

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: October 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:

- Due to the current drought conditions being experienced throughout our region, the risk of brush fires remains exceptionally high. These dry conditions mean that even small sparks can ignite fires, endangering both property and safety. Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services has been actively monitoring these risks and responding to brush/outdoor fires both in our community and other parts of the state (including the heavily reported brush fire in Berlin). The Town had temporarily suspended issuing burn permits, and our municipal ordinance on outdoor burning PROHIBITS open burning activities, including yard debris or recreational fires, when the forest fire danger is high as determined by the State Forest Fire Warden. We ask for the community's cooperation to prevent avoidable fires and protect human life and property. Please stay vigilant, avoid using outdoor equipment that could spark a flame, and immediately report any signs of smoke to emergency services. Working together, we can help keep Mansfield safe.

- On October 18, local officials joined Congressman Courtney for a pair of visits/tours of the Eagleville Green affordable housing project and The Standard at Four Corners project site. State Senator Flexer and State Representative Haddad also took part in the Eagleville Green site visit. As the Council will recall, Congressman Courtney helped secure a \$300,000 grant from the Community Investment Fund to underscore a portion of the Eagleville Green construction project, and is supporting federal funding by way of congressional earmark to support the design and construction of a 10' wide multi-use trail that would run parallel to Storrs Road on the roughly 1-mile segment from the Four Corners



to Tower Loop Road on the northern portion of the UConn campus. In fact, a recent spending bill approved the House of Representatives would provide the remaining \$2 million needed (in combination with \$1 million in federal funding previously secured) to fully fund the project. The Congressman is aware that The Standard and other large-scale multi-family housing projects moving forward into the Four Corners area will significantly increase the need for the multi-use trail and other capital projects designed to improve pedestrian safety in this area that is subject to increasing population densities in the coming years.

- November Election: Early Voting is in full swing in Mansfield and across the State of Connecticut. Operations at both the Town Hall and UConn Bookstore election center locations have been running very smoothly. The Town wishes to thank our partners at the University of Connecticut (UConn) for their ongoing support at the on-campus location. Through this Sunday (October 21 thru October 27), the voting totals were as follows among the two election centers:
 - Town Hall – 1,380 (Early Voting – 1,361 | Same-Day Registration – 19)
 - UConn Book Store – 449 (Early Voting – 210 | Same-Day Registration – 239)
 The Clerks continue to issue Overseas and Military ballots (total 113 so far) in addition to regular absentee ballots (440 issued so far). A reminder that Early Voting at the Town Hall and UConn Bookstore is available now through November 3, 2024.
- As a reminder, in my capacity as Town Manager (who also serves as the Town’s chief of public safety), I have been invited to serve on the search committee for UConn’s next Vice President of Public Safety and the inaugural meeting of the committee is expected to be scheduled next week.
- We are in the process of arranging for a follow-up meeting with the CT Public Safety Commissioner and CT State Police (CSP) Colonel to better understand the reason(s) why the Town’s recent request for additional permanent staffing (one FT Trooper, as was budgeted for the FY2024/25 fiscal year) was declined and whether this denial is temporary in nature. This of course has real implications on the ability to incrementally add more personnel over the course of the next two fiscal years and ultimately reach the Town Council’s stated targeted staffing level of thirteen (13) uniformed personnel, including the Sergeant.
- The Town Manager and Chief of Shared Services and Administration attended a quarterly luncheon of the CT Town and City Management Association this past week. In addition to professional networking and a debrief on the recent ICMA annual conference convened in Pittsburgh, the primary presentation/discussion topic for this meeting centered around approaches municipalities can take to develop effective wellbeing strategies for members of their workforce.
- The Town Manager, Mayor, Chief of Shared Services and Administration, and Director of Finance attended the CT Council of Small Towns (COST) Fall Conference held on October 16. Topics discussed included new laws and challenges facing towns (i.e., housing and land use laws), environmental challenges, and helpful municipal grants and resources.
- Over the past two weeks, the 2024 Mansfield Local Government Academy convened Session #6 focusing on Shared Services (Finance, Human Resources/Risk Assessment, Information Technology, and Facilities Management) and Session #7 that focused on Mansfield Public Library and Eastern Highlands Health District. With regard to Shared Services, in various capacities, these departments serve the Town of Mansfield, Mansfield Public Schools, Regional School District #19, Eastern Highlands Health District, Mansfield Downtown Partnership, and Mansfield Discovery Depot in a variety of key support functions. Mansfield is only a handful of municipalities which is organized this way. Part of the session included a tour of the Community Center pool and mechanical rooms to demonstrate just how complex facilities can be to operate. When it comes to the library, participants learned about creative and innovative programs and services being offered to people of all ages to promote lifelong learning, and the vast array of materials and resources available in myriad different formats. Participants also learned about the depth and breadth of public health services being offered in the Health District’s ten-town region. Further details on this year’s Local Government Academy are available on the Town Manager’s [webpage](#).
- Management continues to negotiate successor collective bargaining agreements with the Public Works and Professional and Technical Employee unions, which are both represented by CSEA. Additional information relative to the ongoing contract negotiations will be shared with members of the Council during a planned non-noticed meeting immediately following the conclusion of the Council’s October 28 regular meeting.
- As was previously reported, the East Brook Mall recently sold to America’s Realty based in Baltimore, MD. Subsequent media coverage reported information provided by the new owners relative to redevelopment of the property. Town staff have subsequently been in communication with members

