

2005 State of the Town Message
By First Selectman Kenneth Flatto
January 24, 2005

Good evening Friends, Neighbors and Town Officials,

As Fairfield moves forward in 2005, I am so proud to talk about our thriving successful community. Again this weekend, Fairfielders proved we have a wonderful town and an incredible group of public servants working for us. Our DPW crews, firefighters, police officers and emergency communications workers toiled together through the blizzard of 2005 to protect every citizen and family. I saw many dedicated town employees who worked round the clock to clear streets, provide medical relief, traffic control, and, yes, even to help deliver a baby. What a grateful feeling to be part of this wonderful group of people! We have such a reliable, stalwart workforce that braved elements to ensure the safety of our town's residents. Please let's thank these individuals for all their efforts. I'd also like to thank the RTM, Board and Commission members and all the school and town employees who have chosen public service. Together, our town is achieving remarkable success.

Thank you, Fairfield, for trusting us to do our best to provide solid results for the community. In 2005, we are ranked as one of the most livable, financially successful, sought-after towns in the entire nation by State magazines and national rating agencies. Our Administration has stimulated economic revitalization throughout town and has protected our town's resources. The public-private-non-profit partnerships we created are making Fairfield stronger and better. The agreements the RTM and our Administration have negotiated during the last few years to revitalize vacant properties have helped attract quality bookstores, retail shops, and restaurants to transform Fairfield Center into a destination. The joint partnerships we established with theater and movie foundations have expanded the arts to a depth and breadth never seen before. The economic advances we've undertaken along Commerce Drive and Kings Highway are already expanding our tax base. We are committed to continue working hard with property owners to transform idle factories like Exide and Fairprene into productive reuse. This will not only beautify our town; it will bring in significant new tax revenue. Fairfield's future is very bright.

We have improved our town infrastructure immensely by tackling every necessary building project not only for our own generation but the next. By renovating two high schools and Tomlinson, by opening superb schools at McKinley, Burr, and Ludlowe, by restoring our main Library, and by finishing town's wastewater facility, all with top-notch construction and cost-efficient operations, Fairfield's town assets are stronger and safer. This has made for a healthier environment and improved air quality at all sites. In 2003, I promised that every building project would come in on time and under budget. I am pleased to report that this promise has been fulfilled. With a Herculean effort by all, seven building projects are under budget by \$5 million. This historic achievement of bonding \$5 million less than RTM members authorized is a testament that: together, our town is achieving remarkable success.

Just as my Capital plan reduced spending by 30% from what was projected in 2001, this Administration's efforts to save money are reaping results. We saved hundreds of thousands of dollars this budget year through cost-savings. Timely bond re-financings saved \$300,000.

Reorganization of the IT department and streamlining the Town Garage has saved \$200,000 this year. The use of dual fuels, and early locking in of fuel oil before prices spiked, helped save \$150,000. Senior tax relief was reaffirmed so those on fixed incomes can remain in the homes they love. In two weeks, I will unveil a town budget that will again show my determination to keep spending down and taxes reasonable. Fairfield's finances are in great shape, as auditors and rating agencies have attested. Fairfield's future is very bright.

With all this activity, our town remains safe and strong. Our level of preparedness is among the top in the State as we secured additional hazmat trained officers and obtained more technical equipment for public safety. With the help of active citizens, I formed the first homeland security "Citizen Corps" in the State. Fairfield's Citizen Corps Council is working with public safety and health officials to foster knowledge about town security programs. In 2005, even more will be accomplished when town receives homeland security grant funds for equipment and training.

I intend to keep setting ambitious goals for bettering Fairfield. Among my goals this year, we will make even more efforts to preserve and protect residential neighborhoods. We will seek

improvements in traffic safety and traffic calming. Exciting new community-wide health initiatives will be pursued in 2005 with vigor. We must preserve the beauty and integrity of neighborhoods. I urge the RTM and Plan and Zoning Commission to seek better regulation of new road and subdivision applications. I'd like Boards to stop the demolition of existing houses when the sole development intent is to cut roadwork through where no road was meant to be. Some builders are just as concerned as residents who realize unrestrained development leads to congestion and negative impact on neighboring properties. This is why I advocate for the proposed zoning height amendment, which will hopefully soon become law, to alleviate uncharacteristic oversized home developments. One of the best ways to protect and maintain our town's beauty has been our open space program. The valuable acquisitions I've negotiated have enabled Fairfield to avoid over 150 subdivision building lots. If such houses had been built, they would have severely strained school and town resources. Town's open space program is achieving remarkable success.

The market value of each property we've saved is double to four times town's negotiated purchase prices. The Navy Housing property is the latest success, and this RTM's overwhelming approval saved town from an unwelcome duplex overdevelopment. I am proud this essential housing plan will provide more moderate, single family housing in town than before. Residents should know we are always looking for good ideas to protect town. I encourage citizens to call with ideas about preserving quality of life. With your help, Fairfield's future is very bright.

Denise Dougiello and I recognize traffic calming and safety initiatives are a citizen concern. Traffic calming is an effort to slow speeding along busy residential streets and to improve pedestrian safety. I am pleased our Police department has moved ahead on significant traffic enforcement efforts. To build upon this, town officials and I have organized meetings with neighborhood representatives to pull together ideas for a pilot program involving traffic calming. Working with Town Engineering and Police departments, we hope to present proposals this spring.

I would like to commend our Health department for its excellent pro-active job implementing new programs. The successful flu clinics run during a time of worry demonstrate the caliber of our workforce. Government leaders have a responsibility as role models. I would like to help lead by

expanding nutrition and fitness programs. Those leading busy lives benefit from following good nutrition and fitness programs. In this regard, I am pleased to announce the establishment of a Fairfield Fitness Council which I will be forming with the Boards of Health and Recreation. I would like our school system, private fitness organizations and the medical community to be involved in this effort too. When I persuaded town bodies to move our recreation center to a permanent home at Mill Plain road, my hope was more residents would find opportunities to join. Resident memberships have risen nicely at the Postol Recreation Center. My hope is that more public access to nutrition and health programs will benefit many Fairfielders.

My goals for 2005 are carefully focused upon protecting and improving Fairfield. We are all neighbors and the more we do to help each other, the better off we all are. Together with everyone's efforts, Fairfield's government is achieving remarkable success. Fairfield's future is very bright indeed. Thank you so much for everyone's part to make it happen.