

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: February 8, 2021
Subject: **Town Manager's Report**

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

Departmental Reports

• ***Town Manager & Human Resources:***

- Residents who are 75+ are the first wave of residents eligible for the COVID-19 Phase 1b rollout of vaccines. In an effort to ensure that these residents are informed of the vaccination scheduling options and supported through the registration process, Human Services, the Senior Center, the Mansfield Library and the Town Manager's departments are collaborating on messaging and outreach. Technology support with the registration, on computers or by phone, is being offered by both the Senior Outreach Coordinator and the Mansfield Public Library. Additionally, transportation to vaccination appointments can be requested. The Human Services department is making an effort to reach all identified seniors personally by phone, and a mailing will be coordinated to distribute a Town of Mansfield flyer outlining these service offerings. This information outlining how the Town of Mansfield is prepared to help residents will also be pushed out by social media and on the Town's website so that families and friends of these seniors are also aware of the process.
- On January 28, the Town Manager and Mayor participated in a virtual meeting with State Representatives Haddad & Smith and State Senator Flexer to discuss state biennial budget as well as to go over issues facing the town and how our state legislators might be able to collaborate with local officials to address these issues through corresponding legislation. Issues discussed include:
 - Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) and associated formulas
 - Microbreweries
 - Absentee voting procedures
 - Legal notice publication requirements in conventional print newspapers
- On January 30, the Town Manager and Mayor participated in the annual "Friends of Agriculture" event (usually an in-person breakfast, but held virtually this year) hosted by the Tolland County Farm Bureau. Speakers included U.S. Rep Joe Courtney, U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, CT Department of Agriculture Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt, members of the CT state legislature, and a wide variety of individuals affiliated with agriculture in either a public policy or business context.
- The application period for the permanent Fire Chief position (which was re-advertised after a search conducted in the fall did not yield the desired candidate) closed on February 5, 2021. The Town received applications from 16 qualified candidates and the qualifications and materials submitted by each applicant will be carefully examined by Human Resources to ensure all candidates possess the stated minimum qualifications before the first round of

interviews are scheduled. Candidates will initially meet with a panel comprised of human resources personnel, a member of the Mansfield Fire Department command staff, and Fire Chiefs from other CT municipalities who have graciously volunteered their time and expertise to help evaluate the candidates. At present, it is anticipated that the first round of interviews will take place on February 23 and semi-finalist (second round) interviews will take place the week of March 1.

- Since the beginning of 2021 the Town has filled five position vacancies in various departments. This includes two vacancies in Finance (FT Staff Accountant; PT Finance Assistant), one in Building/Health and Emergency Management (FT Administrative Assistant), one in Animal Control (PT Animal Control Officer), and one in Human Services (PT Senior Center Outreach Coordinator). The Town is also in the process of filling a FT Finance Manager/Treasurer position within the Finance Department.
- The FY2022 budget development process continues to progress according to the roadmap followed in past years. As of this past week, all department heads have participated in at least one meeting with the Town Manager and Finance Director to review their respective operating budget and capital improvement program requests. We remain on track to have a complete and accurate approximation of the bottom line of the budget by the end of the month based on department submissions, and the Town Manager will subsequently prepare his complete budget recommendations (which will be presented to the Town Council in late-March), incorporating any proposed adjustments to the department submissions, in consultation with the Finance Director.
- This past week the Town Manager was invited by the CT Conference of Municipalities to provide testimony on S.B. 695 (proposed amendments to tax assessment appeal proceedings) and S.B. 698 (proposed amendments to municipal legal notice publication requirements in conventional print newspapers).
- The inaugural issue of a new bimonthly electronic newsletter was published on February 3. Publication was made two days later than originally intended due to last week's winter storm that hit the region on February 1 and 2. The e-newsletter was posted in a variety of locations as well as distributed by email to subscribers who are interested in staying abreast of Town affairs. This resource will include a wide range of information, including department/committee news, project updates, helpful hints (i.e., fire safety strategies), schedules of upcoming meetings and community events, and other items we hope will be of use/interest to residents. A complete copy of the newsletter has been included in the Council packet under "Communications" and can also be reviewed here:
<http://www.mansfieldct.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10339/Feb-2021-Issue-FINAL2-3-21>

