

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: June 10, 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 am very happy to share that this past Friday, June 7, the Bond Commission voted in support of funding a Community Investment Fund (CIF) planning grant in the amount of \$250,000 that the Town applied for in recent months. As the Council was briefed on in 2023, this program is offered by the state of Connecticut and is being administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development. Under this program, which is highly competitive, the town applied for a planning grant and requested up to \$250,000 to plan “for capital projects including activities such as community engagement processes, feasibility studies, development of project plan and construction budget.” The Town continues to proceed with a facilities master planning process that has identified multiple areas of significant need. These include significant deficiencies and constraints associated with the Town’s existing senior center, municipal building, public safety facilities, and public works facilities. The Town has made considerable investment and progress in its facilities master planning process, including community engagement related to the project which is underway. At this time, \$225,000 in Council-approved funding (combination of the Town’s ARPA allocation and CIP funding) is available for appropriation/use during the third phase (Phase III) of the project, which would include additional community engagement services, commissioning of more advanced conceptual design work, cost estimation services, and community outreach/education prior to a possible associated bond referendum. In December 2023, the Council authorized submittal of a CIF grant application in the amount of \$250,000 for master planning work associated with the municipal services campus. These funds will be paired with the existing \$225,000 previously authorized for a combined total of \$475,000 in funding to perform this critically important work.
- As the Council is aware, during its February 26, 2024 meeting, executives from Wilmorite (developer who has proposed building “The HUB” multi-family housing project on King Hill Road/N. Eagleville Road) met with the Council during an executive session to discuss the project’s financing as well as projected tax revenue scenarios. Valuable information was shared between the parties and Town staff, members of the Council leadership, and the Town Attorney subsequently continued communication with representatives from Wilmorite with respect to possible property tax abatements that the developer wished to have the Council consider for this large-scale multi-family housing project. At this time, Wilmorite has indicated a desire to arrange for a follow-up discussion in executive session with the Council during one of its regular business meetings in July or August.
- UConn officials indicated this past week that they anticipate announcing the hire of an Assistant Dean of Students with primary responsibility for overseeing the Off-Campus and Commuter Student Services program/office in the very near future. UConn’s Off-Campus and Commuter Student Services Department, under the outstanding leadership of John Armstrong (former Director), was an incredible resource for the Town of Mansfield up until the program’s sudden/unexpected dissolution in August 2023. Through the actions of John and his team, the quality of life for our residents had

dramatically improved over a roughly 15-year period. The Town of Mansfield does not want to see a regression of the progress made in improving and maintaining the public safety and the quality of life for our residents, and the establishment of the new Assistant Dean of Students position is a very important step in that process.

