

# ***Bifurcation in Connecticut:***

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## ***A Status Report***



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# Scope of Work

In the spring of 2010, the Hebron Board of Selectmen addressed the possibility of bifurcating (i.e., separating) the municipal and local education budgets during referenda. Prior to forming a Charter Revision Commission to consider such a change, the Board voted to form a study committee to investigate what has been the impact of such an action on other Connecticut towns and provide the Board with a report of its findings. This document is the final report of the Bifurcation Study Committee (BSC).

## Overall Study Objectives

- Examine the pros and cons of bifurcation as expressed by other towns
- Understand the voting process when budgets are bifurcated\*
- Understand the impact of bifurcation on:
  - Bond rating
  - CMT scores
  - Property values
  - Education funding levels
  - Ability to set a mill rate
  - Voter turnout
  - Working relationship between the town and school system

\* For purposes of this report, our study of “bifurcation” refers only to voting on the local municipal budget separate from the local education budget; it does not refer to Regional School budgets.

### Acronyms used in report:

BOE – Board of Education  
BOF – Board of Finance  
BOS – Board of Selectmen  
BSC – Bifurcation Study Committee  
CCM – Connecticut Conference of  
Municipalities

CERC – Connecticut Economic Resource  
Center  
CIP – Capital Improvement Plan  
CMT – Connecticut Mastery Test  
ECS – Educational Cost Sharing

# Research Methodology

Research was primarily based on secondary data compiled from State public sources (see Appendix for sourcing and raw data).

The information in this report is based on those sources we determined to be the best available to us. Our understanding of our charge was to collect, synthesize and analyze the data and present it to the Board of Selectmen. We worked as a group to be objective, unbiased and accurate.

The quotes included in this report are taken directly from the returned surveys or from in-person or telephone interviews.

At our request, Lisa Hancock, Hebron's Finance Director provided an overview of town financing, (setting of the mill rate, municipal bonding, etc.)

We determined that we would seek feedback from all 169 towns. We tried, unsuccessfully, to enlist the services of a college intern to assist in phone surveys but were unable to do so as the semester had already begun. Given the limited research time available, the decision was made to survey the 169 towns by email.

Two surveys were developed, a survey (A) of 10 questions for those towns where we understood (based on the secondary data) that they bifurcated their budgets, and a second survey (B) of 4 questions to the remaining towns confirming that they did not bifurcate, but also asking if they had ever considered bifurcation. Surveys were submitted to Dr. Han Srinivasan from UCONN's School of Business for review of the format and suitability of the questions. (See Appendix for copies of all surveys and responses.)

We collected basic demographic data on all 169 towns in Connecticut. We received 65 responses to our surveys in varying degrees of completeness, 21 from towns that bifurcate, 44 from towns that do not.

Trying to synthesize the data into meaningful intelligence, the committee decided to focus on the towns most similar to Hebron, that is, those towns with a population between 7,500 and 15,000, with a classification from CERC (Connecticut Economic Resource Center) data as "Suburban," (vs. Urban Core, Urban Periphery, Wealthy, or Rural), that have a Board of Selectmen form of government and are governed by a charter.

We excluded 2 of the 11 towns that fit this criteria (Burlington and Woodbury) as they belong to Regional School Districts K-12 and have State-mandated bifurcated budgets. Of the remaining 9 towns, 5 towns bifurcate: Clinton, Cromwell, Ellington, Old Saybrook and Oxford, and 4 do not: Hebron, Granby, Orange and Suffield.

We supplemented the secondary data by interviewing officials in Ellington, Oxford, Old Saybrook, Clinton and Cromwell. These case studies reflect the views of the interviewees and provide a snapshot in time of how these towns, similar in many ways to Hebron, address the issue of bifurcation.

# Detailed Study Objectives Specified by Members of the Boards of Selectmen and of Finance

Below are answers based on the publicly available data. See Appendix for more detail.

1. When was bifurcation permitted by State Statute? 2004 per Naugatuck decision. (See Appendix for full text of decision.) We are assuming that the towns that were bifurcated prior to that were “grandfathered” and allowed to continue with their existing process.
2. How many towns have bifurcated their budgets? What should be a simple question to answer is not. Reliable sources are dated and inaccurate. To the best of our knowledge, 39 of CT’s 169 towns bifurcate their budgets, an additional 25 with K-12 school systems are bifurcated by State Statute. We are most confident of the 21 “yes” responses we received to our survey (A).
3. Of towns that once bifurcated, how many have put their budgets back together? One, Salem. The initiation of the lawsuit involving Naugatuck caused Salem to reverse their bifurcation decision and they have not revisited it since then.
4. What is the format for bringing bifurcated budgets to referendum? There are almost as many ways to handle this as there are towns. Here are some examples from different town charters stipulating the process.
  - ❖ If one question fails, both parts fail and go back for a re-vote (N. Stonington, Watertown).
  - ❖ If one question fails, only the failed part will go back for a re-vote (Colchester, Ellington, Milford, Weston).
  - ❖ The town will use the previous year's budget until the new budget passes (Ellington, Hamden, Milford, Weston, Watertown).See Appendix for detailed examples.
5. How often does a bifurcated budget fail, and what parts fail most often? No discernible pattern.
6. When one bifurcated budget fails, must all the elements of the budget pass in its entirety before funds can be released? Yes. What happens if part of the budget fails to pass by June 30<sup>th</sup>? State Statute §7-405 and §12-123 of the CT General Statutes dictate the process (see Appendix for text of Statutes as well as a legal opinion from Town Attorney, Donald Holtman, letter 1/7/11). Also individual towns’ charters outline the specifics of their procedures. A Charter Revision Commission would be advised to review charters of other towns that seem to have worked out an effective process, (see Appendix for examples).
7. What has happened to general government funding in bifurcated towns? In the limited survey response, it either remained the same or went down, but it appears from the comments and interviews that the economy or a major funding project has more impact on whether or not a budget fails or succeeds than the fact that the budgets are bifurcated.

