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Joint Statement of the East Greenwich School Committee and East Greenwich Town Council on \$150 million school building project

The East Greenwich Town Council and the East Greenwich School Committee are the two governing bodies that keep our town moving forward. These are separate bodies under the law, each with its own statutory authority the responsibility to work on behalf of the community to support municipal interests, sound financial management and the educational needs of the public schools. Our Joint Meeting tonight is required under state law as part of the budget preparation for our 2025 Town budget. This joint meeting is an opportunity for the School District and Town to update each other and the community on where we are and where we are going with our financial plans.

And this setting also provides an opportunity for the School Committee and Town Council to update each other and the community on where we are and where we are going on the \$150 million School Master Facilities Project that was overwhelmingly approved by voters this past November.

On Thursday, January 25, the School Building Committee took a major step to advance the project by unanimously recommending the proposed plan to the School Committee and Town Council. The plan includes a new 1st through 5th grade school at Frenchtown Elementary, an extensive addition/renovation and transition to a 1st through 5th grade school at Hanaford Elementary, a significant addition/renovation at East Greenwich High School, and a renovation at Meadowbrook to convert it to an Early Childhood Education Center for pre-K and K students. On Wednesday January 31, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve and endorse the project.

The Town Council has yet to approve the project. The approval was delayed pending a mutually agreeable Town Ordinance. This ordinance will detail how the educational,

design, and cost components of the project will be managed after our application is approved by The Rhode Island Department of Education.

A draft ordinance was proposed by the Town Council in January. In response to concerns with the initial ordinance language, Superintendent Ricca - acting within his statutory authority, and with the full knowledge and support of the School Committee - sought clarity from RIDE regarding governance and oversight of the project.

To address these concerns, and settle on the final language of the ordinance quickly, the School Committee and Town Council each met separately in closed session to determine what they wanted in the ordinance to ensure the project was properly managed and governed.

The School Committee designated Chair Alyson Powell and the Town Council chose VP Michael Donegan to meet together, each with support from our legal counsels, to represent the interests of our groups, and draft an ordinance that meets the needs of each body.

Working together they ultimately reached an agreement on the language of the ordinance.

The Town Council will review the new proposed ordinance agreement in closed session after this Joint Meeting. It will then schedule a meeting on Wednesday for a vote to approve the submission of the School Construction Master Plan Stage 2 Application to RIDE

This is a big project. Every East Greenwich Resident is going to have a stake in this: they are investing their money, they will put up with several years of construction projects, there are going to be many meetings of public officials, town staff and town residents. And despite everyone's best efforts, there are likely to be some disputes before the opening ribbons are cut. But our community is capable of doing big things, as long as we work together to maintain the public's trust.

The School Committee and Town Council understand this. We did not become elected officials to gain status or power. We are your friends and neighbors, and we are committed to public service and to maintaining this public trust. We are optimistic that together, the School Committee and Town Council will be successful in bringing this transformational project to life for East Greenwich. This is an exciting project that will have a major positive impact on our community for decades to come. It is time to move it forward together.