

## MEMO

**To:** Town Council  
**CC:** Town Employees  
**From:** Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager  
**Date:** May 13, 2024  
**Subject:** **Town Manager's Report**

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

- As the Council is well aware, the annual budget review season is drawing to a close for FY2024/25. The Council took final action on adopting a budget on April 25, and the second of two public information meetings on the budget – as prescribed by the Town Charter – was held on May 9. Our annual Town Meeting will be convened at Mansfield Middle School beginning at 7:00 PM on May 14, 2024 (tomorrow evening). Numerous accommodations are being offered to promote accessibility and convenience for Mansfield registered voters and property owners wishing to participate in the meeting. The proposed budget aims to maintain and enhance the exceptional level of municipal services we offer the public while requesting additional funding to increase staffing capacity in the areas of public safety and public works, as well as infrastructure projects. We are projecting that increases in non-tax revenues will help fund these additional investments while still enabling a reduction in the mill rate of at least 1.0 mills for FY 2024/25.
- I am delighted to announce that – following the conclusion of a competitive selection process that members of the Town's management team and other key stakeholders all very thoughtfully informed – Ms. Jessica St. Louis has been selected to serve as the Town of Mansfield's next Director of Human Services. Her first official day in the job will be May 28<sup>th</sup>. I would like to invite Council members to join us in welcoming Jessica to our team later this month when we host a community open house for her on May 30<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-3:00 PM at the Mansfield Senior Center. Light refreshments will be provided by our Senior Center kitchen staff. A press release will be forthcoming this week. Jessica has more than 20 years of experience in the Human Services field where she has demonstrated a strong commitment to and passion for serving children and families. Most recently, Jessica has served as the Manager of Clinical Social Work for Connecticut Children's Medical Center, where she supervises a unit of approximately 40 staff members. In her current role she has implemented a number of initiatives such as the family advisory council, a crisis outpatient treatment clinic, data collection dashboard, clinical work procedures for the Emergency Department, and created a specific mental health care coordination role to help with the mental health surge prior to and during the pandemic. Jessica holds a Bachelors in Social Work from Eastern Connecticut State University, a Master of Social Work from Springfield College, and is a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW). She has roots in Mansfield, and is a graduate of E.O. Smith High School.
- Following Cynthia van Zelm's recent departure as Executive Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership after 22 years of dedicated and admirable service, Kathleen Paterson (Senior Communications Manager) was named as the Acting Director at the Partnership's most recent Board of Directors meeting on May 2. Given that Cynthia is the only Executive Director that the Partnership has ever known, it will be important for stakeholders from the Town and UConn to engage in thoughtful deliberations in the coming weeks and months to determine next steps and ensure that we

chart a successful course for advancing shared economic development goals for the Downtown and throughout the Town of Mansfield.

- Fire Chief John Roache officially began his new appointment as the head of Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services this past Monday, May 6. His initial days on the job have been busy meeting with the Town Manager, members of the Town's management team, the membership of Mansfield Fire and EMS, and other key stakeholders. I want to extend a sincere thank you to Chief Dave Dagon, who for several months served invaluable as Interim Fire Chief and continues to be a tremendous help with Chief Roache's initial onboarding as new Chief. A ceremonial swearing-in ceremony for Chief Roache is being convened at 6:30 PM prior to the start of the Council regular business meeting this evening. Chief Roache has more than 30 years of experience in the Fire Service. Most recently, he served as Fire Chief in Somers, CT, holding that position since 2016. He also worked for the 8th Utilities District of Manchester in the position of Deputy Chief. Chief Roache's career began with a lengthy tenure of volunteer fire service while he was simultaneously working as an informational technology professional before making the transition to the career fire service. His time with the Town of Andover's volunteer fire department led to multiple positions over the years including past Assistant Chief and past Fire Marshal.
- As was announced in my report for the April 22<sup>nd</sup> Town Council meeting, Mansfield Resident Trooper Supervisor, Sergeant Tim Merrill, has stepped down from his role as the Supervisor of the Mansfield Resident Trooper Office (RTO) to accept a promotion to Lieutenant. Newly minted Lieutenant Merrill has been placed in charge of Troop H based in Hartford. Lieutenant Merrill served as the Town's Resident Trooper Supervisor for a little over two years and progress was made on a number of important public safety fronts during his tenure. Sergeant Steve King, who served as the Supervisor for the Mansfield RTO for approximately one year immediately prior to Sergeant Merrill, was appointed by CT State Police (CSP) as the Town of Mansfield's Interim Resident Trooper Supervisor on May 6<sup>th</sup> and will remain in this role until such time as a permanent successor is named by CSP leadership. We are fortunate to have Sergeant King back in this role given his preexisting familiarity with our unique law enforcement challenges and opportunities, as well as the critical importance of effective/ongoing collaboration between Town of Mansfield and UConn. Sergeant King will join the Council's business meeting this evening for a (re)introduction.
- Communications Specialist Margaret Chatey will provide the Council with an update on ongoing branding and communications projects/initiatives for the Town of Mansfield and Board of Education during tonight's regular business meeting.
- Additional human resources/personnel updates:
  - Maximillian Kuczorski has been hired as a full-time (FT) Firefighter/EMT with our Fire Department effective June 3, 2024. Max will fill our last remaining existing vacancy for full-time Firefighter/EMT (pending Town Meeting approval of the proposed two additional FT Firefighter/EMTs proposed in the FY 2024/25 budget) and will bring our roster of FT firefighters (inclusive of the four captains) to 20. Max has served as a volunteer Firefighter/EMT for nearly three years and owns a landscaping business. Max holds Firefighter I and Firefighter II certifications. Welcome Max!
  - Allen Corson, our Facilities Management Director has retired after 24 years of service to the Town and Mansfield Board of Education. We have initiated a search for the next Facilities Management Director, which is a very importance leadership position for both the Town of Mansfield and Mansfield Public Schools. Interested applicants may learn more here: <https://www.mansfieldct.gov/353/Job-Opportunities>
  - Ludwika (Vicky) Hannon has been appointed to the position of Senior Center Program Assistant. Vicky began work today, May 13<sup>th</sup>. Vicky has experience in therapeutic recreation, working with older adults. She is passionate about working with seniors. She holds an Associate's degree in Therapeutic Recreation and is pursuing a degree in Communications. Welcome Vicky!

