

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: June 24, 2024
Subject: **Town Manager's Report**

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

- 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 order to proactively plan for the need to obligate such funds in advance of related statutory deadline, Management and Finance staff will present recommended uses of remaining unallocated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the Council's Finance Committee this evening. If these recommendations are endorsed by the Finance Committee, the full Council will be formally presented with a recommendation during its regular business meeting this evening. As a reminder, the Town of Mansfield was directly awarded approximately \$7.54 million in ARPA funds. Of this amount, the Town Council has authorized approximately \$5.9 million to date. This leaves approximately \$1.64 million remaining to be allocated by the Town Council. Funds must be obligated prior to December 31, 2024. Obligated is defined as "an order placed for property and services and entry into contracts, subawards, and similar transactions that require payment". In summary, the Council must authorize use of funds and funds must be encumbered by staff prior to December 31, 2024.
- 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. Staff have subsequently continued communication with representatives from Wilmorite with respect to possible structured property tax arrangements that the developer wishes 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 its July 22, 2024 meeting.
- The Council will receive an update relative to the planned large-scale solar field to be constructed at the Town's capped landfill, to include proposed amendments to the annual lease payment to be provided by the solar developer (Verogy) based on updated financial information.
- The Mansfield Downtown Partnership (MDP) annual meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday, June 27, beginning at 5:30 PM at Huskies Restaurant & Bar.

- Cynthia van Zelm, former MDP Executive Director, was honored by the Connecticut Main Street Center at the organization's 2024 Awards of Excellence ceremony held this past week (June 18). She was honored for her exceptional leadership in effecting positive change in Downtown Storrs. More specifically, Cynthia received the distinguished Quentin Williams Downtown Hero Award, which has only been bestowed to two individuals, including Cynthia. The award was presented to Cynthia by Mayor Moran, and other local representatives in attendance included the Town Manager, Mr. Matt Hart (former Town Manager and current Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments), and multiple Mansfield Downtown Partnership board and staff members. 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 Manager and Chief of Shared Services and Administration attended the CT Town and City Management Association (CTCMA) annual meeting in Glastonbury on June 13. A primary focus of the meeting pertained to strategies for successfully fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement within a municipal organization.
- A post-legislative session wrap up presentation/discussion with Betsy Gara, Executive Director of the CT Council of Small Towns (COST), has been arranged for the Town Council's regular business meeting this evening. The discussion will focus on legislative developments spanning numerous topical areas (i.e., education, environment, renewable energy, housing and land use, municipal revenues, solid waste, local governance, pensions and labor, etc.) from the most recent legislative session of particular relevance to smaller municipalities
- As was previously reported, on June 7, the State 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. Acceptance of these grant funds has been added to the agenda for the Council's action during tonight's regular business meeting. 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.
- In support of positioning the Town of Mansfield, a campaign is underway to promote Mansfield as a great destination for all ages to visit and enjoy, offering unique experiences in the summertime. The campaign is kicking off with premier cover position and feature story about Mansfield in the *Summer Fun & Dining Guide*, with 10,000 copies distributed throughout central Connecticut. Production of a :30 spot took place this past week featuring families having fun at the Adventure Park at Storrs, the UConn Dairy Bar, the Ballard Puppetry Museum and Betsy Paterson Square, and the Mansfield Drive-In. Original music for the TV spot was created and produced by Waldron's Studio 88 located at Mansfield's Kirby Mill. The spot will air locally during the Paris Summer Olympics coverage in late July and August on NBC TV-30, including in the Opening Ceremony. The Hartford-based NBC station

will also visit Mansfield for a news feature on local attractions. The campaign will be supported with social media, and other select print ads.

