

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

ROBERT J. BRULE, FIRST SELECTMAN

JODY NAZARCHYK, SELECTWOMAN

ELIZABETH SABILIA, SELECTWOMAN

CINDY DUPOINTE, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

It continues to be an honor to serve the Town of Waterford as the First Selectman. To me, commitment is truly the most important piece of serving our community. I continue to value trust, communication, dignity, a sense of belonging and always putting the Waterford community at my forefront. The First Selectman is proud to present the 2022 Annual Report.

In 2022, Waterford was selected by CT Magazine as a Top 15 Real Estate “Hot Spot” in the state and recognized nationally as a Realtor.com Top 50 Hottest Housing Market in the U.S. and third hottest housing market in Connecticut! Recently, our Town has completed and started a number of town-wide capital projects, seen growth in workforce and affordable housing, been recognized as one of 24 communities in the state achieving Sustainable CT Bronze recognition and the town and First Selectman’s Office remains committed to community engagement and our “Waterford Cares” initiative.



The Town of Waterford continues to see growth in new businesses coming into town. With Revaluation scheduled for 2022 and the growth the town has seen, next year could be exciting, yet challenging, to keep the tax rate stable.

In addition, the Town of Waterford, the Town of East Lyme and the City of New London signed a 30-year Sewer Agreement. This regional accomplishment could not have happened without the collective efforts of East Lyme First Selectman Mark Nickerson, City of New London Mayor Mike Passero and the team of Waterford



Utility Commission staff and town leaders. Finally, the Town’s RTM created an Ad Hoc Energy Task Force to review audits of consumption, identify any data needs based on those audits and address the energy policy of the town. The Ad Hoc Energy Task Force Task Force includes two members of the RTM, 1 member of the BOF, one member of the BOS and 2 electors of the town.

Community Engagement



The Town continues to commit to its veterans by hosting Memorial Day and Veterans Day Ceremonies through the First Selectman's Office. These events honoring and remembering our Waterford Veterans remains a priority. The Waterford Veterans Coffeehouse continues to gain membership and attendance. The Coffeehouse continues to be held the second Tuesday of each month at Filomenas Restaurant and has become the largest attended Veterans Coffeehouse in Eastern CT. The Town initiated the 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony to honor First Responders. Now the ceremony features the Chief of Police, Director of Fire Services, the First Selectman and the Police Chaplain to participate and extend our appreciation for all those who put their lives in harm's way.

The 2nd Annual Waterford "Celebrate our Seniors" Parade continued in the summer of 2022 and was a huge success for residents of all ages! The Town of Waterford continues its strong relationship with the American Red Cross and has continued to host monthly blood drives at Town Hall, a tradition that has continued over the years. The Town of Waterford staff worked extremely hard to be among only 24 Connecticut municipalities recognized this year for achieving 3-year Sustainable CT Bronze certification! Sustainable CT is a statewide initiative that inspires and supports communities in becoming more efficient, resilient, and inclusive. Waterford met high standards in a broad range of sustainability accomplishments to qualify for the prestigious Bronze level certification. The highest level of certification currently offered is Silver. The pandemic continued through the end of 2021 and into 2022. The town continued to partner with Ledge Light Health District and Director Stephen Mansfield to provide residents vaccine clinic options, Covid Test Kit distributions opportunities and rolled out the Small Business Grant Program (ARPA) for Waterford and Quaker Hill small businesses impacted by the pandemic. The Board of Selectmen and the Town of Waterford hosted a number of Food Drives in town under the "Waterford Cares"



initiative, an initiative focused on addressing the day-to-day needs of all our residents, emotionally, financially, spiritually, and physically. We continue to donate and deliver holiday meals to veterans and seniors in town, as well as families in need.

The Town continues to be responsive and safe with 24/7 emergency response teams. The Town of Waterford now has 24/7 ambulance coverage, 24/7 police coverage and 24/7 fire service coverage in town. All volunteer fire fighters continue to be eligible to receive stipends for their time protecting our community while part-time fire fighters remain staffed at Oswegatchie, Goshen and Quaker Hill. Due to the national shortage of volunteers and trends, Waterford remains committed to recruitment and retention of volunteer fire fighters. The Town continues to review response times of emergency responders and implemented Streetwise software for fire pre-plans, a secondary form of notification of calls and providing GPS within fire apparatus. The RTM created the Fire Services Review Special Committee to review issues including performance, policies, and staffing.

