking and problem solving skills through meaningful applications of content. “ Dr. Stephen Falcone refined these goals and objectives and they continued to be integrated into our schools efficiently. Professional Learning Communities are an integral part of our teachers' professional development. Our students are beginning to experience the results of the teachers work.

Other areas of accomplishment for the District include:

- The High School completed a very successful NEASC Accreditation visit and feedback has been positive. We are awaiting their final report.
- Hindley Elementary School has been recognized as a 2012 National Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education. Dr. Pandolfo, Mrs. Ferri and a contingent from Hindley PTO were presented with the award in Washington D.C.
- Major curriculum revisions were completed and approved by the Board of Education. A sampling includes Comparative World Religions, Developmental Guidance, Spanish 4 and French 5, Multivariable Calculus and Web Design 2. Curriculum Updates were approved in Western Civilization, Applied Math, English 10, Biology and Physics.

- Last Spring we bid farewell to Mr. John Rechi, Principal of Ox Ridge School, Mrs. Robin Pavia, Director of Special Education and Mr. Dan Haron, Principal of Darien High School. We welcome Mr. Luke Foreshaw as Principal at Ox Ridge, Dr. Deirdre Osypuck, Special Education Director and Interim Principal of Darien High School, Mrs. Arlene Gottesman.
- Our Facilities remain in very good shape thanks to the hard work of our facilities director Mr. Michael Lynch and his maintenance/custodial crew. We continue to be proactive but prudent in planning our capital projects, making preventive maintenance a high priority within the school system. Completion of the Middlesex roof was delayed by state reimbursement paperwork; construction will start in June 2013. Bids have come in favorably and we are confident this project will come in on budget. We are also working with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to finalize the work that needs to be completed this summer on the School Oil Tanks. This project has been included in our 2013-2014 capital plan but we may seek RTM approval early to ensure state reimbursement is available.
- We are currently in the first year of our new 3 year Teacher Contract. Our contract, which was settled in the Fall of 2011, includes a total salary increase of 6.63% over the term of the contract. By comparison, Stamford, and New Canaan settled last month for 9% and 8.5%, respectively.
- 2011-2012 was a fiscally challenging year for the Darien Board of Education. The slow economy and reduced funding from the State of Connecticut for Special Education Excess Cost required us to tighten our belts early in the school year. However, the Board of Education is happy to report that we were able to overcome these financial obstacles without requiring additional funding from the Town for the first time in three years. The Board of Education appreciates the efforts of our elected officials and all the citizens to adequately support our schools, and provide safe, clean, and modern facilities for our students and staff.

Looking Ahead

Mrs. Mao will give you an overall picture of the town's financial position. Financially, for the first time in many years, I can stand in front of you and say the Darien Board of Education is comfortable with its current budget. We will continue to carefully monitor our Special Education expenses and are still awaiting information regarding excess cost funding from the state, but at this moment, we are in sound financial shape.

One of the 2012-2013 district objectives states that we will "continue to monitor enrollment and space utilization at all schools including special education."

As the Board began to strategize our annual five-year forecast for the Board of Finance, it became apparent our enrollment numbers would become the key driver and have a direct impact on our school facilities. Two real estate development projects: The Heights (formerly Allen O'Neil) and Kensett (formerly Procaccini) coupled with overall growth in school age population can be expected to put continued pressure on our schools facilities.

We have projected 38 additional students from the recently expanded Heights project, beginning next school year: 7 at the High school, 7 at the Middle school and 24 at Royle Elementary.

We were informed this spring that Kensett had been re-zoned as age targeted not age restricted. The project consists of 62 luxury 3- and 4-bedroom townhomes. The developer expects 8 homes sold and occupied by the starting of the 2013-2014 school year with construction continuing through 2017. A conservative estimate could be about 80 new students, 20 each at Darien High School and Middlesex and 40 students at Ox Ridge Elementary. If Kensett draws more empty nesters, than families, the impact would be distributed across the five elementary schools rather than just Ox Ridge

Using conservative enrollment estimates for Heights and Kensett, and existing student enrollment, we are projecting that our elementary sections would increase from the current level of 116 to 120 by October 2013, 123 by October 2014 and 124 in 2015 and 2016.