## Detailed Study Objectives Specified by Members of the Boards of Selectmen and of Finance (continued)

8. How are revenues allocated? Which budget receives ECS and education-related state and federal revenues? [Bifurcation has no affect on ECS revenue allocation. \(See Appendix for details on current formula\).](#)

Between bifurcated and non-bifurcated towns, compare:

9. Per pupil expenditures
10. Student performance
11. Per capita general government expenditure
12. Per capita education
13. Property tax rates
14. Property values

[Bifurcation is only one possible variable influencing questions 9-14. The state of the economy overall, the particular experience of a town, \(i.e., the loss of a major taxpayer, the construction of a new school\) will have an impact. Our limited research did not indicate any significant changes due to bifurcation.](#)

# Bifurcation and a Town's Bond Rating\*

Bifurcation, by itself, appears to have little impact on a town's bond rating.

- The Bond rating process is based on 4 major criteria, (each of which includes multiple factors):
  1. Economic Strength
  2. Finance Performance and Flexibility
    - Appropriate fund balance reserves
    - Approved budgets--ability to fund and provide continuous services
    - Meeting budget goals--revenue and expenditures
    - Appropriate planning for capital improvements
  3. Debt
  4. Administration/Management Strategies
- Based on the above criteria, multiple referenda — whether in a bifurcated town or a non-bifurcated town — certainly has a negative impact on the score.
- The chart below shows the Bond Ratings of the 9 towns that are classified Suburban according to the CERC data, all have a Board of Selectmen form of government, population between 7,500 and 15,000 and have charters. The chart that follows shows the comparison of the three agencies that issue bond ratings for towns. (We used Moody's for our research as the data was readily available through CERC data sheets, however, please note that Hebron uses Standard & Poor's rating.)

## Bifurcated Towns

## Non-Bifurcated Towns

Orange	Aa2	Clinton	A1
Old Saybrook	Aa3	Cromwell	A1
Suffield	Aa3	Granby	A1
Ellington	A2	Hebron **	A1
		Oxford	A1

Presentation by Lisa Hancock, Hebron Finance Director (see Appendix for full presentation)

\*\* Hebron uses Standard and Poor's rating when issuing bonds; that rating is AA.

	Moody's	Standard & Poors	Fitch
Best Quality	Aaa	AAA	AAA
High Quality	Aa1	AA+	AA+
	Aa2	AA	AA
	Aa3	AA-	AA-
Upper Medium Grade	A1	A+	A+
	A2	A	A
	A3	A-	A-
Medium Grade	Baa1	BBB+	BBB+
	Baa2	BBB	BBB
	Baa3	BBB-	BBB-

# Key Findings

1. There are no definite trends. Bifurcation by itself has not had a significant effect on any of the issues we were asked to consider. Our analysis of the 169 towns confirmed the similarities between towns that are bifurcated and those that are not.
2. Several towns, both bifurcated and non-bifurcated, voiced concern that bifurcation could “divide” the town; we found no evidence to support this concern.

*“The advantage of separate Town/[Board of Education] BOE budgets is a somewhat greater opportunity for critical analysis. The disadvantage is a tendency to promote a ‘us vs. them’ mentality between the Town and the BOE.” First Selectman, Eastford*

*“It was discussed when the town moved from its annual town budget meeting to budget referendum in 2004 (Charter Revision) but dismissed — did not want to create animosity between the Town and BOE budgets.” Town Clerk, Branford*

3. In speaking with the town administrators of five bifurcated towns, we formed the impression that excellent, ongoing dialog between school and town officials was critical to coming up with workable budget solutions, thus reducing potential tensions between groups of voters and increasing the likelihood that the budgets would pass on the first round.

*“Bifurcation can work if there’s a clear understanding that we work together.” First Selectman, Old Saybrook*

4. The town officials we interviewed (whatever their personal feelings about bifurcation), as a whole, felt that bifurcation made their jobs easier in clarifying where changes to the budgets had to be made. They also felt that “advisory” questions on the ballots were NOT beneficial and only confused the issue.
5. Some of the questions we were asked to research (effect on property values, bonding, tax rate) we did not feel could be answered with any certainty that bifurcation was the only or primary reason for any changes to them. Some towns that have only recently bifurcated (such as Oxford) do not have enough history to be able to say what the effect has been, although their Finance Director pointed out that a town’s bond rating is almost certainly negatively affected by multiple attempts to pass a budget. Other towns that have “always” (i.e., 30+ years) been bifurcated couldn’t relate to that question as they have nothing to compare it to.
6. A common justification for bifurcation — reducing voting events and their attendant costs does not always happen. For example, in Watertown, even with bifurcation, it recently took 4 votes to get to a budget. Similarly in Old Saybrook, where bifurcation has been in place for many years, bifurcated budgets used to fail continually.

*“This last year it took three town meetings on the elementary school budget and that is the first time since I’ve been in town, which is 1986.” Town Clerk, Scotland*

(Such anecdotal responses would seem to validate our finding that a stressful economy rather than the fact of bifurcation has much to do with voting patterns.)