Capital Projects



In 2022 the Waterford Town Center Development Ad Hoc Committee hired an architect and developed design plans for the Waterford “Civic Triangle Park” in our Town Center. The project aims to create vibrant outdoor spaces in the heart of our community, for residents of all ages. Thank you to the

Ad-Hoc Committee and Chairperson Miriam Wagner and consultant Kent & Frost, LLC for all their work and collaboration. A “Town Center” with ADA accessible lit pathways connecting the Community Center, Youth & Family Services, Library, Playground and Historic Green while featuring a boardwalk with a pavilion and new bridges around a clean, dredged pond remains the primary goal, while four new Pickleball courts have been incorporated into the Master Plan! The long-range capital plan remains a key guideline to accomplishing our goals while maintaining a conservative view of the annual budget. The First Selectman’s Office continues to communicate with



the Superintendent of Schools on ways the town can move forward together, to ensure community and school security, in a financially responsible manner. The capital plan in FY22 focused on paving and the reclamation of more roads in town, completing the Waterford Beach Restroom and ADA Sidewalk Project, IT upgrades and equipment in town, continued review of the town's Fleet Management Plan. Accessibility for residents around town continues to be a priority for capital projects as well as town infrastructure. The \$1M LED Streetlight Conversion Project was completed. The Above Ground Municipal Fueling Station at Cohanzie Fire Department was completed. The Waterford Civic Triangle Park project received legislative approvals to both dredge the pond.



The new \$17M multi-million dollar Municipal Complex is now fully complete, opened for full operations and the new sign is up! Thank you again to the Building Committee and Staff for your commitment to seeing this project through to its completion. The \$2.7M Cross Road Paving Project funded by Connecticut LOTCIP funds was completed, through the State of Connecticut and

was just the first of many road reclamation and paving projects this year. The Town of Waterford has continued its' commitment to paving town roads this past year, including:

Rainbow Court	Milton Road
Dunbar Road	Waterford Beach Entrance Road
Monroe Street	Louise Street
Olive Street	Orient Street
Vivian Court	Niantic River Road
Daniels Avenue	Gardiners Wood Road
Lakes Pond Road	Butlertown Road

In FY22, the Town of Waterford agreed to fund half the cost of the new engines for the Waterford/East Lyme Police Boat (shared regional asset) with East Lyme. Capital funds in the amount of \$12,500 each from Waterford and East Lyme provided a needed grant match for the Save the Rivers-Save the Hills new Pump-Out Boat to keep the Niantic River clean. The Town of Waterford recently approved

the paving of New Shore Road, Shore Road, Oil Mill Road and the southern half of Niantic River Road for early next year. Finally, the Town completed its' third and final year capital non-recurring payment for the \$1.1M new HVAC System that the state grant will match \$250,000 of the project!

American Rescue Plan Act

All expected funding from the federal government has been received by the Town of Waterford (\$5,547,889). The allocation the Town of Waterford received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Plan to spend the funding was submitted to the Board of Finance and RTM – appropriating the funding to small business, tourism, mental health, water and sewer and parks. Only one adjustment to the original plan has been made thus far, that being, town wide broadband was not an acceptable project by ARPA, due to Waterford not operating its own Utility. These allotted ARPA funds were transferred to the Civic Triangle Park Capital Project, due to that Master Plan being approved by the Civic Triangle Park Ad-Hoc Committee and all town bodies.

Projects completed with ARPA funds in FY22:

- ESO Fire RMS Software Upgrade
- Dispatch Upgrades
- Cyber Security for the Town

Projects begun/ongoing in FY22:

- Old Norwich Road Pump Station Upgrade
- Gorman Pump Station Control Panels Upgrades
- Fargo Lane Water (Tank) Tower Rehabilitation
- Town GIS Updates

The Waterford Small Business Grant Program was created by the Economic Development Commission in March of 2022, however, funds were not distributed until early FY23. Results will be reported in next year's FY23 Annual Report. Finally, a portion of the ARFP funds created a Human Services Coordinator for mental health services for seniors and families.

Planning & Economic Development



The Town of Waterford welcomed United States Secretary of Energy, Jennifer Granholm, for a visit and tour of Millstone Power Station. The discussion First Selectman Brule had with Madam Secretary Granholm focused on nuclear energy and the importance in Dominion Energy's role in town, in the state and in the country as a necessary green energy source. Productive conversations on the federal legislation regarding Interim Storage and specific steps necessary to remove dry cask storage from the site.

The Zoning Department continues to be very busy with new development applications and number of permit requests. The town has recently promoted an Assistant Building Official to Building Official and hired a new Assistant Building Official. The Zoning Department are currently "working the bugs out" of the newly launched Online Permitting Process, to make things easier for the resident. We continue to look for new and exciting economic development that will have long-term effects and will enhance our Net Taxable Grand List. The Town of Waterford is currently completing the town's Plan of Conservation and Development.

