

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

2021 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 value trust, communication, dignity, inclusion and always putting the Waterford community at my forefront. The First Selectman is proud to present the 2021 Annual Report.

Community Engagement



The pandemic continued through 2021 and as new variants continue to evolve, our community will continue to focus on ways of delivering quality services and to provide supports in a more creative and efficient manner. As a town, we worked tirelessly with Ledge Light Health District, businesses, volunteers, the Cactus Jack Foundation, Waterford Rotary, Senior Services and Waterford Youth & Family Services to

continue the “Waterford Cares” initiative. In doing so, we continue to focus town efforts on the needs of all our residents, emotionally, financially, spiritually and physically. We continued to donate and deliver meals and holiday dinners to Waterford families in need, seniors and veterans in town. We continued the monthly Waterford Veterans Coffeehouse, a group that continues to connect Veterans at meetings and provides breakfast free to participants. Community engagement is the component of strong economic and social transformation in a community as great as Waterford. This summer we brought back the Waterford Parade to honor our seniors, both those seniors graduating high school and those seniors 100 years of age. The “Celebrate our Seniors Parade” included live music on the Historic Green and featured Waterford residents as the musicians. Additionally, the Waterford Farmers Market continued despite the pandemic and 2021 saw creative ways in continuing this enjoyable community event, by holding the market indoors at Town Hall.

As many of us adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic, the safety of our community continued to be my highest priority. Partnering with Ledge Light Health District to host free community COVID-19 testing at the Waterford Library and a creative and successful indoor “Drive-Thru”



Covid Vaccination event at our newly constructed Municipal Complex. These events assured we continued to have the convenience of in-town testing and commitment to residents' safety. Our efforts resulted in Waterford having one of the highest vaccination rates in the State of Connecticut. Through communication with American Red Cross, Ledge Light Health District and United Way we have also offered the Town of Waterford to be a Regional Host for Blood Drives the first Friday of each month, COVID-19 Vaccine & Testing Clinics, and food distribution events in 2021!

Our community continues to be responsive and safer with 24/7 emergency response teams. The Town of Waterford now has 24/7 ambulance coverage, 24/7 police officer coverage and 24/7 fire service coverage in town. The Town of Waterford hired a new Director of Fire Services, Michael Howley, in June of 2021! All volunteer fire fighters continue to be eligible to receive stipends for their time protecting our community while two crews of paid fire fighters are on shift at all times in town (Jordan FD in the south end of town and Cohanzie FD in the north end of town). In 2021, we signed an agreement with the Waterford Professional Firefighters Association to ensure the Town continues to staff a 24/7 schedule in town to provide residents 24/7 fire and additional medical coverage. Two additional full-time fire fighters were approved in this agreement and will continue the trend of a responsible and deliberate increase in staffing for the Waterford Fire Department. Due to the national shortage of volunteers and the trend of recruitment and retention of volunteer fire fighters declining, the Town continues to review response times of emergency responders and generates CAD Data Reports that enable Police, Fire and EMS dispatched data. This data continues to be reviewed regularly and ensures responsible coverage. Safer grants for additional firefighters will be examined in 2022.



Capital Projects



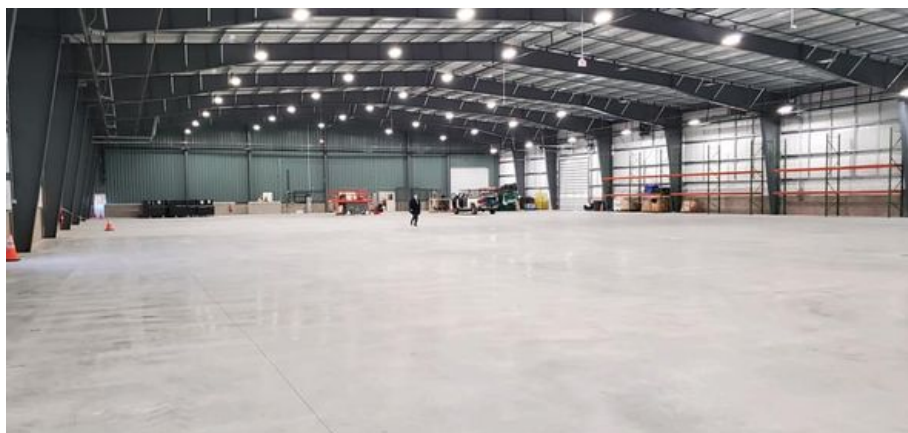
The construction of the Waterford High School Softball Field was completed and affords the girls softball team the opportunity to play high school games "on campus" for the first time ever! It also gives the Recreation & Parks Department a viable space to rent out for revenue. Thank you to the School Building Committee and staff for their comitment! Construction of the improved paths and new bathrooms at the Waterford Beach Park was completed in FY21 and came our great! Multiple Town departments worked together

