

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: March 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:*

- As has been widely reported, residents who are 55+ are presently eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. In an effort to ensure that residents are informed of the vaccination scheduling options and supported through the registration process, Human Services staff as well as members of the Public Library staff team are providing support with VAMS registration, navigating the appointment scheduling process, and arranging for transportation to vaccination appointments. Likewise, the Governor also recently directed local health districts to prioritize vaccinations for teachers and other employees working in schools and as such in daily contact with students. This past Wednesday, employees of E.O. Smith Regional High School were vaccinated by EHHD staff during a clinic held onsite, and Mansfield Public Schools employees who work in each of the four schools were vaccinated at Mansfield Middle School on Friday.
- Second-round interviews with the finalists for the permanent Fire Chief position took place this past week. Finalists took part in two separate interviews on the same day. One interview was with the Town Manager, the Resident Trooper Sergeant, UConn's Fire Chief, and the Human Resources Director. The second interview was with a majority of the Town's municipal department heads. We very much appreciate Sergeant Timme, Chief Perez, and the department heads contributing their time and expertise to help evaluate the finalists. The Town Manager is in the process of completing a final round of one-on-one interviews with the finalists and a conditional offer is anticipated to be extended within the next 24 hours. The goal is to have a new Fire Chief in place by mid- or late-April.
- The FY2022 budget development process continues to progress according to the roadmap followed in past years. Although an ongoing staffing shortage within the Finance Department has impacted the pace at which various reports and analysis are able to be completed (the department had been without a Finance Manager and one of its accountants for some months), and the ongoing uncertainty of the economic/fiscal implications of COVID-19 continue to impact financial forecasting, we are moving closer to finalization and preparation for the Town Manager to present his complete budget recommendations to the Town Council on March 29.
- On February 25, the Town Manager took part in a walking tour of the UConn campus with the Senior Director for Operations with the President's Office. President Katsouleas was not able to attend, but a follow-up one-on-one meeting between the Town Manager and President Katsouleas is being arranged to take place within the next month. The tour was very

informative and will help identify common interests and shared goals between the Town of Mansfield and UConn.

- On February 25, the Town Manager videotaped the introduction for a Facebook Live event hosted by Taste of Mansfield. The event [premiered videos profiling](#) four farms that offer CSA “shares” on a subscription basis in Mansfield, and was timed to coincide with CSA Sign-Up Week nationwide. Partners in the Taste of Mansfield shared the videos widely, and the Facebook post was also shared by Connecticut Farm Bureau. This support for Mansfield farm businesses will continue in other media. The Taste of Mansfield is an initiative that works to connect our community through local food.
- Wayne Norman hosted the Town Manager on WILI-AM’s morning show on March 5. They discussed the Town Manager’s initial impressions for Mansfield, how the community has been impacted by COVID-19 and short- and longer-term priorities for the Town. The interview was recorded, and may be listened to as an online podcast by visiting [here](#). Wayne has invited the Town Manager to “appear” monthly on his show to provide ongoing updates about the Town of Mansfield.
- In early-February, the Mansfield Public Schools Superintendent informed the Town Manager and the Executive Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership of an opportunity to engage in a significant community art project. More specifically, a project called CT Murals is partnering with 39 communities across Connecticut to create 39 murals representing each year of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s life by MLK Day 2022. Each mural will represent the messages, images, and symbols that Martin Luther King, Jr stood for. CT Murals works with national level artists in collaboration with local artists to create high quality murals. This is a matching grant program, where up \$7,500 will be awarded if a municipality commits to contributing the corresponding 1:1 match. This opportunity will be further discussed during the Council’s March 8 meeting and additional details are included in the information packet.
- Over the weekend, the Senate passed the American Rescue Plan which includes aid to towns and cities as part of a broader economic relief package. Earlier last week, the Senate released its initial draft which cut the money to municipalities by \$5 billion. However, as a result of efforts by the National League of Cities (NLC) and state leagues throughout the country, full funding was restored. The bill is headed back to the House where it will likely pass without amendments and anticipated to be signed by President Biden later this week. Once the full details of the bill are passed by the House, CCM will provide details regarding its impact on Connecticut towns and cities. As part of that effort, CCM is strong encouraging municipal managers and elected officials to participate in a “Federal Issues Briefing” with NLC to learn the latest details on the final package along with future issues that are anticipated to be brought up in Congress. Details for this briefing are as follows:

Federal Issues Policy Briefing (Virtual)

Click here to Register: [Federal Issue Policy Briefing Registration](#)

Tuesday, March 9, 2021 from 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

The briefing will feature:

- Dan DeSimone, Director, State of Connecticut Washington Office
- Irma Esparza Diggs, NLC Senior Executive and Director, Federal Advocacy