## Key Findings (continued)

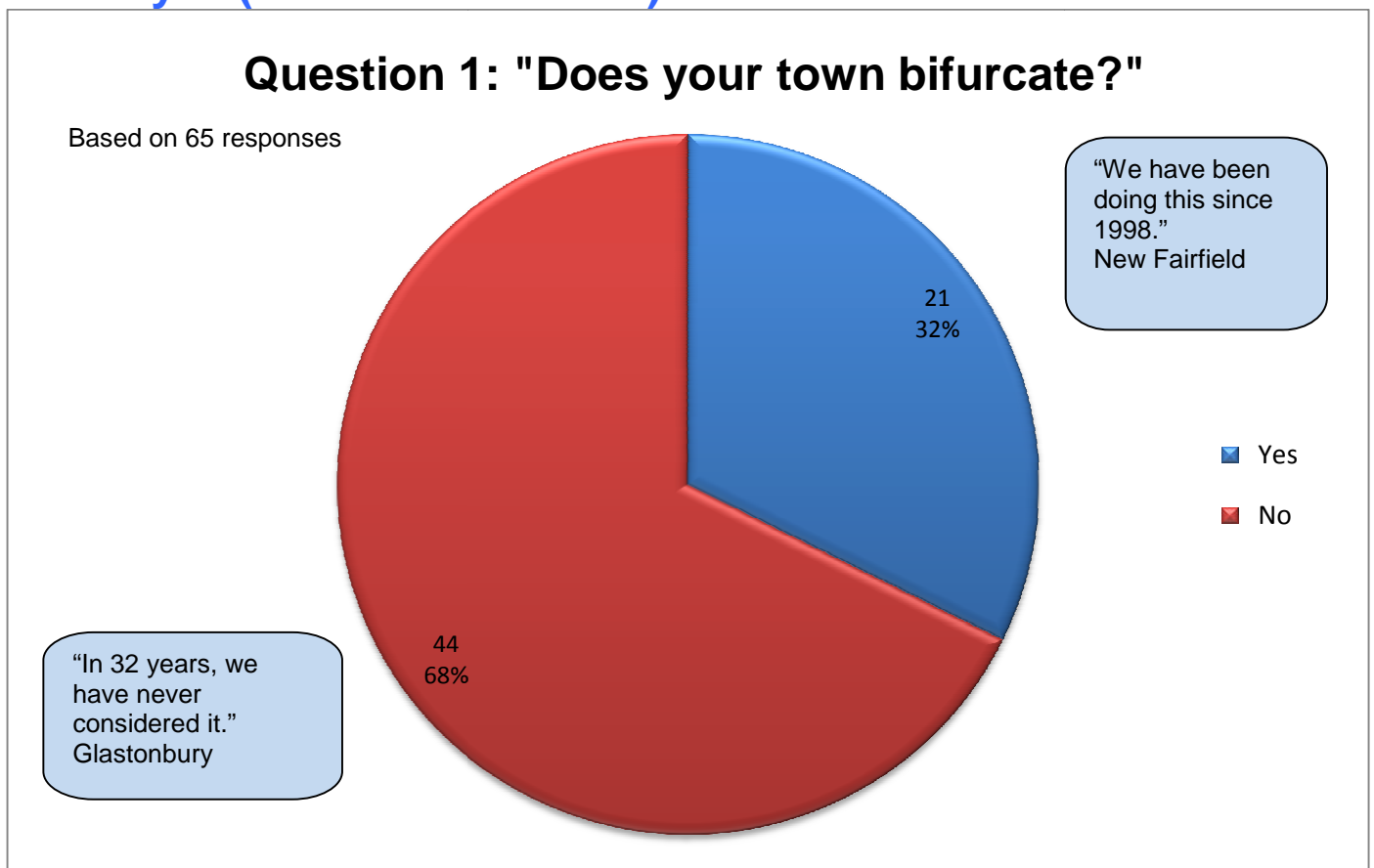
7. Some towns, like Ellington, have changed their charter to allow the option of bifurcation, but in Ellington's case, since that possibility has been instituted, they have never used it.
8. The majority of respondents reported that things have basically "stayed the same" when it came to questions on voter turnout, and any changes in funding for school and town budgets.
9. Cultural and economic change, (e.g., changing demographics from blue collar industrial to white collar workers, from Rural to Suburban populations) seem to have a greater impact on voting patterns than splitting the budget. (Our finding reinforces 20 years of data collected by the CT Office of Policy and Management. See Appendix).
10. A major financial commitment such as a new school building, seems to cause the most friction, leading to multiple votes in order to pass a budget. We saw it happen in Hebron over RHAM, and it happened in Oxford, one of the state's fastest growing towns, over a new high school.

*"Taxes were increasing, we were opening a new high school and were dealing with start up costs... it probably would have settled down after the school was up and running."  
Finance Director, Oxford*

# Survey (A) Responses

The following pages contain graphic depictions of Survey “A” data collected from bifurcated towns that responded to our email request. The quotes are samples of comments taken directly from the actual survey response forms that can be found in their entirety in the Appendix.

## Survey A (Bifurcated Towns)

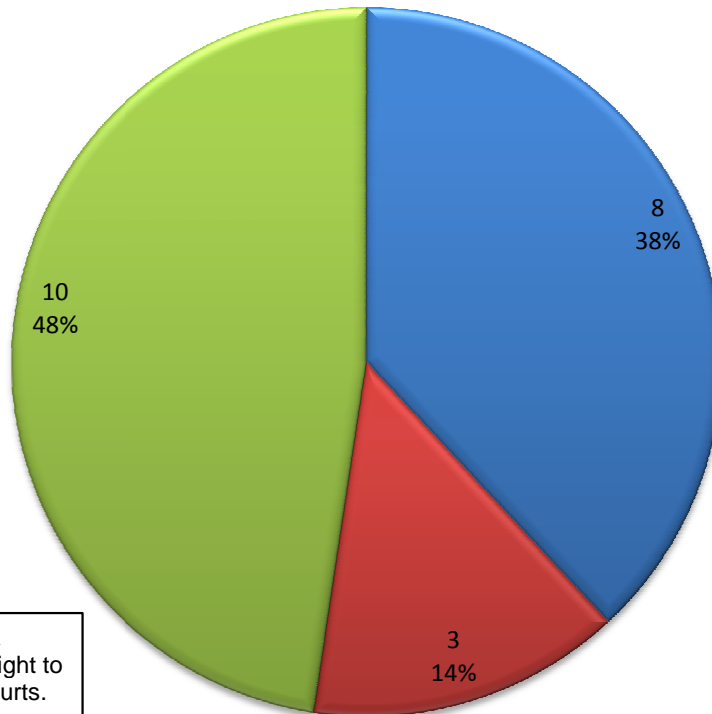


## Survey A (Bifurcated Towns)

### Question 2: "When was that decision made?"

Based on 21 responses

"The Town of Voluntown has voted on the BOS's budget and Board of Education's budget separately for as long as I can remember."  
Voluntown



