

## MEMO

**To:** Town Council  
**CC:** Town Employees  
**From:** Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager  
**Date:** February 24, 2025  
**Subject:** **Town Manager's Report**

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

- Progress continues to be made in finalizing the Town Manager's proposed budget and adjusting all the corresponding revenue and expenditure assumptions based on continuously evolving information. The Town Manager will present his comprehensive budget recommendations to the Town Council in late-March. As in previous budget years, a primary goal for the FY 2025/26 budget is to sustain the high quality of Town programs, projects, and services while simultaneously promoting cost efficiencies, leveraging state and other "non-local" revenue sources, and minimizing—or avoiding—any increases in the property taxes owed by households. We want to ensure that Mansfield continues to be a welcoming and affordable community for residents of all economic backgrounds. As a reminder, this will be the third year that the Town is developing its comprehensive annual operating budget and 5-year capital improvement plan using the ClearGov web-based platform. Mansfield Public Schools is now also using ClearGov to develop its budget moving forward as well.
- On February 13, Mansfield Board of Education (BOE) adopted Superintendent Dart's proposed FY2025/26 budget of \$25,605,000 for Mansfield Public Schools. This represents a 3.24% increase from the FY2024/25 budget. This budget contains increases in contractual salaries and benefits (which represent 84.4% of the total budget), transportation, energy, and outplacement tuition. These increases were offset by reductions in three classroom positions. These positions were reduced based on declining enrollment to maintain BOE class size guidelines.
- Superintendent Cournoyer will present her proposed FY 2025/26 budget for Regional School District 19 (R19) to the R19 Board of Education tomorrow (Tuesday, February 25). The proposed budget is for \$21,650,660 which is a 4.98% increase from the prior year. Based on changes in revenue assumptions, the levy for Ashford, Mansfield and Willington will total \$21,506,860, a 5.17% increase from the prior year. This levy is allocated to the three towns based on enrollment as of October 1, 2024. With a reduction of 20 students, Mansfield's portion of the levy will be \$12,344,848 or 2.72% higher than FY2024/25. The main cost drivers of this increase are contractual salary increases and special education outplacement tuition.
- The Town Manager recently submitted written testimony to the CT General Assembly's Appropriations Committee on the topic of the Governor's proposed FY 2026-FY2027 biennial budget. A copy of the testimony is attached. Written testimony on additional legislation of significance will be considered throughout the current legislative session.
- The latest Annual Report (FY 2023/24) for the Town of Mansfield has been published. It will be soon posted on the Town website, and a limited number of copies are also available in print and available in the Town Clerk's office and at the Mansfield Public Library.
- As the Council is aware, this past fall, the Town Manager, Mayor Moran, and Chief of Shared Services and Administration 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 to have an open discussion about why the Town's 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. At the time, CSP officials explained that the agency is experiencing significant challenges maintaining adequate staffing agency-wide/statewide, and that this was the principal reason the Town's request for an additional trooper was not being approved at this time. Subsequently, the Town Manager engaged with Rep. Boyd in his capacity as House Chairperson of the Public Safety and Security Committee to explain in detail the basis of the growing need for additional law enforcement personnel, and the public safety implications of maintaining staffing at current levels as the Town continues to grow. Rep. Boyd has had follow-up meetings with Commissioner Higgins, who oversees the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), about the Town of Mansfield's need for additional staffing. We hope to have a clearer picture in the near future about the outcome of these ongoing discussions. In lieu of being able to secure additional troopers, the Town will likely need to explore alternatives to relying exclusively on Resident Trooper staffing in order to satisfy its own public safety needs.

