

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: November 25, 2024
Subject: **Town Manager's Report**

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

- This past week we received official correspondence from the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) indicating that Chris Reddy, the Republican candidate for CT Senatorial District 29, had filed an official complaint. We subsequently learned that the SEEC voted to authorize an investigation into the complaint. We are still awaiting an official communication from the SEEC regarding its vote to authorize an investigation, but, pertinent Town officials are in the process of compiling the information that will be the basis of our official response.
- The Town of Mansfield and UConn, with the generous help of many community members, teamed up on November 16 to collect litter/refuse along our roadsides as part of a formally organized Litter Cleanup Day. The Town-University Relations Committee coordinated the "Don't Mess with Mansfield" cleanup in response to residents expressed concern last spring about the litter along roads adjacent to campus and all around Town. On campus, the Office of Sustainability in the Institute of the Environment coordinated the initiative with student clubs, organizations, fraternities, and sororities plus other UConn student volunteers. The university set up eight different pickup spots where students obtained garbage bags and other supplies for this effort. For many years, the Town's Solid Waste Advisory Committee has coordinated a robust [Adopt-a-Road signup](#) so residents can commit to cleaning up on specific roadsides. These volunteers were urged to use this day as an opportunity to fulfil that commitment to the community. Several UConn student organizations signed up to monitor specific roads through this program as well.
- Executives from Promesa Capital LLC recently took part in an in-person meeting with the Town Manager and other pertinent Town staff to provide a detailed status briefing regarding its plans to construct a state-of-the-art driving facility on the "Depot Campus" owned by UConn. As was previously reported, UConn recently sold 15 acres to Promesa for this purpose. 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. The project design has gone through numerous rounds of review and revision, and we believe that an updated site plan to reflect the latest concept will be available for public inspection in the near future.
- The Town Manager has opened up lines of communication with Mansfield's local legislative delegation to set up a meeting – to include the Mayor and Deputy Mayor – prior to the start of the next legislative session in January to review possible priority projects that could be submitted to the State Bond Commission for funding, as well as legislative priorities/concerns.
- The Town hosted a "wet down" ceremony and Open House to celebrate the arrival of the new aerial pumper apparatus/ladder truck ("Truck 207") at the newly renovated Four Corners Station (207) on Sunday, November 17th. The event was open to members of Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services, Town officials, and the general public and about 75 people attended. The weather was glorious and the event was well-attended. In addition to a strong showing from UConn's Fire Department and other

mutual aid agencies, Commissioner Mosquera-Bruno of the CT Department of Housing and State Rep. Boyd were also in attendance to commemorate the occasion. Speakers included the Town Manager Aylesworth, Commissioner Mosquera-Bruno, Mayor Moran, and Chief Roache. Special thanks must be extended to Tyler Burnham and Lynda Lambert for putting together such a successful program.

- Personnel in the Facilities Management Department has been busy in recent days installing the seasonal lighting display in the Downtown area as well as Mansfield Center village.
- The popular Taste of Mansfield Community Dinner, prepared by the Food Services Department of Mansfield Public Schools, was held on November 13. About 110 community members attended the free dinner which featured locally grown products and produce, created by Chef Maraiah Popeleski-Tilley RDN, and her staff. The 2024 Taste of Mansfield Champions were also acknowledged and awarded plaques: Melanie Desch, Stacey Stearns, Maraiah Popeleski-Tilley, and Dog Lane Café. 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.
- The Town Manager, Chief of Shared Services and Administration, as well as certain other Town staff and members of the Town Council will be attending the CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM) annual convention being held at Mohegan Sun on December 3.
- As was previously reported, the Town Manager, Mayor Moran, and Chief of Shared Services and Administration recently took part in an in-person meeting with CT State Police (CSP) Colonel Loughman and other high-ranking officials with CSP and the CT Department of Emergency Services and Public Safety. The parties gathered to have an open discussion about 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. Based on the information the Town provided as further basis/justification for the additional staffing request, Colonel Loughman offered to complete an additional review of CSP's current staffing capacity to determine if there was any way the agency could accommodate the Town's request. Unfortunately, due to its own ongoing staffing challenges, CSP has reaffirmed its prior determination that it does not have the capacity to assign an additional trooper to Mansfield at this time. As a result, it is clear that the Town will need begin exploring alternatives (i.e., reestablishing local constables, cooperative arrangements with UConn PD, etc.) in order to satisfy its own public safety needs in light of this information.
- Over the past two weeks, the 2024 Mansfield Local Government Academy convened Sessions #9 (land use planning and economic development) and #10 (police and animal control). The Academy will not hold a session this week on account of the Thanksgiving holiday, but, when it reconvenes next week, Session #11 will take place at E.O. Smith High School and focus on the operations of both Mansfield Public Schools and Regional School District 19. Further details on this year's Local Government Academy are available on the Town Manager's [webpage](#).
- The Town Manager is meeting with Superintendent Cournoyer this week to have a follow up discussion about Regional School District 19's interest in potentially acquiring a portion of the Vinton School property from the Town for the purpose of constructing a new facility that would house both the Region's alternative education and STAAR programs. As a reminder to the Council, Regional School District presently leases two different spaces (former Reynolds School building and a portion of the Vinton School building) for the purposes of administering these programs.
- 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 at such time as negotiated agreements are in place and ready for ratification.
- The December/January issue of the Town's bimonthly e-newsletter will be published on December 2.
- The Executive Director position with the Mansfield Downtown Partnership has been actively advertised (full position profile is available [here](#)) since early-November and initial review of candidates will commence next week following the Thanksgiving holiday. Interviews with qualified candidates will

