

MEMO

To: Town Council
CC: Town Employees
From: Ryan J. Aylesworth, Town Manager
Date: July 26, 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 & Communications:***

- This past Tuesday, July 20, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Town Manager met with UConn Interim President Agwunobi and his Senior Director of Operations, Cara Workman. The discussion spanned a wide range of topics, including a candid discussion around the Town's considerable concerns and anger regarding the university's recent (unanticipated) purchase of land in the Four Corners that Capstone Communities (developer) had planned to convert into a 358-unit multi-family housing development. There has been significant media and public interest surrounding this matter following the associated press conference that the Town of Mansfield organized on July 20 to express its opposition to the university's actions. Town officials have firmly stated that any and all options are being explored to contest this land sale as well as help ensure that the university does not make similar attempts in the future to interfere with local economic/housing development proposals. The Town's Attorney, Mr. Deneen will participate in the Council's July 26 business meeting to provide updates relative to the Town's recently submitting Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and other updates relative to the Town's potential future legal actions.
- After compiling an extensive list of projects that could potentially be funded via the Town of Mansfield's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation (approximately \$7.5 million), staff are continuing to review and vet those projects that have been proposed by department heads with an expectation that recommendations will ultimately be transmitted to the Town Council for consideration in the near future. Along these lines, a "community input survey" has also been drafted (see corresponding agenda item summary [AIS] in the information packet for the July 26 Council meeting) with the intent of obtaining feedback from Mansfield residents to better understand/gauge public support for how ARPA funds can be best invested, and make corresponding adjustments to ARPA projects ultimately recommended to the Town Council.
- As was discussed in brief at the Council's July 12 business meeting, under the direction of the Town Manager, the Town's IT Department has been diligently evaluating alternative approaches for hardware and software upgrades that can best facilitate effective hybrid board/committee meetings. A corresponding AIS has been included in the information packet for the Council's July 26 business meeting and the Town's IT Director will also provide a comprehensive overview of what has been examined thus far and solicit feedback from Council members to ensure the best possible IT solutions are ultimately deployed with respect to hybrid meetings.