of the new ownership's management team and an initial meeting is being arranged to welcome the new owners and learn more about their goals for the property and provide pertinent guidance relative to the Town's land use review process. The East Brook Mall has long played an important role in meeting the retail and commercial needs of our community, and the change in ownership presents an opportunity to revitalize the mall and strengthen the town's economy while potentially meeting other consumer needs.

- As was shared with the Council at the time of the last report, plans to construct a state-of-the-art driving facility on the "Depot Campus" are continuing to move forward following UConn's recent sale of 15 acres to the venture firm Promesa Capital LLC. More specifically, the facility would serve as the testing ground for driverless cars and various other smart vehicle technologies, a project that has been in the planning phase since its initial 2019 proposal. Representatives from Promesa have been in contact with Town staff to request a meeting to formally introduce the project and discuss pertinent elements of the local land use review process.
- The new ownership of the Mansfield Center General Store property, which has recently completed extensive rehabilitation and renovation work on this historic local landmark, has approached local officials about arranging for a formal grand opening and ribbon-cutting event in the near future. Additional details will be shared as they become available.
- The Town Manager will be interviewed live at 7:40 AM this Friday, November 1 for his monthly WILL-AM session with show host Wayne Norman (1040 AM or 95.3 FM).
- *Mansfield Tomorrow POCD Update*: An Ad Hoc Committee on the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) update has been established. This Committee's primary responsibility is to guide the POCD update, informed by a public engagement process, to meet the evolving needs of the community. The planning process will include an extensive public engagement effort, designed to gather diverse feedback through focus groups, a town-wide survey, online engagement, participation in community events, and a community-wide meeting. Since the plan serves as both the Town's POCD and Strategic Plan, the Ad Hoc Committee will include members of the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) and the Town Council, in addition to four non-voting ex officio staff members. For more details on the planning process and ways to get involved, visit www.mansfieldtomorrow.org.
- *Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan*: Work on the Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan continues, with draft recommendations expected soon. To strengthen the plan's impact, the NW Plan will be incorporated into the Town's POCD once adopted, ensuring that its recommendations are part of the Town's overall vision. Follow the progress at www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan.
- *Recent Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) Actions*:
 - APPROVED: Revision to Temporary and Seasonal Outdoor Dining in the Planning Business-4 Zone (King Hill Area)
Application of Ryan MacDonald and King Hill Properties, LLC to Amend Article 2, Section 190-9(22) of the Mansfield Zoning Regulations Related to Temporary or Seasonal Outdoor Dining (File #P1384)
A zoning text amendment to extend the hours of operation for temporary and seasonal outdoor dining only in the PB-4 Zone (King Hill Area) have been extended, allowing it to continue beyond 9 p.m., but not later than the closing time of the underlying restaurant or food service establishment. Applicant will be required to submit a proposed plan for crowd control and/or security of the outdoor dining area. The zoning permit must be renewed annually.
 - APPROVED: Modification to the Special Permit of Wilhusky Housing, LLC for a Mixed Use Development known as the HUB at Mansfield on four parcels located at 22 and 28-32 King Hill Road and 125 and 134 North Eagleville Road (Assessor's Parcel IDs 15.33.3, 15.33.4, 15.33.5, and 9.23.26) (PZC File 1381-1)

