

## MEMO

**To:** Town Council  
**CC:** Town Employees  
**From:** Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager  
**Date:** March 22, 2021  
**Subject:** **Town Manager's Report**

---

Below, please find my report concerning various items of interest to the Town Council, staff, and the community:

### **Departmental Reports**

#### • ***Town Manager & Human Resources:***

- The second installment of the recently launched bimonthly town e-newsletter is in the process of being developed with an anticipated publication date of April 1.
- I am very happy to report that a new permanent Fire Chief has been selected. His name is Fred Mitchell, and he has served as the Fire Chief of Georgetown, MA, since 2015. Chief Mitchell has led the Georgetown Fire Department, responsible for the overall operation including emergency medical services, budgeting, and personnel while also serving as the community's assistant emergency management director. Prior to leading Georgetown's operation, he served as Deputy Fire Chief for the Cumberland and prior to that the North Cumberland, Rhode Island, Fire Districts. He came to this career as an on-call fire fighter, then a line fire fighter and has also served as a Department Training Manager. A native of Rhode Island, Chief Mitchell earned his Associates Degree in Applied Fire Science from the Community College of Rhode Island, as well as a Bachelor's Degree in Applied Fire Science and a Master's Degree in Public Administration with a concentration in Fire and Emergency Services from Anna Maria College. He also holds numerous certifications including Emergency Medical Technician. I look forward to formally introducing Chief Mitchell to the Council in the near future.
- The Town Manager's FY2022 budget is substantially complete (currently undergoing fine-tuning) and will be presented to the Town Council on March 29, 2021. The overarching goal is of course to develop a proposed appropriations plan that maintains the highest quality municipal services and needed projects at a cost that is fiscally prudent for taxpayers.
- A general/tentative reopening plan for Town Hall as well as other public-facing municipal facilities (i.e., Senior Center and Public Library) has been developed and will be shared with Council during the March 22, 2021 business meeting (see separately enclosed AIS).
- After receiving copies within the past week of the formal reports issued by CT-OSHA relative to alleged violations noted at various Town facilities during a series of random site visits completed in early-December, the Town made arrangements for an informal conference to review/contest these findings and discuss/negotiate associated remediation timelines today (March 22, 2021). The discussions during the informal conference were productive and amiable, and, although Town personnel did not always agree with the manner in which certain infractions were characterized, Town staff and OSHA were able to discuss all the findings and avoid the need for a formal appeal process. An employer's proactivity is factored into any adjustments that OSHA is willing to make to the indicated citations, and OSHA officials offered

a very positive assessment of the good faith efforts that Town personnel had already undertaken to perform corrective actions since receiving the written reports earlier in the month. Proposed fines and penalties that were initially issued totaled approximately \$18,000, and we were able to negotiate a reduced amount of \$6,965 (a reduction of >60%).

- The Town of Mansfield appears eligible to receive up to approximately \$7.5 million in municipal aid/reimbursement under the recently enacted American Rescue Plan. We are still awaiting the detailed funding guidelines to be issued by the U.S. Treasury, but, legislative language indicates that cities and counties can use the direct aid to:
  - Plug revenue holes associated with the pandemic, using 2019 pre-pandemic budgets as the baseline.
  - Cover increased expenditures and mitigate economic harm from the pandemic.
  - Provide up to \$13/hour in “premium pay” for essential workers or \$25,000 per worker.
  - Transfer funds to private nonprofit groups, public benefit corporations involved in passenger or cargo transportation, and special-purpose units of state or local governments.
  - Make investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure through a state-administered program.
- Within the past two weeks, the Town Manager joined a representative from The Rise Up Group to discuss next steps with the MLK Mural project following the Town Council’s enthusiastic vote in support of the concept. A small and nimble Ad Hoc Committee comprised of pertinent community stakeholders is presently being assembled to tackle our fundraising approach and other important additional logistical details. The goal is to have the mural fully complete by the fall of 2021.
- On March 12, the Town Manager had the honor of joining Senior Center staff and volunteers at the St. Patrick’s Day senior luncheon, greeting the drivers and other occupants of all cars as they pulled through. The food was delectable, and every recipient offered rave reviews about the quality of the food provided through these dinners and their appreciation that the Center was continuing to offer meals via a drive-through format.
- With assistance from Human Resources, 14 DPW staff members are in the process of being trained in First Aid by Parks & Recreation staff.

