

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: May 28, 2024
Subject: **Town Manager's Report**

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

- I want to start by conveying a note of sincere thanks to my Executive Assistant, Sharon Biggie, for her tireless work in recent weeks organizing the Mansfield's annual Memorial Day ceremony. I would also like to thank Sara-Ann Chaine, Town Clerk, for all the assistance and support she extended. The hard work of these two individuals in particular ensured that this year's program was a success. Although the weather forecast resulted in the parade being foregone, the program that was convened in the Mansfield Middle School gymnasium was well-organized and well-attended. We greatly appreciate all the veterans, speakers, volunteer organizations, Mansfield Fire Department honor guard, school bands, and members of the general public who came together to honor and recognize the ultimate sacrifice that so many members of the armed services gave during times of conflict to protect the freedoms we enjoy.
- As the Council knows, the FY 2024/25 annual budget (operating budget and capital improvement plan) previously adopted by the Town Council (April 25) was formally approved by the voters by a vote of 108-3 at the May 14 annual Town Meeting. The adopted budget will maintain and enhance the exceptional level of municipal services we offer the public while providing 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. The Town Council will take action on setting the mill rate for the coming fiscal year at tonight's (May 28) regular business meeting. Preparation of the budget requires a great deal of time and effort. I would like to extend a personal thank you to members of the Town Council, our Chief of Shared Services and Administration (Maria Capriola), Finance Director (Amanda Backhaus) and entire Finance team, Superintendent of Schools (Peter Dart), members of the Mansfield Board of Education, municipal department heads and other Town staff team members for the collective diligence and thoughtful contributions over the last several months!
- Shortly after the state legislature voted to adopt an appropriations bill for FY2025 in the waning moments of the legislative session on May 8, municipalities began receiving updated "run sheets" reflecting the amount of state aid (by program) that will be allocated to each town/city in the coming fiscal year. It was quickly noted that the level of Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding included for the Town of Mansfield in the state's adopted budget was substantially higher than what had been anticipated as a result of information shared throughout the legislative session. More specifically, it now appears that the Town will receive approximately \$2.1 million more (\$11.8 million total) in ECS funding than what had been projected (\$9.7 million). Additional information is being sought to confirm our understanding of the factors/circumstances that lead to the increased in ECS funding, but, at this time, based on information that has been obtained by State Rep. Haddad, we are reasonably confident that the enhanced level of ECS funding the Town is expected to receive in FY2025 will

likely be a one-time anomaly. As such, it would be prudent to consider how these funds would be best used for a one-time project/purpose of high importance (i.e., capital improvement program) as opposed to using the funds for the purpose of reducing the funding being raised via the tax levy (operating budget/expenses).