- In his capacity as a member of the board, the Town Manager attended the quarterly meeting of the CT Commission for Education Technology (CET) on June 3. A primary focus of the meeting was the recent completion of the State Digital Equity Plan (Plan). One of the services strongly promoted in the Plan is “digital navigation,” and fellow members of CET were very excited to learn that Mansfield has been funding a pair of “digital access navigators” via a portion of the Town’s American Rescue Plan Act allocation. We continue to receive enormously positive feedback from the public relative to the value of the service being provided by our Digital Access Navigators – Paul Velazquez and John Cropp –who are part of the exceptional Mansfield Public Library team.
- The Mayor, Town Manager, and Chief of Shared Services and Administration attended the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) annual meeting in Manchester on June 5.
- 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.
- A post-legislative session wrap up presentation/discussion with staff from the CT Council of Small Towns (COST) has been organized for the Town Council’s June 24 meeting.
- This week the Town Manager will be meeting with Lieutenant Hayward, Commander of CT State Police Troop C based in Tolland, to review the selection process and associated Town priorities and preferences with respect to the appointment of our next Resident Trooper Supervisor. As the Council was recently informed, Sergeant King has been appointed to oversee the Mansfield Resident Trooper Office on an interim basis and has done a masterful job during his first month in the role (Sergeant King previously successfully served as the Resident Trooper Supervisor in 2021/2022).
- I regret to inform the Council that – due to recent unexpected changes in family circumstances – Sharon Biggie, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager, will be leaving the Town at the end of this month. Sharon will be transitioning into a similar position supporting the leadership of the Naval War College in Newport, RI. Sharon has been a wonderful addition to our Town Hall staff team, and we wish her the very best in this next chapter of her professional life. The search of a new Executive Assistant in the Town Manager’s Office will commence immediately.
- We are pleased to announce that Michael Stankov, Mansfield’s Environmental Planner, has successfully earned the distinguished designation of [Certified Zoning Enforcement Official \(CZEO\)](#). Earning this title requires at least three years of zoning enforcement experience in a Connecticut municipality, successful completion of 60 hours of training and associated examinations, and a written case study demonstrating knowledge and experience of the complex and varied principles, methods, and techniques of the zoning enforcement process. Michael started with the Town of Mansfield in February of 2023 and serves as the Town’s Wetland Agent and Deputy Zoning Agent. Please join us in congratulating Michael on his accomplishments.
- The search for the next Facilities Management Director continues. This 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 Public Works bargaining group this past week. Negotiations are now underway with both bargaining units (Public Works and Professional & Technical Employees) represented by CSEA.
- The diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) organizational assessment survey (funded in the FY24 approved budget) was administered during the month of May 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 either this week or next week.

- 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: An RFP for the 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) was due on May 28. Because only one consultant responded, staff pivoted to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), which is due on July 9th. We still plan to kick off the community engagement in early fall. The 2025 Mansfield Tomorrow will include a robust community engagement process that will incorporate and build upon the goals, strategies, and actions from the Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan, the Mansfield 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: As the Council is aware, in August 2023, 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. At various points during the month of 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 on June 13, 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](#).
- As a reminder, 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](#).
- The [Celebrate Pride](#) festival took place this past Friday evening, June 7, in Betsy Paterson Square. The event was well-attended by the public and we wish to extend a special thank you to the Mansfield Youth Services Bureau and Mansfield Downtown Partnership for their combined efforts in organizing this annual event. Participation in the event by representatives from the Mansfield Department of Human Services, Mansfield Public Library, and Eastern Highlands Health District was very appreciated.
- 110%, Inc., the primary/lead consulting firm retained by the Town for the purpose of facilitating the completion of a comprehensive master plan and financial sustainability strategy for Mansfield Parks and Recreation, and Town staff will present the draft Mansfield Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Financial Sustainability Strategy. As part of the presentation, 110%, Inc. and Town staff will review anticipated next steps associated with completing internal (i.e., Town board/committee) review and proceeding with Town Council adoption of a finalized plan this summer.