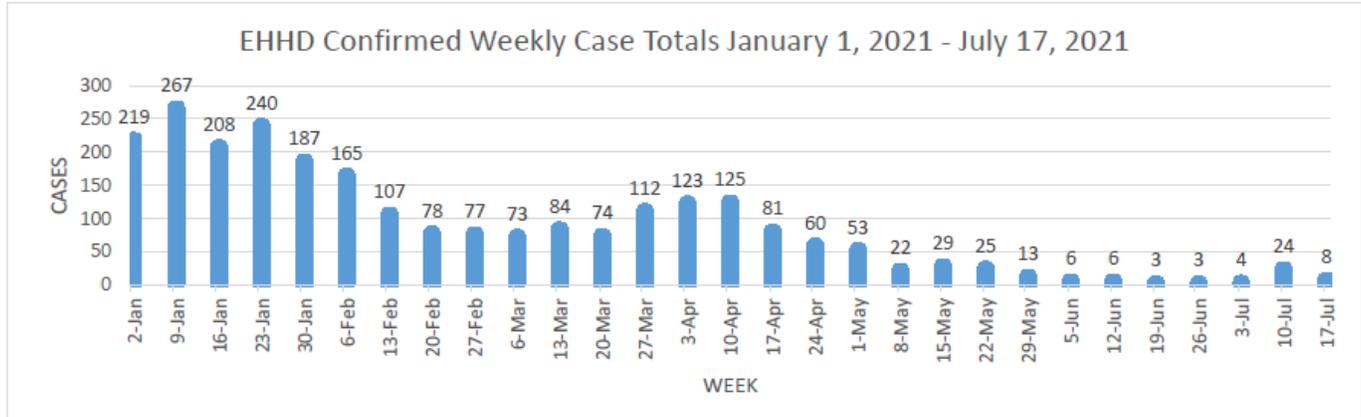
- Town officials recently completed interviews with several design and engineering firms that responded to the request for qualifications (RFQ) the Town published this past spring relative to a municipal facilities needs assessment and program use study. Each firm that was interviewed possessed considerable relevant experience, but one of these firms has emerged as a preferred candidate based on the pertinent selection criteria, and a follow-up meeting is being arranged to further refine the intended scope of the project as well as obtain a formal project budget before final determinations are made.
- Following an initial exchange of proposals on July 13, Town representatives and representatives from CSEA Local 2001 will be holding their next meeting tomorrow (Tuesday, June 27) to continue negotiations and share additional proposals surrounding the DPW Employee and Professional and Technical Employee union contracts.
- The next issue of the Town's bimonthly electronic newsletter is currently being produced with an intended publication date of Monday, August 2.
- Plans continue to be refined for the launch of a proposed new "Local Government Academy" (LGA). The LGA is envisioned as being a roughly 12-class program designed to educate and familiarize citizens with all aspects of their Town government (the overarching premise being that informed citizens lead to more engaged citizens). Classes will be convened in a variety of Town facilities and meet in the evenings for a roughly 2-hour block of time. Discussions will be led by department heads and other public officials responsible for leading and managing the various departments and functions of local government. Participation will be free of charge and food/refreshments would be provided to participants. At this time, the goal is to launch the first LGA cohort in October 2021.
- The Town of Mansfield has brought in several new employees during the month of July to fill key vacancies. These positions include Accounting Manager (Linda Timman), part-time Staff Accountant (Patricia Ball), two Recreation Coordinators (Bethany Cologna and Alexander Shoudy), and a Planning & Development Administrative Assistant (Sandra Forand). We hope the Town Council will join us in welcoming these new members of our municipal team.
- The Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA) will present a check later this week for \$40,262 to the Town of Mansfield, which represents a share of CIRMA's latest \$5 million Members' Equity Distribution. Over the past 11 years, CIRMA has returned nearly \$37 million in equity to its members. CIRMA's Members' Equity Distribution program continues to affirm the organization's deliberate and disciplined approach to creating member value and substantiates its long-term financial strength. The Town of Mansfield and Mansfield Board of Education received a total of \$293,184 in distributed Members' Equity—one of many unique benefits of CIRMA membership. With 362 members across the Constitution State, CIRMA is the leading provider of Workers' Compensation, Liability, Auto, and Property insurance coverages to Connecticut public entities. CIRMA is also the only insurance provider that returns equity to its members—not shareholders.
- Private businesses and Mansfield and Region 19 schools are collaborating with the Department of Health to provide sites for pop-up mobile van COVID vaccination clinics. Vaccinations are offered to anyone age 12+ at outside locations with no appointment needed. Several dates and times are available through the month of July and August. We appreciate this collaboration with the private sector to expand the availability of vaccines, although Eastern Highlands Health District offers ongoing walk-in opportunities at their offices (see EHHD update below for more information).
- Glenn Mitoma, Chair of the Mansfield Human Rights Commission, participated in an interview with Wayne Norman on WILI AM on Friday, July 2. Glenn summarized the efforts of the Human Rights Commission in its first year, and laid out plans for future initiatives in Mansfield, including establishment of Juneteenth Independence Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day in October. You can hear the full interview [here](#).

- **Mansfield Public Schools (MPS) & Region 19:**
 - The new elementary school construction project continues to move forward with no delays to the critical path timeline. The portable classrooms on the rear of Southeast Elementary School have been demolished and top soil has been removed in anticipation of foundation work commencing soon.
 - As was previously reported, Mansfield Public Schools began summer school programming on July 12 with redesigned programs at all levels. The elementary program includes instruction in core academics as well as social and emotional programming and instruction in the arts. It concludes at noon daily and students may then be bussed to Camp Mansfield for the afternoon. The middle school program has been developed with external partners and includes literacy, math, and science programming. The literacy component has been developed with the Hartford Stage and includes educators from the theater who will be teaching with our staff. Door to door transportation is offered to all students and lunch is provided for those students whose day extends beyond lunch time. A summer meals program is available to all Mansfield families. Federal COVID relief funds are supporting all of these programs.
- **Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD):**
 - The EHHD continues to host walk-up vaccination clinics every Monday from 9 AM to 1 PM, and Thursdays 2 PM to 6 PM. No appointments are necessary. Go to the EHHD website (www.ehhd.org) for times and locations.
 - The weekly case count on the below chart shows sustained reductions in positivity rates. Follow this link for more town level data: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Data-Tracker>