- As has been previously reported to the Council, Jessica St. Louis will serve as the next Director of the Department of Human Services for the Town of Mansfield. Her first day in the position is today, May 28, and she will be formally introduced to the Council during tonight's regular meeting. Furthermore, we would like to invite Council members to join us in welcoming Jessica to our team later this week when we host a community open house for Ms. St. Louis this Thursday, May 30, from 2:00-3:00 PM at the Mansfield Senior Center. Ms. St. Louis has more than 20 years of experience in the Human Services field with a demonstrated commitment and passion for serving children and families. Additional biographical information is included in the informational packet.
- On May 20, Congressman Courtney and a member of his senior staff team visited with the Town Manager, Mayor Moran, and select other Town officials to discuss the remaining funding needs of the planned 10-ft wide multi-use trail that would run parallel to Storrs Road/CT-195 for an approximately one-mile segment beginning at the Four Corners (intersection of CT-195 and US-44) and extending to the intersection of Tower Loop Road and Storrs Road/CT-195. Congressman Courtney informed Town representatives that he will be supporting efforts to obtain the remaining \$2.5 million needed to fully fund the project (\$1 million having already been included in the most recently adopted federal budget) via member-directed funding requests intended to be included in the FY2025 federal budget. The Town greatly appreciates the support shown for this project by Congressman Courtney as well as U.S. Senators Blumenthal and Murphy.
- Former Executive Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership Cynthia van Zelm will be honored by the Connecticut Main Street Center at the 2024 Awards of Excellence ceremony on June 18. She is one of three individuals to be honored for their leadership in effecting positive change in Connecticut's downtowns. Cynthia's role in creating the vision for Downtown Storrs, and seeing through its build-out over 22 years, is exemplary. She is very deserving of this honor, and it reflects positively on our entire community, as well. Read the full [press release](#).
- The Town-University Relations Committee most recently met on May 14. These bi-monthly meetings provide an opportunity for senior officials from the Town and UConn to share updates and propose possible opportunities for collaboration across myriad topics and issues of common interest (i.e., housing, neighborhood relations, public safety, economic development, transportation, etc.). Topics from this month's meeting included a reintroduction of Sergeant King (recently appointed Interim Resident Trooper Supervisor for the Mansfield Resident Trooper Office), ways in which the Town and UConn to work together proactively to reduce/eliminate litter (establishing a sub-committee), the status of ongoing housing construction projects (on- and off-campus), and pedestrian safety improvement projects.
- The Mayor, Town Manager, and Chief of Shared Services and Administration will attend the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) annual meeting in Manchester on June 5. On a related note, the Town Manager participated in the CRCOG Policy Board (governing body) monthly meeting this past week, which included adoption of the proposed FY2025 budget, acceptance of numerous grants to facilitate projects of regional value/importance to member municipalities, and other topics.
- The Town Manager and Chief of Shared Services and Administration will attend the CT Town and City Management Association (CTCMA) annual meeting in Glastonbury on June 13.
- Devon Andrews, who assumed the Library Director position in mid-November 2023, will provide the Council with an overview of Mansfield Public Library's programs and operations, as well as an update on a wide range of priority projects and initiatives being carried out by the Library as part of the MPL's strategic plan/roadmap.
- As was previously reported to the Council, we have initiated a search for the next Facilities Management Director, which is a very important 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>

