



MADISON CAMPUS

107 Bradley Road
Madison, CT 06443
860•399•8080 TEL
203•245•5181 FAX
203•318•5246 FAX

WESTBROOK CAMPUS

1356 Old Clinton Road
Westbrook, CT 06498
860•399•8080 TEL
860•399•3103 FAX

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OFFICERS

Barbara Segen Gould, M.B.A.
Chairperson

Alan Sylvestre, C.F.P., C.R.P.C.
Vice Chairperson

Kevin Butler, M.B.A.
Treasurer

Stephen M. Merz, FACHE
Deputy Treasurer

Richard C. Rowlenson, Esq.
Secretary

Donald W. Anderson, Esq.
Deputy Secretary

MEMBERS

JoAnne DePalma

Sherree DiLillo

Colin J. Foster

Thomas Girard

Marietta S. Lee

Krista Maruszewski C.M.C.A.

T. James Newton

Robert Ostroff, M.D.

Dennis N.T. Perkins

Steven Siegelau, Esq.

Roger C. Stikeleather

DIRECTORS EMERITUS

Jacques Brunswick

Tondra Lynford

Elena Patterson

Kent Scully

Steve Souza

William Terribile

Helen K. Bosch, M.S.
Chief Executive Officer

March 9, 2015

From: Robert Keefe- Operations Manager, Vista Vocational & Life Skills Center

To: The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee

Senator John W. Fonfara

Representative Jeffrey J Berger

Re: Testimony regarding elimination of the Community Investment Act

Distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to address the proposed budget cuts affecting the Community Investment Act funds.

On behalf of Vista Vocational & Life Skills Center, I urge you to reconsider making cuts to the Community Investment Act funds.

Vista Vocational & Life Skills Center is a post-secondary program providing services and resources to assist individuals with disabilities achieve personal success. Vista's students and members have an array of neurological disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorders, pervasive developmental delay, acquired brain injury, seizure disorder, attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities. Vista is a Chamber of Commerce member in the shoreline towns from Old Saybrook to Branford and participates in a number of collaborative interagency programs. Vista students and members are encouraged to be active within their chosen home communities, working, volunteering and participating in a wide range of community activities.

Vista's Captain Joseph W. Spencer House, located at 1356 Old Clinton Road in Westbrook, is listed on the State Historic Registry and serves as the program's Dormitory and Residence Hall.

The Captain Spencer House is situated in the central part of Westbrook next to the town green and was built c. 1850 by Captain Joseph Whittlesey Spencer a noted figure in American maritime history. The building, a village landmark, is a fine representation of a Connecticut sea captain's house in a coastal town known for its maritime character.

The Captain Spencer House provides room and board for students enrolled in Vista's entrance program. The facility is also the main hub for staff responsible for providing 24 hour on call support and transportation services for entrance program students and over 190 outreach members who live in the surrounding communities.

Presently the building does not offer ADA accessibility which both limits the acceptance of physically handicapped students who might otherwise wish to enroll in Vista's entrance program and accessibility for visitors with mobility issues.

The building is overdue for some greatly needed renovation work which will include making the majority of the building accessible according to ADA guidelines, renovating worn bathrooms, reconfiguring bedroom space to eliminate overcrowding and updating fire alarm and intercom systems to increase the safety of the visual and hearing impaired occupants. These upgrades will ensure the occupants will have safer more comfortable accommodations and preserve the integrity of the Captain Spencer House so it can continue to be a defining historic anchor for Westbrook's town Center area.

Through the State Historic Preservation Office, Vista has been the recipient of three recent grants. Two Survey and Planning Grants were awarded, one of which was used to offset the cost of hiring an architectural consultant to pursue the historical designation for the Captain Spencer House and the other used towards architectural fees in hiring an architectural firm to draw up plans and specifications for the proposed renovations to the building. Vista was also awarded a Historic Preservation Grant in January which will be used to defray the cost of the renovation project.

Although renovation needs for the Captain Spencer House have been in the planning stage for some time, these plans were put on hold due to the expense they would incur. The project would still be in the discussion stage if the grant money awarded by the State Historic Preservation Office had not been received.

The renovations to the Captain Spencer house are planned to be completed in three phases over the course of three years. Construction on the first phase will begin in May. The ability to attain Historic Restoration Fund grants for the next two construction phases will be a determining factor in Vista's ability to see the project through to completion.

Besides offering funds for and guidance in the repair of a historic building, a State Historic Preservation Office project such as the Captain Spencer House renovation project will benefit the local community through the preservation of a highly visible historic resource that adds richness to the community. The town of Westbrook will be assured of keeping a part of its past history intact for the foreseeable future. The renovated property will continue to add to the architectural and visual richness of the town and provide the kind of interesting and attractive landmark that will improve the living environment for the town's residents and help create a strong sense of space.

The Statewide community will be impacted by the Captain Spencer House project through the labor intensive construction jobs the project will create. These jobs will generate revenue with the associated salaries, wages and profits staying in Connecticut.

Thank you
Bob Keefe
Operations Manager
Vista Vocational & Life Skills Center Inc.