

Memo

To: Town Council
From: Matt Hart, Town Manager
CC: Town Employees
Date: January 14, 2013
Re: Town Manager's Report

Below please find a report regarding various items of interest to the Town Council, staff and the community:

Council Requests for Information/Council Business

- *Ad hoc Committee for Responsible Contracting* – The ad hoc committee met on December 17, 2012, and we had an informed discussion with Town staff regarding code enforcement, engineering inspection and procurement regulations in effect for large public works projects. Staff will schedule the next meeting for late January/early February, with guest speakers from the state and area towns.
- *CCM Legislative Program, Changes to Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS)* – As you know, CCM has included as part of the 2013 State legislative program a proposal to increase the statutorily set contribution to MERS by one-percent per year over the next three years to a total employee contribution of 5.25 percent. Last month I joined with several of my CCM colleagues to discuss this issue with State Comptroller Kevin Lembo, who appeared supportive in order to ensure the future viability of the pension plan. CCM has also approached the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to solicit the support of that office. As the session moves forward, I will keep you informed on developments related to MERS and other legislative issues of importance to Mansfield.
- *Council Action following Newtown* – I would like to draw your attention to item 23 of the packet and the thank you letters we sent to those who planned the Candlelight vigil we held in honor of those lost at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT on December 14, 2012. I was very impressed by the members of our faith community and town and school staff who organized and conducted the ceremony in such a meaningful way. I believe the commemoration was inclusive and moving, and provided our residents with an opportunity to reflect and grieve as a community.

In my role as Town Manager and Director of Public Safety, there are some key subject areas that I would like to review with the Town Council as the state moves forward in an effort to identify and address the systemic causes behind the type of violence that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary. One is physical and school security. We have had school security plans in place for many years now and I want to discuss the iterative process that Town and school staff members use to update these plans on a regular basis. Following the Sandy Hook incident we are assessing the security plans to see if those instruments need any further revision – this process will take some time to make sure that it is done effectively. Under this subject area, we can also discuss resource needs to improve school security and how we work collaboratively with UConn to respond to security concerns at both the Mansfield Public Schools and on-campus.

Second, I would like to discuss the topic of prevention – specifically, what programs, services and resources do we have in place at a municipal or regional level to address mental health issues, violence, parent education and related topics. To the extent we can, I would like to identify gaps in these service areas and talk about how these gaps could be filled on a municipal or regional basis.

And a third subject that I wish to review with the Council concerns legislation and advocacy. CCM, the CT Police Chiefs Association, the General Assembly, our Congressional delegation and others will introduce or support legislation aimed at developing sound prevention strategies for small communities like Mansfield. Using CCM, COST and other resources, I plan to keep you informed of legislation that affects municipal government to see if you wish to lend your support to any of these initiatives or have concerns that you would like to convey to our representatives.

I would imagine that our conversations on these subject areas will extend over the next several months. I welcome any immediate feedback that you might have.

