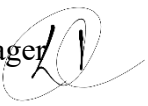


MEMORANDUM

TO: Town Council
FROM: David E. Cox, Town Manager 
DATE: January 19, 2024
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 or agencies. 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.

Collector's Office

- As a reminder, the second installment of real estate, personal property and supplemental motor vehicle taxes is due by February 1, 2024. Payments legibly postmarked by the USPS on or before February 1, 2024 are considered on time regardless of when they are received by the Tax Office. Payments received February 2, 2024 or later, and payments received without postmark are considered past due. As a reminder, payments may be made online through the link on the Town website (www.easthamptonct.gov). Payments made through direct withdrawal from a checking or savings account incur no charge. Payments made by other methods will incur a charge. Also, payments by check may be placed in the drop box outside Town Hall and are considered timely if dropped before Town Hall opens at 8am on February 2. Late payments are charged the statutory interest of 1.5% monthly (18% annually) with a minimum interest charge of \$2.

Library

- The first Cabin Fever program of 2024, hosted in collaboration with the Chatham Historical Society, featured Connecticut author Anastasia Mills Holly and was a big success with 75 attendees. The next event in the series takes place on Saturday, February 24 beginning at 11am and is a presentation by Richard H. Shriver of Estuary Magazine on the history of the Connecticut River Watershed.
- The Library's Strategic Planning team attended its first group meeting with the Connecticut Library Consortium and planning leader Maureen Sullivan. The Library intends to begin conversations with the community about the new Strategic Plan in late February.

Public Works

- On January 9, the Town experienced a rain event of approximately 3.5 inches over a short duration. The rain, combined with the melting of snowpack that was on the ground from the storm on January 6 and 7, generated runoff that was akin to approximately 5 inches of rain falling over a span of 6 hours. This combination of events caused several issues around town with the worst being the failure and washout of the metal culvert that carries Safstrom Brook under Wopowog Road. The culvert consists of two approximately 60 inch corrugated metal pipes and two concrete head walls. The pipes were in a failing condition and a large capital project was being proposed to line or replace them in the upcoming fiscal year. Staff has been working with the engineering consultant to design a full replacement using a box culvert system to replace the metal pipes. The design and permitting is being expedited with hopes to have a set of construction plans, project specifications and a cost estimate within four weeks. Once these documents are obtained, staff will begin pricing the project to get it constructed as soon as possible. Staff has been fortunate to locate an appropriate precast concrete box culvert that an area firm has in stock as a result of a canceled project in another municipality. As a result, the Town will be able to get this culvert at a major discount. Additionally, because the culvert is already manufactured and available, the normally long lead times for this item will be eliminated. Area residents will see the engineering staff on site at the project location in the upcoming days as wetland flagging and survey work gets underway.

- Along with the washout of the culvert on Wopowog, the Town also experienced significant flooding in some areas and washouts on several gravel roads. Public Works crews spent the next few days regrading and repairing these washouts until weather conditions changed with ice and freezing conditions, which has hampered the work restore the roads, though all gravel roads are passable. Additional work will occur on these roads as weather conditions allow.

- Staff continues to address snow and ice conditions created by the January 16 storm and the ongoing runoff created by the major rain events of the last several weeks. Residents and drivers are reminded to be mindful of the ongoing potential for icing conditions.

Recreation

- The Department is currently working to fill the vacant roles of Administrative Assistant and Program Coordinator and both positions are widely posted to seek applicants. The Administrative Assistant position closes on January 25 and the Program Coordinator position closes on February 9. Both may be viewed on the Town website. Staff hopes to fill the positions as soon as possible so that new staff members will be in place before the busy Spring and Summer seasons.

- With winter activities in full swing, staff has begun the planning process for Spring and Summer programming. Several early spring programs are already posted, and more are to come in the upcoming weeks. The deadline to submit any potential summer programs to the Recreation Department for consideration is March 1. After that date, programs will be scheduled and put up for registration. Sears Park Summer Camp and Little Wonders Summer Camp registration will be available for registration the first week of March.
- Planning has also begun for the annual fundraiser golf tournament scheduled for May 16 at Blackledge Country Club. The tournament raises funds for the Jeff Leith Memorial Scholarship and Seamster Park Playground. Registration and sponsorship opportunities will be available by the end of January. This year's tournament should be one of the best!
- Staff met with State of Connecticut DOT representatives this week to get an update on the DOT's preliminary work on the Airline Trail Gap Project and to get a current understating of the project timeline. A firm timeline for this project should be available soon. As a reminder, this project is being designed and coordinated by the Town using grants received from both the federal and state governments.

