

Message from First Selectman Bindelglass ... Update for 6/5/2020



Good afternoon,

Since my last message, much has happened. In addition to the greatest public health issue in a century, we have all watched with horror as events unfolded starting with the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. I have had extensive discussions with Chief Doyle regarding the history of the Easton Police, our policies, our preparedness in the face of protests and demonstrations both peaceful and not. For those of you who did not see his piece in the Easton Courier, I want to excerpt some of what he said.

“The members and I of the Easton Police Department were deeply disturbed by the actions of the officers in Minneapolis. The actions by these officers and those officers that stood idly by are viewed as a failure of the morals, ethics, and standards of conduct they swore to uphold. The actions by the officers are inconsistent to a person’s given rights and Constitutional protections.

“Please be assured that I hold our officers to extremely high standards. Below is an excerpt from the Easton Police Department Policy Code of Ethics which guides our officers in the performance of their duties.

“It is the duty of each officer to respect and protect the rights guaranteed to each citizen by the constitution. No person may be deprived of constitutional rights because he/she is suspected of having committed a crime. The task of determining constitutionality of a statute lies with the court of proper jurisdiction. An officer who lawfully acts within the scope of his/her authority does not deprive persons of their civil liberties. He/she may within the scope of his/her authority make reasonable inquires, conducts investigations, and arrest on probable cause. However, when an officer exceeds his/her authority by unreasonable conduct, he/she violates the sanctity of the law which he/she is sworn to uphold.”

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Mr. Floyd’s family and are with our country and nation as a whole. Events like this should never happen, but we realize that they do all too often. As Americans we must address why they happen, and that is difficult. In Easton, we may love the beauty and to some extent the isolation of our town, but we are not insulated from what is happening around us. As always, my first concern is for our children who are seeing things that are difficult to explain and we must help them and allay their fears. Many of the issues at hand are hard to understand if you have been raised in a community like ours. For all of us I am certain there are a range of perspectives about some of the issues we face as a community and as a nation, and a healthy dialogue is always a good thing. I trust that that dialogue will be held respectfully and the chief and I are happy to participate in any forum.

While life continues to slowly become more normal, and we are on track for opening more of our town and state, we are still finding more people in our state testing positive and dying every day, and new manifestations of the virus in some of our children. One issue I struggle with is “moving up day” and graduation for our Staples and Keller students respectively. I feel terribly for our young people for all that they have been deprived of this year by the pandemic. I know that even a drive by ceremony would be uplifting to them and I know that some towns around us are doing this. Dr. Michos and I still have real concerns about the safety of such an event and we have advised the chairman of the Board of Education, the superintendent and the principals that we feel strongly that no such ceremony should be held. Please know that this is our best judgment, based on today’s conditions, and that we make this decision with the heaviest of hearts. In a similar vein the Fireman’s Carnival has been cancelled. Again this is a huge blow to Easton as it is one of our marquee events. We will miss it, but look forward to next year’s carnival which will be all the more special.

The budget has been finalized. The Final Budget is \$44,639,809 which is an increase of \$786,189 or 1.79%; this amount includes Region 9. Easton’s portion of the Region 9 budget is \$11,123,653 which is an increase of \$893,626 or 8.74% due to enrollment shift. Easton’s enrollment is currently 42.39% and is increasing to 45.68%. The overall Region 9 Budget is \$24,351,255 or .9% increase.

The mill rate was set at 31 which is a decrease of 1.06% from our current 31.33 rate.

A lot more has been coming out about plans for Phase 2 of the Connecticut’s reopening scheduled for June 20. We will have more details next week about camps, youth sports, etc.

I wish you all a happy, healthy and peaceful weekend.