

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: January 12, 2026
Subject: **Town Manager's Report**

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

- With the new Town Council being seated following the municipal elections in November, during its December 8 meeting, the Town Council deliberated on goals for your 2025-2027 term. Materials pertaining to the *Mansfield Tomorrow: Plan of Conservation and Development* and the Council's goals from its 2023-2025 term were reviewed by Council members in advance of the meeting. Based on the substantial and wide-ranging input provided during this session, staff developed proposed draft goals for the Council's consideration. These draft goals were also incorporated into the comprehensive FY 2026/27 budget development guidance that the Town Manager transmitted to all municipal operating departments last month. A proposed list of the Town Council's goals for the 2025-2027 term is being presented for consideration and adoption at the January 12 meeting. Council-adopted goals will ultimately be incorporated into the FY 2026/27 budget book and the Council Policy Index on the Town's website.
- In mid-December, the Town Manager, Chief of Shared Services and Administration, Finance Director, and other pertinent finalized the FY 2026/27 budget development guidance documents that were subsequently transmitted to all members of the municipal management team. As a reminder, this will be the fourth year that the Town is developing its comprehensive annual operating budget and 5-year capital improvement plan using the ClearGov web-based platform.
- The audit of the Town's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the year-ended June 30, 2025 was completed at the end of November and is included on the agenda for review/approval at tonight's Council meeting. The Town received clean audit opinions on the financial statements, internal controls over financial reporting, Federal Single Audit, State Single Audit and had no findings of noncompliance with any grant programs.
- Municipal Services Campus Master Plan: Town staff continue to advance work with EDM Studios on the municipal services campus master planning effort. As previously reported, a \$250,000 Community Investment Fund (CIF) grant administered by DECD is supporting enhanced architectural and design services, along with community engagement, related to potential redevelopment of the existing municipal services campus, including the possible incorporation of additional functions such as senior services. Following the series of facility walkthroughs and in-person meetings conducted with members of the Town's management team in November, EDM has continued to work through follow-up information requests to better understand existing facility conditions, operational constraints, and long-term space needs. While progress slowed as expected during the late-December holiday period, coordination resumed in early January and the project is now transitioning into more focused schematic and conceptual design work and community-wide stakeholder engagement. Staff are also planning to arrange for a project update with Town Council within the next month. Over the coming weeks, this phase will inform the development of more refined preliminary ("pre-referendum") project scopes, cost estimates, and related debt capacity and tax impact analyses to support informed decision-making in advance of a potential bond referendum in November 2026.

