



TOWN OF STRATFORD

News Release

For Immediate Release
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Mayor Harkins Lauds Council Action To Reduce Legal Costs

STRATFORD— Mayor John A. Harkins today lauded the Town Council’s swift action to give enhanced settlement authority for the Town Attorney’s Office in an effort to reduce the Town of Stratford’s legal expenses. The Council voted 8-1 to give the Town Attorney the authority to negotiate, with Mayoral consent, out of court settlements of up to \$50,000 for legal actions filed against the Town of Stratford.

“The Town Council’s action shows that they have heard the same voices of Stratford residents as I have who are sick and tired of throwing money away on needless legal costs,” said Mayor Harkins. “By allowing the Town Attorney to settle more cases in a timely fashion before going to trial, we will be able to clear the backlog of pending cases and claims and substantially cut the billable hours the Town accumulates. This will save the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars over the next several years.”

Town Attorney Tim Bishop, who drafted the ordinance revisions as part of his ongoing efforts to reduce that office’s operating costs, told the Council that this ordinance change would have saved taxpayers approximately \$200,000 in Fiscal Year 2010.

Mayor Harkins also noted that while the Town Attorney has been given enhanced flexibility in these relatively small legal claims, significant checks and balances remain in place to protect taxpayers. “While this ordinance revision removes direct Council approval for certain cases, the Town Attorney has not and will not be given a blank check. The Mayor must sign off on all settlements as the fiduciary authority of the Town, and may reject any proposed settlements. The Town Council must approve the appointment of the Town Attorney and in so doing, must consider his or her discretion in these matters. Finally, the Town Council will receive a report of all cases settled under this ordinance each month, and may rescind the Town Attorney’s settlement authority by ordinance at any time.”

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