Senior Center

- The Center will continue to host programs provided by AARP including its tax preparation assistance program, which runs by appointment on Mondays between February 5 and April 1. This year, there are six certified tax preparers including a few volunteers from East Hampton. Additionally, the Center will host the AARP Safe Driving class for 2024. Classes will be held quarterly.
- Energy assistance application work has slowed but continues to be a challenge for both the Senior Center and Youth and Family Services due to a lack of overall funding for the program at the State level. The Chair of the Town's Council on Aging published the attached opinion article on CT Mirror urging the State to make additional funds available. At this point, staff is helping to direct those in need of assistance to other resources.
- The Center will host its Aging Gracefully series in February with topics including dementia, VA benefits, hospice care, and home health care in comparison to home care.
- The High School's Rotary Interact Club is hosting a Game Challenge in January and February, and the Center will be recognizing the veterans in VA hospitals for Valentines Day.

- The congregate meal program is operated by the Estuary and is running five days a week but is still requiring support of the Senior Center staff. Staff is working with the Estuary and Senior Resources, who funds the program, to determine a plan for improvement. The partner plan, Meals on Wheels, is running well, due, in large part, to the volunteer drivers who are fantastic and cover for each other and deliver to homes where the plowing has been less than ideal. The residents are very appreciative of the tenacity of the drivers in getting meals to people.

Youth and Family Services

- The Prevention Coordinator continues to facilitate the Bring Change to Mind group at the High School and approximately 25 students regularly attend the weekly event. The Prevention Coordinator is continuing efforts to establish a similar group at the Middle School.
- The Department and the Prevention Partnership are also discussing logistics of a focus group taking place at Town Hall on February 22, 2024. The event will consist of a conversation with East Hampton youth in grades 9-12 about vaping and marijuana use. Information shared by the kids will be used to develop educational programs targeting marijuana and vaping use among youth. Participants will be students at East Hampton as well as other youth who are residents of East Hampton but may not attend school in Town. The focus group is funded, in part, by a youth vaping prevention grant received by the Department.

Town Manager/Other

- The Town Manager's Office and the Fire Department are coordinating on an agreement with the Town of Portland and its Fire Department for the loan of and East Hampton Fire Engine to Portland. Recently, Portland's engine became unserviceable and had to be taken out of service. The East Hampton Fire Department was able to loan a reserve engine it maintains conditioned on Portland responding to assist when that engine is needed in East Hampton. The details of the agreement are being finalized so that it will be housed in Portland for about six months. It is anticipated that Portland electors will choose to purchase a replacement apparatus, which could be available this summer. Today's Rivereast has a letter from Portland First Selectman Curly about the matter.
- Recently, staff in Representative Courtney's office reached out regarding an opportunity for federal funding. Specifically, the office was seeking proposals for Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) funding. The WRDA is a comprehensive water resources development law that authorizes studies and projects within the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers (Corps) Civil Works mission areas, including navigation, flood damage reduction, hurricane and storm damage reduction, shoreline protection, and ecosystem restoration. Through WRDA legislation, Congress also provides the Corps with authority to address water supply needs to cities, agriculture, and industry, to aid in the production of hydropower, to manage a national recreation program, and to address local environmental infrastructure needs, including project that may be non-traditional projects under the "Environmental Infrastructure" authority. There would be a 25% non-federal cost share. The Town Manager's Office has proposed three potential projects for funding consideration under the legislation as follows. The Congressman will select a few projects from the district to propose and Congress will make the ultimate decision.