This increasing enrollment will stress our school district and town facilities. We expect to be able to house our elementary programs, including our ELP preschool program, in 2013-2014 within our current facilities. However, each school will be very tight. In the school year beginning September 2014, we do not expect to be able to accommodate the six classrooms of ELP within the current elementary facilities. We have tasked our Administration to look at possible solutions that are available to us. The Board of Education has established a Facilities and Capital Committee and its first charge will be to review district facility needs. We look forward to working with the Selectman, Board of Finance and RTM as we plan our Educational facilities for the Town of Darien.

Finally, there are a number of people I would like to thank on behalf of the Board of Education.

Our thanks to the many volunteers, parents and donors who contribute so much to our efforts, and especially to the members of the Board of Finance, the RTM and the Town as a whole for your generous support.

I would like to thank Mr. George Reilly and Mrs. Amy Bell for their dedication and commitment to the boards and for their volunteer service in the community of Darien. We wish them both the best in their future endeavors.

The Board also extends our deep appreciation to our Superintendent, Dr. Stephen Falcone and all of the employees of the Darien School System, for their outstanding work again this year. Their professionalism and dedication are the foundation of our success as a School District.

Personally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members. Vice Chair, Clara Sartori, Secretary, Heather Shea, Michael Harman, Susie Perticone, Jim Plutte, Sarah Schneider-Zuro, Katie Stein and Morgan Whittier. It is a privilege and a pleasure to work with this group of volunteers, and it is an honor to be your Chairman. I am very proud to be a member of this dedicated Board.

Overall, 2012 was another excellent year for the Darien School System, and we look forward with positive anticipation to 2013.

On behalf of the Darien Board of Education, I wish you and your families a joyous holiday season, and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Elizabeth A. Hagerty-Ross
Chairman
Darien Board of Education
RTM State of the Town Meeting
December 10, 2012

STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS
ELIZABETH SMITH MAO, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF FINANCE
DECEMBER 10, 2012

Madam Moderator, Members of the RTM, Town Officials, Fellow Citizens and Taxpayers

Good evening, All! As Chairman of the Board of Finance, I have the honor of addressing you each December to report on the State of the Town. Together we have accomplished a lot in the past year. I am pleased to report that Darien's financial health is strong, and that the Town's hard assets are in great shape, and still improving.

The general environment we find ourselves in today includes a lot of the same factors we have been living with for the past several years. Connecticut's economy is still not growing, and despite the largest tax increase in the State's history, the State is still faced with a current deficit of almost \$400 million dollars, and a grim forecast of a billion dollar deficit for next year. Undoubtedly, the state's financial problems will mean less money is returned to Darien in education and other grants in the years ahead.

In the time since I spoke to you last year, several important items of note happened in Darien on the financial front.

First, the Town ended Fiscal Year 2012 with a small surplus of about \$300,000 on a total budget of about \$115 million. Employee Benefits cost less than expected and revenues for Town Clerk fees and building permits were higher than expected. The Town has been able to keep a tight control on expenses, and we commend the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator Karl Kilduff, and all the Heads of Departments for their leadership in managing to tight budgets.

Second, The Board of Education was able to come in on budget, and the amount the Town received for the Equalized Cost Sharing Grant was \$100 thousand dollars greater than what we had forecast.

Third, The Board of Finance spent the summer productively. Working with our Financial Advisor Mark Chapman, and in conjunction with the hard work of our Finance Director Kate Clarke Buch, The Town of Darien was once again able to take full advantage of its pristine credit rating of Triple A, and refinance over a third of its total debt.

- In August we refunded \$35.2 million dollars in bonds. We directed our advisors to shorten the time horizon of the payback to take advantage of record low interest rates. Secondly, we also wished to smooth out the debt service payments in the current and the next few fiscal years. As you may recall, last year's forecast anticipated our going to \$12.6 million dollars in debt service payments for Fiscal Year 14. We have shaved \$1.5

million dollars off that number and now expect \$11.1 million dollars in debt service for next year (FY 2014) instead.

