

Branford RTM

Republican caucus

Branford, CT

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BRANFORD RTM REPUBLICAN CAUCUS CALLS ON FIRST SELECTMAN 'UNK' DAROS TO HOLD THE LINE ON TAXES

Branford, February 3, 2009: First Selectman 'Unk' DaRos declared to Branford Eagle reporter, Marcia Chambers on January 14, 2009, "If ever there was a year to bring a contract to arbitration, this was the year, especially given anticipated state cutbacks in education and other monetary factors the town faces." Unfortunately, Selectman DaRos' strong words came **after** the RTM meeting in which the Branford teachers' contract passed by a 19 – 7 margin.

The Branford RTM Republican Caucus was stunned by these remarks, given that DaRos said nothing about the contract **before** the vote, either in his own Democratic caucus or at the RTM meeting, and given that DaRos has never hesitated to express his views.

The vast majority of RTM members who expressed their thoughts felt 'we are held hostage by the specter of binding arbitration' according to RTM Representative Pam Fowler (R-4) 'which is why I reluctantly voted yes for the contract' recalling the rejected Administrators' contract of 2006 which never came back to the RTM for review due a loophole in the binding arbitration law. Scott Thayer (D-5) and many other Democrats expressed similar views.

In the same week when hundreds of thousands of new layoffs were announced nationwide, RTM members asked BOE Chairman Frank Carrano, who is also the Branford Democratic Town Committee Chairman and former head of the New Haven teachers' union, if the contract could be renegotiated or wages frozen in order to preserve jobs. Carrano argued that the contract was fair and would not consider re-examining it in spite of the fact that other BOEs had negotiated contracts with smaller increases.

The BOE budget makes up over half of the Branford town budget and teachers' wages is the single largest line item in the budget.

The Branford RTM Republican Caucus respects and values our public school teachers and feels they were not given the opportunity to reconsider wage increases that may have prevented job cuts. With the 2008 inflation rate near zero, and the economy entering a period of severe and prolonged contraction, it is imperative that town taxes not be raised. Accordingly, we pledge not to support any budget that increases the present mill rate of 23.21.

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