- UConn Golf Practice Facility: As the Council is aware, a proposal by UConn to construct a Golf Practice Facility for its men's varsity golf team is attracting interest and concern among Mansfield residents. On December 16, 2025, a Notice of Scoping was published in the *Connecticut Environmental Monitor* relative to the project. The project would occupy approximately 7 acres of a 22-acre UConn-owned parcel with access from East Road; the existing residence and outbuildings along Storrs Road would remain. The site was formerly used as an experimental plant nursery. The proposal includes site clearing and earthwork to construct an unlit driving range, chipping and putting areas, gated access from East Road, parking for fewer than 20 vehicles, and an approximately 6,000-square-foot building with offices, locker rooms, equipment storage and repair space, team/flex space, and indoor putting and simulation areas. The facility would be limited to university use and not open to the public. A recording of the January 7, 2026 Public Scoping Meeting regarding the proposed new facility can be accessed [here](#). As is customary, staff will prepare a draft comment letter for review by the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) at its January 20 meeting and by the Town Council at its January 26 meeting, for submission to UConn as part of the CT Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) scoping process. The Town has been granted an extension, with comments due by January 28. Traditionally, the Town's comments are submitted in a letter signed by the PZC Chair and the Mayor. Following receipt of the Town's and other comments, UConn will prepare a post-scoping notice that includes responses to comments, an environmental review checklist, and a determination as to whether a full Environmental Impact Evaluation is required under CEPA.
- During its regular business meeting this evening, Fire Chief Roache will provide the Town Council with an update on the services/operations, apparatus, personnel, facilities, and current projects/initiatives being overseen by Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services.
- Former St. Joseph Church Structure Fire: At approximately 7:25 AM on January 3, an on-duty Mansfield Fire Captain, while driving through the area, observed heavy smoke coming from the former St. Joseph Church (in the process of being converted into a 4-bedroom single family home) located at the intersection of Route 32 and Route 275. The Captain immediately notified dispatch, prompting a rapid response from Mansfield Fire personnel. Fire crews from Mansfield, UConn, Willimantic, Columbia, and Coventry responded on the first alarm. Upon arrival, crews encountered a significant volume of fire, necessitating the activation of a second alarm. Additional resources were deployed from Coventry, Tolland, and Columbia to support suppression efforts. Firefighters initiated an aggressive interior attack and successfully located and extinguished the fire in the building's basement. The fire was brought under control at approximately 8:08 AM. The cause of the fire remains under investigation by the Mansfield Fire Marshal's Office. The quick actions of the on-duty Captain and the coordinated, effective response of all responding agencies, helped prevent further damage and ensured the safety of personnel and the surrounding area. As more pertinent information becomes available it will be shared as appropriate.
- *Hiring and Appointment Updates:*
 - Bryan Plecan, has been hired as a laborer with the Public Works Tree Division. He began work on December 29, 2025. Bryan has experience in the municipal world, including snow plowing. Bryan has extensive tree service private sector experience. Welcome Bryan!
 - Jacob Bachman, has been hired as a laborer with the Public Works Roads Division. He began work on January 5, 2026. Jacob has extensive private sector construction and paving experience. Welcome Jacob!
 - Zach Bertram, has been hired as a laborer with the DPW Grounds Division. He will begin work on February 23, 2026. Zach has experience in the municipal world, including snow plowing. He also has experience in the maintenance field in the private sector. Additionally, Zach is a volunteer firefighter. Welcome Zach!
 - Rick Landry has been promoted to the position of Fire Captain, effective January 11, 2026. Rick has served as a Firefighter/EMT with Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services for ~15 years. He has served in numerous roles such as Acting Captain, EMS Officer, and Knox Box Administrator. He has participated in numerous training and certification programs such as the

National Honor Guard Training Academy and the iLead Officer Development Program. He has participated in many special projects and initiatives, with current examples including a Squad replacement and specification and delivery of an ambulance. Prior to his career service with Mansfield, he spent nearly 15 years in the municipal public works field. Rick is currently pursuing an associate's degree in Emergency Management. Congratulations Rick!

- Following completion of a competitive recruitment process for Firefighter/EMT's, the Town has extend seven conditional offers to candidates, with anticipated start dates of January 26, 2026. Most of these candidates are scheduled to attend the Fire Academy program beginning in February. This will complete the hiring process for the new staff positions associated with the SAFER grant that has been awarded to the Town.

- *Planning and Development Updates:*

- Housing Legislation: Planning and Development staff are tracking implementation of the new housing legislation that took effect on January 1, 2026, including provisions related to municipal housing planning and production expectations, zoning standards that may be considered barriers to housing, alignment between zoning and affordable housing goals, designation of priority housing areas, and treatment of infrastructure constraints such as public water and sewer capacity. Staff will attend a January 22 session hosted by the American Planning Association (Connecticut Chapter) to better understand key provisions and potential implications for Mansfield. Analyses prepared by the [Partnership for Strong Communities](#) and the [Council of Small Towns](#) are available online for reference.
- Mansfield Tomorrow Plan of Conservation and Development: Work continues on the draft goals, strategies, actions, and plan narrative with an intent to finalize the plan in early 2026. Stay informed and follow the plan's progress [online](#).

