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First Selectman

STATE OF CONNECTICUT • COUNTY OF TOLLAND  
INCORPORATED 1786

# TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2013

## AGING COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

### TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 6397, AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR A SENIOR CENTER IN THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON.

Good Morning Chairman Ayala, Chairman Serra, Ranking Member Kelly, Ranking Member Adinolfi and Aging Committee Membership. My name is Maurice Blanchette, First Selectman of the Town of Ellington in Representative Christopher Davis' district, and split between Senator Gary LeBeau's and Senator Anthony Guglielmo's districts --- and I am thankful for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 6397, An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State for a Senior Center in the Town of Ellington.

The Town of Ellington is looking to build its own Senior Center. We've been living in two bays of a strip mall for our Senior Center for 18 years. On February 14, 2012 our voters at referendum approved a new Senior Center on town-owned land, authorized \$2,500,000 for the project, and authorized our Permanent Building Committee (PBC) to make it happen. Unfortunately, the best bid on the project would have resulted in a cost overrun on the project by \$400,000 or more. In accordance with its authority, the Permanent Committee proceeded to move forward on two fronts.

At its meeting on February 19 of this year, the PBC approved a construction bid of \$2,069,800 for a shell of the Senior Center, with the understanding that many of the cuts might be added piecemeal over the coming years; we all recognize that this is much less than desired, but it will get the shell up in a reasonable amount of time, before construction costs further escalate. Among the cuts that we will be left with are the following:

1. A covered portico at the main entrance;
2. A cupola, considered both to make the building more attractive and to provide an additional interior natural light source;
3. A sliding partition to divide the main activity room;
4. All kitchen equipment;
5. All furniture and fixtures;
6. A sidewalk from the main entrance to Maple Street;
7. A reduction in parking spaces and an exit lane;
8. A reduction in the grading of siding from Commercial Grade to Builder's Grade;

9. A reduction in the grade of windows;
10. A reduction in the R value of the insulation;
11. Automatic or Handicap door;
12. Generator;
13. Telephone system;
14. Security system;
15. Exterior signage;
16. Landscaping; and
17. Millwork for counters and cabinets.

At the same February 19 meeting this year, the PBC approved a request to the Board of Selectmen for an additional appropriation in the amount of \$500,000 to finish the project in accordance with the concept brought to the voters in February 2012. The process for this began last night when the Board of Selectmen approved the additional appropriation. If the Board of Finance also approves, that additional appropriation will go to Town Meeting for a hearing and then to referendum for approval.

In spite of those who tell us that coming here today is too late, we seek to leave no stone unturned in securing funding to finish the project as it was meant to be, and not a shell of what could have been. To that end, I ask that you support House Bill 6397; if we get approved for that, we can work to incorporate that into our planning and get a finished Senior Center instead of just a shell. Regardless how this develops, thank you for your consideration and time.