

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: March 10, 2025
Subject: **Town Manager's Report**

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

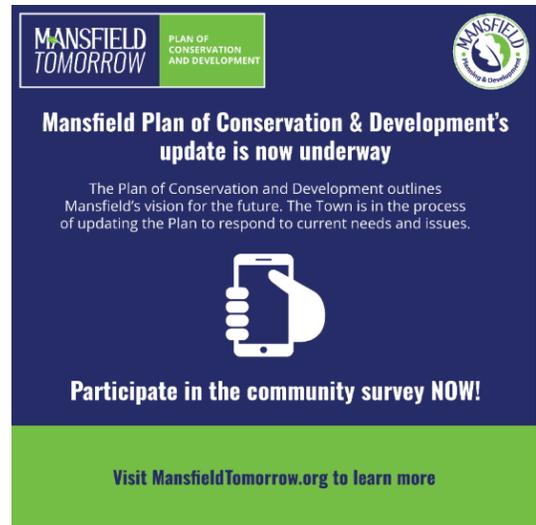
- The Assessor finalized (before BAA changes) all property values as part of the ongoing revaluation process and signed the October 1, 2024 Grand List prior to February 28, 2025. Now that the list has been certified by the Assessor, the GIS website (<https://www.axisgis.com/mansfieldct/>) is being updated with the finalized (again, before BAA changes) Assessor Real Property Record cards. Final assessment notices for real property owners are being mailed today, March 10. 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.
- With the 2024 Grand List now certified, which provides pivotal information relative to local revenue assumptions, staff are moving closer toward finalizing the Town Manager's proposed FY 2025/26 operating and capital budget. 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.
- Following the start of the new legislative session, State Rep. Haddad has been in regular communication with the Town Manager regarding legislation that might have particular impact on our community as well as priority Town projects that could potentially be strong candidates for state funding (State Bond Commission) with active support from Rep. Haddad and Sen. Flexer.
- As both a member of the Board of Directors for the Mansfield Downtown Partnership and a member of the Search Committee for the organization's next Executive Director, I am very happy to announce that – following a competitive selection process – Mr. Steven Ferrigno has been selected to serve as the next Executive Director. At its March 6 business meeting, the MDP Board of Directors voted to make his appointment effective March 24. Mr. Ferrigno is a well-known business leader in Mansfield, as owner and managing broker of Ferrigno-Storrs, Realtors LLC. He has been an active force within the community serving on the Board of Directors of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership for five years, as well as Chair and a member of the Mansfield Economic Development Commission for 11 years. In addition to his work directly with the Partnership, Mr. Ferrigno has served on the long-standing School Building Committee for the new Mansfield Elementary School, and is the Chair of the Board of Directors of Mansfield Discovery Depot and is on the Edwin O. Smith Foundation Board. Mr.

Ferrigno holds his Master's in Business Administration from the University of Connecticut, and his Bachelors from Boston College. Prior to operating his company in Mansfield, which he has operated for 20 years, Mr. Ferrigno worked at Wachovia Securities and Northwestern Mutual Financial Network, earning several securities certifications. A detailed press release can be accessed [here](#). I want to take a moment to extend a personal thank you to Ms. Kathleen Paterson, MDP's Senior Communications Manager, who has served as the Acting Executive Director for the better part of a year following the department of long-time Executive Director Cynthia van Zelm. Ms. Paterson's efforts at the Acting Executive Director have been greatly appreciated and she will be an invaluable resource to Mr. Ferrigno as we continue to navigate the upcoming transition process.

- 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.
- Hiring/Employment Updates:
 - Jeovani Perea will begin work March 17th as a FF/EMT with Fire & Emergency Services. Mr. Perea has 10 years of experience as both a volunteer and career firefighter. He also has experience as a 911 dispatcher. Mr. Perea is a graduate of the CT Fire Academy recruit program and holds numerous certifications in the fire service field. Welcome Jeovani!
 - Carrie Zahner will begin work March 24th as our lead revenue specialist in the Finance Department. Ms. Zahner has over 20 years of experience with municipal revenue collection, most recently serving as Revenue Collector for the Town of Coventry. She also has payroll and tax experience. She holds an associate's degree from Manchester Community College and a bachelor's degree from Eastern Connecticut State University. Welcome Carrie!
- *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. In late-February, the north wall repair design was completed and approved by the Town's Building & Housing Department. Most recently, work focused on preparing the Old Town Hall roof truss to accept columns to transfer roof load to the basement columns. Additionally, the building's rear door was removed to be reconstructed and painted for reinstallation.
- *Municipal Facilities Master Planning*: Immediately after the CT Department of Economic and Community Development completed its review, the Town reissued 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). Responses will be accepted through March 24, 2025. The RFQ can be viewed [online](#). This project will be funded in large part via a \$250,000 planning grant from the State of Connecticut.
- *Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan*: Town staff and the Town's consultant FHI Studio (now IMEG) will make 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, and the plan is available for review at www.mansfieldtomorrow.org/nw-neighborhood-plan/.