- East Hampton Water Source Implementation, estimated cost \$28 million – The Town of East Hampton currently operates two small water systems, however, these systems have inadequate water supply to provide water services to additional customers who use private wells, but are in need of a better source of drinking water due to known pollutants and contaminants as well as inadequate private supply from their ground sources. Further, the Town's existing water supply for its municipal systems is impacted by contaminants including PFAS. The Town has undertaken extensive study, modeling and conceptual design to implement a new water source with enough supply to replace the existing sources and provide for interconnection and expansion of its systems to provide service to thousands of additional households and residents. The Town proposes to implement a water source near the Connecticut River at 49 Oakum Dock Road, for which the Town already has permits for water diversion, and would construct a new water treatment facility that would be able to process the initial .9 MGD (million gallons per day) flow from the wells. This source would be interconnected to the existing systems and provide source for the major expansion and implementation of a system serving the most densely populated areas of the Town.

- East Hampton/Colchester Joint Facilities Middletown Avenue Pump Station Rehabilitation, estimated cost \$20 million – The Towns of East Hampton and Colchester are partners in a regional wastewater treatment facility that serves customers in five communities (East Hampton, Colchester, Marlborough, Hebron, Lebanon). The Middletown Avenue Pump Station (MAPS) collects and moves nearly all of the flow collected from the five municipalities to the wastewater treatment plant for processing. MAPS moves between 1MGD and 4MGD. This critical facility came online in 1983 and aside from maintenance and pump replacement remains essentially as installed more than 40 years ago. The project will upgrade the storage capacity of the station and replace controls and pumping equipment to take advantage of new technology and provide for current

wastewater flow as well as provide safety factors to prevent backups and surcharges of untreated wastewater into the environment.


- East Hampton Hales Brook Crossing Rehabilitation, estimated cost \$1.5 million – The Town of East Hampton plans to replace an existing system for crossing Hales Brook under Lake Drive on the north side of Lake Pocotopaug. The existing crossing consists of three corrugated metal pipes that have outlived their service life and are significantly deteriorated, which is causing washout of road material and periodic road failures. Additionally, the capacity of the stream crossing is undersized causing frequent flooding of the roadway and adjacent lands in this residential area. Construction is further impacted by other utilities in the area. The project, which is identified in the Town's FEMA-approved Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, will involve removal and replacement of the system for moving Hales Brook under the roadway with an intent to design the replacement system to have capacity for a 100-year rain event, which will improve and prevent upstream flooding due to capacity of the crossing and will prevent roadway deterioration and flooding.

DC

cc: Management Staff

CT VIEWPOINTS

Connecticut lawmakers, restore heating funding right away!

 by Eric Rosenberg MD
January 18, 2024 @ 12:02 am



JOE AMON | CONNECTICUT PUBLIC

A \$25 million cut in federal funds for energy assistance has left the state’s low-income residents in danger of freezing in their homes or making a choice between paying for heat or buying food and medicine.

Gov. Ned Lamont and leaders of the General Assembly must act now to allocate funds from the state’s \$675 million projected budget surplus to stave off potential harm to

state residents as we enter the heart of winter.

This looming crisis is not theoretical. In East Hampton, where I chair the Commission on Aging, our town's senior services director, Jo Ann Ewing, reports that in the last two weeks she was contacted by five older adults who have run out of money for energy. They are only part of a larger statewide concern.

A [Connecticut Mirror story published Jan. 12](#) made clear the shortfall between needs and funds. Federal funds for the [Connecticut Energy Assistance Program](#) dropped from \$110 million to \$85 million this year, according to the story. To make matters worse, demand has spiked. The state reports approving 56,721 applications for energy assistance by mid-December — up 18.6% from last year — with a projected 125,000 applications by spring.

[CT lawmakers still undecided whether to bolster home heating aid]

This demand was not unexpected. Last fall, the state's [Low Income Energy Advisory Board](#) asked the state to allocate \$17 million to bolster the beleaguered CEAP fund. So far, state officials have balked, apparently pinning their hopes of avoiding disaster on a mild winter, lower oil prices and newly established electric rate discounts for the poor. Depending on this list of variables is a poor bet. The significantly higher demand for help virtually guarantees that needs won't be met for poor households. The CT Mirror story reports that state officials expect poor families will get a maximum of \$1,350 in energy assistance, which is \$970 less than last winter.

The Lamont administration and elected representatives should use the upcoming special legislative session to tap the state's ample surplus to properly fund the energy assistance program. Allowing the neediest residents of one of the country's wealthiest states to be in fear of freezing is a disgrace.

Eric Rosenberg, MD is Chair of the East Hampton Commission on Aging.

