

For Immediate Release

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Schwager Votes Against Divisive Appointment of Gayle Corrigan as East Greenwich Town Manager

East Greenwich, RI – At tonight’s Town Council meeting, Councilor Mark Schwager voted against the appointment of Gayle Corrigan as permanent Town Manager for East Greenwich citing her divisive and harmful tenure.

Remarks of Councilor Mark Schwager as delivered:

During my last year on this Council, I’ve seen East Greenwich transformed – and not for the better.

East Greenwich is a very special place. People who grew up in town, or came to live here as adults, definitely do not just have East Greenwich as their mailing address; they roll up their sleeves and dive into the community. Our small town has a wealth of talent and energy among our residents and an amazing diversity of community based organizations. Just about everyone with an 02818 zip code is involved in our town in one way or another.

We are usually a close knit town, but now I see a divided community with a town leadership that is not responsive to its citizens and that has a hard time listening to the community and seeking compromise.

I share in the manager’s concerns surrounding a number of problems in town government that were brought to light over the past year. But every town has problems, and every town can improve its local government. Identifying problems is only the first step; the other necessary skill is building a team and engaging the public to implement real solutions. And in this regard, the Town Manager has failed. Rather than working collaboratively to solve the challenges we face, the manager and the Council majority have resorted to tactics that alienate and discredit valued community members, the school committee, our public employees, and members of the local press. The town has also used its website, list-serve and mailings to put out one sided information.

We are drowning in litigation and incurring hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal costs; our negotiations with our fire department are at a standstill; our Council has been found in violation of the Open Meetings Act seven times, our town manager faces two ethics complaints, employee morale is down, our town’s statewide reputation has been damaged.

And now we have a town budget that reduces Town Services through unfilled positions and is paying for town and school operating expenses by raiding \$1million from the town's emergency fund, and potentially creating an ongoing structural deficit.

East Greenwich has a strong sense of community. We have respect for our neighbors who live here and for the people who work here. We have a history of coming together to solve the challenges we face, and we must again pull together as a community. This is not a partisan issue. Several of my Republican colleagues have stated they feel that choosing a new Town Manager is an opportunity to move forward, away from the present polarization and divisiveness caused by this administration.

So now is the time to act. We need to rebuild the trust and support of the community. We need a new Town Manager, and we need a new direction for the East Greenwich Town Council.

I vote no on this motion.

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