- **Mansfield Public Schools & Region 19:**

- A message from Superintendent Kelly Lyman on the untimely loss of a deeply valued member of the Town of Mansfield family

*Dear Mansfield Colleagues,*

*I am sorry to share with you that we lost a truly beautiful soul and member of our work family this week. Julia Jenkins, secretary in Food Services and the superintendent’s office became ill last Friday. She was immediately hospitalized but her condition worsened quickly. Her family shared this afternoon that she has passed away.*

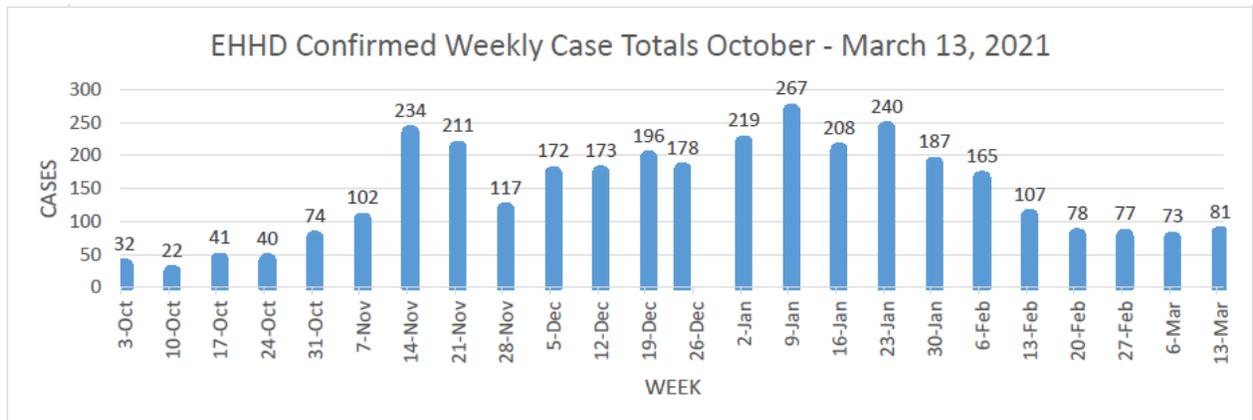
*Julia worked for the Mansfield Public Schools for 16 years. For those of you who met her, or worked with her, you know what a giving, kind person she was. Julia was always full of life and did whatever she could for other people. Although her work was mostly behind the scenes, it touched many.*

*Julia’s family will hold private services in remembrance of her life and hope to have a service that others may attend this summer. Along with keeping her immediate family in your thoughts and prayers, we ask that you also remember her sister and brother-in law Alicia and Alan Ducharme who also work within our system.*

- The schooling model for grade 8 students will switch to full in-person from the hybrid model on March 29. Public health data and the management of the coronavirus in schools remains favorable allowing every grade to now attend school in person five days a week.
- After multiple meetings with pertinent design/engineering professionals, members of the School Building Committee, and town officials/department heads, the Town officially issued the invitation to bid for the construction of the new elementary school. The bid invitation was officially issued on March 2 and general contractors were asked to take part in a “pre-bid” meeting on March 16. Bids are due to be submitted by April 12. Additional information can be found here: <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/bids.aspx?bidID=130>

• **Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD):**

- The EHHD conducted six vaccination clinics in the past week with 520 doses being administered. Seven additional clinics are scheduled for the coming week.
- With the coming week, the EHHD will transition back to providing vaccination clinics open to the general public. This includes four clinics being offered at the Mansfield Community Center (Mon. Tues. Thurs. & Fri.) and one being offered at E.O. Smith Regional High School (Weds.).
- Follow this link for more information on the Phases of the vaccine rollout: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Vaccination---Phases>
- The weekly case count bar chart on the below chart indicates a plateau of the case count over the past three weeks, with a slight uptick in the last week. Follow this link for more town level data: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Data-Tracker>



**TOWN LEVEL DATA**

TOWN	Andover	Ashford	Bolton	Chapin	Columbia	Coventry	Mansfield	Non-student	Scotland ++	Tolland	Willington	EHHD Totals
Cumulative Cases	160	226	238	108	299	636	1,298		39	809	239	4,052
Change from last week	4	2	5	0	9	16	27	(7)	0	13	5	81
Two week change	5	3	8	1	13	27	68	(15)	0	21	8	154
Deaths	3	4	5	0	6	8	27	(27)	2	16	3	74