TOWN LEVEL DATA

TOWN	Andover	Ashford	Bolton	Chaplin	Columbia	Coventry	Mansfield	Non-student	Scotland ++	Tolland	Willington	EHHD Totals
Cumulative Cases	188	249	300	133	348	767	1,533	0	41	967	286	4,812
Change from last week	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	(0)	0	3	0	8
Two week change	6	1	2	0	3	3	6	(6)	0	7	4	32
Deaths	3	4	5	0	6	8	27	(27)	2	19	3	77

EHHD residents who received COVID-19 vaccine												
TOWN	Andover	Ashford	Bolton	Chaplin	Columbia	Coventry	Mansfield^	Scotland ++	Tolland	Willington	EHHD Totals	Connecticut 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	3,631,470
Received 1 st dose COVID vaccine % of pop.	2,059 64%	2,534 60%	3,227 66%	1,215 54%	3,417 64%	7,767 63%	8,980 35%	857 51%	9,885 68%	3,315 57%	43,256 54%	64%
Fully vaccinated % of pop.	1,949 60%	2,419 57%	3,046 62%	1,147 51%	3,247 60%	7,373 59%	8,461 33%	818 49%	9,338 64%	3,126 53%	40,924 51%	59%



*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.

- **Planning & Development**

- *Helping Hands Program:* We continue to accept applications for assistance with food and childcare needs from residents impacted by the pandemic. Please contact the Planning Department at 860.429.3330 or visit <https://www.mansfieldct.gov/2089/COVID-Assistance> for more information.
- *Housing Rehabilitation:* If your house is in need of repair, the Planning Department may be able to help. Mansfield's Housing Rehabilitation Program provides assistance with home repairs and improvements to low and moderate income households. We provide a 0% interest loan of up to \$35,000 with no monthly payments; the loan is repaid upon sale or refinancing. The Town will prepare a scope of work for your project, obtain construction bids, and manage the construction process and contractor payments. Residents can learn more by calling 860.429.3330.

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

- The Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry's *Summertime Saturday Puppet Show Series* continued this past Saturday with a free performance on Betsy Paterson Square, co-sponsored by the Mansfield Downtown Partnership. The audience of 140 enjoyed a performance of *Our Magnificent Monster Circus* by CactusHead Puppets. There are two more performances in the series. Saturday, July 31, The Gottabees will perform *ScreenPLAY!: Journey into Space* via Zoom; "tickets" are free but limited. Visit bimp.uconn.edu to reserve yours today. The final performance will be co-sponsored by the Partnership and will take place on Betsy Paterson Square on Saturday, August 7 at 11:00 AM. WonderSpark Puppets' performance of *Fox Fables* will be free and open to everyone.

