

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: February 26, 2024
Subject: **Town Manager's Report**

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

- As the Council is aware, early this month the Town Manager, other appropriate senior Town staff, and the Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership took part in a meeting initiated by executives from Wilmorite, the developer who has proposed building "The HUB" multi-family housing project on King Hill Road/N. Eagleville Road. The group discussed the status of the project as well as projected tax revenue scenarios. Valuable information was shared between the parties and it was agreed that it would be beneficial to engage in a similar discussion with the Town Council in executive session during the February 26 business meeting.
- During its February 13 meeting, the Town Council received public comments from several residents who reside on the unpaved portion of Coventry Road. A related citizen petition was submitted into the record showing that the owners of nine (9) of the ten (10) homeowners residing on the unpaved portion of Coventry Road supported its paving. The residents who spoke during public comment at the Council's February 13 meeting expressed considerable frustration with regard to road conditions following inclement weather and asked that the Town Council elect to pave the road. At the request of the Town Manager, the Department of Public Works subsequently completed an analysis of road surfacing options relative to Coventry Road for the Council's understanding and consideration. These options will be presented and discussed with the Council during its February 16 meeting.
- Staff are presently preparing to transmit recommendations to the Finance Committee – and then eventually onto the full Council assuming Committee support – relative to priority uses of the Town's remaining unobligated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, which total roughly \$1.77 million of the original approximately \$7.54 million. The Council will ultimately need to select specific projects for the purpose of obligating remaining funds before the end of 2024 or, as staff have previously mentioned, potentially funding certain capital improvement projects we are ready to move on – thus freeing up CNR funds for other things that we would have otherwise used ARPA to fund. It will be important for the Council to authorize projects that are ready so that the funds can be properly encumbered by the December 31, 2024 deadline for obligation.
- The Town Manager was recently in contact with senior staff in Congressman Courtney's office regarding the status of the Town of Mansfield's funding request ("Community Project Request") for designing and constructing a 10-ft wide multi-use trail along the roughly 1-mile segment of Route 195/Storrs Road that connects the UConn campus with the Four Corners area of Town. As the pace of new development continues to accelerate in this part of town, the critical importance of the trail from a public safety standpoint continues to rise. The Congressman's staff indicated that they continue to be optimistic that the project would be funded should a more comprehensive FY2024 federal budget deal be passed following the expiration of the current continuing resolutions that extend into early-March.

