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East Granby moves to the future with new leadership that encourages business and residential growth

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As Election Day passes in East Granby so does the torch held for the past 12 years by First Selectman David Kilbon, as newly elected First Selectman James Hayden looks forward to settling in for his first term. This year has brought many changes and new faces to the town hall. Many of Kilbon's efforts in his last term as first selectman have been aimed at making the transition for the newly elected first selectman as smooth as possible. One of the changes is a newly created position, director of community development, which combines the duties of the town planner with those of economic development officer previously held by Bob Sproat.

Bradley International Airport has grown to become the second largest airport in New England, with over 7.4 million passengers passing through the terminals yearly. Bradley continues to grow as it implements the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved Master Plan. The airport has become the centerpiece of the I-91 transportation corridor, which has gained attention as a significant regional transportation corridor. The I-91 corridor links the metropolitan area of Springfield and New Haven, which have direct transportation connections that extend out to two major metropolitan cities, Boston and New York. The thriving concentration of development along the I-91 corridor from Springfield to Hartford is designated as the "Knowledge Corridor" in that it provides an accessible and desirable place to work and live. Many companies continue to locate and grow in this region, because there is a well educated pool of talent for their workforce to draw from. At the center of the "Knowledge Corridor" is Bradley International Airport which continues to be a desirable location for many companies, due to the close proximity to the airport and highways.

The Bradley Development League (BDL) is a public/private non-profit corporation representing four towns, East Granby, Suffield, Windsor, and Windsor Locks. The BDL focuses on economic development in and around the airport. Distribution companies and light manufacturing companies continue to locate and grow in and around the airport, providing tax revenue and jobs for those who live in the area. The BDL recently met with DECD and DOT commissioners to emphasize Bradley International Airport as an economic driver for the area towns around the airport. This inter-governmental communication helps lay the ground work for capitol improvement and economic development projects down the road that emphasize Bradley's potential for economic development and the need for better transportation connection to and from the airport.

As the "Western Gateway to Bradley" the town of East Granby looks to build upon the expansion and development around the airport. The town has conducted several studies relative to this aim beginning with a marketing study initiated in 1998 to look at the development opportunities and constraints in the community. Rte. 20 carries over 20 thousand vehicles a day and is a major connector to the airport and I-91 corridor. The town center has been situated at the center of East Granby at the intersection of Rtes. 20 and 187, while historically the housing stock has been

concentrated at the outskirts of East Granby. For this reason most town residents tend to shop and congregate in neighboring towns. In 2003 surveys were sent out to business and landowners to gauge their feelings about the town. The surveys showed the town received high marks in delivering a positive experience in most key categories. The town then sent out a second survey to residents to see where they did their shopping and to see what type of development they would like to see in their town. From these surveys came the 2004 update of the Plan of Conservation and Development, the master plan guiding development and future land use decisions within the town. The plan looked at many issues and concerns including the impact of the airport, preserving and conserving natural resources, and the development of a town center. Throughout the plan update it was clear that business owners and residents felt the development of a true town center would help expand and create business opportunities while providing local services to the town residents. The plan's major objective is to preserve the rural character of the town, while creating a quintessential New England village center that would serve as a proper backdrop to the small town and create a sense of place as the "Western Gateway" to the airport.

As East Granby moves to the future the new leadership will continue the efforts of our predecessors.

Our goal is to encourage business and residential growth while protecting and conserving our natural and cultural resources and to continue to enhance the character of our small town. Our predecessors have provided a good base for us to build upon. As the newly hired director of community development I look forward too carrying on their hard work.

Gary Haynes is director of community development for the Town of East Granby.

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