"Plan Waterford" is our Town's guide for the future. It shows where we have been and lays out the vision for where we are going. Thank you to the staff and Planning & Zoning Commission for the effort put forward as we complete the final phases, including the online survey. Over the past year, there continues to be a commitment towards economic development and our continued efforts to "fill empty storefronts" and attract new businesses to Waterford. Female business owner, Linsi Getz Bratland added on to her existing business and opened Cyclebar in Waterford Commons. The Town continues to welcome new businesses. ALLTOWN Fresh Select on Route 85 opened. The 168-Unit Waterford Woods Luxury Apartments Complex project started. This needed apartment housing development is an approximately \$90M project on Willetts Avenue, and is on schedule to open in December 2022 and will include a state of the art clubhouse and pool, rain gardens, 3-mile walking trail, pickleball courts, dog park and garage units for additional storage for residents. Waterford Woods sees





every unit being filled quickly, providing the town additional tax revenue with limited town services needed. The town celebrated the Grand Opening of Big Lots in the old Benny's space at Waterfall Center. The new Hartford Healthcare Medical Facility has officially opened and has filled the void left at the old Toys-R-Us property. This is Hartford HealthCare's newest and biggest with

70,000 square feet of medical space, housing primary care physicians as well as a host of specialized services such as breast health colorectal surgery and men's health. The old Sunset Rib Restaurant in Mago Point was purchased this past year and is currently being renovated to be a new "Fat Tuna" seafood restaurant, completion date is projected to be Winter of 2023. FASTSIGNS moved just down the road to Boston Post Road, creating an amazing space! Graniteville Dentistry new dentist office is moving into the vacant space at Utopia Centre. The Town's Economic Development Commission and Planning Department continue to work diligently with local restaurants and food service providers, long-term care facilities, retail stores and residents to help those who need the help.

In the Spring of 2022, the Waterford Economic Development Commission created a Small Business Grant Program, (with \$300,000 from the American Rescue Fund) committed to a consultant and small businesses owners in town. Economic Development will review and approve Waterford and Quaker Hill businesses requests for grants moving forward. Small Businesses that were operating during the pandemic and negatively impacted by the pandemic will be eligible for consideration.

Fleet Management Plan

This past year the Town invested in Fleetio, new fleet vehicle software to improve efficiencies and assist the Town in managing maintenance needs and costs. We



have continued the use of the Fleet Management Plan as a way to provide quality vehicles without having major spikes in our budget. By planning a life cycle for the various vehicles and constantly reviewing the need for these, we have been able to provide our employees with safe efficient and affordable equipment. Implementation of the Utilization Plan has already been helpful in us to get better returns on our auctioned vehicles and removing some of the more inefficient vehicles from the

plan. We continue to look at ways to improve efficiencies going forward. The Public Works Department and the Police Department fleet plans remain a priority. As supply chain issues have occurred, the Town remains in good position to purchase the fleet necessary to keep our town safe and operating efficiently. The Town has also removed vehicles from the fleet that were no longer needed (sold at auction), in an effort to reduce the size of the fleet, while the new Municipal Complex's 70,000 square foot garage now keeps our trucks and other fleet equipment inside and protected from the elements. The Long Range Fiscal Planning Committee continues to focus its priorities on Fleet Management, focusing in how many vehicles the Town has in its fleet, maintenance of vehicles to extend life and budgeting for large vehicle replacement when the time is needed.

Budget Management

In 2022, the Town of Waterford enjoyed a tax decrease again! Over the past year, there has been a commitment to work closely with the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and the Representative Town Meeting to ensure Departmental Budgets, Capital Spending and Fleet Management Plans are thoughtful, deliberate and transparent. There has been a commitment to identify areas where Department Heads can find savings. The Town continues to prioritize a working budget for our town that supports first responders, critical services and level of education we enjoy in town, while minimizing the growth of the taxpayers' burden. We have continued that philosophy with a minimal increase in the budget and a continuing close eye on any replacement or additional positions in our staff, all the while, updating job descriptions through Commissions and the Program Review Board.

The Town, like many of its neighboring communities, has seen a continuation of retirements by eligible employees. There continues to be a focus placed on

recruitment and retention of building officials, assessor and dispatchers. Over the past year, a number of eligible Department Heads retired: the Chief of Police, Senior Services Director, Utility Commission Director and Recreation & Parks Director to name a few. The Town would like to thank our town leaders who have given decades of



their lives to our amazing community. We appreciate your service and wish you and your families all the best in retirement!

Conclusion

Waterford continues to grow and attract families and businesses to town. We continue to have some of the largest retail shopping stores and plazas in southeastern CT and are home to two nuclear power plants. These provide many benefits to our town. We have more growth forecast for the town and look forward to planning out that growth with the various builders and developers. The year posed serious challenges due to supply chain issues and significant cost increases within capital expenses, handling the pandemic, as well as absorbing the aforementioned number of retirements of long-time town leaders and employees, yet, provided great opportunities and services for the Town. The Board of Selectmen delivered substantial government accomplishments of the people's goals in 2022. Waterford has 221 years of history and our future reflects the substantial achievements of our successful past. Finally, and sadly, the loss of former First Selectman Daniel Steward had an impact on the lives of countless Waterford residents this past year. Dan's 14 years as First Selectman is the longest tenure of any First Selectman and his love for the town and its' residents was endless. The Town of Waterford will never forget Dan's presence as a true gentleman, a family man, a father, and to me and so many others, a true a friend.

