OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

A. Candy Perez, Mayor

Winsted works – when we all work together! During this year there was a bi-partisan effort by Board of Selectman to deal with the issues facing the town.

In November of 2015, the BOS accepted the resignation of Town Manager Dale Martin and Robert Geiger was unanimously chosen to be the next town manager. Mr. Geiger immediately began discussions with staff and community members to continue to move current projects forward while welcoming new developers.

A bi-partisan budget was in place for 2015-16 that included a town planner that had an immediate impact as we applied for grants, streamlined the land use operations, and began to address blight. A BOS strategic plan was started in January. A Road Analysis by Lenard Engineering provided a plan for the repair of our local roads. Holabird bridge repairs preparations were underway with the State of Connecticut managing all of the pre-construction items with the construction to start in September of 2016. The West Road bridge construction bid was awarded during the spring and the work began toward the end of the summer of 2016. Suckerbrook Dam saw extensive repairs by the State of Connecticut in August. Lambert Kay came another step closer to clean up with all of the environmental concerns identified, asbestos removed, and bids sought for final clean up which should be finalized before the close of 2016.

The 2015-16 audit, while delivered late in July due to the school system issues, contained extremely good news. The fund balance was at a strong 16% of the budget, well above the guidelines in the adopted fund balance policy and recommended fund balance standards. This continues our efforts towards credit rating restoration. The Town of Winchester is in a stronger financial position than ever before.

Growth continues as well. The American Tort Museum, the only law museum in the United States dedicated to tort law, opened with hundreds of people attending the convocation. The American Mural Project matched a one million dollar challenge grant from the State of Connecticut thus assuring continued growth in the arts in Winsted for the future. The Community College hired a new President Michael Rooke as well as broke ground for the new Vet Tech building.

The school system was challenged in many ways and needed intervention by the State Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education through adopted state legislation, appointed a person to the position of State Receiver in August, replacing both the Superintendent and the local Board of Education. This person along with changes in the financial office and special education began to make the necessary changes to strengthen internal financial controls as well as providing a stronger education for all of the students. Additional funds through the state’s commissioner’s network also stabilized financial concerns. Perhaps the most significant achievement was moving the BOE Central Office to Town Hall. This has allowed for greater communication with the Town Manager, Superintendent, and business office personnel.

Several businesses began work in Winsted during this year. Mad Rover lofts began the renovation of the western building in the old Winsted Furniture complex. A new gas station Henny Penny
began the approval process necessary for the east side of town. The Northwestern Community College Veterinary Tech building construction began to replace their older aging building. Whiting Mills continued the improvements to the building with waiting lists for the spaces. Hartford Hospital continued their plans to develop a medical office building on the east side of town.

Further, the town budget for 2016-17 passed in May by forward-thinking community members, provides for modest growth, strengthens our foundations and continues the growth started in the last four years.

Most importantly, there were contributions by many community members both in small and large ways. The traditional parades hosted by important organizations continue to make Winsted one the best American small towns. We have the longest running Pet Parade, the Laurel Parade added a king to go along with the queen, the hard working Fire Department held their annual parade, and our Memorial Day parade continues to honor all of our service men and women. Others in the community spruced up our signs, mowed along the river banks, cleaned up Tatro’s pond, as well as in numerous other quiet ways.

We continue to strive to promote and improve quality of life, enhancing a sense of community, and preserving the integrity of our small-town identity and heritage as we move ahead to 2016-17.

A. Candy Perez
Mayor