- Before 2004\*
- After 2004
- No response

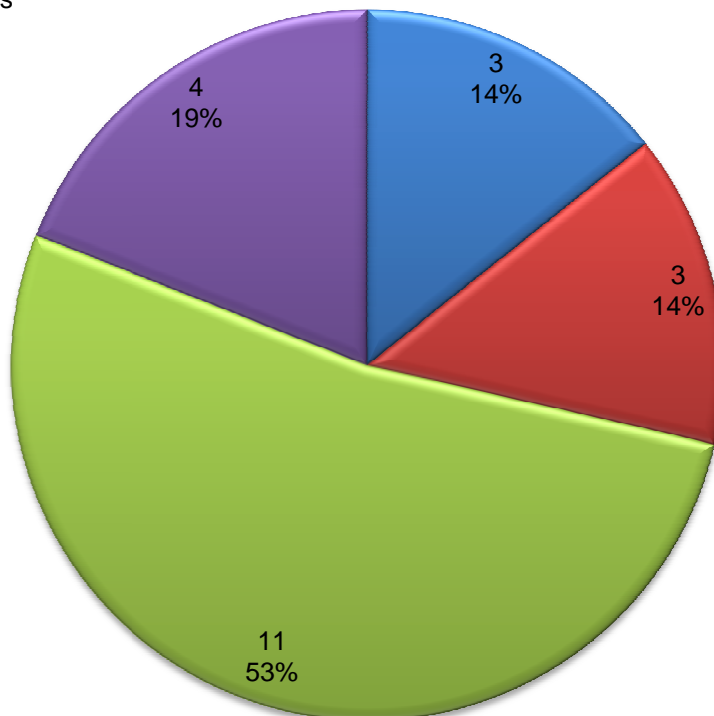
\*2004 is when the Naugatuck decision in favor of a town's right to bifurcate was made by the courts.

"Ages ago-- before 1945."  
Hampton

### Question 3: "How was that decision made?"

Based on 21 responses

"Charter revision November, 2008, FY 09-10 budget first year with separate questions."  
Colchester

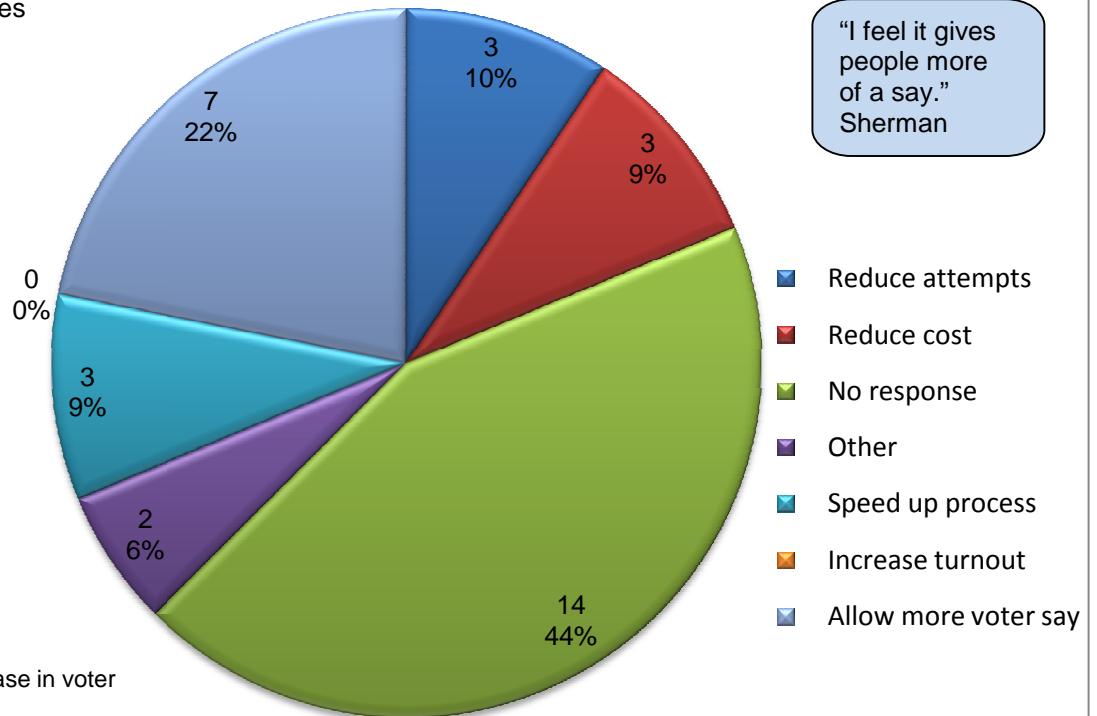


- At town meeting
- By governing body
- No response
- Other

## Survey A (Bifurcated Towns)

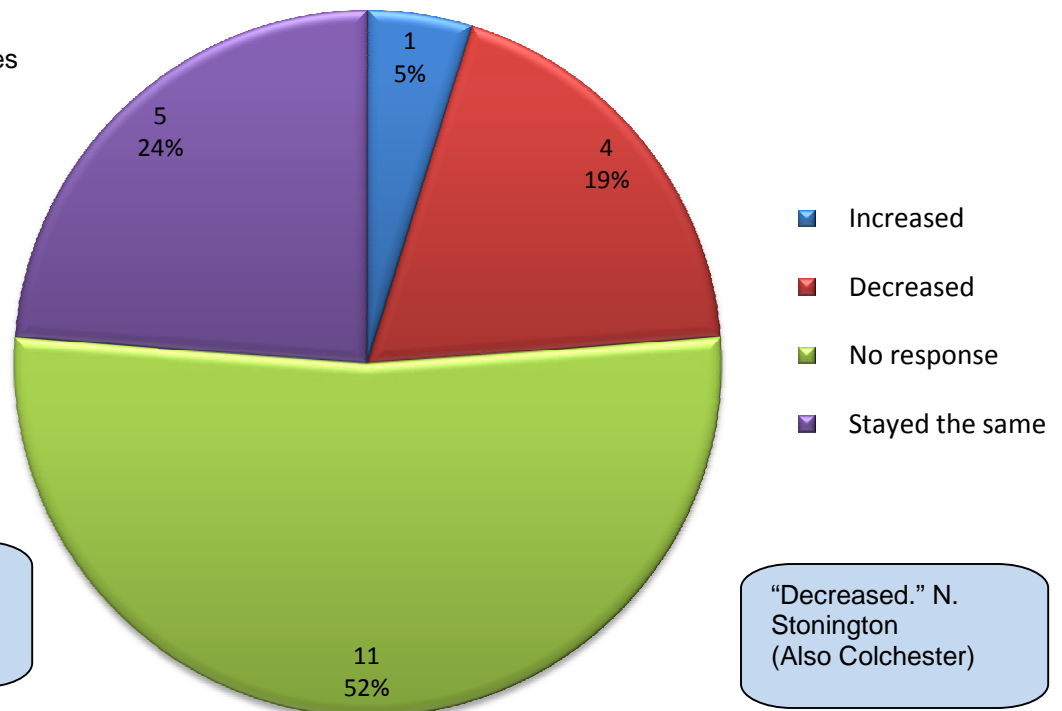
### Question 4: "What were you trying to achieve with bifurcation?"

