

Town officials: Southington is weathering the storm

By ED HARRIS
Editor

Southington is still adequately weathering the rough economic conditions, but there are some potential rough patches ahead, town councilors said last week.

"The poor economy continues," said Town Council Chairman Ed Pocock III. "In Southington we're doing quite well, compared to other parts of the country."

Pocock made his remarks, along with the other town councilors, during an annual State of the Town dinner hosted by the Southington Chamber of Commerce. Each town councilor used the dinner to talk about which committees they served on and how they planned to face the various issues the town faces in the next two years of their terms.

Investment in the town, including infrastructure like sewers and the water pollution control plant, making the

town friendlier towards businesses and the park systems were some of the main issues addressed.

Pocock said the town had an \$805,000 budget surplus from last year which was added into the unassigned fund balance. The unassigned fund balance now holds \$13.5 million and helped earn the town an AA+ rating from Standards and Poors. The town has also used substantially less from its contingency fund in comparison to this time last year, Pocock said.

However, the recent revaluation, which saw residential and personal property drop about eight percent, is a bit of a concern. The councilors noted the mill rate would have to be adjusted because of this.

"The goal is to maintain what we have," Pocock said, talking about town services.

Long term debt is another issue that the town will

have to tackle, Councilor John Barry said.

"There is a problem of long term debt," Barry said. "It is something that has to be repaid."

Barry said the town has bonded \$62 million dollars and another \$48 million, mostly in relation to the middle school renovations, on the horizon.

Another issue that will potentially cost the town millions is a wastewater mandate requiring towns to remove large amounts of phosphorus from its wastewater. The town is currently looking to work with other communities, but if things do not work out, the town could have to spend anywhere from \$40,000 to several million, depending on final regulations.

"This is one of the largest unfunded mandates the town may ever face," said Town Councilor John Dobbins, the head of the council's sewer committee.

Councilor Chris Palmieri talked about how the Apple Harvest Festival had become self sufficient this past year and how that would alleviate the need for town funds

towards the event.

"Our goal from since the beginning has been to be self-sufficient," Palmieri said, adding that the festival turned enough profit where a

\$5,000 donation was made to the Community Services Department. "That is just an example of how every little bit can help give back to the town."

Livestrong: Program is successful

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the pilot participants, said a lot of the training was more hands on and monitored than normal training is typically. This is because of the different treatment levels of those involved in the program. Some are survivors and others were undergoing chemotherapy and battling cancer while taking part in the program.

"They're very inspiring,"

Prus said of the 12 participants.

Livestrong at the YMCA, launched in 2008, is designed to improve the health and day-to-day quality of life for the country's growing population of cancer survivors and their families. To date, approximately 6,000 cancer survivors have participated in the program nationwide.

Jean Rose, a participant of Southington's pilot program and a 10 year breast

cancer survivor, enjoyed the program.

"It's really beneficial," she said, adding that the program had offered support and comfort. "It's been very rewarding."

Rose also noted that the 12 participants had bonded and worked together over the course of the program. Other participants echoed this idea.

"We're a team," Rose said. "We are family."

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