- The bond sale was successful beyond our expectations. The interest rate on the new refunded bonds was an averaged 1.71 percent! We achieved a savings of \$4.5 million dollars over the life of the bonds, and as I noted, most of these savings are achieved in the immediate term.
- These savings accomplish our objective of lowering future peak debt service payments to \$11.25 million dollars or less. This holds true even when we account for capital projects not yet approved. The Board of Finance is very comfortable with debt service at nine percent or less of total expenditures.

To put this in perspective, the Town has been able to continue to pay down the debt on the High School and Tokeneke School, as well as build and bring on to operation a newly renovated and expanded Police Department Building and new buildings at Weed Beach. We have funded delayed maintenance and renovations at other schools and town buildings, like a new \$750,000 roof at Middlesex Middle School. The new Board of Education Building at 35 Leroy and the Mather Center here at Town Hall are timed well in that the debt service for these projects are coming in as the debt service attributable to school buildings is declining.

In my view, a few years from now, our taxpayers will be applauding our excellent timing in improving our town and school buildings at a time when interest rates were at the lowest the US had seen in 70 years or more.

At the same time, we are aggressively paying down our debt. At June 30th 2012, the Town's total debt peaked at \$99 Million dollars. Even with our new projects coming on, by June 30th 2013, we will be down to \$ 89.5 million dollars, and each year thereafter total debt is currently projected to drop rapidly by between five to nine million dollars a year.

A Look at Next Year

The Five Year Plan you have before you is not a budget. We have accepted the generous forecasts from the Board of Education as to enrollment and expenses and have not cut any proposed capital projects from either the BOE or Town forecasts, although in Exhibit D you will see that we assume some projects will be deferred. The Board of Education has given us a forecast that has each year's spending climbing more than five percent over the previous year. I cannot agree that Darien taxpayers should be spending more than \$100 million dollars a year on education by 2018. I hope the Board of Finance will direct the Board of Education to plan their spending to be more in line with inflation.

One area that is difficult to predict is school enrollment. For the first time, we have included BOE enrollment forecasts on this Exhibit. The unexpected continued growth in the school population is a key driver of expenses going forward, especially if the additional students tip classroom sections over their set limits. The BOE has said that most of the growth is in the elementary grades, and that we may need to be looking at adding additional room at the elementary level. We have asked the BOE to plan out different scenarios, and we will be working hard to come up with optimal plans to deal with the possibility of space limitations.

We continue to be concerned about Special Education expenses, as the BOE's forecast has expenses rising in this area at 8.5 percent per year, double or triple inflation effects. We hope the BOE and administration will take steps to limit such increases.

Returning to Exhibit B, you will note that the forecast predicts a rise in the Town's total expenditures for next year of 6.2 percent, or \$127.7 million dollars, up from this year's budget of \$120.2 million dollars.

AGAIN, THE BOARD OF FINANCE DOES NOT THINK THAT THIS IS ACCEPTABLE, AND WE WILL BE WORKING HARD AS A TEAM WITH THE TOWN AND BOE DURING THE BUDGET SEASON TO TRIM BACK THESE FORECASTS.

Over the past several years, the Selectmen have done a very good job in limiting new spending. However, as we move forward, we anticipate that operating and maintenance costs may need to rise in order to keep our new, more sophisticated buildings at optimal operational efficiency. We also see the need to complete drainage projects, to minimize flooding. We have assumed that these projects, totaling almost \$3 million dollars, will be bonded for. We are hoping that new capital project will be brought in under budget as has the new Police Building and Weed Beach.

Turning to Exhibit C, you will find anticipated revenues and transfers. We have been conservative in our revenue growth assumptions and we assume declines in governmental grants and only modest growth in our Grand List. We will draw on our healthy Fund Balance, but we will stay within our Board of Finance policy of not having a Fund Balance less than 10 percent of our total budget.

Before you gasp at the projected mill rate increase of 6.04 percent to fund next year's budget, please remember that the numbers before you represent a full "wish list" of projects and expenses, and have not been subject to any real scrutiny. I assure you that the Selectmen and the BOE will work with the Board of Finance to bring that number down to a more acceptable number through the budgetary process beginning early in 2013.

State of the Town
December 10, 2012
Jayme Stevenson – First Selectman

Good evening friends – Madam Moderator. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you this evening and share the many accomplishments of my board and staff in 2012.