Based on 21 responses



### Question 5: "Has there been a change in the number of voting events since bifurcation?"

Based on 21 responses

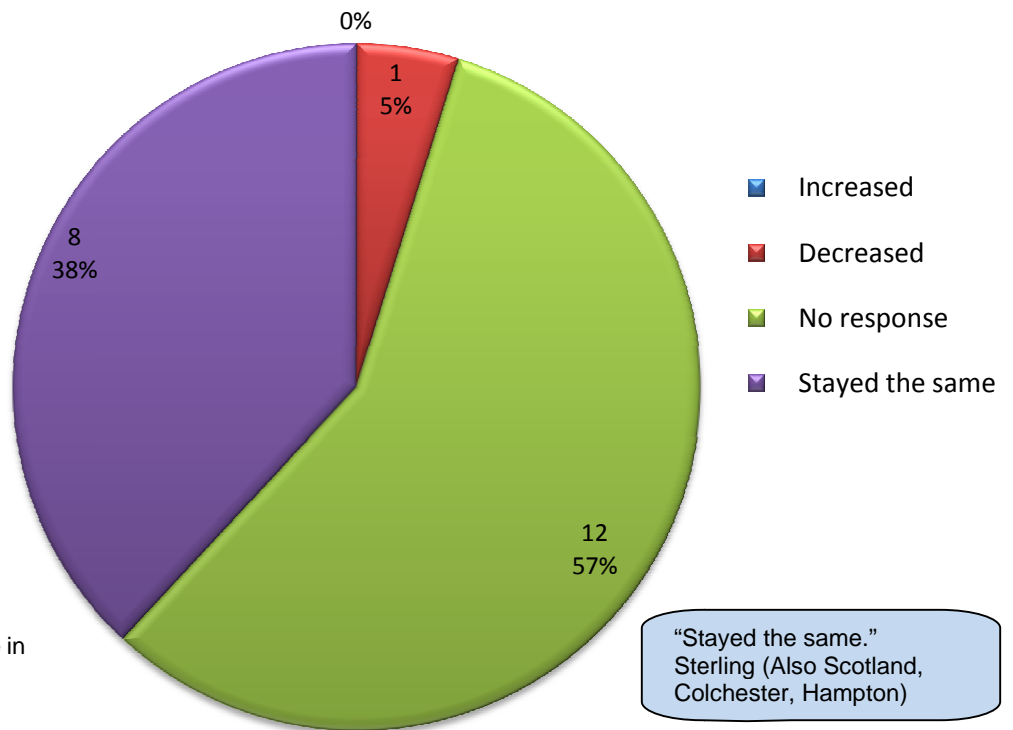


## Survey A (Bifurcated Towns)

### Question 6: "Has there been a change in voter turnout?"

Based on 21 responses

"Decreased."  
Simsbury



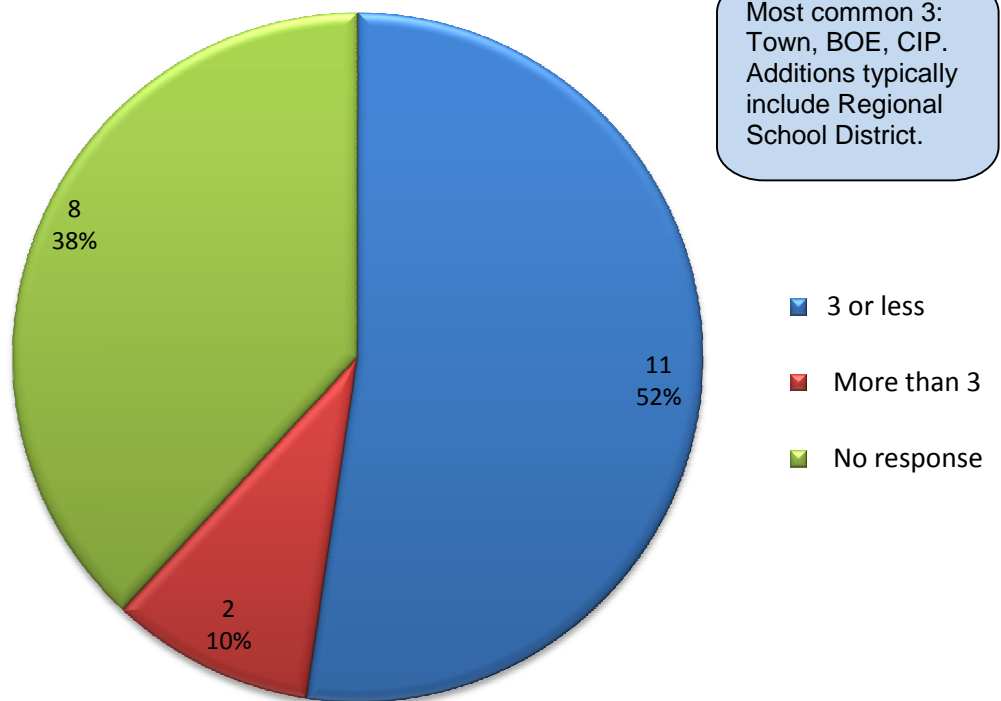
0% = no one indicated increase in voter turnout

"Stayed the same."  
Sterling (Also Scotland, Colchester, Hampton)

### Question 7: "How many budget items do you vote on?"

Based on 21 Responses

"Budgets that are self supporting (e.g., sewer use, non-public school fund, dog fund) and debt retirement are combined into one question." Simsbury

