


MEMORANDUM

TO: Town Council
FROM: David E. Cox, Town Manager 
DATE: March 19, 2021
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.

Collector of Revenue

- March is the last month to participate in the Lower Interest Rate Program for any unpaid tax bills that were due on January 1, 2021. By Executive Order and Town Council action, interest penalties are charged at a rate of 0.25% per month, or 3% per year, from the due date of the tax. On April 1, 2021 the interest rate will revert back to the normal rate of 1.5% per month, or 18 % per year, from the original due date. There is a \$2 minimum interest charge on each tax bill.
- The second half payment of sewer use charges is due on April 1, 2021.

Finance

- The draft budget for FY 2022 has been posted to the Town website and distributed to the Board of Finance and Town Council. The Board of Finance will hold a public hearing on the draft Monday, March 22 at which the Town Manager and School Superintendent will present information and initial comments will be taken. The Board of Finance will then hold a series of workshops daily from Tuesday, March 23 through Saturday, March 27 at which it will review the entire budget in detail with each department/division of the Town. Information for those meetings, which will be held at Town Hall and via the Zoom platform, is posted on the Town website.

Land Use

- In follow up to Council direction, staff is working to develop an RFP to solicit interest in the 1 Watrous and 13 Watrous site, which is owned by the Town. The RFP will solicit proposals for partnering with the Town to remediate and reuse the site and will also allow for proposals that include adjacent properties as may be appropriate.

Library

- The Library launched its life size game of Candy Land on Friday, March 12. Over 1,400 East Hampton residents pre-registered to participate in the two-week long event which

runs through Sunday, March 21. The game featured four Candy Land themed stops around East Hampton with life-size candy decorations and an activity to complete at each stop. The library estimates that over 2,000 people played the game, which was funded by a grant from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County.

➤ The Library was featured on television news several times in the last week related to the Candy Land game and to its success during the pandemic.

- *Life Size Candy Land Launches in Connecticut*, NBC Connecticut. Aired Friday, March 12: <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/life-sized-candy-land-launches-in-connecticut/2447252/>
- *East Hampton Becomes Life Size Candy Land*, WTNH News Channel 8. Aired Wednesday, March 17: <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/book-sales-soar-during-pandemic/2447277/>
- *Book Sales and Borrowing Soar During Pandemic*, NBC Connecticut. Aired Wednesday, March 17: <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/book-sales-soar-during-pandemic/2447277/>
- *Candy Land Comes to Life in East Hampton*, WFSB Channel 3. Originally Aired Friday, March 12, follow up story aired Thursday, March 18: https://www.wfsb.com/candy-land-comes-to-life-in-east-hampton/video_d665dabb-740e-54dd-8944-078a38b3fb9c.html
- *East Hampton Becomes Life Size Candy Land*, WFSB Channel 3. Aired Thursday, March 18: https://www.wfsb.com/news/bright-spot-east-hampton-becomes-life-size-candy-land/article_467238c6-8819-11eb-9916-2f00ddc5bb27.html?block_id=1039529

➤ The Library has contracted with interior design and architectural firm 4D Design and Decorating to provide space planning services. The FY 19/20 capital budget allocated \$7,500 towards this project. The firm is tasked with: providing CAD drawings of the existing library building, meeting with library staff and board members to understand current building challenges and potential future needs, and providing sketches, floor plans, furniture plans and cost estimates that might address building challenges. This information will be used to facilitate future discussions regarding projects at the library.

Parks and Recreation

➤ The Parks and Recreation Department is working with Rotary and the East Hampton Garden Club to coordinate development of a Community Garden. A potential location has been identified on private property adjacent to the Cranberry Bog and logistics are being worked out. Determinations are being made regarding Town involvement,

needed easements and layout of the gardens. A fairly large group of approximately 30 people are supporting this effort and will be used to help develop the space and coordinate the funding efforts of this project. As the project develops, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Town Council will be apprised.

- Final interviews have been completed for the position of Sears Park Summer Camp Director and the Department is pleased to announce Leah Coughlin for that position. Ms. Coughlin has been involved as a program councilor with the summer program in the past and brings a high level of enthusiasm and ideas to improve the programing for the youth who participate.
- The State DEEP has announced the Town of East Hampton will receive a \$25,000 grant for this year's Air Line Trail project that will facilitate the relocation of 12 Eversource utility poles off the unfinished portion of the trail west of Rt 66. The project calls for rerouting electric transmission from the Air Line Trail to Gildersleeve Drive via land owned by the Town and occupied by the WPCA. An easement for Eversource is in its final stage of design and will be presented to Eversource in the coming weeks after approval. Ultimately, the Air Line Trail is intended to be improved with a boardwalk path to traverse this area, which is frequently wet.