- *Mansfield Public Library Updates:*

- Thanks to the wonderful Human Services Department team, the Library will now host a satellite food pantry location! The pantry is stocked with shelf-stable cans and boxes of food, and Mansfield residents can access the pantry anytime the Library is open. Patrons looking to donate food can do so at the Human Services building or place items in a bin in our foyer. The hope is that, in addition of helping to meet the needs of current library patrons, that those who discover the library because of the new pantry will then be connected to all of the other wonderful support and services offered by the Library, including technology help from Digital Navigators, lendable hotspots and Chromebooks, tools, toys, and more.
- During its annual January shutdown from January 5-7, the Library underwent deep cleaning, had new carpeting installed in the Buchanan Auditorium, removed and repurposed shelving to create an open and welcoming space for the food pantry, and staff took part in an annual fire and safety training. The Library was happy to welcome the public back on January 8 with all of these fresh updates completed.
- The Library's Winter Reading Program for kids, teens, and adults is officially underway. Patrons can stop by the library to register and pick up one of our bingo cards. Participants will receive a drawing ticket every square they complete for a chance to win one of the larger prizes, and get a small prize automatically when they complete a row. The program continues through the end of February.
- On January 15, in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s commitment to service, the Library is inviting community members to a special Wonder Workshop featuring creative card-making. Greeting cards will be distributed to seniors at the Mansfield Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation in hopes of bringing joy during the cold wintry months.
- On January 24, the Library is partnering with Compassion & Choices for a screening of *Other Side*, a powerful documentary that follows the journey of CT's own Lynda Bluestein, a lifelong activist who, facing a terminal illness, sought access to medical aid in dying. Premiering to soldout crowds at the SXSW Film Festival, this film raises essential questions about access,

autonomy, and what it means to receive compassionate support at the end of life. A Q&A with a representative with Compassion & Choices to follow screening.

- On January 27, the Library will launch a new program, "Read with Rogue." Children are invited to spend individual 10-minute sessions reading to Rogue, a local, licensed therapy dog who loves stories. Reading aloud to a calm, non-judgmental furry friend can help children gain confidence in reading.

- *Mansfield Parks and Recreation Updates:*

- The Winter Solstice Art Show exhibit dates at the Mansfield Community Center continue through January 17. This event is sponsored by the Mansfield Arts Advisory Committee.
- The next free Community Paint Day is January 15 at Lenard Hall.
- In collaboration with the Downtown Partnership, Parks and Recreation will host a Kids Night Out program at the Community Center on January 30. While children are being cared for and participating in activities, parents will be encouraged to shop and dine at local businesses. This is timed to coincide with Taste 2 Towns, Restaurant Week in Mansfield and Windham.
- Park Improvement Projects: Interviews were completed this past week with selected firms for ADA and other Park Improvements at Southeast Park and Sunny Acres Park.
- Bicentennial Pond Bathhouse: Mansfield Parks and Recreation continues to work collaboratively with multiple Town departments, the Town's architecture and design firm (PFA Architecture), and pertinent vendors/contractors to develop detailed plans for a new bathhouse at Bicentennial Pond.

- *Mansfield Downtown Partnership Updates:*

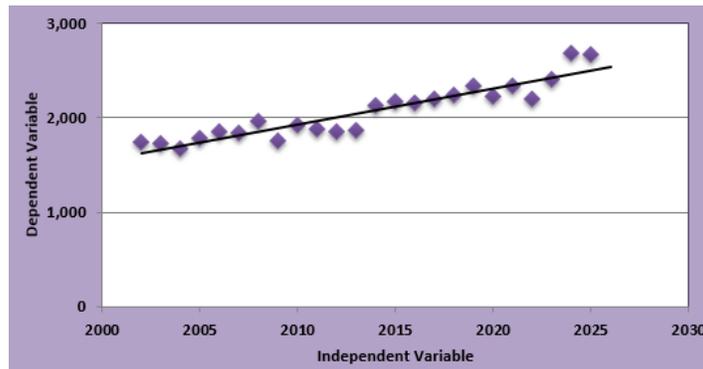
- Taste 2 Towns. Staff members from Mansfield and the Mansfield Downtown Partnership have been working with the Windham Downtown Neighborhood Association to plan for Taste 2 Towns, Restaurant Week in Mansfield and Windham. This year's dates are January 26 to February 8, 2026. A record 14 Mansfield-based food establishments have committed to join in this year, along with ten Windham restaurants. It is also encouraging that there are seven new restaurants participating for the first time! Menus and offers should be posted at taste2towns.com later this week, and publicity will begin. Active solicitation of sponsors continues, as well as local restaurant sign-up. Restaurants from Mansfield include Bagel Zone, Coyote Flaco, Dad's Doughs, Dog Lane Café, The Farmers Cow Calfé and Creamery, Fenton River Grill, Gansett Wraps, Hops 44, Huskies Restaurant & Bar, Little Aladdin, Nikki's Dog House, Red Rock Café, Spice Venue / Salt + Lime, and Stix n Stones
- Eastern Connecticut Maple Festival. MDP and Mansfield staff have met with representatives of the Windham Chamber of Commerce which organizes the Eastern Connecticut Maple Festival. The group is working to find the optimum Mansfield location for the two-day event, and details on the date and location will be set soon. For the previous two years, the event has been hosted at E.O. Smith High School and adjacent to Town Hall.
- Television Coverage. Fox 61 visited Downtown Storrs on December 30 and produced a news segment about the importance of local support of businesses when UConn students are away. The reporter interviewed MDP Executive Director Steven Ferrigno, and the proprietor of Gansett Wraps for the segment.