- ***Board of Education:***

- The Office of School Construction and Grants Review has taken up final review of the application for the Mansfield Middle School roof replacement and photovoltaic system. At this time the application materials submitted satisfy the requirements for approval of the roof replacement. We have been asked to clarify language regarding the installation of a photovoltaic system in two Town Council resolutions. These resolutions allow for 1) the creation of a building committee and 2) the issuing of bonds and authorizing the Board of Education to apply for a school construction grant.
- In consultation with Bond Counsel, new resolutions which allow for clarification of the language in the adopted resolutions have been created. These will be acted on by the Town Council at the February 8 meeting.

- ***Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD):***

- The EHHD conducted four vaccination clinics for Phase 1a eligible personnel and those 75+ in the past week. 460 doses were administered. Five additional clinics are scheduled for coming

week for 2nd dose recipients and those 75 and over. At present, EHHD estimates that just under 60% of Mansfield’s 75+ y.o. population has received the first dose of the vaccine.

- Unfortunately, despite ongoing efforts by Town staff and volunteers to reach as many seniors 75+, EHHD is anticipating unfilled appointments for Wednesday’s clinic. This is the first week since the vaccination program launched where number of scheduled individuals is unlikely to equal the number of available vaccine doses. EHHD believes this in part because we are nearing the end of this phase of the rollout where those with means have received their first dose. Those left are the most challenged by vaccine access. The Town Manager authorized additional staff resources to respond to this issue. The Town Clerk’s Office has generated a list of registered voters 75+. This list has subsequently been provided to Mansfield Senior Center staff as well as staff members associated with the Library, Parks & Recreation, Human Resources and Town Manager’s Office to ensure that residents 75+ can be more actively targeted by phone to assist with the vaccine scheduling process. Additionally, the Town Manager has directed the Town’s Emergency Management Director to organize a reverse-911 call using the “CodeRed” service with a message to all Mansfield landlines with information about the vaccine process. This message is presently being finalized with a goal of the message/call being deployed within the next 24 hours.

UPDATE: Sunday night EHHS was notified by the State that the Governor will soon announce that the official eligibility start date for individuals 65 or older is this Thursday, Feb 11th. We were further informed that unofficially the health district is authorized to immediately accept individuals 65 or older for any clinics with open appointments. As such, EHHD is confident that all available doses will be administered at the Wednesday clinic at E.O. Smith High School.

- Follow this link for more information on the phases of the vaccine rollout:
<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Vaccination---Phases>
- Based on health district contact tracing evidence, disease transmission within our population is largely driven by small gatherings of family members not from the same household, small social gatherings, and workplace settings.
- The weekly case count bar chart on the next page indicates a **25% decrease** in the prevalence of cases from the previous week. Follow this link for more town level data:
<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Data-Tracker>

TOWN LEVEL DATA

| TOWN | Andover | Ashford | Bolton | Chapin | Columbia | Coventry | Mansfield (non-student) | Scotland ++ | Tolland | Willington | EHHD Totals |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|----------|----------|----------------------------|-------------|---------|------------|----------------|
| Cumulative Cases | 135 | 205 | 206 | 92 | 262 | 531 | 1052 | 35 | 716 | 209 | 3443 |
| Change from last week | 8 | 16 | 13 | 3 | 12 | 25 | 53 (40) | 1 | 32 | 18 | 181 |
| Two week change | 12 | 30 | 28 | 16 | 40 | 78 | 101 (93) | 2 | 75 | 39 | 421 |
| Deaths | 2 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 8 (8) | 1 | 15 | 3 | 49 |