- *Internet Safety:* On Friday, June 21, beginning at 10:00 AM in the Program Room located in the Mansfield Public Library main branch (54 Warrentville Road), Mansfield Public Library's Digital Access Navigator, Paul Velazquez, will offer the second of two free internet safety courses for the community. The first such course was offered last week on June 7. Topics will include identifying secure websites, creating and remembering strong passwords, and avoiding scams and fraud. Participants will also have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss internet safety. Whether an attendee is a seasoned internet user or just starting to explore the online realm, this presentation will empower them to make informed decisions and safeguard their digital presence. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own laptops or other mobile devices for hands-on practice. The library does have devices available to lend if needed. No registration required.
- Mansfield's Youth Services Bureau had its first self-care event at Mansfield Middle School (MMS) and the 50 spots filled up quickly. Based on the level of interest expressed in this program, Youth Services looks forward to working in collaboration with MMS to expand this offering going forward. The program included having participants use different senses to help calm and soothe themselves, and craft activities – such as making “calm down jars” and aroma therapy – were provided to students as ways to help them ground themselves when they get overwhelmed or experience other mental health struggles.
- *Mansfield Elementary School Bike Week:* Through a generous partnership between Bike Mansfield, EHHD, Community donations, Mansfield Elementary School (MES) PE Teachers, and the Mansfield Board of Education and staff, all fourth graders participated in a first annual “Bike Week.” Through this partnership, the district was able to purchase bikes, a storage trailer, and resources so that each year, fourth grade students will learn how to safely ride a bike. The week culminated with a community ride that was supported by volunteers including Sergeant King from the Mansfield Resident Trooper Office. Additionally, Eastern Highlands Health District generously donated helmets for students to keep and use after this event.
- As was previously reported to the Council, the Mansfield Fire Department and E.O. Smith High School students concluded the Fire Explorers program year in late-May with an event/simulation at the Fire Training School in Willimantic. Members of the Mansfield Fire Department produced a [video](#) (which came out great!) to commemorate the hard work and efforts of the students that took part in the Explore Program this year. This program is a major commitment that should be acknowledged, and we hope that many of those that have acquired such valuable firsthand experience with the Mansfield Fire Department will seriously consider a career path or volunteering in the emergency services field.
- Final work on the new pickle ball facility being constructed adjacent to the Mansfield Community Center is nearing completion. The surfacing contractor is scheduled to begin one week from today (Monday, June 17th). This work is estimated to take up to two weeks, depending on weather. Spectator seating is being assembled in preparation of installation. Finally, the electrical contractor is coordinating a new electrical service for the lighting system. Barring additional unanticipated delays, the project should active functional completion in time for use throughout the majority of the summer and all this coming fall.
- *Public Works/Infrastructure Improvement Updates*
 - Public Works has been deploying two crews to perform drainage improvements on Browns Road (from Chatham Drive to Crane Hill Road) and September Road, and 20 of the 24 planned new basins have thus far been completed. Similarly, drainage work has started on Elizabeth Road with 4 of 8 catch basins being thus far completed and one cross pipe slated to be replaced in the near future.
 - 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 in mid-May 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 in late-May 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.
 - The new Public Works office trailer (adjacent to the Public Works Garage located on Clover Mill Road) was delivered this past week and personnel from the Town's Department of Facilities Management are in the process of connecting utilities this week.
- *Town Hall HVAC Updates:* New wall-mounted AC units have been installed and are running successfully in Council Chamber. Additionally, the failed AC unit located in the Town Hall server room was also replaced.
- *Mansfield Elementary School Project- Water Treatment:* The Town has been informed by CT Water (certified system operator) that the Town's contracted engineering firm (Weston and Sampson) has submitted what is anticipated to be the final adjustments to the proposed water treatment design for Mansfield Elementary School. CT Water is currently completing its review and the revised plan will then be transmitted to CT Department of Public Health (DPH) for approval. 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.
- To support proper rabies vaccinations in time for dog licensing season, the Animal Control Office hosted its annual drive-through Rabies Clinic this past Saturday, June 8, at the former Vinton Elementary School. The event was supported by the East Brook Animal Hospital and NECTAR.
- *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.
- *Justices of the Peace* – Major party nominations for Justices of the Peace (JP) are now closed. Anyone who is not a member of a major party and wishes to serve as a JP should contact the Town Clerk before August 1st for more information.
- Due to the rain last Thursday, the first concert in the Summer Concerts on the Square series was postponed. Therefore, this Wednesday June 12, local band The Kingpins will perform with the All Night Boogie Band from Vermont performing on June 13. All concerts are 6:30 to 8:30 PM on Betsy Paterson Square and are free to the public
- A pop-up Puppet Show on Betsy Paterson Square will take place at 2:00 PM, following the closing of schools for the year on Friday, July 14. The show will be performed by the Magnificent Monster Circus and is free to all.
- The June/July edition of the Town's bimonthly electronic newsletter was published on June 4 and can be accessed [here](#).
- The Town Manager's next monthly appearance on WILI-AM on the Wayne Norman Show took place this past Friday, June 7 and can be accessed [here](#).