be scheduled for later in the month of December. This is a very important position and the application window will remain open until a final selection is made.

- *Mansfield Tomorrow Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Update:*
 - *POCD Update Underway-* The Ad Hoc Committee on the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Update held its first meeting on Thursday, November 21. The Committee's primary responsibility is to guide the POCD update, which will be informed by an extensive public engagement process. This process is designed to gather diverse feedback through focus groups, a town-wide survey, online engagement, participation in community events, and a community-wide meeting. For more information about the planning process and opportunities to get involved, visit www.mansfieldtomorrow.org.
 - *Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan-* Work on the Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan is progressing, with draft recommendations expected soon. To maximize its impact, the plan will be incorporated into the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) once adopted, ensuring its recommendations align with the Town's overall vision. Follow the plan's progress at www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan.
 - *Multi-Family Development Regulations-* After several public hearings and Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) workshops, the public hearing on this regulation closed on November 18, 2024. A decision on the proposed regulation is expected on December 2, 2024. If approved, the regulations will take effect on January 1, 2025. The moratorium on high-density housing is set to expire on December 31, 2025.
- *Downtown Partnership:*
 - *Winter Welcome:* The Partnership will host its 12th Annual [Winter Welcome](#) in Downtown Storrs on Saturday, December 7 from 4:00 PM to 6:30 PM. Enjoy winter-themed activities on Betsy Paterson Square and winter specials at participating downtown restaurants. The free, frosty fun kicks off when Santa Claus arrives at 4:00 PM to visit with friends at Barnes & Noble UConn in Downtown Storrs. For more information, please visit downtownstorrs.org/winterwelcome.
 - *Welcome to Mansfield!:* The Partnership invites the public to attend a ribbon-cutting at 483 Storrs Road to celebrate the opening of Dad's Doughs. The newest sweet spot in town, Dad's Doughs offers a creative line-up of mini donuts seven days a week. The ribbon-cutting will take place at 11:00 AM on Friday, December 6.
 - *Taste2Towns:* The Partnership and the Town of Mansfield have begun coordinating details for Restaurant Week in Windham and Mansfield. This popular promotion, scheduled this year for January 27 to February 9, is designed to encourage restaurant patrons from near and far to explore the diverse offering of eateries in our two communities. Prospective sponsors and restaurants are being contacted over the next month before promotion begins in the new year.
- *Mansfield Public Library Updates:*
 - As a reminder, 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 the Town's website under the [Sign Up for Notifications](#) button.
 - The Library will be closing out DINOvember with a special dinosaur-themed storytime on November 30 at 10:30! Participants will get to dance, sing, read, and ROAR in this dino-riffic storytime. You might even encounter a t-rexcellent special guest!
 - *Worldly Wonder Workshop featuring Mansfield's Human Rights Commission* Thursday, December 12 from 4:00-6:00PM in MPL's Buchanan Auditorium Learn about Global Human Rights Day through a special craft led by Mansfield's Human Rights Commission along with activities to celebrate young human rights trailblazers from around the world.
 - *Friends of the Mansfield Library: Gingerbread House Decorating Contest*

Saturday, December 14 from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM in the Buchanan Auditorium
Join the Friends of the Mansfield Library for their first Gingerbread Decorating contest!
This event is open to all, and the decorated houses will be displayed in the library for patrons to vote for. Prizes will be awarded. Signing up for this event can be completed [online](#). Please register by December 10th to help us ensure there are enough materials available. This event is available between 9am and 12pm so you do not need to be present for the full 3 hours!