Truth be told, with the culmination of a more-than-spirited election cycle, Hurricane Sandy and the follow up snow storm, I was very tempted to stand here tonight and just sing you a Christmas Carol. Don't worry, I'll save that for another time.

First, I'd like to thank Liz, Betsy, Fred, Sarah and Karen Armour for your leadership and to your boards and RTM members for your thoughtful work on behalf of our nearly 20,000 residents. Much of what you hear from me tonight wouldn't have been possible without your collective support and that of our very talented and hard-working town staff. I'd like to also offer special thanks to Town Administrator Karl Kilduff and attorney Wayne Fox and his staff. Their knowledge and guidance are critical to all of our municipal operations and invaluable to me personally.

This year, to set the stage to respond to new challenges that affect our quality of life, encourage more efficient delivery of town services and to create a platform for improved accountability, the Board of Selectmen instituted a new goal setting protocol. Our goals will now be incorporated into department performance measures and budget requests and will allow us to better evaluate ideas and proposals for their consistency with our mission. Our new mission statement, goals and objectives are on the town web site for your reading pleasure.

Since January 2012, the Board of Selectmen has appointed or re-appointed 4 advisory committees and 28 individuals to boards and commissions. Volunteers are the life blood of our town government so I've made it an important part of our process to interview each and every volunteer and to thank them for their service.

We successfully negotiated new agreements with the Police, Public Works and Town Hall unions. Each of the contracts included cost saving provisions for healthcare and workers compensation. We considered and approved a number of tax appeal settlements resulting from the 2008 revaluation. 4 of the appeals were from the 3 country clubs and the hunt club. Negotiations with the clubs resulted in the town receiving deed restrictions and rights of first refusal on club property - a significant and valuable tool for the town to help preserve open space should the opportunity arise in the future. The Tax Assessor's office is organized and ready to begin the work on the mandated 2013 revaluation.

Capital projects, transfer station operations, drainage, parking and pedestrian safety and, of course, Hurricane Sandy have been the focus topics for my board.

The Darien Police Department building and Weed Beach renovation projects were completed this year on time and under budget. Decisions by prior administrations to hold on these

projects ultimately provided a tremendous opportunity to realize significant cost savings for construction and project financing. We continue to enjoy favorable pricing for the Board of Education Office/Mather Community Center project. The timing of these projects couldn't have been better for our taxpayers. I also want to thank the Board of Finance and Finance Department for seizing the opportunity to take advantage of historic low rates to refinance our eligible outstanding debt and for supporting the installation of natural gas to town hall, the police department and 35 Leroy which will allow us to reap cost savings for years to come. The Public Works department and I have initiated dialogue with Yankee Gas to encourage expanded gas infrastructure town wide allowing more homes to reap similar cost savings. Their current business model doesn't support or incent timely or cost efficient expansion but we will continue to advocate for this important service in the coming year.

The lengthy and passionate debate regarding an ordinance to ban single use plastic checkout bags had the very positive outcome of raising awareness about recycling. This year, we put into practice Single Stream Recycling and convened the Transfer Station Advisory Committee to develop educational awareness about single streaming and to make other operational efficiency suggestions regarding the transfer station. This committee is energized and hard at work. And, yes, you can single stream recycle plastic bags.

The ongoing discussion about new sidewalks required the development of a new sidewalk installation policy to help guide future funding decisions. Several outstanding new sidewalk requests, including the proposed sidewalk on Route 106 will be evaluated against our new policy criteria during the upcoming budget cycle.

Flooding and drainage continue to be a focus and concern for the Board of Selectmen and the Department of Public Works. Please indulge me in a bit of history. The unprecedented storms of 2007 set in motion a series of actions and reactions to not only respond to public concern but to better understand what can and cannot be done to mitigate future flooding in Darien. In May of 2010, the Flood Mitigation Strategy Committee made formal recommendations to the Board of Selectmen based on their review of studies prepared by hydraulic engineers for the Stony Brook, Noroton River and Goodwives River watersheds. The engineers were tasked with evaluating existing conditions, modeling different flood levels and making recommendations for mitigation projects and protocols. Many of the 12 recommendations by the FMSC have been implemented or are in process and 2 large drainage improvement projects - one on Intervale Road and one on Kelsey Street - are currently being engineered and will be presented for consideration in the upcoming budget cycle.