- The Partnership's *Moonlight Movies* series returns on Friday, August 6! Residents and friends are invited to enjoy free movies outside on Betsy Paterson Square. Activities will start at 7:30 PM; the movies will begin at dusk. Join us for *Raya & The Last Dragon* on Friday, August 6 and *Frozen 2* on Friday, August 13. For more information, please visit downtownstorr.org/movies.
 - The Partnership invites Mansfield-located businesses and community organizations to be a part of the fun of the 18th Annual [Celebrate Mansfield Festival](http://downtownstorr.org/festival) by hosting an Activity or Food Booth! The deadline to sign up is Friday, August 20. Information and applications for both opportunities is available at downtownstorr.org/festival. This year's Festival will take place on and around Betsy Paterson Square in Downtown Storrs on Saturday, October 2.
 - The Partnership continues to support our Mansfield businesses. Business owners can receive email updates or find information on our website, mansfieldmdp.org/reopen. To be added to our email list, please simply email mdp@mansfieldct.org with your name, business name, and location.
- **Human Services:**
 - The Senior Center is fully reopen and has a month of fantastic programs, activities, classes and trips lined up for August. Take a ride on the Essex Steam train, try a yoga class, join the Woodcarvers, brush up on your French...the possibilities are endless! Share your talent or simply enjoy the show at their Open Mic on the 13th, take a musical journey with singer/songwriter Joe Flood on the 20th, and learn about Thomas Edison's epic fails in History for Fun on the 25th!
 - We are thrilled to announce that in-person dining will also resume at the Center in the month of August with TVCCA's daily meals and a Mediterranean Fresh Friday on the 20th. Dining will look a little different due to new safety protocols, but we are so excited to welcome our community back to share a meal with friends. We will also transition weekly Meals on Wheels deliveries to daily deliveries in August. Senior Center staff wish to extend a big thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers who have been busy training and meeting this past month to help make these programs run as smoothly as possible!
 - We are still actively looking for more volunteer drivers to help with our Meals-on-Wheels deliveries and to drive Seniors to medical appointments. Meals on Wheels deliveries occur daily between 10:30am-1:30pm, and medical transportation can be scheduled around your availability. Anyone who has some free time, likes working with a great group of people, and is interested in giving back to your community, is encouraged to give the Senior Center a call or stop by!
 - The Senior Center is also busy planning their 15th Annual Veterans Day Celebration, scheduled for November 5th, and are soliciting donations from our community to help support this important event. Over one hundred Mansfield Veterans, their spouses and residents generally attend this annual event, which is a highlight in our community. The celebration begins with a coffee hour and a multi-media ceremony with guest speakers and local honorees; following the ceremony, Veterans and their spouses are cordially invited to enjoy a luncheon provided through the generosity of local business owners. If you'd like to volunteer to help or be a community Sponsor, please contact Sarah Taylor at 860-487-9874.
- **Parks & Recreation:**
 - Registration for Camp Mansfield (traditional full day camp) and specialty camps remain strong and slightly higher than anticipated in the preseason. The last non-COVID year for Camp Mansfield was 2019, as enrollment was not sufficient to offer a camp in 2020. This summer, Camp Mansfield is averaging about 55-60% of the 2019 enrollment. As of July 23, Mansfield has provided 39 individual scholarships for Camp Mansfield to qualifying low-income families. The scholarships were made possible by the Connecticut Department of Education

Summer Expansion Grant. This benefit provides a positive summer enrichment opportunity for children and an important child care option for parents. The Expansion Grant application was a collaborative effort by Parks and Recreation, Youth Services and Mansfield Public Schools. Parks and Recreation also manages the grant fund reimbursements and two College Corps students who contribute to the camp program.

- Additionally, Camp Mansfield was featured on the front page of The Willimantic Chronicle on July 24th.
- June 2021 member attendance at the Mansfield Community Center exceeded 6,000 (6,314) for the first time since the reopening in June of 2020. This is 53% lower than member attendance for June 2019, but about 20% higher than this April and May.
- Bicentennial Pond was closed to bathing on July 14 and 15 due to elevated E. coli levels associated with recent rain storms. The pond reopened on Friday, July 16.
- Minor damage associated with recent storms have been identified at River Park (parking lot), Bicentennial Recreational Area (wash out to the beach and universal access trail and downed tree limbs), and Merrow Meadow Park (downed tree limbs). Repairs are in progress. Additionally, volunteers have been organized to explore more remote trails for potential storm damage.

- **Library:**

- The library's two branches opened to the public in June. The Library Express is open 10-2, Monday-Friday, with plans to expand hours when UConn goes back into session at the end of August. The Maple Road branch is open when the Senior Center is open. Both branches allow pickup of holds and return of library materials.
- Library staff is beginning to analyze input from a second targeted survey as part of its strategic planning process. Mostly very kind, positive responses, and the not unexpected requests to stock more books and create a quiet study area. We will be scheduling focus groups in the fall for further discussion.
 - From "what we do well" -- *The staff is very creative and hardworking. I have always felt welcomed and appreciated as a community member there. Also, the new branches are an example of successfully making the library have a broader reach.*
 - From "what we could do better" -- *The library could use more books! Books we are looking for are frequently checked out or the library doesn't own them.*

- **Town Clerk:**

- Dog Licensing – For those still needing to license, please see our [dog license webpage](#) for more information or call us at 860-429-3302. The State considers any dog license issued after June 30th to be late and charges a \$1/month late fee. Late licensers can also receive a \$75 State ticket issued by the Animal Control Officer. The law requires license tags be worn on the dog's collar. Lost dogs found wearing their updated license tag are easily able to be reunited with their families.