CONNECTICUT TOTALS

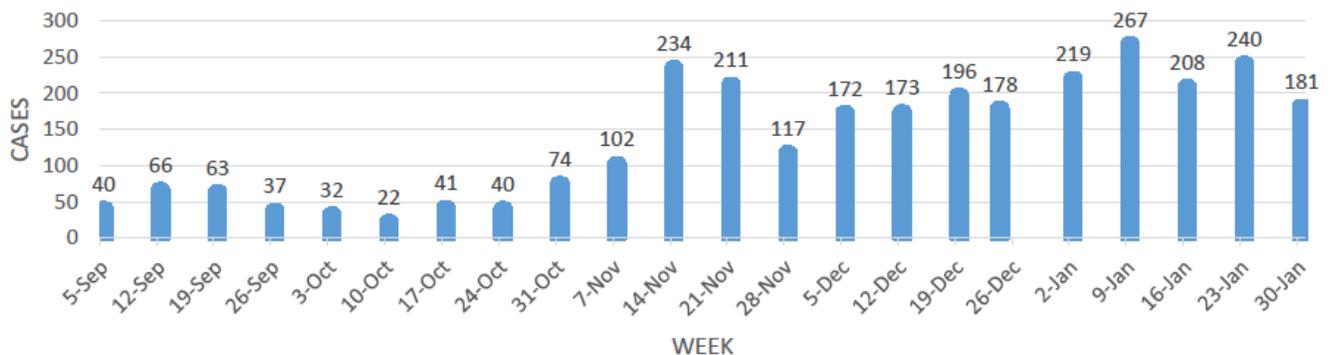
| Number of cumulative cases | Change from last week | Change from two weeks | Current hospitalizations | Two week change in hospitalizations | Deaths |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| 257,941 | 9,176 | 22,145 | 837 | -223 | 7,185 |

EHHD residents age 75 and greater who received a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine

| TOWN | Andover | Ashford | Bolton | Chapin | Columbia | Coventry | Mansfield | Scotland ++ | Tolland | Willington |
|---|---------|---------|--------|--------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|---------|------------|
| Estimated pop >75 years | 137 | 186 | 268 | 116 | 340 | 500 | 1016 | 68 | 659 | 270 |
| Received 1 st dose COVID vaccine | 63 | 101 | 175 | 49 | 198 | 282 | 564 | 44 | 504 | 110 |

Source: Connecticut immunization registry/CT DPH as of 2/5/2020; population based on 2010 census

EHHD Confirmed Weekly Case Totals (September 5, 2020 to January 30, 2021)



Planning & Development

- On February 15, 2021, The Town of Mansfield will start accepting applications for emergency child care assistance from residents that have been financially impacted by the pandemic. As a reminder, this program is being financially supported by a \$500,000 CDBG/Small Cities grant that the Town of Mansfield recently received. Additional information is available at <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/2089/COVID-Assistance>. Residents are encouraged to complete a pre-screening form prior to starting the application to identify potential eligibility concerns. Questions should be sent to HelpingHand@MansfieldCT.org.

Downtown Partnership, Economic Development & Marketing:

Downtown Partnership:

- Encouraging residents and visitors to support Mansfield restaurants through our new “Spend & Win: Supersized!” activity. We’re giving away fun prizes each week in February! For more information, please visit mansfieldmdp.org/spendwin
- Supporting the efforts of the Mansfield Public Schools Grade 4 remote learners, who are working to raise funds to support local businesses and to show appreciation for essential workers in our community. They will use the money they raise to purchase gift cards from local businesses and then donate the gift cards to essential workers at Windham Hospital. To date, they have raised over \$3,200! Learn more here: <https://gofund.me/a47b9376>
- Continuing our support of all Mansfield businesses by communicating guidance from the state for safe operations, funding and business development opportunities, and federal news and updates – including the new round of COVID relief – through email blasts and our website (please see mansfieldmdp.org/reopen)

- **Human Services:**

- As part of the ongoing Phase 1b of the COVID-19 vaccination program, Human Services personnel continue to coordinate closely with other municipal staff and the Eastern Highland Health District to help seniors 75 years of age and older receive the vaccine. More specifically, the senior center has been providing information through its newsletter, email blasts and during virtual programming regarding the vaccine and testing. The Human Services outreach coordinator, Yamil Figueroa, is offering assistance to seniors who are having challenges with the registration process. Yamil is also coordinating transportation assistance for those who need it to both testing and vaccine sites.