- Staff is working to prepare the Town's website for a design update in mid-July. In cooperation with the existing website provider, Information Technology and Communications staff refined the design to make it more contemporary and user-friendly, and to utilize the valuable "real estate" on the Home page more effectively. After the new website becomes public, there will be continuing refinements through the summer to ensure changes in the design are working properly.
- Lieutenant Hayward, Commander of CT State Police Troop C based in Tolland, has formally invited me to participate in the selection process with respect to the appointment of our next Resident Trooper Supervisor. Candidate interviews are taking place in early-July. As the Council was recently informed, Sergeant King has been appointed to oversee the Mansfield Resident Trooper Office on an interim basis and has been doing a masterful job (Sergeant King previously successfully served as the Resident Trooper Supervisor in 2021/2022).
- As the Council was informed at its June 10 meeting – due to recent unexpected changes in family circumstances – Sharon Biggie, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager, is leaving the Town to transition into a similar position supporting the leadership of the Naval War College in Newport, RI. This is her last week on the job. 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. We are actively recruiting qualified candidates to perform the duties of the Executive Assistant position on a temporary basis as we commence with a competitive search for a permanent replacement.
- The search for the next Facilities Management Director continues and initial interviews with qualified candidates are taking place this week. This is a very important leadership position for both the Town of Mansfield and Mansfield Public Schools. An overview of the position can be accessed here: <https://www.mansfieldct.gov/353/Job-Opportunities>
- We have made two conditional offers of employment to full-time Firefighter/EMT candidates. Both candidates are finalizing the conditional offer process, and are anticipated to begin work on July 15th. This will fill both full-time FF/EMT service improvements, and bring our total number of full-time Firefighter/EMT's to twenty-two (22), which was the targeted staffing level outlined by Town and department management to the Council throughout the FY 2024/25 budget development process.
- The annual general wage increase (GWI) for non-union personnel as proposed by Town management and endorsed by the Council Personnel Committee this past week will be presented to the Town Council for approval at tonight's regular business meeting.
- The new classification of a Deputy Fire Chief of Operations as well as an Assistant Library Director will be presented to the Town Council for approval at tonight's regular business meeting. Creation of the proposed positions was formally endorsed by the Council's Personnel Committee at a special meeting this past week. Following creation of the classification, we will proceed with the recruitment.
- First-round interviews for the advertised new laborer positions (drainage and grounds) in the Department of Public Works are complete, and second round interviews are being held this week. We anticipate having individuals in the two approved laborer positions in July.
- The Town transmitted a formal request to the Connecticut State Police on May 15, 2024 for an additional Resident Trooper effective July 1, bringing our overall total to eleven (11), including the Sergeant. This is consistent with the targeted staffing level outlined by management to the Council throughout the FY 2024/25 budget development process.
- 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). The complete analysis and draft project report was provided to management this past week, and staff are in the process of reviewing the information and working toward finalization of the report in the near future.

