


MEMORANDUM

TO: Town Council

FROM: David E. Cox, Town Manager 

DATE: January 10, 2020

SUBJECT: Town Manager's Report

The following information includes follow up from general items that were discussed at previous Council meetings as well as updates of a general nature from the departments. The items are organized by department and are intended to provide information on activities currently being undertaken by the Town's departments and those matters that are upcoming. Not all departments will be represented in each Report.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Council Meeting Follow Up

- Council members, along with members of the Board of Finance and staff, were afforded opportunities to tour the new Town Hall building. The tours went well and the groups were able to see the progress that has been made. At the time of the tours, nearly all of the walls were completed so there was a real sense of the spaces and how the building will look as it comes together.

Assessor

- The response to the 4800 mailers sent in December to Town property owners by the Town's Assessment contractor, Vision Government Solutions, has been positive. Many real estate owners have returned mailers providing updated information about their properties that will prompt an inspection request and helps the Town's assessment process be as accurate as possible. An employee from Vision will begin calling the owners by the end of January to schedule appointments to visit the property and ensure the accuracy of the information.

Chatham Health

- January is Radon Awareness Month and Chatham Health District has been distributing free radon test kits to residents made possible through a partnership with the Connecticut Department of Public Health. So far, 8 residents in town have taken advantage of this program. Residents who are interested in having their homes tested

for Radon should call 860-365-0884, or just stop by the Chatham Health District office at 240 Middletown Avenue to pick one up.

Finance

- The fiscal year 2019 audit has been completed and has been filed with the Town Clerk, State of Connecticut and the Municipal Securities Rule Making Board. Final audited general fund net income was \$277,720. Fund balance ended the year at \$5,713,344. Fund balance is now 12.3% of FY 2020 budgeted expenditures. Electronic copies of the Town's audits can be accessed from this link: <https://www.easthamptonct.gov/finance/pages/annual-financial-reports>. Additionally, hard copies of the Audit are found in the Board's mailboxes at Town Hall. Several bound copies are available free for the public in the front foyer of the Town Hall.

Parks and Recreation

- The Department is working to revamp the summer program to offer more exciting opportunities for participants and staff. The changes involve theme weeks and staff dress-up days with activities directed toward the theme of the week. The effort will require high energy from staff and they are looking forward to a great summer.
- The Department is exploring ways to eliminate the sticker process for the parking at Sears Park, which costs about \$1,200 annually from the General Fund for the stickers alone. The goal is to eliminate the stickers and use a different method such as a drivers license or other method as proof of residency.
- Firm costs are being developed for improvements to the baseball field at the High School and are expected soon. Staff will be working to develop options for moving the project ahead and will present those options to the various Boards and Commissions as soon as they are available.
- Department staff are participating in efforts to develop a regional connection route between the Air Line Trail and the Farmington Canal Trail. At a recent meeting, a large portion of the discussion focused on the gap in East Hampton and what must be done to connect the 1200 linear feet of trail. This sparked a conversation between DEEP and Eversource who were present at the meeting to schedule a meeting soon to determine how the utility-related work will be coordinated and paid. As part of these discussions, it is likely an easement between the Town and Eversource will be needed to allow

installation of two utility poles on the WPCA property to facilitate relocation of existing power lines.

Police

- For some time, the Department has had a Drug Take Back box in the lobby of the police department that was provided via the East Hampton Prevention Partnership through the Prevention Grants received by the Town. During the 2019 calendar year, the public deposited 353.9 pounds of medication that was eventually destroyed preventing the misuse or inappropriate disposal of the drugs. The Drug Take Back program has been so successful that the Town is getting a much larger box for the new police department lobby.

Public Works

- The Department has been monitoring the soil remediation project at 13 Watrous Street on behalf of the Brownfields Agency. It has been determined that additional contamination exists and must be removed. At this time, the contract will be changed to remove the paving of a parking area from the contract work in order to have additional funds for remediation. It is, however, not likely that the current grant funds available will be sufficient to complete the necessary remediation. As such, it is expected that the site will, once again, be temporarily restored and the Agency will seek additional outside funds to finish the remediation project. As the Council will recall, this work is being coordinated with the State as the Town received a grant through the Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) to fund the project.

Senior Center

- The Center hosted a holiday party at the Riverhouse at Goodspeed Station last month. About 80 people attended the event, which included entertainment, lunch and social time, and it was very well received. The event was funded through a commission paid to the Center for sponsoring a river boat cruise/trip last March.
- The Center is working on a comprehensive plan to address both the on-going transportation concerns for older adults in our community, including medical and general transportation, and the food service program.

- The Senior Center and the Social Services/Youth and Family Service Departments have been exploring ways to work together to provide services that address demands in the community that impact both departments.
- The Commission on Aging is implementing the fifth seminar in its *Thriving in Place* series on February 19. M. Cookie Mankowski, PhD, MSW (EH commission on aging member and associate professor at the University of St. Joseph) will present "Will you still need me when I'm (64...74...84 and beyond)." The program is a discussion of recent neuroscience research on connection and isolation, relationships and loneliness, staying relevant and living a purposeful life as well as a review of what each of us can do to support ourselves and others as we navigate our changing lives.
- The AARP tax assistance program will begin Feb. 10th and continue at the Center on Mondays by appointment through the end of March. The program is run by AARP trained volunteers including an East Hampton resident who has volunteered as a Tax aide for several years. The Center continues to seek volunteers willing to train and assist with this program.

Town Clerk

- Staff is reviewing options for a new records management system to address concerns and shortcomings of our current system. It is anticipated that a new system will come with expanded capabilities and improved options for access including greater ability for research of Town records remotely through online access. It is anticipated that a new service provider will be determined in the upcoming weeks. After transitioning to the new system, announcements will be made regarding any new services from the Town Clerk's office.

WPCA

- The Carbon Filter Installation Project at Memorial School is complete and the new filters have been flushed. Samples were taken this week and have been sent out to a laboratory for PFAS and Coliform testing as required by DPH before the units can be put on line. Quarterly testing was also performed in the Village Center for PFAS at the same time. Results from the testing is expected in four to six weeks. Once clear results are received, the new filters will be put online.
- As budgets are being prepared for the Joint Facilities Commission and the EHWPCA, the WPCA Board is also preparing to make a presentation to the Town Council about the long-term future of the local sanitary sewer collection and treatment system including

capital planning and anticipated rates for the upcoming years. It is anticipated that the presentation will occur at a Council meeting around March.

Town Manger/Other

- Staff has been working with the Housing Authority to solicit proposals for grant writing services related to the planned submission of a Community Development Block Grant application for work at the Housing Authority property. An application was made last year but it was unsuccessful. It is expected that the same work will be included in the new grant application and that efforts will be made to work with the State to enhance the application to improve its chances for success. Ultimately, as the official applicant, the Town Council will be involved in the various activities related to the grant application.

- Based on interviews with the interested parties, the Town Manager plans to appoint Christopher Ott (76 Royal Oaks Ave.) and Matthew Reich (9 Arch Drive) to the Economic Development Commission for terms ending in 2021. That will fill the Commission's membership roster. Additionally, Robyn Letourneau is being reappointed to the Economic Development Commission for a term ending 2024 based on her expression of interest to continue.

DC

Attachments

cc: Management Staff