Police

- Officer Sorie Kamara and Officer Steven Wawruck officially graduate from the Connecticut Police Academy on Friday, March 19. Due to COVID restrictions, they will not have a formal graduation ceremony. Both officers will complete one week of administrative training before starting their formal field training program during the week of March 28. It is anticipated that both officers will complete this training sometime after July 1 at which time they will operate independently.
- In the last Town Manager's Report, the effective date of Officer Hardie Burgin's promotion to Sergeant was misstated. Officer Burgin's promotion to Sergeant was effective March 14 and a small promotional ceremony was held on March 16.

Public Works

- Crews have completed the main work on the Anderson Way Detention Basin, which had been temporarily halted once the winter weather turned snowy. Crews will be returning to perform turf restoration once the warmer weather sets in.
- Public Works have begun work on the Edgerton Street drainage project. The letter to residents requesting information on pumps and drains tied or to be tied into the storm

sewer system has brought some responses from property owners. This will help the Department tailor some aspects of the new system to incorporate those discharges, which is expected to help eliminate future icing conditions and prolong the life span of the road.

- Crews have begun marking out and preparing for spring pavement repair and shimming and summer chip sealing. Preparation work such as cleaning of drainage swales and other minor drainage projects will begin this week. Roads planned for shimming and chip sealing are White Birch Road (from Elmwood Rd to Lake Drive), Mott Hill Road, Ridgeview Drive, Portland Reservoir Road, and Brack Farm Road. The Chip Sealing will likely take place in late May or June.

Senior Center

- Chatham Health District held a Vaccine Clinic on Wednesday, March 17 for those age 55 and over. The Senior Center assisted with the enrollment of the appointments and over 200 vaccines were administered. The second dose clinic will be held at the High School Wednesday, April 14. Senior Center staff handled over 500 telephone calls and call backs to facilitate the setting of appointment for older adults. CHD plans to hold regular vaccine clinics on an on-going basis to meet the rest of the community needs and will keep the Senior Center apprised of those dates and offer appts each week to older adults not able to use the VAMS program. Staff continues to assist seniors with information on the VAMS system and other ways to get registered for vaccine appointments.
- The Senior Center is maintaining its open status by appointment only. All group programming continues to be done virtually. CHOICES counselling, and energy assistance continue to be offered via zoom, telephone or in-person appointment. The AARP tax appointments are full and counsellors collect the returns from the taxpayer in the morning and call back when the return is complete. The process seems to be working efficiently. Staff continues to take energy applications for those in need of fuel assistance.
- Volunteer shopping and CRT Grab and Go meals continue to be offered with minimal contact.
- Staff is also focused on developing hybrid programs for use as the Center starts its "re-entry" for more programs and service. Challenges of staff coverage, technology limitations and willingness of participants to meet via in-person groups exist to be

addressed. Virtual programming continues. Staff continues looking toward spring and summer and is preparing travel and programming options for outdoor or indoor activities as restrictions ease with COVID safety protocols in place.

WPCA

- The Joint Facilities has ordered new inlet building doors and is preparing to have the flat roofs replaced as capital projects this year.
- Staff is preparing the 2021/22 water budget, which will be presented to the WPCA in early April and to the Town Council by May. As always, staff is developing an efficient and economical budget but with increases in expenditures, it appears that a small increase is likely. An increase in costs may lead to a discussion of an increase in rates for fiscal year 21/22. There was no rate increase last year.

Youth and Family Services

- The Department, in coordination with the Library, is presenting an internet safety session scheduled for April 5. The live online discussion coordinates with similar sessions being presented by the schools and provides additional opportunities for youth and adults to learn about and discuss popular applications, programs, trends and issues related to social media interaction and online activity.
- The Department is developing recommended policies and protocols for how the Town will handle housing relocation cases under the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act. The policy draft is being reviewed by staff and will be presented to the Town Council for review in the near future.
- The Department is also developing guidelines on how it will effectively work with the schools on truancy. The Department guidelines will describe a global approach to truancy that incorporates mental health and support for and from families. The guidelines are being developed in coordination with East Hampton School principals, vice principals and social workers.
- The Department is developing *A Someone Special to Me* event for East Hampton youth. The program is expected to be presented in two parts. During one program, youth will be invited to attend with a male role model and in the other, youth will attend with a female role model. The event will be therapeutic in nature and facilitated by a clinician who will provide therapeutic activity on bonding and communication.