Wilhusky (also known as "The HUB") received a modification to its special permit approval to develop the project in two phases. The first phase, Site B, is located at 134 North Eagleville

Road (the portion of the property on the north side of North Eagleville Road). Willhusky anticipates starting construction of Site B in spring 2025. The second phase of development, Site A, will begin at a future date, yet to be determined. According to the applicant's statement of use, the following data summarizes the distribution of dwelling units, bedrooms, retail/restaurant square footage, parking spaces, and the affordable housing requirement fee-in-lieu payment between Site B and Site A:

Site B

Dwelling units: 216

Bedrooms: 593

Restaurant square footage: 6,932 sq. ft.

Parking spaces: 216

Affordable Housing Requirement fee-in-lieu payment: \$1,685,119

Site A

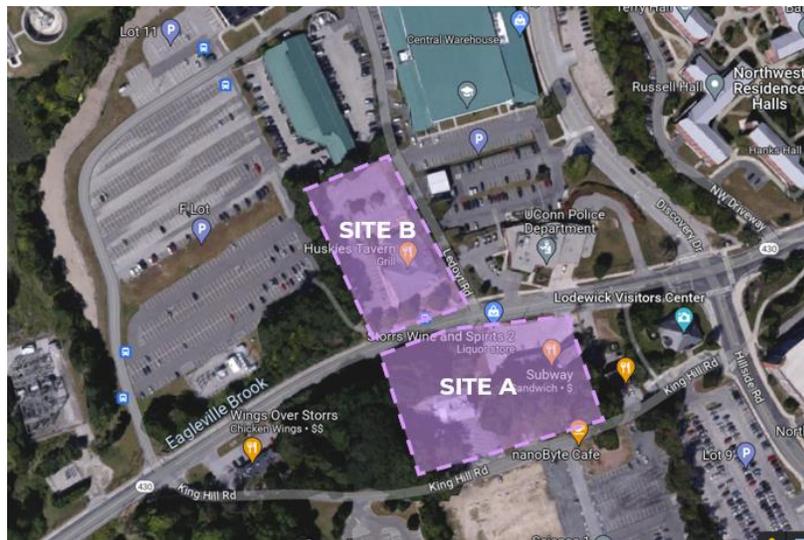
Dwelling units: 194

Bedrooms: 572

Retail square footage: 6,976 sq. ft.