- Mansfield Tomorrow Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Update:** The Ad Hoc Committee on the POCD will next meet on March 27, 2025. At its most recent meeting (February 27), the committee discussed 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:

 - Following our progress and stay up to date at: www.MansfieldTomorrow.org
 - Taking the Survey (coming soon!): Available March 13 through May 31
 - Attending 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
- Farmers Forum:** The Mansfield Agriculture Committee will hold its annual Farmers Forum on Thursday, March 27, 2025 at 6:30 PM in Lenard Hall (450 S. Eagleville Road). Community members involved in the production, distribution, and regulation of local agriculture are invited to attend and discuss ongoing issues, challenges, and solutions related to agriculture. This year's forum will feature a keynote address from Kimberly Stoner, Director of Advocacy for the CT Northeast Organic Farming Association, along with a discussion on the ongoing update to the Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development. Those interested in attending can register at <https://mansfieldct.jotform.com/233394607987876>. Light refreshments will be provided.
- Proposed Wireless Telecommunication Tower Facility (424 Storrs Road):** A public information session regarding a proposed wireless telecommunication tower facility at 424 Storrs Road was held on Tuesday, March 4 at 6:00 pm in the Council Chamber. The Towers LLC presented its proposal and answered questions. The Town requested this presentation to inform residents; however, the Connecticut Siting Council has exclusive jurisdiction over wireless communication towers, and such facilities are not subject to local land use approvals. The Towers LLC published a notice in the *Hartford Courant* and sent information via certified mail to adjacent property owners. Information was also posted on the Town's Website. No application has been filed with the Siting Council at this time. If The Towers LLC submits an application, it must notify the Town, with the earliest possible filing date being April 9, 2025. The applicant will summarize public comments from the session and submit them to the Siting Council if the application moves forward. Application details can be accessed [here](#). More information is available at the [Citizen's Guide to Siting Council Procedures](#).
- In response to questions that were posed during/following the January 30 special meeting of the Mansfield Board of Education relative to Mansfield Elementary School's Net Zero designation and the Eversource solar energy rate program that the Town selected for the facility, staff have been actively compiling additional related information and conferring with the Town's independent energy consultant (Titan Energy) and its special legal counsel for alternative energy in anticipation of providing the Council a detailed update this spring.
- Mansfield Community Center Main Pool Update:** We are very happy to report steady progress on the planned improvements to the Mansfield Community Center Main Pool over the last two weeks. We continue to be on track to reopen the pool to the public later this month. The custom-made heat exchanger, which has been the primary factor causing a delay in the previous project timeline, was delivered and installed this past week (slightly ahead of our modified schedule). The heat exchanger



had to be installed prior to moving forward with the final major steps in the repair process, which include the new plaster coat on the pool basin and refilling of the pool with 25 truckloads of water, a total of 152,000 gallons. Additionally, earlier today application of the bond coat was also completed. With the heat exchanger now in place and the bond coat applied, remaining work can be completed relatively expeditiously. Curing, brushing, and removal of loose plaster particles, as well as temperature and chemical rebalancing, and fully filtering pool water prior to reopening entails a roughly two-week process that begins shortly after the pool has been filled with water. We appreciate the community's continued patience and support as the remaining upgrades are completed on the main pool.

- Promotion for Mansfield Parks and Recreation spring and summer programs and events is underway. The spring brochure is available [online](#) and also will be mailed to Mansfield households this week.
- The Library recently reconfigured wall space in the Children's area to serve as the *Mansfield Public Library Art Wall*. Month-long exhibits by local artists will be featured, beginning in April with an exhibit from the Swift Waters Artists' Cooperative. The new "gallery" space will not only allow the Library to connect patrons with local art but also provide opportunities to partner with our local schools to host student art shows! The Library will be putting the call out for exhibit applications in the near future.
- 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 Department of Human Services is thrilled to announce an extension to our existing food programs. Our Food Pantry now is offering monthly meal kits to make sure their tables and bellies are full and to increase the variety of food offerings. This program is all about making sure that households in need have all the resources to prepare nutritious and delicious meals. Please contact the Human Services Department at 860-429-3315 to learn more about the program.
- *Volunteer Drivers Needed:* The Town's Senior Services Transportation Program is looking for volunteer drivers to help seniors in Mansfield get to medical appointments. Interested parties should call the Senior Center at 860-429-0262 for more info.
- 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](#).
- The installation of the water treatment system for Mansfield Elementary School has been confirmed for the week of April 14 to coincide with the school break. The installation will be performed by CT Water and their subcontractor, RH White. Interruption to the schools water service during this installation period would be limited to one day (anticipating 4/17 interruption). Water bubblers will remain in the schools during and after the treatment system install.
- Just before 9:00 PM on Friday, February 28, Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services responded to Conantville Road and Overlook Drive, for a reported truck fire. The box truck had been converted into a camper, and occupants in the vehicle were using a propane stove in the back of the truck when a gas leak ignited. Prior to MFD arrival, at least two 20lb propane cylinders that were in the vehicle exploded. On arrival, crews found heavy fire, and two people with burn injuries. The fire was quickly extinguished and nearby structures were successfully protected. One patient was ultimately flown by LifeStar to a burn center in Rhode Island, and the other patient was transported to Hartford.
- The Resident Troopers Office will commence with the spring semester proactive "party patrols" beginning this coming weekend and will be continuing with enhanced enforcement of the Town's Nuisance Ordinance that started in the fall.
- This past Saturday, March 8, a protest/rally in the Downtown Storrs area was organized to coincide with International Women's Day. State Police reported that no traffic or public safety issues were experienced as a result of the protest.
- 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 in coordination with the first day of the Eastern Connecticut Maple Festival. 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 February/March issue of the Town’s bimonthly e-newsletter can be accessed [here](#).
- My most recent monthly interview on WILI-AM with Wayne Norman took place on Friday (March 7) and focused largely on the recently completed Northwest Mansfield Vision and Strategy Plan as well as the ongoing Plan of Conservation and Development update. The interview can be listened to [here](#).