- The Assessor is working to finalize all property values as part of the ongoing revaluation process with an anticipated signing of the October 1, 2024 Grand List prior to February 28, 2025. Once the list is certified by the Assessor, the GIS website will be updated with the finalized (Before BAA Changes) Assessor Real Property Record cards and real property owners will be mailed their final assessment notices, by March 10, 2025. Individual Property Notices will provide gross assessment value, exemption value (as applicable), and net assessment value, as well as the filing deadline for written appeal petitions to be submitted to the Board of Assessment Appeals. Details regarding formal appeals processes is available on the Town's website: <https://www.mansfieldct.gov/2126/Board-of-Assessment-Appeals>. As such, Mansfield's Property owners are encouraged to verify that their current mailing address is listed correctly to avoid receiving delays. The deadline to file an assessment appeal with the Board of Assessment Appeals is by March 20, 2025. Appeals will be scheduled in March and April 2025.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) Act Presentation – Staff, elected officials, and committee volunteers are invited to attend a CT Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Workshop on Thursday, March 13th at 2:00 pm in Council Chamber (Town Hall). Russell Blair from the Freedom of Information Commission (FOIC) will discuss how the FOI Act impacts municipal staff, elected officials, and committee members and will answer questions. Further details and a link to sign up are contained in a flyer that should have been emailed by a staff person assigned to your committee.
- Mansfield Downtown Partnership staff recently attended a workshop on social media marketing and the Eastern Connecticut conference on tourism, both of which provided valuable tools and information to help staff in their work in promoting Downtown Storrs and Mansfield as regional destinations for arts, dining, and outdoor recreation. The Town's Communications Specialist also attended the tourism conference hosted by the Eastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, which is promoting how to implement the lessons learned and to leverage the work being done at the state level.
- Mansfield Downtown Partnership, the Town's Communications Specialist, Mansfield Public Library Director, and the Mansfield Historical Society president attended an organizing meeting with UConn Archives staff members to begin to formulate Mansfield's plans for *America 250 Connecticut*. Nationwide there will be celebrations to mark the country's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026, as well as at the state level. The Mansfield commission wants to ensure the local schools and Historic District Commission are invited to be part of the planning, or other stakeholders and organizations. The next local meeting is scheduled for March 5. UConn will be the host site for a [statewide conference](#) on March 21 to assist communities planning local programs and events. The state is guiding local commissions to focus from among key theme(s) in planning celebrations: Telling Inclusive Stories; Power of Place; Doing History; and For the Common Good
- At the Council's February 24 business meeting, Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services will share information regarding the Town's present billing practices, service rates, and strategies for collecting outstanding payments relative to medical/emergency services. The Department currently bills for several services, including EMS standbys and medical transports. The Town Manager and

Department leadership periodically review these existing programs to ensure rates are set appropriately. The Council will be presented with options for strengthening our collection efforts for overdue payments. Recent state regulations now permit agencies to bill for additional services, including lift assists, motor vehicle accidents, hazardous material spills, and nuisance alarms. As such, it would be prudent at this time to discuss whether the Town Council supports the Town implementing fees for these types of additional services.

- *Historic Town Hall Project:* Progress continues on the much-needed repairs and renovations to our Old Town Hall and adjacent administrative building on Spring Hill (954 Storrs Road), currently leased by the Mansfield Historical Society, which commenced in early-January. The renovations will include site work and drainage improvements, structural repairs, and accessibility improvements. The general contractor is Sarazin Construction. Over the last couple of weeks, footing drains were installed around Old Town Hall. Stumps were removed and window wells were also installed. Excavation was performed to enable installation of the pre-cast bulkhead. Replacement windows were measured and ordered. Siding was removed on North side of the Old Town Hall building, which exposed rot on portions of the sill and wall studs that needs to be repaired. The repair work will require the building be jacked up to remove the rotted sill. This was not part of the project so there will be a change order for the work. The Town's design and engineering firm will soon submit plans associated with structural repair of the north-facing wall to the Town's Building Department.
- *Municipal Facilities Master Planning:* Pending final review from the CT Department of Economic and Community Development (in-process), the Town will immediately reissue an updated request for qualifications (RFQ) for professional architectural services related to the next phase of municipal facilities master planning project work (focus on municipal campus at 4-10 South Eagleville Road, and the Mansfield Senior Center). That project is being funded in large part via a \$250,000 planning grant from the State of Connecticut.
- *Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan:* There will be a presentation of the Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission, Town Council, and the public on Wednesday, March 12, at 6:30 pm in the Council Chamber (with virtual option). The plan provides a framework for managing growth, investment, and conservation in the Northwest Mansfield area and will be incorporated into the updated Mansfield Tomorrow Plan of Conservation and Development. At this meeting, there will be an opportunity for public comment. In addition, written comments on the draft plan will be accepted until April 21, 2025, which will be available for review later this week at [www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan/](http://www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan/).
- *Mansfield Tomorrow Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Update:* The Ad Hoc Committee on the POCD will meet on February 27, 2025. At this meeting, the committee will discuss what has been learned from the review of existing community and regional plans and the preliminary results from the benchmarking exercise. The second of three Working Group meetings for Boards and Committees is scheduled for Tuesday, March 18, at 6:30 p.m. Department heads will participate in a similar exercise earlier in the day. Here are some ways the community can provide input in the POCD moving forward:
  - Follow our progress and stay up to date at: [www.MansfieldTomorrow.org](http://www.MansfieldTomorrow.org)
  - Take the Survey (coming soon!): Available mid-February through early May
  - Join the Public Workshop: Saturday, April 5, 9:30–11:30 AM @ Mansfield Middle School
  - Visit Us at the Earth Day Event: Saturday, April 26, 2025, at the Mansfield Community Center
  - Email Us at: [MansfieldTomorrow@MansfieldCT.org](mailto:MansfieldTomorrow@MansfieldCT.org)
- *Proposed Wireless Telecommunication Tower Facility (424 Storrs Road):* A public information session regarding a proposed wireless telecommunication tower facility at 424 Storrs Road will be held on Tuesday, March 4 at 6:00 pm in the Council Chamber. During the session, The Towers LLC (the applicant) will present an overview of the preliminary proposal and welcome community feedback before a formal application is submitted to the CT Siting Council. Jurisdiction over any proposed cellular telecommunications facility is exclusively held by the CT Siting Council. Consequently, local wetlands, zoning, and other municipal land use approvals do not apply. For further details on the CT

Siting Council's Procedures for Telecommunications Facilities, please refer to this [link](#). Information related to the application can be downloaded [here](#).

