

To: Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, Co-Chairs
Appropriations Committee

From: David Pinney, First Selectman
Town of Somers

Re: *Governor's Bill No. 828, Section 1(w)*

Date: February 17, 2009

CC: Members of the Appropriations Committee

I write to request that the Committee on Appropriations reject the proposal to remove \$12,000,000 from the state account for land protection, affordable housing, and historic preservation in each year of the state's next biennium budget, as presented in section 1(w) of Governor's Bill No. 828.

The Community Investment Act of 2005 established a \$30 deed recording fee that would be dedicated to open space and farmland preservation, affordable housing and preservation of historic properties. Having added this fee to the process of recording changes in the land records, it would be inappropriate to now turn it into a means of generating additional revenue for the General Fund of the state. More importantly, it would seriously undermine our capacity to work effectively to actively pursue the creation and maintenance of communities that provide high-quality places to live for the diversified population our state needs to be successful economically and otherwise.

The Town of Somers has made good use of these funds. We partnered with the Northern Connecticut Land Trust to acquire two large parcels of land that represent considerably more value to the region as open space than as housing developments. Funds for these acquisitions came from the Land Trust, the Town and most importantly, from grants supported by these dedicated state funds now being considered for transfer to the General Fund.

Somers is also looking forward to support from these funds in helping make possible the conversion of an abandoned mill in town into attractive housing within range of and affordable to a diversity of incomes. The many conversations I have had with prospective developers of this mill property always indicate the need to bring in outside funds targeting historical preservation and affordable housing as part of what it will take to make a project financially viable. Somers is not well situated to be the site of increased economic productivity for the state, but we can be an attractive and affordable place to live for the workers needed to support increased economic activity.

Difficult decisions winnowing out finding a way to fund what we need to do from what we would like to do if we could afford it clearly need to be made while riding out these challenging economic conditions. One of the needs we cannot lose sight of is the need to build and maintain strong communities where the people who are and will build the future of our state can live. The Community Investment Act created funds that very effectively support strengthening our communities by leveraging resources from public and private sources. The funds should continue to be dedicated to these purposes.