- The Town Manager, Chief of Shared Services and Administration, and Finance Director are in the process of pulling together a complete working version of the FY 2024/25 and capital improvement plan to enable more detailed understanding of projected aggregate changes in revenue and expenditures to allow for more in-depth analysis of the budget in its entirety. As with every year, we continue to focus on finding ways to maintain or selectively/strategically enhance the quality of the service we provide or high-value projects we complete while finding ways to control cost and overall budget growth. While level funding the municipal budget in FY 2024/25 may not be possible, the Mansfield Board of Education's recent adoption of a level budget for FY 2024/25 in combination with the projected increases in State Aid (based on the Governor's recently released proposed budget) will be helpful in mitigating any potential need to increase the mill rate.
- During its February 13 meeting, the Town Council re-engaged in a brief deliberation relative to the goals for FYs 2025 and 2026, which had been revised by Town staff based on the substantial and wide-ranging input provided by Council members during the initial goal-setting session on January 8. During the February 13 meeting, the Council elected to establish an ad hoc subcommittee comprised of three members (Ms. Moran, Mr. Bruder and Mr. Kueffner) to meet and deliberate on possible additional revisions that could be presented to the Council at a future meeting for approval. We currently anticipate that this action will be taken at the March 11 Council meeting. Council-adopted goals will ultimately be incorporated into the FY 2025/26 budget book.
- As previously shared with the Council, Mansfield will be the host site for a major regional event known as Eastern Connecticut Maple Fest organized by the Windham Chamber of Commerce. The event in Mansfield will take place over a two-day period, March 9 (Saturday) and 10 (Sunday) in the blacktop area between Mansfield Town Hall and E.O. Smith High School. Plans include 12 food trucks and about 100 vendors providing foods and other items for sale, as well as games and activities for children. As an alternative to parking in Downtown, buses will shuttle visitors from the Eastern Ball Field parking lot. Local organizations and clubs are encouraged to consider registering to exhibit or fundraise at this event. Contact the Chamber at <https://www.windhamchamber.com/general-clean>.
- Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan: Within the next month or so, the Town's consultant (FHI) will be developing a draft vision with goals and objectives and will be soliciting feedback. Progress on the plan is available at www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan.
- Zoning Regulation Updates: With the moratorium on high-density housing extended until August 31, 2024, the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) is working on several updates to the zoning regulations. On February 27, the PZC's Regulatory Review Committee will review a new DRAFT regulation for multi-family developments. This draft was developed by Tyche Planning and Policy group and is based on feedback from the January 4th PZC Virtual Housing Work Session as well as a review of public comment from the NW Mansfield Vision and Strategy. There is still more work to do and will be more opportunity for public comment, but this draft will provide a framework from which to work. The Committee will review a draft of new sign regulations.
- The consultant, 110%, Inc., that the Town retained to help develop a comprehensive Mansfield Parks and Recreation (MPR) Master Plan and Financial Sustainability Strategy visited Mansfield earlier this month to complete their final series of site visits. They inspected MPR properties for the purpose of finalizing recommendations relative to priority "asset improvements." At this time we anticipate that the master plan and financial sustainability strategy will be completed by the end of March. This timing will allow for presentation to the Town Council for review and feedback before proceeding with adoption in roughly parallel path with the FY 2024/25 budget and updated 5-year Capital Improvement Plan.
- Department head searches/recruitments:
 - Finalists for our Fire Chief position are visiting Mansfield this week.
 - We are currently accepting applications for our Human Services Director position at: <https://www.mansfieldct.gov/353/Job-Opportunities>
- Community engagement efforts relative to the ongoing Municipal Facilities Master Plan continued this past week with a series of pop-up community events and focus groups being administered by the

Town's community engagement partner/consultant, CivicBrand, over a three-day period. Information about these opportunities was shared through the Town's news and announcements and many departments' social media, and included opportunities for participation during daytime and early-evening hours (i.e., up to 6:00 pm on two different evenings). At this time we believe that the focus for the balance of the project will shift to compiling all of the public feedback received to articulate the community's expressed values and begin evaluating the fit/alignment of various possible municipal facility improvement projects in relation to these expressed values/preferences. For anyone who was unable to attend a pop up, there is an online version of the questions that were asked available at mansfieldtomorrow.org/survey, and this survey will remain open through March 8.

- The Registrars of Voters will be attending the Town Council's February 26 regular business meeting to provide information relative to the planning and implementation of the April 2 Presidential Preference Primary, which will be the first election in which the newly enacted early-voting law will be in effect.
- Mansfield Elementary School Project: Legal negotiations with Newfield Construction (general contractor) relative to outstanding claims associated with the Mansfield Elementary School construction project have been progressing, and the Town recently transmitted an updated proposal that we hope will bring about final resolution to the matter.
- Mansfield Middle School Roof Project: As the Council was previously informed, the Mansfield Middle School Roof Building Committee last met on February 7 and an update was provided regarding the status of completing the remediation work and the overall project. The solar array portion of the project is complete, and the roofing portion is nearing completion. The next meeting of the Committee will be held on March 6th.
- On February 15 the Town Manager and the Director of Human Services co-led a lecture for a course in the UConn Human Development and Family Sciences program that is being taught by Terry Berthelot (former Town Council member). The session focused on the impacts that policy-setting and decision-making at the local government level has on families.
- The Town Manager will be attending an upcoming "Legislative Update" meeting of the Capitol Regional Council of Governments (CRCOG) that will entail CRCOG representatives conveying the organization's FY 2024 legislative agenda to House Speaker Ritter and other key state legislators.
- The February/March issue of the Town's bimonthly electronic newsletter was published on February 2 and can be accessed [here](#).
- The Town Manager's most recent monthly appearance on WILI-AM with Wayne Norman took place on February 7 and can be accessed [here](#).