○ *Introducing Tech Savvy Seniors!*

Are you looking to navigate the digital world with confidence? Curious about the world of social media but not sure where to start? Interested in exploring the basics of artificial intelligence (AI), including its history, key concepts, and real-world applications? Then this series is for you! Led by Mansfield Library's Digital Navigator, Paul Velazquez, this drop-in class meets on the third Friday of every month at 11AM in the Library's Program Room. No registration needed. The first class will be on December 20 and the topic is Internet Safety (online security and privacy). 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. For more information call or text Paul at: 959-444-1305 or e-mail

VelazquezP@mansfieldCT.org

● *Mansfield Human Services Department Updates:*

○ Youth Services: Youth Services continues to host the once per month Teen nights for our middle school-aged youth. These events have proven to be a great success and our spots fill up quickly! Our December Monthly event is being held on Friday Dec. 20th from 3:00PM-5:00PM. The youth will be making their own fleece tie blankets to bring home and keep them warm and cozy through the winter. If you are interested, please go to the Youth Services webpage for the Teen Center where you will find a QR code that can be scanned to [register online](#) for the event.

○ Social Services:

➤ Seasonal Gifts- Our Seasonal Gift Program is now in full swing with almost 100 youth registered for this program. While our applications for the program have officially closed, we encourage anyone in need to reach out to inquire about any seasonal/holiday assistance needs that they may have. You can contact our department at 860-429-3315.

➤ Meals Program- This year, we are including the possibility to sign up for two meals, one in November and one in December. We are committed to accommodating any dietary restrictions that individuals/families may have. The November Meal Program distribution began this past Thursday, Nov. 21, and we provided meals to approximately 150 individuals. This meal included a variety of sides and desserts.

➤ *Energy Assistance* application appointments continue to fill up. Any households who are struggling to find ways to stay warm this winter should please reach out to complete this application and see if you qualify for the assistance.

➤ Seasons of Giving- Our annual *Seasons of Giving* campaign is underway. This campaign is an annual initiative designed to unite the community in support of those in need. While the campaign officially begins in the fall and goes through the winter months, the donations received benefit year-round programs that help families celebrate holidays, address food and financial insecurity, and work toward greater independence while preserving their dignity. Through contributions to this campaign, local residents and businesses have the opportunity to create opportunities for those in need while fostering hope and a sense of community for their neighbors throughout the year. We are so grateful for the kindness and compassion demonstrated by those in our community and want to thank all of those that have contributed!

○ Senior Center: The Mansfield Senior Center continues to take pleasure in hosting events to bring people together and find ways to celebrate. On November 19th, the Senior Center hosted

its annual Thanksgiving Holiday luncheon. We had over 80 seniors that attended this celebration to enjoy a delicious meal, the company of others, and share their gratitude for each other. Our next celebration is scheduled for Tuesday, December 17th, for the Holiday luncheon. Lunch will be followed by a performance from the Mansfield Senior Center Chorus group and a “Thieving Elves” gift exchange. To end 2024 and ring in 2025, the Senior Center will be hosting a New Year’s Eve Celebration on Tuesday, December 31st at noon. If you are interested in attending any of these events, please contact the Senior Center staff at 860-429-0262.