• **Mansfield Public Schools & Region 19:**

- After multiple meetings with pertinent design/engineering professionals, members of the School Building Committee, and town officials/department heads, the Town officially issued the invitation to bid for the construction of the new elementary school. The bid invitation was officially issued on March 2 and general contractors will be asked to take part in a “pre-bid” meeting on March 16 and have bids submitted by April 12. Additional information can be found here: <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/bids.aspx?bidID=130>

- The Mansfield Public Schools Winter Newsletter was mailed to all Mansfield residents last week. Among the stories featured was an update on the new school project.
- **Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD):**
 - The EHHD conducted five vaccination clinics in the past week with 740 doses administered. Six additional clinics are scheduled for the coming week.
 - As instructed by the State, the EHHD has pivoted to closed clinics for school staff. Three of the six clinic planned for next week are school clinics.
 - Follow this link for more information on the Phases of the vaccine rollout: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Vaccination---Phases>
 - The weekly case count bar chart on the next page continues to trend down with a **71% decrease** in the prevalence of cases over the previous seven weeks, Follow this link for more town level data: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Data-Tracker>

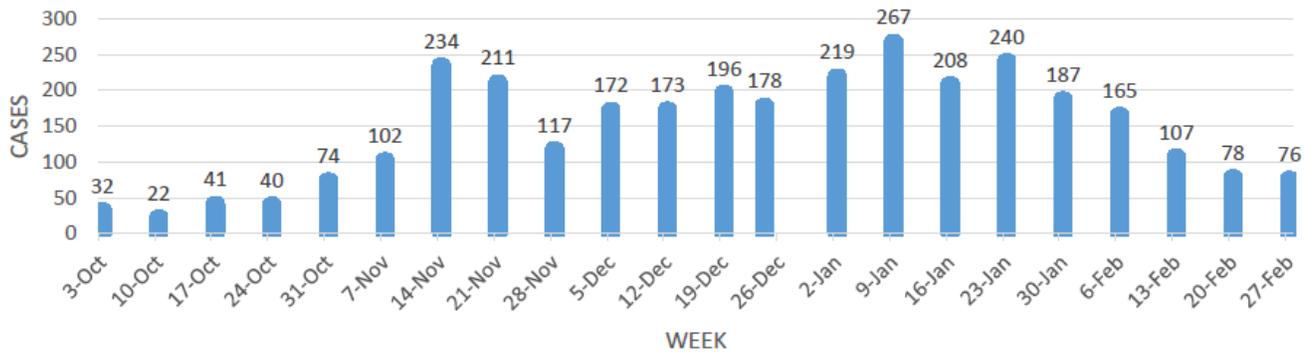
TOWN LEVEL DATA

TOWN	Andover	Ashford	Bolton	Chapin	Columbia	Coventry	Mansfield	Scotland ++	Tolland	Willington	EHHD Totals
Cumulative Cases	152	223	228	107	286	605	1,244	38	785	229	3,897
Change from last week	2	2	3	1	3	17	32	0	13	3	76
Two week change	6	6	5	6	9	25	71	0	20	6	154
Deaths	3	4	5	0	6	8	25	2	15	3	71

EHHD residents who received a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine											
TOWN	Andover	Ashford	Bolton	Chapin	Columbia	Coventry	Mansfield	Scotland ++	Tolland	Willington	EHHD Totals
Estimated pop	3,236	4,255	4,884	2,239	5,379	12,407	25,487	1,672	14,618	5,864	80,041
Received 1 st dose COVID vaccine	543	705	917	345	1,160	2,131	2,577	267	2,673	883	12,201

**The Town of Mansfield's population is comprised roughly 55%-60% of UConn students, which will substantially reduce the overall percentage of Town residents who have received a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.*

EHHD Confirmed Weekly Case Totals October - February 27, 2021



- **Planning & Development**

- **Emergency Childcare Assistance**

- We are continuing to accept applications for emergency child care assistance from residents who have been financially impacted by the pandemic. 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. The web page also has Frequently Asked Questions about the program. Basic information was distributed to all Mansfield School families this last week, and details have been mailed to all registered childcare centers.

- **Downtown Partnership, Economic Development & Marketing:**

- **Mansfield Downtown Partnership**

- The Mansfield Public Schools Grade 4 remote learners' fundraiser to support local businesses and essential workers is still open! They are raising money to purchase gift cards from local businesses and then donate the gift cards to essential workers at Windham Hospital. They have raised over \$3,300 already! Learn more and donate here: <https://gofund.me/a47b9376>
 - We continue to support all Mansfield businesses by communicating guidance from the state for safe operations, funding and business development opportunities, and federal news and updates – including the recent announcement about the planned lifting of capacity limits for some businesses on March 19 - through email blasts and our website (please see mansfieldmdp.org/reopen)
 - The Partnership is co-sponsoring a special event with the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry and the UConn Puppet Arts Program: *ISH*, an MFA performance by UConn Puppet Arts graduate student Felicia Cooper. This 45-minute, family-friendly puppet show will be performed outdoors on March 18, 19, and 20 at 7:00 PM on Betsy Paterson Square in Downtown Storrs. These outdoors shows will be socially distanced and follow State of Connecticut COVID-19 safety protocols. Admission is free, but due to COVID-19 safety precautions, seating reservations must be made in advance by visiting bimp.ticketleap.com. The performance will also be streamed on March 21 at 7:00 PM on the Ballard Institute's Facebook Live (facebook.com/BallardInstitute) in celebration of World Puppetry Day. For more information, please visit bimp.uconn.edu/2021/03/05/ish