- The Department is also working with Epoch Arts to create a program that invites youth to work on a large-scale mural that will be hung in the Youth and Family Services office as a means to promote positive youth engagement.

Town Manager/Other

- East Hampton remains at the "Red Alert" under the State's COVID Response Framework although the situation is generally better. According to the most recent information from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), East Hampton had 29 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the last two weeks, which leads to a two-week average daily positivity rate of 16.1 per 100,000 population. That equates to just about 2 new cases each day in East Hampton. The most recent reporting from the DPH indicates the total number of diagnosed COVID-19 cases in East Hampton is now 707 since tracking began in March. Also, according to the most recent data from the State, over 3,600 (28.3%) Town residents have received at least their first dose of the vaccine.
- Based on the anticipated retirement of Don Harwood, the joint Facilities Director position, which was approved by Council in September 2020, has been advertised with an expected start date of July 1, 2021. As a reminder, this new position is a combination of positions and will manage facilities owned by the Town and operated for general government or education purposes as well as the related maintenance staff.
- The Salmon River Watershed Partnership, in which the Town participates, outlined its 2020 accomplishments in the attached material. Most of the Town of East Hampton lies within the Salmon River watershed including Lake Pocotopaug and Pocotopaug Creek whose waters eventually enter the Salmon River before it flows into the Connecticut River in East Haddam.
- Staff is monitoring developments in the American Rescue Plan Act funds. As reported, the Town anticipates receiving at least \$1.2 million under the Act for COVID related relief, economic development and certain infrastructure projects. Information is being assembled to aid staff in identifying potential uses as we await both the US Treasury Department guidelines and the first payment, which is expected in the next few months. Funds received under the Act may be used through December 2024.

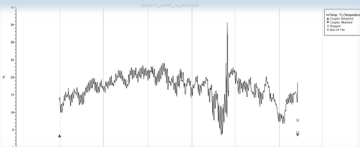
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cc: Management Staff



SALMON RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



A Resource for Watershed Residents: With the pandemic and folks outdoors more, we have experienced a noticeable uptick in questions from local residents on a variety of topics from fishing access, to wildlife inquiries, illegal dumping and local stream concerns, among others. For questions we can not answer we are happy to research and pass on further contact information.

MS-4 Stormwater Permits: While almost all in-person events and educational classes were canceled this year, SRWP was still able to accomplish a number of out-reach activities that help MS4 Towns meet their Stormwater Permit requirements. SRWP provides a list every year that can be included in the annual report to the state.

Preserved Lands--Updating the Resource Map-2020: Every two years SRWP reaches out to each of the watershed towns for any updates to the Watershed Preserved Lands Map. The map has proven to be a very useful tool to accompany comments on state plans, grant applications and for a shared vision on resource protection that transcends municipal boundaries.

Stream Monitoring: SRWP currently coordinates 4 types of stream monitoring activities throughout the watershed. While the pandemic has limited our volunteer contributions this last year, we were still able to meet our monitoring goals and even increase our conductivity logger launches to 10 locations. Water monitoring data is used to establish baseline conditions, help identify potential problem areas and inform local decision making.

Supporting Municipal Grant Applications: SRWP was happy to provide written support for four town applications in 2020 (East Hampton, Marlborough, Colchester and Hebron) in support of land acquisition, watershed protection and trail development. SRWP is in a unique position to be able to include important criteria related to local stream conditions and watershed resources.

Social Media: As a sign of the times, it seems more folks were on social media in 2020 and SRWP Facebook and Instagram followers increased noticeably. Taking advantage of that, SRWP included some new post series such as “Watershed Challenges”, “Out on the Trail” and “Weekend in the Watershed” in an effort to engage and provide useful information to local residents and visitors.

Pictures T to B: 1. Mint Brook at Wells Woods Preserve (Columbia), 2. GZA-Green Team volunteers setting a conductivity stream logger at the Blackledge River (Marlborough), 3. Crayfish at Elbow Brook (East Hampton), 4. Location of stream temperature logger at Pine Brook (Haddam), 5. Volunteers conducting an assessment for healthy aquatic habitat at Jeremy River (Colchester), 6. Site of dam removal and river channel restoration on Blackledge River (Glastonbury), 7. Stream temperature hydrograph on the Jeremy River (Hebron)