I have met on several occasions this year with members of the EPC, FMSC and town attorneys to continue the dialogue regarding the creation of a separate FECB. Although EPC favors this separation of duties, the concept was rejected by the RTM and given back to the Board of Selectmen for further discussion. Until any formal decisions are agreed upon, the Public Works department continues to be well suited to respond to the recommendations set forth in the FMSC report and to research and implement new drainage projects as they arise. Director of Public Works, Bob Steeger, can attest that I am focused on the issue.

Hurricane Sandy, thankfully, did not bring the flooding as initially forecast. However, this enormous Category 1 Hurricane/Noreaster combination storm will go on record as the most costly storm for the Town of Darien in our reported history. We're still gathering figures but information to date suggests it will cost the Town nearly \$1 million dollars before insurance and any FEMA reimbursements – 4 times that of any storm on record. While we did have ample notice and time to prepare, the storm and its aftermath necessitated our Emergency Operations Center to be open for 9 days. 90% of our town was without power by the time the storm ended. We opened an emergency shelter for 4 nights sheltering 75 residents and 9 pets. 19 dedicated volunteers and Post 53 and school personnel staffed the shelter 24/7.

Damage to the town was significant. We had 146 downed trees, 71 downed trees with utility wires in them, 72 blocked roads with 12 of those inaccessible to emergency vehicles. Clearing these inaccessible areas and removing the trees with wires is the most critical “make safe” phase of storm recovery and was our primary focus as soon as the winds stopped.

17 homes have been rendered uninhabitable, 21 additional homes, 2 commercial buildings and 3 town facilities suffered varying degrees of damage by coastal flood waters or by fallen trees. An oil spill in the Jr. Sailing area of Weed Beach will require extensive and costly remediation. The town is working closely with residents in Noroton Bay to facilitate the process for home repairs and rebuilding. A reminder to those needing FEMA assistance or low-interest SBA loans - all applications must be submitted by the end of this month.

Activating the EOC in the new police building was critical to our storm response and I commend the dedication of our town employees who worked tirelessly to support our response and recovery efforts. This unprecedented storm required the focused and prolonged attention from not only Public Works and the Police, but also our Fire Marshall, Health, Social Services, Parks and Recreation and Buildings Departments, school administration and staff, Post 53 and our 3 volunteer fire departments. The Darien Public Library and The YMCA were also critical partners in providing much needed community support and we're very grateful for their efforts. Marc McEwan deserves special mention for helping me quarterback our response. The CodeRed reverse 911 system continues to be an invaluable communication tool. Please register your home and cell phones if you haven't already. I promise I won't CodeRed my Christmas Carol!

We always learn a great deal from each emergency event and have already met and detailed our after action recommendations, some of which will need funding in the upcoming budget. A few of the most notable recommendations are for improved generator capacity in our critical town buildings, satellite communication capabilities for the EOC, better information from private associations and the creation of an Emergency Shelter Task Force.

Downed utility wires and loss of power is not just inconvenient, it can be life threatening and therefore feedback to the utilities regarding their storm response is critical. My fellow chief elected officials from the 8 SWRPA member towns have aggregated and presented our utility response critique to both CL&P and their regulatory agency, PURA. It's imperative that the utilities significantly improve their response – 4 storms in 5 years *should* have provided enough

experience to make meaningful improvements. My colleagues and I will do all we can to demand improved service for our towns. Additionally, I've recommended to our public works director that we consider adding a tree trimming protocol to our annual road repaving program so we can be more proactive rather than reactive regarding vegetation management.

I want to especially thank everyone who reached out to your friends and neighbors in need and also to the groups who gave support to other communities whose recovery needs are far greater than ours.

In spite of rather anemic and uncertain economic environments at the state and federal levels, Darien is healthy. You've already heard from Fred about new development, Liz on the state of our finances and Betsy regarding the success and desirability of our schools. I attribute our town's sustained health to sound and conservative policies that balance service expectations with taxpayer burdens. As we move into a new budget cycle in the coming weeks, I pledge that my board will remain mindful of continuing economic uncertainty, potential changes in state and federal tax policies and rising local unemployment rates.