- **Facilities:**

- The Facilities Department is presently working on a wide range of projects and tasks, including the following:
 - Assisting the Town Manager with review and evaluation of firms responding to the municipal facilities needs assessment/program use study request for qualifications
 - Soliciting proposals for conducting Hazard studies done on Town buildings constructed pre-1980 (per OSHA recent visit)
 - Replacement of a main breaker for the Department of Public Works facility
 - Installed a bottle fill station at Bicentennial Pond for summer camp
 - Completing washer/dryer hook up at Mansfield Senior Center

- Hiring a replacement custodian to serve both Southeast School and Mansfield Community Center buildings
- Soliciting and compiling bids for furniture replacement at Town Hall
- Planning and deployment of carpet replacement at the Public Library

- **Police**

- There are no noteworthy law enforcement updates to provide at this time.

- **Fire Department:**

- Below is a brief synopsis of Fire Dept. responses for the period July 12 – July 25, 2021.

Type	# Calls	# Mutual Aid Out of Town
ALS	24	
BLS	46	10
Total Medical	70	10
Aircraft Accident	0	0
Brush, Grass, Forest Fires	0	
CO Detector Activation	2	
Fire Alarm	10	
HAZ Mat Gas Leak	0	
Other Fires	0	
Service Call	5	1
Smoke/Odor Investigation	0	
Standby	1	
Structure Fire	1	1
Tree/Wires Down	5	
Vehicle Accident	7	
Total Fire Calls	31	2
Grand Total	101	12

- Firefighters Landry and Burnham recently attended and graduated from the National Honor Guard Training Academy held at the Connecticut Fire Academy.
- Chief Mitchell and Captain Morrissette attended training lecture on Fire Tactics in Hording Homes hosted by the Bloomfield Ct. Fire Department.
- Ambulance 607 remount is processing with a target date of delivery end of August 2021.
- Yearly Apparatus Preventative Maintenance has started for FY 22.
- The Fire Department continues to conduct daily operational checks of apparatus and carry out aspects of the annual apparatus preventative maintenance program.
- A working group comprised of members of the Fire Department have been actively meeting with candidate vendors, reviewing specifications, and inspecting demo apparatus to move forward with the planned new apparatus acquisition (hybrid aerial pumper/"quint") being funded with CDBG/Small Cities grant monies. The focus of this committee is presently on equipment outfitting needs of the apparatus.
- Members of the Mansfield FD continue to respond to COVID-19 medical emergencies in the community and first responders continue to diligently use PPE and follow all pertinent policies to ensure the safety of both Town personnel and the public we serve. As of this date, no members of the Mansfield FD has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Personnel continue to take additional precautions to minimize the potential for exposure/transmission in the fire stations and/or apparatus.

- **Public Works:**

- Tropical storm (TS) Elsa brought us numerous roadside washouts, some which we are still repairing. The July 17 rainstorm in the northeast corner of Town brought us more washouts and tree issues as well as a few road closures. The following roads had washouts and/or required cleanup of debris: Atwoodville, Ball Hill, Bassetts Bridge, Candide, Chaffeeville, Cider Mill, Codfish Falls, Coventry, East, Fern, Gurleyville, Hillyndale, Hunting Lodge, Maple, North Eagleville, Ravine, Separatist, Spring Hill, Stearns, and Wormwood Hill.
- From July 9th to July 17th, the Department worked 316.5 regular hours and 49.25 overtime hours on TS Elsa and storms occurring after that.
 - Total Hours = 403.75
 - Total Salaries = \$12,746.52
 - Total Salaries with Benefits = \$15,786.65
- Since the last report, the Town has had two more signs stolen, including one was for a railroad crossing.
- Since the last report, the Department in-house crew and Eversource's storm response crews removed 13 trees and pruned nine others.
- The Department continues to work on drainage improvements on Mount Hope Road between Wormwood Hill Road and Warrenville Road (Route 89). There may be times when we will close these roads. School bus service, trash service, and local traffic will have access.
- We continue roadside mowing; first cut is 65% complete. We have cut all our intersections with state roads.