- Lisa Gustafson has been appointed to the Administrative Assistant position with our Facilities Department. Lisa begins work in this capacity on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Lisa has nearly 30 years of comparable private sector experience. She holds a paralegal certificate. Lisa replaces Catharine Varga, who was recently promoted within our organization to Public Works Specialist. Welcome Lisa!
- *Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan*- The Community Engagement Summary has been posted at [www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan](http://www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan). A draft plan will be presented later this spring and there will be many opportunities for public feedback.
- *Development Activity*- Staff continues to update the [Development Activity](#) portion of the Planning and Development website.
- *2025 Mansfield Tomorrow POCD*- The request for proposals (RFP) relative to the 2025 Mansfield Tomorrow Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) update was recently published and interested firms have until May 28 to submit a detailed proposal. Consultant selection is expected in July. The 2025 Mansfield Tomorrow will include a robust community engagement process that will incorporate and build upon the goals, strategies, and actions from the NW Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the Facilities Master Plan, among other relevant planning documents.
- On May 20, 2024, at 6:00 pm the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) will hold a Public Hearing to hear comments on the PZC-initiated amendments to Article 9 Section 190-69 of the Mansfield Zoning Regulations related to Signs (PZC File # 907-60. The PZC has been working to make the regulation more user-friendly and content-neutral pursuant to case law.
- The Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) continues to work with Tyche Planning and Policy Group on substantive updates to the zoning regulations relative to future multi-family housing projects. The PZC is refining a new approach to the multi-family applications, which includes a Planned Housing Development District. This proposed regulation would require applicant to follow the following procedure:
  - Pre-Application Staff Review
  - Conceptual Development Review
  - Master Development Plan Zone Change Application
  - Public Hearing
  - Site Plan Application no public hearing
  - Commission Decision
- *Summer in Storrs*- The annual Summer Stroll event being organized by the Mansfield Downtown Partnership on May 30 from 5:00-7:00 PM kicks off a season full of fun in Downtown Storrs! Join us on Thursday, June 6 for the first of our [Summer Concerts on the Square](#); on Friday, June 7 for [Celebrate Pride](#); and on Saturday, June 8 for the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual [John E. Jackman Tour de Mansfield](#)!
- As the official kickoff to Pride Month here in The Town of Mansfield, we will host a Pride flag-raising ceremony prior to Summer Stroll activities at 4:00 PM on Thursday, May 30. Members of the Town Council are encouraged to participate in the ceremony, along with members of E.O. Smith High School GSA. The community is encouraged to gather at the flag pole outside Town Hall. The Mansfield Youth Services Bureau will be distributing free Pride flags to all.
- The Town is in receipt of a complete working version of a proposed final comprehensive Mansfield Parks and Recreation (MPR) Master Plan and Financial Sustainability Strategy as developed by our consultant, 110%, Inc.. We anticipate that, following the consultant's efforts to incorporate final input that staff is presently in the process of providing, the master plan and financial sustainability strategy will be provided to members of the Council for initial review by end of May with a formal presentation to the Town Council taking place during the regular business meeting on June 10.
- The Town's consultant, CivicBrand, which has served as the lead on the ongoing community engagement work associated with the municipal facilities master planning project recently finalized the community values based on public feedback, and they are now working with Town staff to develop a scoring system that can be applied to myriad potential future facility