- *Mansfield Community Center Main Pool Update:* As of late last week, the lead project contractor is now estimating the reopening in late March. The primary factor causing a delay in the previous timeline is the tentative delivery date of a custom-made heat exchanger that is not expected to arrive until the week of March 10. The heat exchanger must be installed prior to moving forward with the final major steps in the repair process, which includes the new plaster coat on the pool basin and refilling of the pool with 25 truckloads of water, a total of 152,000 gallons. Although we are disappointed that the tentative project timeline has been delayed since the last update, it should allow time for the UV light disinfection system to be installed and operating when the pool reopens. Additionally, repair work that can be completed prior to the heat exchanger installation continues to move forward. We appreciate the community's continued patience and support as our team of town staff continues to work with multiple contractors to complete all necessary repairs on the main pool.
- The Department of Public Works, together with the CT Department of Transportation (CT DOT) and its bridge design contractor, hosted an in-person public information meeting on the planned replacement of the Atwoodville Road Bridge over the Mount Hope River on February 11 in Town Hall. The meeting was well-attended and members of the public provided helpful feedback and conveyed supportive commentary relative to the project. The new design incorporates a sidewalk on the southern side of the bridge and a wide shoulder on the northern side.
- The selection process for the next Executive Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership is nearing completion. A conditional offer of employment has been accepted by the preferred candidate. We anticipate that the Board of Directors will move to officially appoint the next Director in March.
- Prior to the February 24 Town Council meeting, the Town will host a swearing-in ceremony for nine firefighters who serve our community. Firefighters Bill, DelMastro, Fabian, Jameson, Keplesky, Lavitt, Mullady, Smith and Webster will be formally sworn in to service. We are proud of these staff members and greatly appreciate for the professional service they provide our community.
- The Town held the second of a two-part training series for its supervisors on February 20. The session, which was attended by roughly 40 supervisors and other staff, focused on a variety of human resources compliance topics, including federal and state non-discrimination laws, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Fair Labor Standards Act, etc. Like the first session, which was held in mid-January and focused on the Municipal Employees Relation Act (MERA), the second session was facilitated by the Town's labor/employment counsel.
- This past weekend, the Friends of Mansfield Library (FML) held its annual Winter Book Sale, which featured an extensive array of books, games, movies, music, and more. This year's sale was very successful thanks to the amazing generosity of community members who donated large volumes of high-quality/desirable items in great condition, and the dedicated FML volunteers and Mansfield Public Library staff that worked diligently to promote the event and organize such an impressive display. Contributions from the sale, as well as donations collected by FML throughout the year, are used to help fund important projects and the wonderful programs MPL provides our community!
- Mansfield Public Library's new Digital Navigator, Lauren Epperson, started her new position today (Monday, February 24). Anyone wishing to book an appointment with Lauren or Paul Velazquez (our other Digital Navigator) can call/text: 959-444-1305 or email them at [digitalnavigators@mansfieldct.org](mailto:digitalnavigators@mansfieldct.org).
- During the month of March, Mansfield Senior Center will be delivering programs intended to celebrate and honor Women's History Month, Red Cross Month, National Nutrition Month, St. Patrick's Day and "Pi Day". The public can find additional information on all events and registration forms by calling the Senior Center at 860-429-0262 or [online](#).
- The Energy Assistance Program is still available for all those that meet the income guidelines. More information is available by contacting the Department of Human Services at 860-429-3315 or [online](#).

- Mansfield Schools are hosting a Local Maple French Toast Bake Breakfast Fundraiser event on Saturday, March 29 from 8:30 to 10 AM at E.O. Smith High School Cafeteria. The goal of the fundraiser is to assist local families and the Food Services department in “boiling down” the debt at the three local schools for student breakfasts and lunches. Tickets can be purchased in advance or at the door, and additional donations from community members will be accepted online. The breakfast is scheduled for the first morning of the Eastern Connecticut Maple Festival (March 29 and 30; the festival is 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM each day).
- The February/March issue of the Town’s bimonthly e-newsletter was published on February 3 and can be accessed [here](#).
- My most recent monthly interview on WILI-AM with Wayne Norman took place on Friday (February 7) and can be listened to [here](#). My next appearance on Wayne Norman’s program will take place on March 7.