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November 6, 2017

Dear Leigh:

As Chair of the East Greenwich Juvenile Hearing Board (“JHB”) I am writing to you to recommend re-appointment for myself, Tricia Colgan, Brian Warburton, and Leanne Zarrella. Stephanie Murphy is certainly also worthy of reappointment but my understanding is that she is asking to step aside.

I strongly encourage the Town Council to re-appoint all current members of the JHB. The current Board makeup is a good mix of personalities, interests, and perspectives. Together we all work cooperatively to address juvenile crimes that have already been committed, but, more importantly, to try to get to the root of the problem and encourage children and families to get necessary education, counseling, or other services in order to prevent future criminal behavior.

I have served on the JHB for approximately 3 years, and over the past year I have served as Chair. During that time we have addressed children ranging in age from 11 to 17, who have committed crimes such as drug offenses, assault, thefts, and even a “cyber” crime. We talk out the issues with the kids and their parents and try to focus on the drug, mental health, and relationship issues that are so often at the root of the problem. We have emphasized educational and active “punishments” such as reflective essays, community service, time at the Teen Center, referrals to mental health counseling, and drug testing. In many cases we require kids to return to our monthly meetings to discuss their progress and what they may have learned. Each member of the Board has been active in talking with the kids and parents, and then coming to a consensus on the outcome.

It is important to note the contributions of two individuals who are not on the Board but

serve the two most important roles – Sergeant John Carter and Bob Houghtaling. Sergeant Carter comes to every JHB hearing. He brings cases to the Board for consideration, works with the school resource officers to let us know how the child is doing in school (both academically and socially), and always reminds us that our purpose is not to punish, but to intervene and provide services to the child and community.

Bob Houghtaling comes to many JHB hearings as he is often invited children or their families. Often Bob is already working with the children and families that come before us and he is able to offer insight into what is going on at home. He is able to establish a trust with the juvenile that makes our job much easier, and he is able to check in with the kids much more frequently than the once-per-month JHB schedule would allow. He has a boundless energy and caring for the kids of East Greenwich. He is an invaluable resource to our Town.

One good reason to re-appoint all current JHB members is that we have gone through the growing pains of having four new members (Heather, Tricia, Leanne, and Brian) and learned how to work together than with Sergeant Carter and Mr. Bob. With full reappointment we can continue doing this good work.

Thanks,

/s/ Olin Thompson

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