- **Human Services:**

- Mansfield Farms to Families Program (MFFP) Grant – all 15 slots for low-income households to receive CSA shares have been allocated and we currently have eight more families

interested. MFFP will also distribute 100 food boxes four times over the growing season to low-income families through this grant.

- The Senior Center will hold a drive through St. Patrick's Day event on Friday, March 12th. A traditional Corn Beef and Cabbage meal will be offered and seniors will decorate their cars to celebrate the occasion
- There are two food distributions at the Senior Center this week – Foodshare which is open to all 11:30 to 12 noon on Thursday, and TEFAP
- The Senior Center continues to provide assistance with COVID vaccine registration for individuals 55 years and older
- In partnership with AARP, the Senior Center is providing virtual assistance with tax preparation for seniors at the Senior Center through April 15th

- **Parks & Recreation:**

- The Mansfield Community Center continues to serve as a host location for CT COVID-19 vaccines (presently eligible residents 55+ years of age) three days per week (Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday) and will continue to do so until at least early-June. Clinics are provided by the Eastern Highlands Health District.
- As a reminder, the new temporary Community Center hours are 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:**

- In light of the Governor's recent declaration that capacity limits have been lifted on a wide range of facility types, including libraries, Mansfield Public Library is actively deliberating its own reopening timeline (and other potential changes in operations) based on positivity rates in the region in consultation with the Town Manager and appropriate public health officials.
- The library continues to respond to high demand for curbside service, computer & browsing appointments, as well as reference, notary & fax services.
- Programs continue to be primarily virtual, and are well-attended.
- A survey recently went out to the public, as the beginning step in developing a strategic plan.
- 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:**

- The State's Government Administration and Elections Committee held a public hearing on February 22, 2021 in part to solicit public comment on proposals to implement no excuse absentee voting and early in-person voting (HB 58 and 59). Both Senator Flexer and Representative Haddad serve on the Committee and the Mansfield Town Clerk has contacted them to share the Connecticut Town Clerk's Association's strong recommendation that a legislative task force be created this legislative session to examine the changes to statute, procedures, funding and technology upgrades necessary to implement the changes. The work to implement the changes is critically important and difficult. The intensive review of the election process must begin now in order to allow Town Clerks and Registrars to proactively plan and ensure election integrity.

- **Police**

- On Saturday night just before midnight, Connecticut State Police responded to reports of a large party near the UConn campus, and cited the residents for violating the Governor's Executive Orders regarding COVID health and safety. Troopers from the Mansfield Resident Troopers office responded to 160 Birch Road. Upon arrival, Troopers observed an estimated 150-200 students. The renters at the residence admitted to hosting the large party. No PPE, such as mask wearing, or social distancing were being adhered to at the party. The three renters were issued infraction tickets for hosting a large gathering in violation of the Governor's Executive Order. It should be noted that the Town Manager's Office was not made aware by the State Police that this event had taken place, and it is unfortunate that Town officials learned of the matter through local and regional media reports. UConn officials were similarly not informed of this development by the State Police. This shortcoming has been brought to the attention of the Resident Trooper's Office (who was similarly not aware of statements that agency administrators had made to news media), and procedures are being put in place to ensure that communications procedures are implemented in the future.

- **Fire Department:**

- Below is a brief synopsis of Fire Dept. responses for the period Feb. 22 – March 7, 2021.

Type		# Mutual Aid Out of Town
ALS	36	5
BLS	30	1
Total Medical	66	6
Tree on Wires Down	3	
Smoke in Building	2	
Fire Alarm	5	1
CO Detector Alarm	1	
Cover Assignment	1	1
Service Call	2	
Vehicle Accident	4	
Total Other	18	2
Grand Total	84	8

- **Public Works:**

- Since the last report, the Department removed twenty-two trees and pruned two.
- This snow season the Department responded to nine storms, twenty-one treating events and hauled snow away seven times, including two hauls using a contractor. To date there have been 2,525.25 hours of overtime costing \$99,599 and we have purchased 1,453 tons of treated salt for \$121,729. We paid the hauling contractor \$10,820.
- The budget for this snow season is \$125,000 overtime, \$225,000 treated salt and \$20,000 for hauling contractor. Based on current expenditures, we have had a below-average snow plowing season, so far.