



For Immediate Release  
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## **Statement by Mayor Harkins on FY 2011 Budget Approval**

**Stratford**— Mayor John A. Harkins today said that the FY 2011 budget approved by the Town Council is the first step forward in getting Stratford's financial house in order. In a bi-partisan 7-3 vote, the Council approved the vast majority of the budget document proposed by the Mayor in March, making minor adjustments\*\*\*.

“The budget approved by the Council this evening is, in a word, honest,” said Mayor Harkins. “It does not make promises of revenue we know will not materialize, maintain a workforce that the taxpayers can no longer afford, or defer the costs of previous commitments for the sake of political expediency. It recognizes that economic development is crucial to lowering the long-term property tax burden on residents and requires investment immediately. The choices made tonight, though painful and no doubt unpopular, are the first necessary steps in the path to fiscal responsibility for our community.”

The Town Council's approved budget enacts the Mayor's recommendations for reductions in police and public works personnel, while adopting the Mayor's recommendation to restore the position of Economic Development Director.

Mayor Harkins said that to relieve future pressure on taxpayers, the Town must reduce its labor and legal costs. “This budget confronts the enormity of the burdens that employee benefits and legal defense places on the taxpayers,” continued Harkins. “We cannot, and this budget does not, shirk the responsibility for commitments and expenses already incurred. It is upsetting that the vast majority of the mill rate increase contained in this budget will pay for contractually obligated labor costs and defending the town from the poor decisions of the past. However, I am committed to reducing these expenditures in the next four years through aggressive legal cost containment and by rationalizing employee compensation and benefits with that of the average taxpayer.”

The Mayor also praised the Council for acting in a bi-partisan fashion to write and approve the tax and spending plan for the next fiscal year. “This Council proved tonight that cooperation and civility in government are possible,” he said. “Not only was the budget approved with members of both political parties, but the entire budget debate was orderly, respectful, and free from the vitriol of years past. This, more than anything else, shows just how far Stratford has come in a few short months.”

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