**Public Call for Action: Seeking a Champion for Ethical Governance in New Haven**

As concerned citizens, we have prepared a formal ethics complaint regarding Mayor Justin Elicker’s actions in connection with the conveyance of state land to the APT Foundation. We believe these actions may violate New Haven’s Code of Ethics, as detailed in the letter below.

However, under current city rules, only certain city employees or public officials are eligible to submit such an ethics complaint. In a city dominated by one political party, with no elected opposition, this process discourages accountability and hinders transparency. We are therefore reaching out to any city employee or public official who is willing to stand up for ethical governance and submit this complaint on behalf of the public. Your identity and actions are protected under Connecticut’s whistleblower protection laws, which safeguard those who report misconduct in good faith from retaliation.

We are asking:

1) Will any city employee or public official step forward to submit this complaint and help ensure transparency and integrity in our city government?

2) If you are willing, please contact us confidentially.

*A Commitment to Reform*

*Steve Orosco, candidate for Mayor, pledges that if elected, he will open the ethics complaint process to all citizens, not just city insiders. He believes the current process is rigged and encourages bad behavior by shielding officials from public scrutiny. In a one-party town, this lack of accountability undermines public trust and good governance. Steve Orosco is committed to making the ethics process transparent, accessible, and fair—so that any citizen can raise concerns about city conduct.*

***Together, let’s demand ethical leadership and a government that serves all of New Haven.***

Read the Full Complaint

To: Municipal Ethics Commission

City of New Haven

Formal Complaint Regarding Ethical Violations by Mayor Justin Elicker in Connection with the Conveyance of State Land to the APT Foundation

Dear Members of the Municipal Ethics Commission,

I am submitting this formal complaint to bring to your attention actions by Mayor Justin Elicker that I believe constitute violations of the City of New Haven’s Code of Ethics, specifically Sections 2-826 and 2-827, in connection with the conveyance of state land at Sargent Drive to the APT Foundation, as authorized by Special Act No. 23-27 (Substitute House Bill No. 6939).

Summary of Complaint

Mayor Elicker acted improperly by advocating for the inclusion of the APT Foundation in the conveyance bill and facilitating a reversion clause that bound city officials to transfer city-acquired waterfront property to this private non-profit, under threat of the property reverting to the State if not transferred as stipulated. These actions, I believe, violate:

Section 2-826: Use of City Property

“No officer or employee shall use city property, funds, or services for personal benefit or for the benefit of others, except as provided by law.”

Section 2-827: Representation Before City Agencies

“No officer or employee shall appear on behalf of private interests before any city agency.”

Relevant Facts and Timeline

March 8, 2022: The APT Foundation withdraws its application for a clinic at 794 Dixwell Avenue after neighborhood opposition.

March 23, 2023: HB6939 is introduced in the Connecticut General Assembly, conveying parcels of state land to the City of New Haven. The bill, at this time, does not mention the APT Foundation nor does it include a reversion clause benefiting them.

March 24, 2023: A public hearing is held for HB6939. No testimony or substitute language references the APT Foundation or any requirement to convey the property to them.

March 29, 2023: The bill is amended to include a reversion clause specifically referencing the APT Foundation, requiring the City to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the APT Foundation within 60 days or risk the property reverting to the State.

March 30, 2023: Mayor Elicker is quoted in the New Haven Independent as actively working with the APT Foundation to secure a Long Wharf location, at a time when the reversion clause is already in place and obligates the City to convey the property to the APT Foundation.

May–June 2023: The amended bill passes both chambers of the General Assembly and is signed into law as Special Act No. 23-27.

Omission of Special Act Transmission to the Board of Alders

In addition to the above, it is critical to note that Mayor Elicker did not transmit Special Act No. 23-27—the conveyance bill that authorized the transfer of state land to the city—to the Board of Alders. By omitting this step, the Board of Alders was not made fully aware that the City could acquire this valuable waterfront property for only a nominal sum (one dollar plus administrative costs). A strict interpretation of the Special Act would allow New Haven to satisfy the State’s intent simply by placing an automotive facility or learning building on the site, thereby meeting the requirements of the CSCU System and the State of Connecticut. The lack of transparency in not sharing the conveyance bill with the Board of Alders appears deliberate and resulted in the Board not being presented with the opportunity to consider alternative public uses or to ensure the best interests of the city were served.

This omission facilitated a process whereby the property could be conveyed directly to a private entity, the APT Foundation, without full public or legislative scrutiny, and demonstrates clear favoritism.

Evidence of Favoritism and Intent

Further demonstrating Mayor Elicker’s intent to favor the APT Foundation, in a February 23, 2023 article in the New Haven Register, Elicker publicly stated his intention to obtain the land and transfer it to APT at cost, with the expectation that APT would pay for the building and any improvements to the property. This public statement, made prior to the insertion of the reversion clause in the Special Act, demonstrates an intent to benefit a specific private entity rather than to maximize public benefit or ensure a fair and open process.

The original approach was abandoned when the mayor recognized that the bill, as written, required two independent appraisals if the property was to be conveyed to a private entity. Despite this, the mayor had unilaterally decided to sell the property specifically to the APT Foundation, bypassing the standard Request for Proposals (RFP) process that is both customary and required by city statutes for the sale of city-owned property. The RFP process is designed to ensure transparency, fairness, and competition by allowing all interested parties an equal opportunity to submit proposals for the purchase and use of public assets. In this case, the property never went through the RFP process, effectively excluding other potential buyers and undermining established safeguards intended to protect the public interest.

To comply with the statutory requirements set forth in the Special Act and not give them the land for a dollar, the mayor arranged for two appraisals and ensured that the payment would go directly to the State. Publicly, the Mayor claimed that the City would purchase the property and then resell it to the APT Foundation at the same price. However, this assertion was misleading, as the City was eligible to acquire the property for a nominal sum—one dollar plus administrative costs—under the Special Act. The mayor’s plan was for the City to act merely as a pass-through, using APT’s funds at a single closing to transfer the purchase price directly to the State. This maneuver would have allowed the mayor to circumvent the need for Board of Alders approval to use City funds, thereby by passing established municipal procedures and oversight. However, due to significant public pressure and community concerns, the mayor has since paused the transaction altogether. These plans, as described here, are based on the mayor’s own explanation to a group of Hill residents, which was recorded.

Violations of City Statutes and Procedures

Mayor Elicker did not submit the APT Foundation development proposal to the Development Commission, as is standard for all economic conveyance transfers, but instead sent it directly to the City Plan Commission. This deviation from established procedure further suggests preferential treatment.

No City funds were allocated for the purchase, nor was there a special allocation by the Board of Alders. Instead, APT Foundation’s funds were to be used at closing, with the City serving merely as a pass-through entity.

Conclusion

Mayor Elicker’s actions, as outlined above, constitute a violation of Section 2-826 by using city property and process for the benefit of a specific private entity, and Section 2-827 by acting on behalf of private interests in dealings with city agencies. These actions also undermine public trust in the transparency and fairness of municipal processes, particularly as the Special Act’s reversion clause was inserted without public scrutiny or competitive selection, and as critical information was withheld from the Board of Alders.

I respectfully request that the Ethics Commission investigate this matter and take appropriate action to uphold the integrity of the City’s governance.

Thank you for your attention to this complaint.

Sincerely,

Steve Orosco Jason W. Bartlett