

Statement from East Greenwich Town Council President Suzanne Cienki

Incorrect cost calculations. Misleading reporting. Cronyism and nepotism. Unapproved agreements. Improper loans. Discriminatory hiring practices.

We continue to uncover issues that have been quietly plaguing this town for years. From 2000-2015 East Greenwich had a 1.3% population increase ([Exhibit 1](#)) – merely 166 residents – yet, the tax levy imposed on its residents has increased 87% from \$29.7 million to \$55.4 million ([Exhibit 2](#)).

Here is a short list of what we have uncovered so far:

- The former fire chief and former town manager informed the Town Council in February, 2016 that they negotiated a labor contract with an “estimated net contractual impact” of \$165,221 ([Exhibit 3](#)). This information is not supported by the facts. The annual costs of the 2016-2019 fire union contract far exceeds \$165,221, based on overtime costs alone.
- Since becoming a town department in 2013, the fiscal impact to the town for the two consecutive fire contracts has been \$4.3 million ([Exhibit 4](#)). That cost will continue to escalate unless structural changes are made to department operations.
- The former fire chief and former town manager informed the Town Council that they negotiated a labor contract with the firefighters 2% annual raises ([Exhibit 3](#)). Not true. There were annual raises over 20% embedded in the contract ([Exhibit 5](#)).
- The fire union president and former town manager then signed an agreement to keep 2 positions open, which opened the door to additional overtime costs. This agreement was never presented to, nor approved by the Town Council ([Exhibit 5](#)).
- When the former fire chief was asked to identify the cause of increasing overtime costs, the response was short staffing. They are short staffed because they signed an unapproved agreement to KEEP themselves short staffed.
- The former fire chief told the Town Council that the phase out of the “floater” position would cost \$30,000 annually ([Exhibit 3](#)). So far, this fiscal year, the cost for firefighter overtime has averaged \$14,200 a WEEK ([Exhibit 6](#)).
- The fire union, the former fire chief and former town manager let a hiring list expire, full of qualified and diverse candidates, so they could hire 6 of their friends and family from other towns ([Exhibit 5](#)).
- The former town manager and fire union president signed an agreement, never presented to, nor approved by the Town Council, to give the 6 friends and family a nearly 40% increase in step pay and overall compensation. Compensation more than what anyone on the prior list would have received ([Exhibit 5](#)).
- An open bank account for the Fire Department with signatories from the former fire district was never reported or addressed by the previous administration. No one knew about the account and there was no oversight or accountability for the account.
- The former town manager gave a \$50,000 interest-free loan to a private organization without authority or making any effort to collect repayment ([Exhibit 7](#)).

- The prior administration failed to identify or address the School Department's emerging structural deficit, which raised the state auditor general's attention in December, 2016.

The East Greenwich Town Council is charged with the larger responsibility of identifying and correcting the many errors of the past, most of which were made without our knowledge or date back further than our time on the Town Council.

We are moving forward to get the Town back on the right path.

As Town Council President, I encourage my colleagues to join me in renewing our commitment to providing the Town with greater fiscal stability and governing the Town with greater transparency. Let's shine the light towards a better future.