As we begin our look at the new budget, it's important to know that we don't start at zero. If each town department held their funding requests to the same level as last year, we will need a budget increase of 2.9% based solely on contractual obligations and debt service payments for contracts and projects approved by all the town boards including this body.

I've recently met with members of the Board of Finance to discuss changes to the way the budget information is organized and to the process itself that we believe will make the process more efficient and transparent. We've also met with the chiefs of the 3 volunteer fire departments who've agreed to our request to hire a consultant to help in budget planning for the large capital investments in equipment planned for the next 10 years. I want to thank the departments for their cooperation. And I remain hopeful that the Board of Education and the town can find meaningful ways to share services and save costs. I'll be presenting suggestions as part of our budget request.

I'd like to briefly touch on several other great projects that my board has in progress that will continue through 2013:

We've approved new parking technology for commuter parking lots allowing for better permit management and enforcement and a more efficient daily parking process.

SWRPA's Route 1 Corridor Study has been completed and presented and there will be several traffic and pedestrian safety initiatives that may come forward in the budget.

The town is partnering with the Friends of Gorham's Pond and the State of Connecticut to bring a dam repair and dredging project in Upper Gorham's Pond to fruition. Private contributions and grant funding secured by the town will enable this long awaited and very worthwhile watershed improvement project to become a reality.

The new Board of Ed office and the Mather Community Center will open in 2013 finally giving our seniors the kind of facility they deserve. What to do with the Edgerton property remains in question as the Board of Ed evaluates their facility needs in response to increasing enrollment. Dr. Falcone and I have spoken and he understands that my job as First Selectman is to be mindful of the needs of ALL our residents and to honor the goals of our town plan of conservation and development. I appreciate his willingness to think creatively to find a solution that will satisfy the educational needs of our students but also provide flexibility as enrollments will surely change over time. I've often thought how interesting it might be to consider the benefits of a Charter School model for our highly successful ELP program.

Some of you may be anxious to hear about the status of affordable housing in Darien. Our efforts on this front continue. As you've heard, the redevelopment of Allen O'Neill, now known as The Heights is well underway and the first 10 buildings will be complete within 6 months. I have had numerous informal discussions on our next steps for additional affordable housing. The limited four-year moratorium granted to Darien in October of 2010, under CT statute 8-30g, is not nearly enough time to acquire, fund, develop and occupy the large amounts of housing needed for a second moratorium. However, we will continue to pursue a variety of affordable housing options in the coming year.

One of SWRPA's legislative initiatives for the next session is modification to 8-30g. My fellow CEO's have agreed that while we all desire to encourage the development of more affordable housing in our respective towns, we further agree that 8-30g is a one-size-fits-all mandate and does not appropriately incent development nor does it protect towns from costly litigation. I'm very pleased to be presenting our bi-partisan supported modifications tomorrow morning at the SWRPA Legislative Breakfast and want to thank Planning and Zoning Director Jeremy Ginsberg for his work on this. I've shared the proposal with our local legislators and have asked for their support.

There's no better representation of dedication and hard work than by Charlie Savarine as our building inspector and Chief Building Official for the past 30 years. Charlie retired in November and we wish him well in his retirement. We welcome Peter Solheim as our new acting building official. Pete has worked for the town for 20 years and provides a seamless transition for this very busy department. We also wish the best to our outgoing voter registrars Tom Dunn and Don Smith. Their terms end in early January at which time we welcome Kathy Hammell and John Visi. Tom and Don have done a great job for many years particularly this past year with redistricting and a presidential election cycle complicated by a hurricane. On behalf of the town, I thank you all for your service and wish you a happy and relaxing retirement.

Finally, I want to thank my board for their support and for working with me to foster an environment of transparency, inclusiveness and collaboration. Our government system is complex and at times inefficient but it's one in which the will of the taxpayers is carried out - not the desires of a few individuals or elected officials. The Boards of Selectmen, Education and Finance all play important and distinct roles in this unique process but you, the RTM, has the most important role of keeping us all accountable and balanced in our requests. Thank you for all you do.

I wish you *peace* this holiday season and *hope* for the coming year - don't forget to put that generator and land-line telephone on your holiday wish list!