

March 19, 2014

Joint Committee on Planning and Development

Reference: Raised H.B. No. 5541 An Act Concerning the Thompsonville Fire Department

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

I am requesting a modification to Bill 5541 referencing Section 2. Section 4 of number 460 of the special acts of 1935.....etal as follows:

Section 2 (b): delete the following wording in lines 2 and 3--"that proposes an increase of more than three per cent over the prior year's budget "

The Declaration of Independence states "... government is instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." A minimum 3% increase annually, without consent of the voters, will place additional long term debt burden on Thompsonville taxpayers, increase mill rates, and further jeopardize revitalization of Thompsonville.

It is important to know that the Fire Department recently approved a \$3.5 million bond issue for a new fire station. This action already placed a tax burden on homeowners for 20 years. The Town has imposed a new sewer tax and I am sure homeowners will receive another increase for the Board of Education. Food prices, utilities, and taxes continue to rise, forcing taxpayers to realign their budgets, in order to pay for these increased costs.

I am not aware of any municipality, city, or private entity that gives a perpetual 3% automatic increase? I worked in government to age 68, received no salary increase for 4 years, and had to accept mandatory higher medical deductibles and premiums. My social security monthly check did not increase in 2014 because of the ACA (Obama care) which increased Medicare premium payments.

Thompsonville is no longer an industrialized area. Homes were originally built for working class people when Bigelow Sanford Carpet Company was employing 9000 employees and there was a viable business community in the center of Thompsonville. Bigelow was the basic reason why the TFD existed. That day is pass and its passing is the root cause of what is happening. Only 19% of the homes are owner occupied, there is no incentive for people to buy homes, and few businesses exist in downtown Thompsonville. Yet, the Fire District continues to spend money like it exists in a 1960's vacuum. This wording is a death knell for people who own and/or live in their homes and short shifts the Thompsonville taxpayer. The District is run like a fiefdom and taxpayers are the working serfs.

This is unreasonable and ridiculous wording that will set a precedent for all Connecticut Fire Departments to request. Do you want this to happen to your constituents?

On another note, please be aware that the TFD 2012 audit provided to me by the Fire Chief was unsigned. I am not aware of any government entity or business that accepts an unsigned audit. Expenditures included a purchase of a Ford Explorer, with an outstanding loan to 2016 in the amount of \$134,124 (page 23 of the 2012 unsigned audit). Was this item competitively bid? I worked in government for over 20 years, ran million dollar budgets, was required to competitively bid all needs, including consultants, and was audited constantly. The Thompsonville Fire District manipulates government legislation when it is to their benefit, and I believe, does not conform to procurement or other rules required for a government agency. Nor does it conform to affirmative action guidelines.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Caroline Cogtella, homeowner 5 Main Street, Thompsonville, CT. 06082.