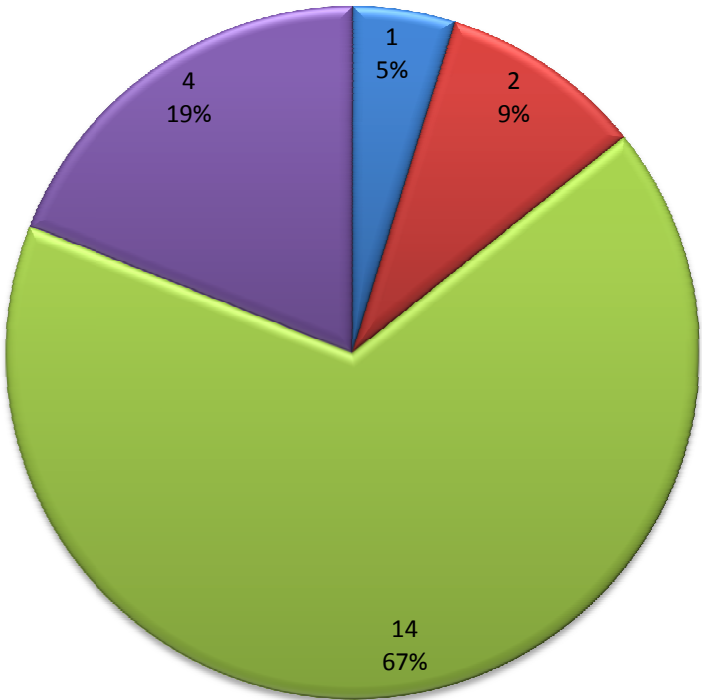


Most common 3: Town, BOE, CIP. Additions typically include Regional School District.

# Survey A (Bifurcated Towns)

## Question 8: "Has there been a change in the town's operational budget?"

"Stayed the same."  
Colchester (also  
Scotland, N.  
Stonington)

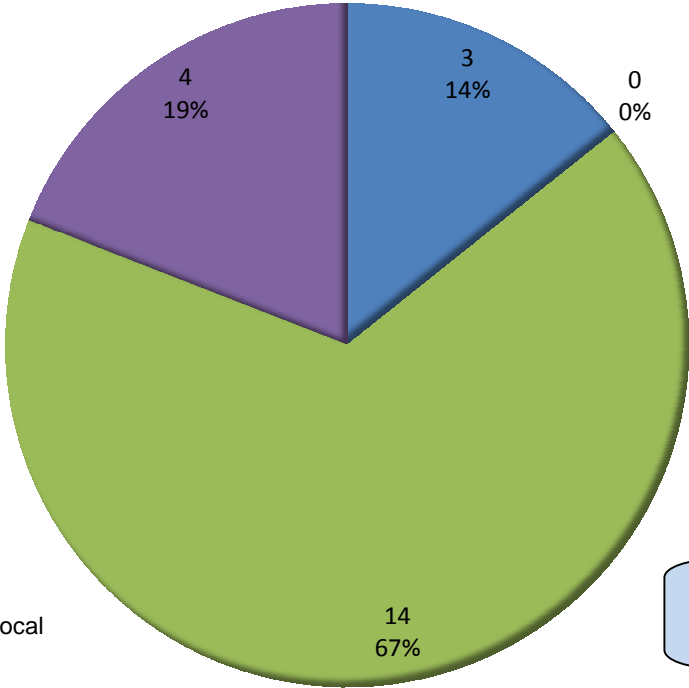


- Increased
- Decreased
- No response
- Stayed the same

## Question 9: "Has there been a change in the local education budget since bifurcation?"

Based on 21 responses

"Stayed the same."  
Sterling (Also Sherman,  
Canterbury, Scotland)



- Increased
- Decreased
- No response
- Stayed the same

0% = no response "decrease in local education budget"

"Increased." Simsbury  
(Also Oxford and New  
Fairfield)

# Case Studies

- Ellington.....Telephone Interview, Judith Podell 12/7/10**
- Oxford.....In person interview, Loreta McDonnell & Judith Podell 12/9/10**
- Old Saybrook.....In person interview, Loreta McDonnell & Judith Podell 12/21/10**
- Clinton.....In person interview, Loreta McDonnell 12/22/10**
- Cromwell.....In person interview, Loreta McDonnell & Judith Podell 1/5/11**

## Ellington: Interview with First Selectman, Maurice Blanchette

Blanchette is in his first year of a 2-year term as First Selectman (de facto Town Manager), of a 7-person Board of Selectmen. Previously he served on the Ellington BOE for 15 years. Ellington is a bedroom community with little commercial development that has managed to maintain education standards even with low per pupil spending, “We do well for what we spend.” (Sixteen years ago, Ellington ranked 130<sup>th</sup> out of 169 towns in per pupil spending, today, they rank lower, “We’ve gone backwards”). Blanchette attributes some of that decline to the fact that, “Education cost-sharing from the State hasn’t kept up, and now it’s capped — and that doesn’t keep up with our growing student population.” Ellington has a single school system, K-12; Blanchette acknowledges that 2/3 of the budget goes to education, but adds (only half jokingly), “That’s our main mission...education and keeping the roads open.”

About 12 years ago, passing the budget took 7 votes which is when discussion about bifurcation first came up and it was after that when the Charter was changed.\* Blanchette explained that Ellington’s charter [as amended in 2007] includes the provision that they have the option to bifurcate after the first (referendum) vote fails. In that case, if the budget vote doesn’t pass, the BOF can revise the rejected budget and the BOS can choose to bifurcate the municipal and education budgets. (Ellington’s Charter also provides for a petition to change any decision of the Town Meeting process, requiring signatures of 5% of the electorate.) In the last several years, the budget has passed on the first vote so the provision for bifurcation has never been used, “we haven’t seen it in action.” “The BOS hasn’t pushed for it.” In recent years Blanchette says, “we’ve been better in passing.”

As to why the budget process has become easier, Blanchette responds, “The way the people in charge speak about the process affects the way people vote. The tone of the BOS, the BOF, and the BOE has, I believe, a big influence on the perception of the voters.”

“I think our Boards are talking to each other, working together better. But we’re not spending enough — on our infrastructure, and on student spending.” Blanchette thinks both the town and education side of the budget are equally important, “if the roads don’t get plowed it doesn’t matter how good the schools are.”

Currently, the school budget, the municipal budget and CIP are voted on together. There have been petitions or referenda called — as allowed in the Charter, but not over the budget, rather over individual issues. For example, recently the Town received a \$200,000 grant for a fire training center. The issue passed at Town Meeting, was petitioned (by the required 5% of voters), went to referendum and failed, so the training center was not built.

Blanchette personally thinks that separating out the education budget could hurt the schools. “I believe it would destroy our education system.” Asked whether he didn’t think that the State mandates on minimum spending level thresholds for schools was a protection against townspeople cutting education budgets too deeply, he said no, that the State levels were so low, that almost all of Connecticut’s 169 towns already exceed that minimum and that the requirements haven’t kept up with inflation.