Major Projects and Initiatives

- *Budget Retreat* – At 6:00 PM this Wednesday, January 16, 2013, we will hold a budget retreat with the Town Council as we continue preparation of the FY 2013/14 Proposed Budget and Capital Improvement program. As you will note on the attached agenda, we will discuss Council goals and policies, the status of the budget for the current fiscal year as well as anticipated revenues and expenditures for FY 2013/14. In addition, we will spend some time talking about our capital improvement program (CIP) and seek any preliminary budget guidance or feedback that you might have at this point in the process.
- *School Building Project* – On January 7, 2013, the Town Council held a special meeting on the proposed school building project. This meeting featured a conversation with our state legislators and a report from the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC). We plan to hold our next meeting on this topic on January 22 or January 23, 2013; I would like to post the agenda within the next few days.
- *Small Cities Housing Rehabilitation Program Update* – On November 26, 2012, the Town executed a contract with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for the \$300,000 Small Cities grant. This grant will be used to continue the Town's existing housing rehabilitation revolving loan program. This program offers 0% interest, deferred loans to homeowners that are considered to be low-moderate income as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. For example, the maximum income for a two-person household to qualify for the program would be \$52,000; the maximum income for a four-person household would be \$65,000. The purpose of the program is to complete upgrades that will make homes code compliant, safe and energy efficient. The loans issued through the program fund basic home repair projects such as furnace/boiler replacement, electrical upgrades, plumbing repairs, septic/well repairs or replacement, energy efficiency upgrades, window and roof repairs/replacement, handicap accessibility, etc. The funds cannot be used for items such as stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, or other items intended to increase a home's resale value. Currently we have three projects underway using program income (funds repaid from previous loans) and 23 other applicants currently on the waiting list. In early December, we hosted informational meetings for people that are currently on the waiting list as well as other residents interested in the program. The main focus of these sessions was to fully explain the application process, to request updated information and to answer any questions. Four homeowners on the current waiting list attended these meetings; we are planning on holding an additional meeting next month for residents who were unable to attend the December meeting due to the busy holiday season.
- *Storrs Center Construction Update* – Three more businesses - the Flower Pot, Mooyah Burgers & Fries, and Dog Lane Café - have opened in Storrs Center. One Dog Lane is now fully occupied. In Nine Dog Lane, one business remains under construction; Geno's Grille is expected to open in the coming months. Questions may be directed to the Mansfield Downtown Partnership (storrscenterinfo@mansfieldct.org or 860.429.2740). The Partnership continues to maintain a construction website for updates at <http://storrscenterconstruction.blogspot.com> (updated January 11).

Departmental Reports

- *Human Services*
 - *Accessible Van for Volunteer Transportation Program* - After a long wait, the department received delivery of a 10 passenger, lift-equipped van. Eighty-percent of the cost of the van was covered by a grant from the Department of Transportation DOT; the van will be used to provide transportation to seniors and residents with disabilities. We are actively recruiting volunteer drivers to be able to maximize the use of the van.
 - *Holiday Donation Programs* - During the month of December the Department of Human Services was very busy coordinating its various holiday donation programs. Approximately 70 families were sponsored by individuals, organizations and employee groups who generously donated gifts and food. The department also assumed operation of the Mansfield Holiday Fund, and in collaboration with First Niagara Bank collected and distributed almost \$12,000 to 54 families in Mansfield.

Special Events and Activities

- *Storrs Winter Farmers Market* – The Storrs Winter Farmers Market is open from 3:00 – 5:00 PM on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month, December through April. The market is located at the Buchanan Auditorium in the Mansfield Public Library and the 2013 dates are: January 26; February 9, 23; March 9, 23; and April 13, 27. The Winter Market features fresh and cold-storage vegetables and fruits; baked goods; jams and jellies; beef, pork and lamb; honey; maple syrup; hot sauce; locally-roasted coffee; and more. All of the winter vendors participate in the farmer's market year-round.

Upcoming Meetings*

- Personnel Committee, Tuesday, January 15, 2013, 6:00 PM, Conference Room C, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Town Council Budget Retreat, Wednesday, 6:00 PM, January 16, 2013, Council Chamber, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Conservation Commission, Wednesday, January 16, 2013, 7:30 PM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Mansfield Community Campus Partnership, Thursday, January 17, 2013, 4:00 PM, Council Chamber, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Ethics Board, Thursday, January 17, 2013, 4:30 PM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Traffic Authority, Tuesday, January 22, 2013, 10:30 AM, Conference Room B, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Planning and Zoning Commission, Tuesday, January 22, 2013, 7:00 PM, Council Chamber, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Economic Development Commission, Thursday, January 24, 2013, 5:30 PM, Council Chamber, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
- Town Council, Monday, January 28, 2013, 7:30 PM, Council Chamber, Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building

**Meeting dates/times are subject to change. Please view the [Town Calendar](#) or contact the Town Clerk's Office at 860-429-3302 for a complete and up-to-date listing of committee meetings.*