EHHD residents who received a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at any vaccination site*											
TOWN	Andover	Ashford	Bolton	Chapin	Columbia	Coventry	Mansfield	Scotland ++	Tolland	Willington	EHHD Totals
Estimated pop	3,236	4,255	4,884	2,239	5,379	12,407	25,487	1,672	14,618	5,864	80,041
Received 1 <sup>st</sup> dose COVID vaccine	900	1,074	1,458	534	1,748	3,365	3,748	375	4,155	1,363	18,720
% of over 64 years of age received 1 <sup>st</sup> dose	99	96	93	81	89	96	95	80	99	95	=====

\*The Town of Mansfield's population is comprised roughly 55%-60% of UConn students, which will substantially reduce the overall percentage of Town residents who have received a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

- **Planning & Development**

- **Affordable & Workforce Housing Plan.** The recently formed Ad Hoc Group on Affordable & Workforce Housing last met on March 10, and the meeting focused in part on the review of the draft survey that the Town's consultant has developed, as well as an associated outreach strategy for reaching Mansfield residents. The survey only takes about five minutes to complete, and is being distributed via surface mail, through social media as well as [online](#). Responses are desired by April 14. The survey is intended to gain input from residents for the Town's Affordable Housing Plan. We want to hear from as many people as possible to gain an understanding of local perspectives and what our community values. The common definition of affordable housing is when total housing costs are no more than 30% of a household's income. Affordable housing provides an option for seniors who want to downsize from larger homes, for working families with children, for young professionals starting their careers, and individuals who want to return to the town where they grew up. Affordable housing comes in many shapes and sizes including single-family homes. It can be rented or owned and can be in the form of in-law or accessory dwelling units, duplexes, multi-family homes, townhomes and apartments.
- **Helping Hand.** Applications are currently being accepted for childcare and food assistance for residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope to roll the food program out sometime in April. Please call 860.429.3330 or email [HelpingHand@MansfieldCT.org](mailto:HelpingHand@MansfieldCT.org) with any questions.
- **Outdoor Dining.** The Planning and Zoning Commission has scheduled a public hearing for April 5, 2021 to take comments on a proposed change to the Zoning Regulations to temporarily authorize outdoor dining for all eating and drinking establishments until December 31, 2021 consistent with the provisions of Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7MM. Please email any comments to [PlanZoneDept@MansfieldCT.org](mailto:PlanZoneDept@MansfieldCT.org)
- **Pending Special Permit Applications.** Information on pending special permit applications is now available on the Planning Department's webpage at <https://www.mansfieldct.gov/2123/Proposed-Projects>. Upcoming projects include an agbotic greenhouse project at 438 Browns Road (public hearing scheduled for April 5, 2021) and a 358 unit multi-family residential development on Middle Turnpike between CVS and Key Bank at the Four Corners (public hearing scheduled for April 19, 2021)

- **Downtown Partnership, Economic Development & Marketing: Mansfield Downtown Partnership**

- The Partnership continue to support all Mansfield businesses by communicating guidance from the state for safe operations, funding and business development opportunities, and federal news and updates – including updated information on capacity limits and operating

guidelines that went into effect March 19 - through email blasts and our website (please see [mansfieldmdp.org/reopen](https://mansfieldmdp.org/reopen)).

- The Partnership co-sponsored a special event over the weekend with the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry and the UConn Puppet Arts Program: *ISH*, an MFA performance by UConn Puppet Arts graduate student Felicia Cooper. The socially distanced seating for the outdoor shows sold out, but everyone still has a chance to see the show! The livestream performance will be available on the Ballard's Facebook page ([@BallardInstitute](https://www.facebook.com/BallardInstitute)) for all to enjoy. But check it out soon: The video will only be available for one week.
- We are monitoring the health and safety guidance from the state for community events as we look ahead to the summer. Decisions on all Partnership events will be based on the permitted activities, costs of producing the event, and allowed capacities, among other factors.

- **Human Services:**

- The Senior Center has continued to provide essential services, including weekly meal delivery, transportation and wellness calls. Over the past few weeks, the Center has seen an increase in transportation requests, and have provided an average of 3-5 rides per week, with many lined up for April already.
- The Senior Center's COVID-modified tax program in collaboration with AARP continues to go smoothly, and staff have been able to accommodate on average 12-15 people per week. Appointments are currently being scheduled through April 7<sup>th</sup>, but may be extended due to the deadline extension.
- Although calls have slowed down significantly, the Senior Center continue to provide assistance to approximately 10 people per week in registering for a COVID-19 vaccine appointment.
- Senior Center online programming continues to be well-attended, and Pick-up Luncheons are a huge success, with an average of 80 people driving through twice per month to say hello and pick up a delicious, homemade meal. The St. Patrick's Day Luncheon on March 12 was one of the Center's best yet, and a lot of fun – big thanks to all the town staff who jumped in to help prepare & serve an incredible corned beef & cabbage meal to 82 people!
- With the governor's reduced restrictions, the Senior Center is tentatively planning a soft re-opening in May. The Department is planning to take a phased-in approach, starting with providing wellness services and small, in-person groups. The Senior Center will continue its online programming as well, and hope to increase the frequency of Pick-Up Luncheons to once per week. The Center will provide more details as this plan evolves through its newsletter, Town website & Facebook page, and the Center's email distribution list.