- Management has commenced negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement with the professional/technical bargaining group, and will be doing the same with the Public Works union in the coming weeks.
- The diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) organizational assessment survey (funded in the FY24 approved budget) was administered this past week with the support of Daniel Penn Associates (independent consulting firm). The survey was distributed to members of our larger leadership team (approximately 25 individuals) and the complete analysis and final project report is expected to be provided within the next couple of weeks (mid-June).
- Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan: Work continues on the plan with an expectation that a presentation will be provided in the near future. Follow the progress at www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan
- 2025 Mansfield Tomorrow POCD: Responses to the recently issued request for proposal (RFP) for the 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) are due on May 28 with consultant selection expected in July. The 2025 update to *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 Municipal Facilities Master Plan, among other relevant planning documents.
- The Future of High-Density Housing-New Regulations Proposed-Public Hearing 6/17: Last August, the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) enacted a temporary and limited moratorium on high-density housing, which expires on August 31, 2024. The Commission has been working with Tyche Planning and Policy Group and Staff to develop a regulation that will meet the community's needs for this type of housing. A public hearing has been scheduled on June 17, 2024, at the PZC's regular meeting at 6:00 pm. The hearing will stay open through the summer to allow for ample public input. Throughout June, Jennifer Kaufman, Director of Planning and Development, will provide an overview of the proposed regulations to several boards and committees as well as the Town Council. In addition, she will conduct a virtual public information session and will provide an overview of how to provide comments through the public hearing process. The draft regulation, staff memos describing the regulations, feedback provided during the January 4th Housing Work Session, and the PowerPoint presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission on May 20, 2024, can be [viewed here](#).
- On Wednesday, June 12, 2024, from 5:30-7:30 pm, a joint meeting of several Mansfield Committees and Commissions will be convened in Council Chambers to initiate initial collaboration and communication among town committees in renewing Mansfield's [Sustainable CT](#) certification. During the meeting, attendees of the Sustainable CT staff will work with each committee to determine which of their activities could qualify for points. More information about Sustainable CT is available at this [link](#). As a reminder, Sustainable CT is a voluntary certification process where CT towns are recognized for their ongoing sustainability initiatives. It is our hope that Sustainable CT will serve as a unified sustainability focus for Mansfield and greater collaboration between committees/commissions. Further, certification through Sustainable CT moves the town closer to implementing many of the actions in the [Mansfield Tomorrow Plan of Conservation and Development](#). Additionally, as part of this interdisciplinary gathering, Jennifer Kaufman, Director of Planning and Development, will provide an overview of the proposed regulations related to high-density housing and how to provide feedback to the Planning and Zoning Commission as part of the public hearing process. The public hearing will open at the PZC's regular, hybrid meeting, on June 17, 2024, and will be continued into August to allow for adequate public input. Draft regulation and related documents can be [viewed here](#).
- 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 19th 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 this 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 and the K-POP Dance Group. The community is encouraged to gather at the flagpole outside Town Hall. The Mansfield Youth Services Bureau will be distributing free Pride flags to all.
- As was previously reported, 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. Staff has provided a final round of input, which has been incorporated. The master plan and financial sustainability strategy will be provided to members of the Council for initial review later this week, with a formal presentation to the Town Council taking place during the regular business meeting on June 10.
- CivicBrand has received feedback from Town Staff on the municipal facilities scoring system and is working on finishing the draft report for Staff to review shortly. After Staff has a chance to review the draft and make changes, the report will be available for public comment. We will then incorporate public comments into the final report.
- A post-legislative session wrap up presentation/discussion with staff from the CT Council of Small Towns (COST) is being organized for a near future Town Council meeting (likely June 24).
- Final work on the new pickle ball facility being constructed adjacent to the Mansfield Community Center experienced recent delays due to shifting availability of the private contractor (retained by the private benefactor supporting the project) that is applying the top/finish performance coat and line striping. Although we had previously anticipated final completion prior to the Memorial Day weekend, we now believe that completion during the second half of June is more likely. The new facility should still be open for use for most of the warm-weather season.
- As was previously reported to the Council, the contractor (VMS Construction Company) retained by the Town for the South Eagleville Road Sanitary Sewer Extension Project commenced work earlier this month (week of May 13) and we anticipate that work will continue until approximately mid-July with final paving occurring in the fall.
- The Town's selected contractor, Genovesi Construction, LLC, began construction of the culvert carrying the Eagleville Brook under Hunting Lodge Road this past week (week of May 20th) and we anticipate that work will continue through 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, CT Water (certified system operator), and the Town's 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). CT Water met onsite with Weston and Sampson earlier this month and it was a productive meeting to have all the key subject matter experts on-site to review and discuss treatment, layout, controls, and needed pipe modifications in both the pump station and mechanical room to accommodate the proposed treatment. Weston indicated it will take three weeks to complete. The original task order was for the treatment of the elevated copper and with the change in pH, DPH has required pH adjustment. With this, a decision has been made to add chlorine treatment to minimize any risk of bacteria. The team is working through hardwiring the analyzers located in the mechanical room back to the pump station about 300', since space is minimal in the existing conduit. Alternative options for discharge are being evaluated, and the team is progressing towards getting the re-design fully completed. Weston is also actively working on finalizing the equipment list and any additional project costs related to controls work and addition of pH and chlorine. All parties are aware that the proposed treatment system, once approved, must be installed as soon as possible this summer and tailored to minimize disruption to students and staff.
- *Dog Licensing:* Connecticut dog license renewal is due during the month of June. Please go to www.MansfieldCT.gov/dogs for licensing information. Payments may be made online, by mail, or in person at the Town Clerk's Office. To support proper rabies vaccinations in time for dog licensing

season, the Animal Control Office is hosting its annual drive-through Rabies Clinic on Saturday, June 8. It will be held at the former Vinton Elementary School from 10 AM to 12 noon. Animal Control is supported by the East Brook Animal Hospital and NECTAR in providing this convenient, low- or no-cost clinic for cats and dogs.

- Mansfield Fire Department and E.O. Smith High School students will be concluding the Fire Explorers program year this week at the Fire Training School in Willimantic. Town staff has invited WFSB-TV-3 to produce a story about the program and the students' Capstone project work that will be videotaped this evening.
- 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 next monthly appearance on WILI-AM on the Wayne Norman Show will take place on Friday, June 7. The Town Manager's May appearance and can be accessed [here](#).