- *Human Services Updates:*

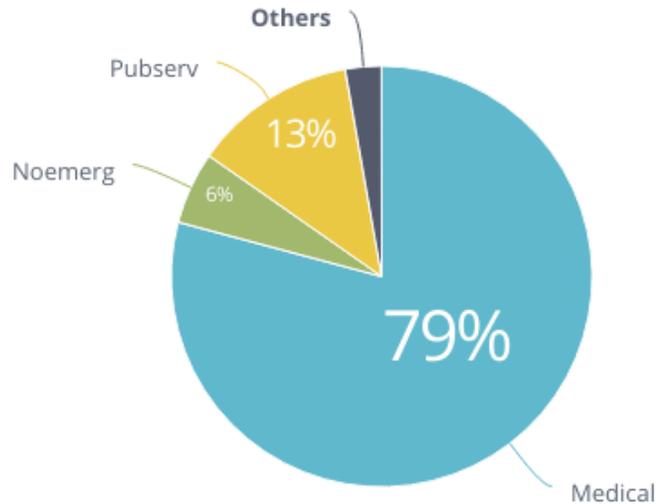
- The Human Services Department is excited to announce that it has received funds from a generous donor to form a Senior Trip Assistance Program. This program will support residents who are in need, to attend trips hosted by the Mansfield Senior Center. There is a short application process to determine eligibility for this program and the Department encourages anyone that may be interested in learning more to reach out to Mansfield Human Services at 860-429-3315 or stop by and visit its office at 303 Maple Road in Mansfield.
- On Wednesday, February 4 at 12:45 PM, the Human Services Department will host its first Veterans Roundtable Discussion. This open conversation is designed to help us better

understand the resources, services, and supports that local veterans need and what they would like to see offered in our community. The event will take place at the Mansfield Senior Center (303 Maple Road). While RSVPs are preferred by February 3, all are welcome to attend. To RSVP, please contact the Department's new Human Services Outreach Worker at 860-487-9871 or Gardinera@mansfieldct.org. Staff look forward to hearing from as many veterans as possible.

- The Human Services Department, in partnership with the Mansfield Public Library, is pleased to announce the opening of a new satellite food pantry location inside the Library. This collaboration will make essential resources more accessible to residents, right where they already gather. Early feedback from the community has been overwhelmingly positive, and the Department is excited to be working with the Library to offer this important service.
- Human Services is offering a Cancer Survival Toolbox six-week series at the Mansfield Senior Center. This program begins on Wednesday, January 21, at 10:00 AM and will continue for six consecutive weeks. This group will focus on topics and skills building cancer survivors and those impacted by cancer. Some special topics to be covered are communication, advocacy, and decision-making. If you are interested in attending please RSVP to the Senior Center at 860-429-0262.
- *Fire and Emergency Services Updates:*
 - As has been previously shared with Council, the department's Station Design Working Group has been exploring the needs around a possible replacement for the Eagleville Fire Station that similarly serves the CT-32 corridor but would add enhanced operational usefulness/value for responding to calls in southern Mansfield. The working group continues to work on preliminary ideas with an architect, who recently provided a conceptual rendering illustrating what a new fire station could look like.
 - For 2025, Mansfield Fire and Emergency responded to a total of 2671 calls, which is effectively identical to the total number of calls (2677) in 2024. While there is always going to be some minor fluctuation year to year, the department's overall trend for call volume is still averaging an increase of just over 9% every year.



- Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services responded to 72 calls over the past two weeks (December 26, 2025 – January 9, 2026) with the breakdown by type as follows:



- **Facilities Management Updates:**

- Mansfield Elementary School (MES) Cafeteria Sound Mitigation Project: The RFP for sound mitigation work in the school cafeteria has been issued and is currently open for bidding. The bid period is expected to close on January 19, after which submissions will be reviewed with the School Building Committee in anticipation of selecting a contractor.
- MES Water System: Following several months of successful testing and monitoring, the water system at MES has been reopened for use by students, faculty, and visitors. This change was implemented upon students' return from winter break. Water quality will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis.
- Mansfield Middle School (MMS) Main Entrance and Elevator Project: Work on the main entrance project is nearing completion, with delivery of the elevator car anticipated this week. Installation is expected to occur over the next two weeks, followed by comprehensive testing and a final State inspection.
- MMS HVAC Improvements: HVAC installation work on the third floor and in the gymnasium continues to progress on schedule and within budget. All air conditioning units have been installed in classrooms and on rooftops. Final ductwork installation and controls programming are scheduled for January 19, taking advantage of the holiday and student absence from the building.
- Historic Town Hall Project: Rehabilitation work at the Historic Town Hall and administrative building on Spring Hill, currently occupied and stewarded by the Mansfield Historical Society, is nearing completion. Only minor cosmetic items remain, with floor refinishing in the Old Town Hall space scheduled for next week. Remaining exterior parking lot paving will be completed in the spring once asphalt plants reopen.

- **Public Works Updates:**

- Staffing Updates: Brian Lavoie, Operations Manager, resigned/retired effective December 29. John Mohan retired effective December 29, with an official last workday of January 30. In addition, Jacob Bachman (Roads Division) and Bryan Plecan (Roads Division – Tree Crew) joined the department as laborers within the past two weeks.
- Snow and Ice Removal Operations: The Town has experienced an active winter season to date, including three plowable snow events totaling approximately 11 inches of snowfall and nine treatment-only events. Crews have applied a total of 976 tons of salt. Snow hauling operations were conducted three times in Downtown Storrs and twice at Mansfield Elementary School.

- December Wind and Rain Event: On Friday, December 19, a significant wind and rain event resulted in downed trees and wires, leading to the closure of 29 Town roads and one State road (Route 195), along with 16 additional roads experiencing single-lane blockages. Town crews cleared 14 of the fully closed roads and all 16 one-lane blockages. The remaining 14 road closures required utility response and were cleared by Eversource by Monday, December 21.
- South Eagleville Road Pedestrian Safety Improvements Project: The project is currently in winter shutdown; however, limited coordination work continues. The contractor is working with Eversource to install an electrical meter to power sidewalk lighting and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs). Delivery of the light poles has been delayed due to a manufacturing issue, with shipment now anticipated by February 8. Installation will be completed as soon as materials are received.
- Separatist Road Culvert Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation work on Separatist Road was completed late last week and included installation of a liner within an existing 60-inch culvert.
- Stump Grinding Operations: A road crew has been grinding stumps at municipal buildings and parks. Work began at Firehouse 307 but was temporarily suspended due to a mechanical failure of the rented stump grinder. Grinding will resume once the equipment is repaired and returned.
- Route 275 and Separatist Road Signalization Project: The signalization project at the intersection of Route 275 and Separatist Road remains under the direction of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT). Recent coordination with CTDOT has not yielded a definitive construction schedule. The next phase of work will involve installation of the steel mast arm components (shafts and arms). The contractor is tentatively scheduled to begin this phase later this month at intersections in Old Lyme, weather permitting, with work in Mansfield to follow.
- The Town Manager's most recent monthly appearance on WILI-AM with Wayne Norman took place on January 2, and can be accessed [here](#).
- The February/March issue of the Town's bimonthly newsletter is currently in development with an anticipated publication date of February 2, 2026.