- **Parks & Recreation:**

- The Parks & Recreation Director has joined the Town Manager, BOE and Region 19 School Superintendents, Region 19 Athletic Director, DPW Grounds Division staff, representatives from Mansfield Little League, and other pertinent stakeholders to explore alternative fields that can be utilized by Little League baseball/softball and Region 19 varsity softball while Ballfield C (Southeast Elementary School) is out of commission during construction of the new elementary school.
- The Mansfield Community Center continues to serve as a host location for CT COVID-19 vaccines (presently in Phase 1b eligible residents 75+ years of age) and will do so until at least early-June. Clinics are provided by the Eastern Highlands Health District several times per week.
- As a reminder, the new temporary Community Center hours began on December 10th as follows:
 - Monday-Friday: 5:30am-1:30pm and 3:30pm-8:00pm
 - Saturday and Sundays: 7:00am-4:00pm

Staff will continue to closely monitor user patterns and revenue collections, and confer with the Town Manager to identify possible needs for adjustment as appropriate

- **Library:**

- The newly created 30-minute browsing appointments continue to be very popular, and are fully booked each day.
- Federal tax forms should be available later this week, as we have been informed that they have been shipped, and their arrival will publicized. For easy access, we will put the standard forms and instructions outside the library during business hours. People can call to get other forms printed as needed. We expect to be able to have prints available the same day as requested, depending on volume. No word yet regarding state forms.
- Library hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 10 - 3; Tuesday, Thursday 2 – 7. For more details on services the Library continues to offer, please contact us at 860-423-2501 or MansfieldLibrary@MansfieldCT.org

- **Town Clerk:**

- Governor Lamont issued Executive Order No. 10 on February 4th allowing any voter to request an absentee ballot for reasons of COVID for any special election or municipal primary held before April 20, 2021. Town Clerks administering the absentee ballot program during such an election or primary must use ballot package materials specific to the EO. The Order does NOT apply to local referenda.
- Town Clerks across the State recently responded to a Connecticut Town Clerks Association (CTCA) survey regarding suggested improvements to the Secretary of the State's (SOTS) Connecticut Voter Registration System (CVRS). Town Clerks rely on CVRS to administer the

absentee ballot program. The volume of absentee ballots the Town Clerks were required to process during the 2020 elections using CVRS made clear the limitations of the system's capabilities – a system that is operating on a platform created in 1994. SOTS is seeking to improve the system with a more modern platform and we are hopeful that the CTCA survey feedback will be taken into consideration.

- **Fire Department:**

- Below is a brief synopsis of Fire Department responses for the period January 25 through February 7, 2021.

| Type | | # Mutual Aid Out of Town |
|------------------|----|--------------------------|
| ALS | 27 | 1 |
| BLS | 34 | 2 |
| Total Medical | 61 | 3 |
| Structure Fire | 1 | 1 |
| Appliance Fire | 1 | |
| Fire Alarm | 5 | |
| HAZ MAT | 1 | |
| Service Call | 1 | |
| Vehicle Accident | 3 | |
| Total Other | 12 | 1 |
| Grand Total | 73 | 4 |

- **Public Works:**

- Since the last report, the Department removed 32 trees and pruned one.
- Since the last report, the Department responded to three storms and three treating events. The first two of these storms consumed approximately \$25,000 in overtime and 416 tons of treated salt. We also employed a contractor to help remove snow piles from Downtown Storrs at a cost of approximately \$4,000 for the first two storms. Financial and human resource inputs for the third storm are not yet known as the storm was in-process at the time of this report's writing.

- **Facilities:**

- As was previously reported, representatives from the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) completed a short-notice inspection of Town facilities in early-December. The Town is still waiting on the final report from OSHA. Once the report is received, it will be carefully reviewed and issues will be challenged or mitigated where appropriate.