- The Department of Human Services, in collaboration with the Human Services Advisory Committee has finalized the annual request for competitive grant funding application that will be made available to eligible local social service agencies and nonprofits. As a reminder, the adopted FY 2024/25 budget includes a total of \$70,000 that will be divided accordingly.
- This past Friday, June 21, Town staff met with representatives from CT Water Company and UConn to discuss the Town's water allocation via the regional pipeline in light of approved/anticipated future housing and commercial development.
- *Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan:* Work continues on the plan, and progress can be followed at www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan. The public presentation of the plan has been delayed until September based on the needs of the lead consultant, FHI.
- *The Future of High-Density Housing-New Regulations Proposed:* Staff in the Planning and Development Department have initiated an effort to ensure the public is informed about the new proposed regulations on high-density housing in Mansfield and how feedback can be provided. They hosted an informal virtual question and answer session on June 13th for the public. The presentation was recorded and is available for viewing at www.MansfieldCT.gov/Video. The Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) opened the corresponding public hearing process on June 17. Staff provided a presentation of the regulations and the Commission received public comment. The hearing has been continued to the PZC's regular meeting on July 15, 2024 at 6:00 pm. Staff continues to present to boards and commissions, which will include a presentation by Jennifer Kaufman, Director of Planning and Development, to the Town Council at its regular meeting this evening. All formally submitted comments regarding the proposed new regulation must be received by the PZC prior to the close of the public hearing in order to be included in the deliberative process.
- On June 12, a joint meeting of several Mansfield municipal Boards, Committees and Commissions convened in Council Chambers to initiate initial collaboration and communication among town committees in renewing Mansfield's [Sustainable CT](#) certification. After a presentation by the Sustainable CT staff, each committee gathered and completed a matrix to determine which of their activities could qualify for points. It was a very productive session and a great start to the Town's quest for achieving gold certification (presently we are certified at the silver level). 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](#).
- *Library Programming:* Following a well-attended "kickoff" event organized by Mansfield Public Library this past Saturday that included many great activities, the Summer Reading Program is officially underway for kids, teens, and adults. Many fun prizes are available to participants! Mansfield Public Library will be offering many great programs all summer long. Staff also wants to ensure Mansfield residents and other library patrons are aware of an exciting new service – Museum Key – that the Library has launched to make a wide variety of free and discounted passes to area museums and other local/regional cultural attractions available in both digital and physical pass form. Please visit the [website](#) to learn more and take full advantage of the wonderful museums and other cultural and educational resources that our region has to offer!
- We are happy to report that final work on the new pickle ball facility adjacent to the Mansfield Community Center is nearing completion with the top/finish coat being applied this past week, and the line striping largely being completed this past week as well. Final work on the striping will be performed this week. The top coat will need the remainder of the week to finish curing. During this time period, the remaining interior fencing and nets will be installed with an anticipated completion date of June 30th. Coordination with Eversource and timing for the electrical equipment is still pending, however, the courts may be put in use before the lighting is in place, which will extend play into the evening hours. An official soft opening date will be set in the near future after the handrails are installed on the access ramp.

- *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 all 24 planned new basins have now been completed. Similarly, drainage work continues on Elizabeth Road with 6 of 8 catch basins being thus far completed and one cross pipe still needing 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.
 - Road sweeping has been completed on 5 of the 8 routes planned.
 - The new Public Works office trailer (adjacent to the Public Works Garage located on Clover Mill Road) has been set on the new concrete slab poured for this purpose. Personnel from the Town's Department of Facilities Management and contractors as appropriate are currently connecting electricity, plumbing and internet utilities with an estimated completion of next week/early-July).
- *Mansfield Elementary School Project- Water Treatment:* The public water system at Mansfield Elementary School continues to show slightly elevated copper levels when samples are taken from fixtures that are not outfitted with point-of-use filters that the designated bottle filling stations possess. The Town continues to work with CT Water (certified system operator) and our contracted engineering firm (Weston and Sampson) to obtain state approval relative to a planned water treatment system for Mansfield Elementary School that will effectively address the elevated copper levels that have been experienced since the school's opening in spring 2023. This has been a very involved and iterative process resulting in numerous rounds of plan/design review by the CT Department of Public Health (DPH), and Town staff, CT Water, and Weston and Sampson have been very thorough and responsive to the guidance and direction we have received from the state. At this time, we anticipate transmission of the final version of all needed documentation to CT DPH later today. 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.
- *Justices of the Peace:* Anyone who is not a member of a major party and wishes to serve as a Justice of the Peace should contact the Town Clerk before August 1st for more information.
- *Summer Programs in Downtown Storrs Drawing Crowds:* Since kicking off the summer event calendar in the last week of May, the Mansfield Downtown Partnership has welcomed over 1,100 visitors to Downtown Storrs for community events, including Summer Stroll, Celebrate Pride (co-hosted with Youth Services), John E. Jackman Tour de Mansfield (co-hosted with Parks and Recreation), a pop-up puppet show (co-hosted with the Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry), and Summer Concerts on the Square (every Thursday in June and July from 6:00-8:00 PM).
- 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 will take place on Wednesday, July 3 at 7:40 AM (rescheduled from Friday, July 5).