- **Parks & Recreation:**

- The March 19 State Sector Rule updates for gyms/fitness centers allows for a capacity limit up to 100% but is subject to 6-foot social distancing requirements. Therefore, minimal impact is expected on current operations at the Community Center as 6-foot spacing between people has been the norm and there is no significant changes to current pool rules. However, we hope to reposition some of cardio machines to allow for additional use and improve programming space in the fitness studio. Masks continue to be required.
- *Updated Guidance for the Operation of Interscholastic, Youth and other Amateur Sport Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic* by the DPH went into effect on March 19th.

All Town of Mansfield Co-Sponsored sports such as baseball/softball, soccer and lacrosse will begin in late March/early April. All organized sport groups using town fields are required to follow DPH Guidelines and submit a written COVID-19 health and safety plan to Parks and Recreation for their review and approval before commencing play. Parks and Recreation staff will monitor activity as feasible.

- The Mansfield Community Center continues to serve as a host location for CT COVID-19 vaccines (presently eligible residents 55+ years of age) three days per week (Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday) and will continue to do so until at least early-June. Clinics are provided by the Eastern Highlands Health District.

- **Library:**

- We are pleased to announce that the Mansfield Public Library location at 54 Warrenville Road will open to walk-in visits as of Monday, April 5, 2021. The library will begin each day with 1.5 hours of appointment-only time for those who are vulnerable or uncomfortable entering the building when it is open to the general public. This will be followed by 4 hours of walk-in, no appointment necessary time. Curbside pickup service will continue. We are looking forward to seeing everyone again!
- Library hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 10 - 3; Tuesday, Thursday 2 – 7. For more details on services the Library continues to offer, please contact us at 860-423-2501 or [MansfieldLibrary@MansfieldCT.org](mailto:MansfieldLibrary@MansfieldCT.org)

- **Town Clerk:**

- We are seeing an approximate 35% increase in land record recordings so far in 2021 over the same point in time in 2020. The increase is mostly due to refinancing and home equity loans. Additionally, death certificates filed between January 1, 2021 – March 18, 2021 are double that of the same time period from 2020.

- **Police**

- Sergeant Keith Timme has informed the Town Manager of his plan to retire from the Connecticut State Police effective July 1, 2021. Keith has enjoyed working with everyone in the Town of Mansfield, especially the Department Heads, and found his experience serving as the supervisor for the Mansfield Resident Troopers Office over the last few years highly rewarding. Join us in congratulating Keith on a distinguished career in law enforcement and a well-earned retirement. He will be missed by many. A search for a new sergeant to head up the Mansfield Resident Troopers office will be conducted in the near future, and we presently anticipate that the Town will get to play a role in the candidate review process given the importance that Keith’s successor is a good fit for the culture of the community.

- **Fire Department:**

- Below is a brief synopsis of Fire Dept. responses for the period March 8 – March 21, 2021.

Type		# Mutual Aid Out of Town
ALS	28	6
BLS	38	2
Total Medical	66	8
Tree on Wires Down/Burning	2	
Structure Fire	1	1
Fire Alarm	3	

CO Detector Activation	1	
Brush Fire	8	1
Outside Fire	3	
HAZ MAT Gas Leak	1	
Cover Assignment	1	1
Dive Team Call	1	1
Service Call	3	
Standby	1	1
Vehicle Accident	11	1
Total Other	36	6
Grand Total	102	14

- **Public Works:**

- Since the last report, the Department in-house crew removed 26 trees and pruned three. For more challenging trees, we called in our contractor who removed an additional nine trees.
- The Swap Shop at the Transfer Station will resume its Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday hours beginning Saturday, April 17, 2021. Please mask up and practice social distancing when visiting the swap shop. In order not to overwhelm the space, we ask residents to limit their donations to two boxes per visit. We also ask residents to limit their visit to 15 minutes.