\*(He mentioned that the Charter was modified about 10 years ago and again in 2007 to take effect in 2008).



## Oxford: Interview with Finance Director, James Hliva

Hliva has served as Finance Director of Oxford since 2006 having moved there after he retired from a long career as Finance Director in Hamden. Oxford bifurcated their budgets more than 4 years ago, but a court challenge by a resident delayed the implementation for two years. Oxford is one of the fastest growing towns in the state, and when the issue of bifurcation first came up, they were opening a new high school, taxes were increasing, start up costs were high, they were still paying tuition for their local students to continue at out of town schools, and the previous three years had required multiple attempts to pass the budget, culminating in 6 votes in the last year before they decided to bifurcate.

They have now gone through 2 budget cycles with bifurcation and both budgets have passed on the first try. Bifurcation has had no impact on the process of voting, which remains the same. The Finance Director prepares a detailed budget (for everything but the education side) which goes to the BOS which then goes to the BOF and then to Town Meeting, where it may only be approved or decreased. After the Town Meeting vote it automatically goes to referendum. The education budget follows the same path. Hliva noted that even with Oxford's increasing student population, ECS funding has stayed the same, and the State has decreased funding in the areas of Special Ed and transportation.

When discussing the causes for friction between groups in towns, he described Oxford as having three distinct populations: an influx of wealthy retirees from western CT moving into single family "Over 55" golf communities — who strongly support education as the schools serve many of their grandchildren; young white collar workers and their families moving further up into Beacon Falls and Oxford, away from the more expensive coastal towns and finally, the older retired residents more concerned with taxes going up.

The vote itself to change to bifurcation was not controversial. The First Selectman suggested it based on the lengthy voting process. The idea of adding an advisory question did not work for them, "Too high, too low advisory questions were a failure, too confusing." He did note that attendance at Town Meetings has declined after bifurcation. The process was implemented by Ordinance, although Hliva thinks it may have been added to the Charter which has been amended since then. Eighty-five percent of Oxford's total budget is education-related, this includes CIP and school-bonded debt that is part of the Town's budget.

When asked about "transparency," Hliva ruefully points out that the town budget gets, "Dissected down to the penny" while the BOE comes in with a "Macro version." From his perspective, he thinks politics has a lot to do with how calm or how contentious the budget process is-- which he attributes to how the Boards work together. When the majority is the same party, he feels they cooperate more and there's less conflict. When the BOF and the BOE are the same party, the BOF will ask, "are you asking for enough money?" He did not feel these interactions were changed in any way by bifurcation. If he has any concern, it is what steps will need to be taken if the mill rate cannot be set as "even if one budget passes, until the second does, you can't set the mill rate."

The next few years Hliva believes will not be as smooth and will probably require multiple referenda on the budgets due to loss of revenue from a GE power transmission program that is not moving forward and revaluation coming up and he doesn't know, "what that will do to the mill rate." But as for bifurcation, Hliva sees it as a "win-win for everyone." "It's easier for those involved with the budget to determine what part to work on after it fails, then you only have to focus on fixing the one area."

## Old Saybrook: Interview with First Selectman, Michael Pace

When Mike Pace came to Old Saybrook, (from Woodbury where he served for over 8 years as Assistant Superintendent of Schools), the town had been bifurcated for a number of years and budgets were contentious and divisive and even with advisory questions, “was the budget too high? Too low,” it required multiple referenda in order to pass the budget. When he was elected First Selectman 12 years ago, he was the fifth First Selectman in 4 years.

Pace implemented a collaborative approach to budget preparation and implementation in an effort to create a sense of community — this cultural change took two years, “at first, people didn’t trust me.”

Under Pace’s leadership the municipal and school budgets are prepared virtually together. The 3-member BOS, the BOF and the BOE communicate 12 months a year about the budget. Pace talks monthly, if not weekly, with the current Superintendent of Schools, with whom he has worked for the past 6 years. It’s critical, he says, to have a continuous, working relationship with the Superintendent, “if you don’t have that, it will just be politics.” In Old Saybrook, they feel the town shares a “common interest” in municipal and school budgets, so when the budgets go to Town Meeting, he, the First Selectman, presents both the town and the education parts of the budget. In their bifurcated system if one budget fails, they both fail. Pace insists on “quarterly meetings of all boards and a yearly vision” of where the town is going.

For the past 12 years the budgets have passed, “3 to 1, every time.” “Bifurcation can work if there’s a clear understanding that we work together.”

Pace describes Old Saybrook as having 3 distinct populations: “graying” older residents on fixed incomes (“a very high fixed income!”), new arrivals (“They want the best of everything”) and the summer contingent, (“The biggest percentage against the budgets, still, we try and reach out to them, explain about maintaining their property values.”)

He brings to the table a philosophy of government that combines the social, economic and financial. “Keep the balance sheet good and the debt service going down,” Old Saybrook only bonds, “brick and mortar” projects, and those projects are on the town side of the budget, he instituted a sinking fund for the School Board and has a separate one for the town.

He says, “25% of the public will always vote no, if you can get 60-65% you’re doing OK.” He believes in tackling the toughest issue first — “Don’t let people play the ‘us-them’ game — it is ALL us!”

Pace understands that there are differences in the needs of the town vs. the schools: while the Fire Department is capital expensive, the schools are labor intensive, but as he points out, “you can take away a fire truck, but you can’t take away a 4<sup>th</sup> grade....the kid isn’t getting it back.”

A bifurcated budget he feels, can “work for you or against you.” “Bifurcation forces you to better define your needs. It increases transparency for the town and for students. And...the public wants a say, and this gives it to them.” His caveat: “If you can’t work together, then don’t do it.”

## Clinton: Interview with First Selectman, William Fritz

Clinton has been bifurcated for at least 10 years. They have had two charter revisions and are contemplating a third. This past year was a difficult budget season. The municipal budget failed twice and the school budget once. According to Fritz, the parents in Clinton rallied behind the school budget, but not the town budget. They didn't want taxes to go up but were unwilling to lose school services, so the town budget that ultimately passed didn't even cover their fixed costs. The Town was forced to lay off employees, including the Town Planner, and reduce transfer station hours to 2 days per week.