Parking spaces: 308

Affordable Housing Requirement fee-in-lieu payment: \$1,606,129



- **Multi-Family Development Regulations:**
 - *PZC-Initiated Amendments to Article 4, Section 190-33 of the Zoning Regulations to Establish Planned Housing Design District Regulations (PZC File #907-62)*
The Public Hearing will resume for the proposed Planned Housing Design District (PHDD) regulations, which will apply to multi-family developments of over six units. The PHDD is intended to replace the existing multi-family regulations.
 - *PZC-Initiated Zoning Regulation Amendments to Repeal Certain Sections Related to Multi-Family Housing (PZC File #907-61)*
A separate public hearing will be held to receive comments on the proposed repeal of specific sections related to multi-family housing.
- Several businesses have recently opened or are planning openings in the coming months:
 - Aspen Dental (96 Storrs Road) – Now open!
 - Chipotle (96 Storrs Road) – Now open!
 - Code One CPR Training (9 Dog Lane, Suite 102) – Now open!
 - Dad's Doughs (483 Storrs Road, Suite B) – Opening soon
 - Five Guys (96 Storrs Road) – Opening soon
 - Lisa's Chocolates and Gifts (534 Storrs Road) – Now open!
 - Krispy Sicilian Foods (650 Middle Turnpike) – Opening soon
 - Nikki's Dog House (1244 Storrs Road) – Opening soon
- **Halloween Fun:** This past Saturday, October 26, members of the community and visitors were treated to multiple fun-filled Halloween events! The first was the Mansfield Public Library's *Teen Halloween party*, which featured free pizza & Halloween treats, ghoulish games & and other fun creepy activities! Additionally, over 40 businesses and community organizations took part in the Downtown Boo Bash (trick-or-treat and trick-a-trunk event). This was the second year that the Downtown Partnership and Parks & Recreation teamed up to host free, Halloween fun in Downtown Storrs after many years of hosting separate – but coordinated – events. We thank the Department of Public Works for their critical support in making the Boo Bash possible. In addition to DPW, the Town was well-represented at the event with the following departments participating: Fire and Emergency Services; Mansfield Public Library; Resident State Trooper's Office; Senior Center; and Youth Services.



- **Mansfield Public Library Updates:**
 - The Library has two new ways to communicate with residents- a new e-newsletter to share information about upcoming events and spotlight different collections and resources AND NextReads newsletters which deliver reading recommendations on popular genres and topics sent directly to patrons' inboxes. People can sign up for any or all of these on our website under the [Sign Up for Notifications](#) button.

- The Youth Services librarians recently hosted all of the 4th grade classes of Mansfield Elementary School for tours of the library.
- Commedia Mania Theatrical Performance Saturday, November 9 at 2:00 pm in MPL's Buchanan Auditorium
Ren Faire season may be coming to a close, but here is your opportunity to relive some of that experience once again! Join theatrical comedy troupe Commedia Mania for a live, original performance providing memorable laughs and entertainment. Feel free to wear your family-friendly garb and take a photo in front of our backdrops, and maybe even get a selfie with the actors!
- *Mansfield Human Services Department Updates:*
 - Human Services participated in the Boo Bash's trick-a-trunk setting up two booths. A lot of time and energy went into planning the haunted house theme for the Mansfield Senior Center's trunk display, and kudos to the staff and seniors for putting this together! Youth Services represented well for their department creating a magical fairy world to help all the kids to dream of a world of possibilities!
 - Mansfield Farms to Families offered its last local foods distribution this week, and plans are underway for the next growing season. Our post-season surveys are coming back with accolades all around to the farmers and the Town for this program. We hope to continue to grow the amount of families that we serve and support through this wonderful program in the years to come!
 - Our annual Holiday food and gift program has begun. Applications went out to families through the schools' digital backpacks and direct email to families connected to Human Services. We also have our application online on our website under Human Services > Seasonal programs. Please help us to spread the word to support families during this season.
 - While the month of November is commonly recognized for Veterans Day, it is also Military Family Appreciation Month. The Town of Mansfield would like to honor the contributions of all military families, especially those in our community. We can't thank the veterans and families enough for their sacrifice, strength, and resilience. Please take a moment this month to recognize Veterans and Military families for all that they have given of themselves for each of us and our country.
 - There will be a multi-town Veterans Day event on Saturday November 9th. The VFW Post 938 that supports Willington/Ashford/Mansfield/ is working with veteran representatives from the towns to put this event together. The Ceremony has been scheduled for Saturday, November 9th, beginning promptly at 11:00am at the Ashford's Veterans Memorial located on Tremko Lane adjacent to the Ashford Senior Center. Each year this event recognizes a specific group of veterans, and this year Korean War era veterans will be recognized. Mayor Moran has graciously agreed to participate in the ceremony on behalf of the Town of Mansfield.
- The popular Taste of Mansfield Community Dinner, prepared by the Food Services Department of Mansfield Public Schools, returns on Wednesday, November 13. The free dinner will feature locally grown products and produce, and will be created by Chef Maraiah Popeleski-Tilley RDN, and her staff. It will be held at Mansfield Middle School from 5:30 to 7:00 PM. [Reserve a seat online](#), and the Mansfield Senior Center will provide transportation to seniors who request a ride by calling Amy at 860.487.9875. The Taste of Mansfield is an initiative to connect the community through local food through a partnership of five Town of Mansfield departments, three commissions and committees, Mansfield Downtown Partnership, UConn Extension, and the Storrs Farmers Market.
- *Mansfield Parks and Recreation Updates*
 - Following the most recent discussion with the Town Council regarding the Mansfield Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which included sharing with the Council changes that had been made to the Plan as a result of advisory committee feedback provided over the summer, Town staff have been working to prepare a set of related policy resolutions for the Council to act on during the month of November. The Master Plan, and corresponding financial sustainability