- construction/improvement projects based on those values. Once the scoring system has been developed, CivicBrand will finish the draft report, which will be available for public comment. We will then incorporate any public feedback we receive into the final report and facilities scoring system.
- The 2024 Legislative Session officially concluded on May 8. The Town Manager participated in a preliminary “recap” of the recently closed legislative session hosted by the CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM) on May 9, but, given the very quick turnaround, a more detailed summary of (in)action on legislation of interest to municipalities will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead. We anticipate that a similar post-legislative session wrap up discussion will be convened in the near future by staff from the CT Council of Small Towns (COST), in which the Town Manager and other town officials will also participate.
  - *Region 19 Budget Referendum*– Regional School District #19 held its annual meeting on Monday, May 6, followed by the annual budget referendum on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, for the roughly \$24.4 million budget as adopted by the Region 19 Board of Education. The budget received majority support from the voters of all three member towns, and carried by a combined vote of 603 in favor to 328 opposed. The Mansfield-specific vote split was 133 in favor and 8 opposed.
  - As a reminder, through a Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) regional bid, the Town selected the firm of Daniel Penn Associates to conduct our initial diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) organizational assessment survey that was included in the FY24 approved budget. Staff from the Town Manager’s Office/HR recently held a project meeting with Daniel Penn to review the proposed survey instrument and propose adjustments as appropriate. The survey will be distributed to members of our larger leadership team (approximately 25 individuals) the week of May 20, and the project report is expected in mid-June.
  - Devon Andrews, who has served as our Library Director since November 2023, will provide an annual update regarding Mansfield Public Library programs and services during the Council’s regular business meeting on May 28.
  - Mansfield Public Library is seeking volunteers to join staff members on Saturday, May 18 from 9:00am-12:00pm to prep the space in front of the playground fence for the sculpture and pollinator garden being installed as part of the ARPA-funded “public art walk” in Mansfield Center. This opportunity coincides with the popular Mansfield Garden Gate Club Plant Sale on the library grounds.
  - The community survey produced by the Mansfield Public Library closed this past week (Tuesday, May 7) with a total of 118 responses and one lucky patron winning an Amazon Fire 7 Tablet. Community members provided excellent feedback and suggestions for added services and programs. The responses will help to shape the program planning and collection development that is currently underway for the upcoming fiscal year and beyond.
  - As a reminder, we anticipate that final work on the new pickle ball facility being constructed adjacent to the Mansfield Community Center will be complete prior to the Memorial Day weekend. Remaining work includes application of the finish top/performance coat (which has to be applied when overnight temperatures are conducive). Installation of the associated fencing enclosure was largely completed this past week. The Town’s Department of Public Works has largely completed its responsibilities for the project, which included final grading and hydroseeding. The new facility should be open for use for most of the warmer weather season. The associated parking lot expansion project has been receiving good use. New pavement will be applied when the asphalt plant opens later this spring.
  - The Town contracted with VMS Construction Company for the South Eagleville Road Sanitary Sewer Extension Project. Work is scheduled to begin today (May 13) and continue to approximately mid-July with final paving occurring in the fall.
  - The Town’s selected contractor, Genovesi Construction, LLC, will begin construction of the culvert carrying the Eagleville Brook under Hunting Lodge Road. Work is scheduled to begin the week of May 20<sup>th</sup> and continue thru to the end of August. During this time, this section of Hunting Lodge Road will remain closed to thru traffic.

- *Mansfield Elementary School Project- Water Treatment:* The Town and its contracted engineering firm, Weston and Sampson continue to proceed with making final adjustments to the proposed water treatment design for Mansfield Elementary School based on additional rounds of substantive feedback and review provided by the CT Department of Public Health (DPH). At this point there have been numerous updates to the proposed design and associated rounds of review by the State. The system being implemented is what is referred to as an optimal corrosion control treatment (OCCT) system that will mitigate the slightly elevated levels of copper that continue to be present in the water sampled at MES. In addition to lower copper concentrations for public health/consumption benefits, the mitigation system will also help extend the anticipated useful life of piping in the building. As soon as CT DPH approves the final design of an OCCT system, the Town and Mansfield Board of Education will proceed with implementation. The precise timeframe for installation will be tailored to minimize disruption to students and staff. Throughout this process, students, staff, and visitors have had access to safe drinking water within the building using either bottled water stations or filtered drinking fountains that are tested twice a month.
- Final preparations are being made for Mansfield's annual Memorial Day Parade. The parade will step off at 9:00 AM on Monday, May 27. Invitations have been distributed to volunteer organizations, school bands, and guests, and most anticipated participants have subsequently responded to confirm their attendance in this year's program. Mansfield veterans are encouraged to participate in the parade. Please contact the Town Manager's office for details.
- The June/July edition of the Town's bimonthly electronic newsletter will be published on June 3. The April/May issue of the Town's bimonthly electronic newsletter was published April 2 and can be accessed [here](#).
- The Town Manager's most recent monthly appearance on WILI-AM on the Wayne Norman Show took place on Friday, May 3, and can be accessed [here](#).