He feels strongly that the current national political climate influenced the local referendum. The electorate of Clinton just didn't want any increase of taxes. There was no one issue that drove the multiple votes.

The Superintendent and all boards work well together and in a collaborative manner. Fritz has weekly interface with members of all boards, not just the other Selectman (a BOS of 5), he also communicates regularly with the School Superintendent and members of the BOE and BOF. Representatives from these Boards are currently working quickly to replace the Finance Director that is a dual position serving both town and school. They have found it very effective to "have the same person wear both hats."

Fritz felt that this year's issues were exacerbated by not getting the message across to the electorate how the municipal budget would be negatively impacted by only supporting the school budget. He doesn't feel they adequately explained how bad it is, for example, not to keep up with CIP. "This impacts the schools too, but we didn't get that across...we'll have to do better this year."

Fritz describes Clinton as a "blue collar town," 83% residential, "we have 5 trailer parks...we're not a Guilford." Their per capita income is \$68,000; they have some seasonal residents, "who got hit really hard in last revaluation." The Clinton Outlet Mall is the largest share of their commercial tax base.

While personally disenchanted with bifurcation, Fritz, although frustrated with the process does feel that, "bifurcation helps with knowing where the problems are in your budget. In our case, even with all the boards working together, if people don't understand — you have a problem passing a budget."

## Cromwell: Interview with First Selectman, John Flanders

John Flanders, Cromwell's newly elected First Selectman (in office 14 months at the time of the interview), describes their budget process as "trifurcation," as town voters decide on 3 items: the local education budget, the municipal budget and bonded debt (the only one of the three that has passed on the first ballot every time).

Cromwell has been bifurcated since the 1990's, "People were upset with one budget or another and no one knew what to cut." Flanders served as a Selectman during that time, left to attend Law School and subsequently served on the BOF. In those 20+ years he has not seen that splitting the budget vote has brought any significant change. Generally, the town government budget passes, but "every couple of years, the Board of Education budget goes down." Why? "It's too high...it only goes down when the economy is tanking." Whereas 20 years ago, budgets were voted on in Town Meeting, now it automatically goes to a referendum.

Flanders doesn't believe party politics plays much of a role in town; it's not Democrats vs. Republicans, but rather, "education against the rest of the community....It's been this way as far back as I can remember."

Cromwell has experienced significant growth over the past 50 years, the 1960 Census had the population at 3,500, today it is over 14,000. A spate of condo building in the 70's and 80's has given Cromwell 1/3 of its households (originally occupied by singles and young couples starting out, today, because of the economic downturn, there are significantly more families with children — far more than expected — living in them). Cromwell has a "busy retail corridor" and their tax base is 70/30 residential/commercial.

Asked what he would include on a "wish list," Flanders identified 3 items:

- 1) He likes the "Rocky Hill model," where the town owns all the public buildings (including the schools), and while the BOE handles education issues, anything pertaining to the buildings is the Town's responsibility.
- 2) A change to the State-funding formula, which he feels is "grossly underfunded" — and "stupid."
- 3) The BOE's absolute control of their budget (dictated by State statute) he believes exacerbates conflict between town and the BOE. "It would be nice, from a fiscal standpoint, if the BOF had some line item control over parts of the BOE budget."

Flanders mentioned that in some larger communities, (16,000 -18,000 population range, he named Rocky Hill, Berlin, Newington, Cheshire), they operate with a Town Manager and a Town Council (6-8 people). They skip the "public" (referendum) step and budget decisions are made by the Council; a dramatically different process. He would prefer that Cromwell not get that large, he'd like "fewer houses, more office buildings."

Asked for any advice he would give Hebron regarding bifurcation, he said, "I would do it, for political reasons: if there's the political will, can impose frugality on the BOE, it's more democratic."

# Data Resources

CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM)	Survey: Separate Referenda Votes for Gen'l Gov't Budget and Board of Education (2009)	
Town profiles	<a href="http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/default.asp">http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/default.asp</a>	
Town gov't type	<a href="http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?A=2986&amp;Q=383032">http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?A=2986&amp;Q=383032</a>	CEO List link on this page
CT definitions of county, town, municipality	<a href="http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/default.asp">http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/default.asp</a>	
Five Connecticut classifications	<a href="http://www.ctsdc.uconn.edu/projections/5cts.html">http://www.ctsdc.uconn.edu/projections/5cts.html</a> (CT State Data center at UCONN)	
Town Demographics	<a href="http://www.epodunk.com/communities_ct.html">http://www.epodunk.com/communities_ct.html</a>	select state first then check each town individually
Equalized mill rates, prop tax % of revenue, income per capita	<a href="http://www.ccm-ct.org/advocacy/2007-2008/011608/eq_mill_rates.pdf">http://www.ccm-ct.org/advocacy/2007-2008/011608/eq_mill_rates.pdf</a>	Source: CT Office of Policy and Management: Municipal Fiscal Indicators, 2006; Department of Economic Community Development: Distressed Municipalities, 2007
Expenditures per pupil 06-08 - Page 15	<a href="http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/igp/munfinsr/fi2004-08_final_as_of_11-20-09.pdf">http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/igp/munfinsr/fi2004-08_final_as_of_11-20-09.pdf</a>	
Emails of CEO of towns/municipalities	<a href="http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?A=2986&amp;Q=383032">http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?A=2986&amp;Q=383032</a>	
Listing to town clerks, addresses, emails by town	<a href="http://www.ctclerks.com/content/2698/default.aspx">http://www.ctclerks.com/content/2698/default.aspx</a>	
List of town charters	<a href="http://www.jud.ct.gov/lib/ordinances.htm">http://www.jud.ct.gov/lib/ordinances.htm</a>	
CMT Scores 2007-2010 by town/district	<a href="http://solutions1.emetric.net/captpublic/Index.aspx">http://solutions1.emetric.net/captpublic/Index.aspx</a>	
Home Rule	<a href="http://search.cga.state.ct.us/dtsearch_pub_statutes.html">http://search.cga.state.ct.us/dtsearch_pub_statutes.html</a>	
School funding in CT	<a href="http://www.ctappleseed.org/communications/1008/schoolfunding.pdf">www.ctappleseed.org/communications/1008/schoolfunding.pdf</a>	