strategy and associated supplemental plans, will ultimately be living documents that are subject to periodic review and updates as warranted to meet evolving community needs.

- The main pool at Mansfield Community Center closed earlier this month to remove algae growth from the surge tank and disinfect the tank. Primarily as a precaution, the pool also required 24-hour super chlorination. Rebalancing of water probes and water chemistry were required before the main pool could be reopened to the public. Pool water chemistry during regular public use prior to closing remained within the acceptable state health code range with no threat to the public. The therapy pool did not require any work but was closed for a short period as an additional safety measure, as the surge tank is located in close proximity to the therapy pool. The pool reopened this past Friday, October 25.
- Planning is underway for Winter 2025 Parks and Recreation programs and services. The winter brochure will be mailed to Mansfield residents the second week of November.
- The next [Free Community Paint Day](#) at Lenard Hall is November 7th.
- The next Free Mansfield Day at the Community Center is November 22nd.
- *Freedom of Information Commission 2024 Conference* – Mansfield Clerks recently attended the Freedom of Information Commission 2024 Conference. Commission Counsel and staff presented regarding the FOI Act and new legislation and litigation, Shipman and Goodwin attorneys offered helpful FOIA compliance tips, various panelists discussed FOI and emerging technologies, and psychologist Dr. Laura Saunders of Hartford Healthcare delivered the keynote.
- *Facilities Management Updates*
 - Mansfield Elementary School (MES) Retention Basin: The retention “pond” is in the process of being actively converted to the intended retention “basin” with all water having been drained. Basin soils have been inspected and replaced as needed in an effort to correct the prolonged retention/ponding issue.
 - MES Water Treatment System: The Town has received the CT Water Company proposal for the bulk of the treatment system. There are still a few small portions of the overall project that were not included in CT Water’s proposal that we are awaiting pricing on. These combined costs will make up the total cost for the entire water treatment system and installation. In addition, an estimate for the increases to our ongoing water system operating costs as a result of the new treatment system is still being prepared by CT water.
 - Mansfield Middle School Upgrades: The design and construction drawings for the MMS main entrance and security renovations are near completion. We expect to be posting a request for proposals (RFP) for this project next month. Additionally, the new main entrance sign is on track for a November 5 installation.
- The Mansfield Resident Troopers Office will be continuing with proactive party patrols for another roughly two weekends as the activity that these patrols address will be far more limited during colder weather months.
- The new primarily grant-funded Quint apparatus (aerial pumper) is officially in Town and was featured during this past week’s Fire Safety activities at Mansfield Elementary School and this weekend’s Downtown Boo Bash! Plans are also being finalized to organize a “wet down” ceremony to coincide with an open house at the newly renovated Station 207 on Sunday, November 17th, from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM that will be open to members of Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services, Town officials, and the general public.



