

November 12, 2008

CITY OF HARTFORD
COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL
550 Main Street, Room 208
Hartford, CT 06103

Re: Statement on Further Cuts to Public Services

President Torres and Council Members;

My name is David Shoff, and until October 24, I worked in zoning administration as the City of Hartford's only urban planner. In fact, until I learned that I had been cut, I served in the Department of Development Services for 19-1/2 years working on a variety of "quality of life" issues impacting Hartford residents and businesses.

I am here tonight with members of CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, and all of Hartford's City workers, to share my concern about further cuts to public services. Though we all agree the current deficit demands action, it appears that the proposed "cuts by department" were made without consideration for the impact they might have on public health and safety, as well as economic development in Hartford.

My own case clearly illustrates this. After all, before I was cut, I was the only worker in the department certified by the Connecticut Association of Zoning Enforcement Officials. I was responsible for making sure residents and businesses complied with zoning regulations, and recently played an important role in making sure adult entertainment businesses were not sited near residential neighborhoods.

It seems obvious to me that after City taxpayers invested in my two decades of zoning enforcement training and on-the-job experience, it would have made more sense to tap into my extensive knowledge base. After all, an effective succession plan would have included me training a replacement to serve the City in zoning enforcement for the next generation.

I believe the decision to cut my position shows a lack of any results-based accountability. The reality is that for the past 6 years, Hartford has suffered from a shortage of public service professionals for oversight and regulation of numerous quality of life issues. Won't public service cuts discourage new businesses -- the kind that create strong new jobs in our City's neighborhoods -- from investing in Hartford?

Finally, I'd like to talk about the personal impact of being cut. I mentioned that I had 19-1/2 years of service to the city. That means I was just a few months short of retiring with a pension -- in other words, I was cut quite literally just before having a shot at real retirement security.

That leaves me with two kids in college, at out of state tuition rates, and bills that are already beginning to pile up. And though I imagined I'd likely have to continue working even after qualifying for 20 years of retirement service, I never imagined I'd have to start all over again at my age.

Thank you for hearing my voice on this critical matter today.

William David Shoff

Urban Planner - Zoning Enforcement Officer, Hartford Dept of Development Svcs
Member, CHPEA, CSEA/SEIU Local 2001

CC: Mayor Eddie A. Perez