- *Mansfield Parks and Recreation Updates*

- The main pool at the Mansfield Community Center (MCC) remains closed. To recap, on November 15 the main pool was closed until more conclusive information regarding the cause of the black staining on sections of the floor of the main pool could be determined. This past week, we received insightful information from one of several water test lab results but are waiting on an additional report from another lab. Therefore, the main pool will remain closed until this report is received. The therapy pool is not affected and remains open for your use. The team of staff from Mansfield Parks & Recreation, Town Facilities Management, independent pool contractors, and Eastern Highlands Health District will then review the lab results to take further action to effectively solve this problem. Anticipated work on the pool may not occur until after the Thanksgiving holiday because of the number of required steps to safely reopen the pool to the public. However, we are working to expedite this anticipated timeline. A detailed update will be released when a definitive timeline is known. Until then, the main pool will need to remain closed. We apologize for the impact this may have on visits to the Community Center and appreciate the community’s patience.
- Member appreciation week at MCC was held during the week of November 18 and included local business card gift card give-a-ways, daily refreshments, and cupcakes to celebrate the 21st birthday of the facility.
- Over the weekend of December 14-15 the Annual Mansfield Parks and Recreation Nutcracker shows (12/14 & 12/15), Jingle Jog (12/14), and Community Center Craft fair (12/14) will be held. More information at www.mansfieldcc.com
- [Registration](#) for winter programs begins on December 9, 12 and 16.
- On November 25, Ariel Blair will begin employment as Administrative Service Specialist. Ariel previously worked for Parks and Recreation in a variety of part-time positions between 2007 and 2021. She is replacing Lynda Lambert who was promoted to the position of Administrative Analyst for Fire and Emergency Services.

- *Resident Trooper Office Updates*

- The Mansfield Resident Troopers Office has concluded its proactive party patrols for the remainder of the semester as the need to respond to gatherings becomes far more limited during colder weather months. Personnel issued 36 nuisance tickets this fall season for Party Patrol totaling roughly \$9,000, all of which has been paid.
- The office has begun distributing flyers for Stuff-a-Cruiser at business locations across town. Toys are being collected at Town Hall outside the Resident Troopers office, Mansfield Community Center, and at Staples. Collection of toys will continue at Winter Welcome on December 7. Our Troopers look forward to working with Human Services on completing this mission.
- Our grant to help fund overtime pay for patrols for drivers Operating Under the Influence (OUI) through Department of Transportation was approved. OUI patrols have already commenced using the grant funds.

- *Fire and Emergency Services Updates*

- The Department has posted for its open full-time and part-time firefighter/EMT positions with a closing date of December 10. Additional information can be found [here](#).

- Personnel are now being actively trained in the operation of the new aerial pumper apparatus, and the mounting of equipment and tools in the apparatus is also proceeding gradually.
- As everyone is aware, we finally received some much-needed rain, which temporarily helped suppress the risk of outdoor fires. However, it will be a few days before we know if this was enough to have a lasting impact on wildfire danger.
- 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). Additionally, the new owners of East Brook Mall have started making roof repairs in preparation for new solar panels being installed.
- Below is a breakdown of the calls for service that Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services responded during 11/8/24 to 11/21/24.

Call Type	# of calls	# of calls which were responded as Mutual Aid
ALS Medical	28	3
BLS Medical	34	7
Total medical	62	10
Fire Alarm	5	1
Structure Fire	2	2
Outside/Brush Fire	11	1
CO Alarm	1	
Natural Gas Leak	1	
Vehicle Fire	1	
Vehicle Accident	8	1
Tree/Wires Down	3	
Service Call	2	
Standby	1	
Total Non-medical	35	5
Total	97	15

- *Public Works/Infrastructure Improvement Updates*
 - Hunting Lodge Road Culvert: Genovesi Construction has poured the concrete parapets, will soon be installing a waterproofing material, and will then pave the roadway (contractually required to complete the project by the end of this month).
 - Coventry Road: Work on Coventry Road to improve the stability of two areas on the unpaved portion of the road is complete. Approximately 2200 total feet of Geogrid was installed, followed by approximately one foot (1-ft) of 3 ½ inch gravel base, and then finished with a 3-inch application of processed 1 1/2” gravel as the top course. Final grading is taking place and then some areas need to be backfilled and/or restored.

- The Department's in-house tree crew and the Town's contracted tree company removed seven (7) trees on Pleasant Valley Road since the last report.
- The paving contractor completed two large driveway aprons and the Cape Cod curbing on Browns Road. Crews are still backfilling the road edges and restoring the lawns.
- The paving contractor installed curbing on Brookside Lane and Elizabeth Road. Town crews installed the driveway aprons on Brookside and Elizabeth. Town crews are still backfilling the road edges and restoring the lawns.
- Knowlton Hill Road and the northern section of Wormwood Road have been resurfaced with an overlay of asphalt. Driveway aprons are currently being installed.
- VMS Construction is actively installing the replacement water main for the CT Water Company on South Eagleville Road.