- Members of Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services have been and continue to actively help control the extensive Hawthorne Fire in the Town of Berlin. As was widely reported, the blaze tragically took the life of Wethersfield Firefighter Robert “Sharkey” Sharkevich Sr. when the utility task vehicle he was riding in rolled over. A funeral service for Firefighter Sharkevich was held earlier today, and the entire community of Mansfield wishes to extend its deepest sympathies and support to the Sharkevich family, the Wethersfield Fire Department, and the Town of Wethersfield at large.
- The Fire Marshal’s Office, in concert with the Department of Building and Housing, continues to provide ongoing inspections associated with The Standard at Four Corners (roughly 400-unit multi-family housing development) and Eagleville Green (42-unit multi-family housing development that contains 34 affordable housing units).
- Below is a breakdown of the calls for service that Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services responded during 10/11/24 to 10/24/24.

Call Type	# of calls	# of calls which were responded as Mutual Aid
ALS Medical	40	5
BLS Medical	64	11
Total medical	104	16
Fire Alarm	3	
Building Fire	1	1
Outside Fire	1	
Appliance Malfunction	2	
CO Alarm	2	
Natural Gas Leak	2	
Smoke/Odor Investigation	1	
Vehicle Accident	7	1
Tree/Wires Down	3	
Officer Call	4	
Wires Burning/Arcing	1	
Service Call	1	
Standby	9	
Total Non-medical	79	2
Total	141	19

- *Public Works/Infrastructure Improvement Updates*

- Hunting Lodge Road Culvert: Genovesi Construction completed installation of the new box culvert, headwall, endwall, and wingwalls. The parapet walls, which protect the traveling public will be formed and remaining drainage structure installed this week. Genovesi at that time will complete grading of the roadway and paving. The water handling system is now completely removed and the stream is returning to its natural location.
- While doing repairs to the approaches to the bridge on the multiuse path on Route 44, we discovered the steel on this 19 year old bridge was severely corroded and must be replaced. The bridge is safe for users but not for any Town maintenance and snow removal vehicles. The cost of the bridge alone (no installation) is \$85,000 for the same unpainted weathering steel which we assume would fail again in 19 years. A galvanized version of the bridge will last longer and cost \$135,000 (no installation). We are seeking estimates for installation but expect it to bring the total cost over \$155,000. We currently have approximately \$148,000 in our Capital Improvement Program for bridges.
- Coventry Road: Work on Coventry Road to improve the stability of two areas on the unpaved portion of the road commenced last week. The road crew completed the smaller 400-foot area on eastern end of the road and has moved to the 1,800-foot section on the western end of the unpaved section.

- All the driveway aprons have been completed on Browns Road with the exception of two large ones that the paving contractor will complete. Crews have started backfilling the road edges and restoring the lawns on Browns Road.
- The Elizabeth Road, Brookside Lane, Hickory Lane and Juniper Lane project road paving is complete. Driveway aprons, curbing, backfilling the road edges and restoring the lawns remains to be completed.
- CTDOT announced a horizontal curve signing project on local roads will begin this fall. Mansfield is one of the serviced towns. The following roads will be signed: Separatist Road, Maple Road, Hunting Lodge Road, Birch Road, Baxter Road, Forest Road, North Eagleville Road, Ravine Road, Spring Hill Road, Clover Mill Road, Mansfield City Road, Hanks Hill Road, Dog Lane, Puddin Lane, Coventry Road, and Pleasant Valley Road. The purpose of this project is to remove outdated signs and install or reinstall signs which will improve motorists' awareness of a change in the roadway. Existing chevrons and curve warning signs will be replaced with new signage on breakaway supports. The new chevrons, large arrows and warning signs will improve motorists' awareness and safety. The areas will also be cleared to increase the visible distance to the new signs. The entire project which includes other towns has a completion date of May 8, 2025.
- VMS Construction is actively installing the replacement water main for the CT Water Company on South Eagleville Road.