to deliver a more welcoming and accessible park to our residents. Electricity, city sewer and water are now on site! During the pandemic, the Recreation & Parks Department, the Utility

Commission, the Public Works Department, the Planning Department and the Environmental Planner worked together to accomplish this vision! The project removed two septic tanks which were in the flood plain and DEEP recommended their removal, the staff demolished the two 50 year old bathrooms that had no electricity or city water & sewer, trenched 1600 feet of city sewer, city water and electrical conduit all the way from Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, clearly identified the wetlands, created ADA pathways from the parking lot to the causeway bridge, purchased two 35 foot ADA compliant luxury trailers with multiple stalls, a changing room/handicapped bathroom, installed new showers, purchased two water fountains and a mobi-mat from the bridge to the beach for ADA accessibility and through the fleet capital plan ordered a beach ATV for EMT's to access the beach quickly for emergencies.



Most recently, our Town has completed one of the largest capital projects it has ever initiated, the \$17M Municipal Complex housing the Public Works and Utility Commission. A landmark occasion for the Waterford Public Works Department & Utility Commission. In May of 2020, the Waterford Department of Public Works began to phase into their new building after 17 years of hard work. Overcoming fiscal, environmental, and construction difficulties, the roughly 60,000 square foot building opened fully in January 2021. Featuring a spacious garage to house the department's many vehicles, a state-of-the-art mechanic shop, a wash bay sized to handle large collection vehicles, and office space for two departments, the building marks a victory for Waterford. As part of the project, the town was able to clean up a large area of contaminated ground around where the building would be constructed, contributing to the wellbeing of the environment. This land was contaminated by previous use of the property. Surveys had identified that the contamination was under a specific area of the building, but once these concerns were addressed a final test of the area around the building revealed that there was another



contaminated spot. The building houses all of the Public Works vehicles, increasing their lifespan and saving the town money. These vehicles are essential to the functioning of the town and are used to plow snow, salt roads,

and maintain infrastructure. The mechanic shop services nearly all town vehicles, making use of multiple vehicle lifts. The service area features drive-through and drive-in areas to maximize efficiency in the space. A sign shop connected to the garage produces signage for the town and ensures that traffic signs in Waterford stay in operating condition. There is an open-air garage offset from the main building used to house sanitation trucks that keeps them protected from the elements and prolongs their lifespan, while also allowing them to maintain sanitary conditions inside of the garage. Inside the administrative area, there are locker rooms, a conference space, and a breakroom with an employee kitchen. These are all major improvements from the old space, as employees would have to complete training modules at off-site locations, taking valuable time out of their day. The office space is shared with the Utility Commission Office, where residents can inquire about and pay their sewer bills.



In 2021 the Town created an Ad Hoc Committee to study the interest a town park and began developing plans for the Waterford Community Park in our Town Center. The project continues efforts this year to create more vibrant outdoor spaces in the heart of our community, for

residents of all ages. I am excited to announce that the Board of Selectmen unanimously approved to adopt the Master Plan of the Waterford Community Park! Thank you to the Ad-Hoc Committee and Chairperson Miriam Wagner, Planning Director, Abby Piersall and consultant Kent & Frost, LLC for all their work, collaboration and presentation. A “Town Center” with ADA accessible lit pathways connecting the Library, Playground and Historic Green - featuring a boardwalk with a pavilion and new bridges around a clean, dredged pond is just the beginning!

American Rescue Fund Plan

Waterford's plan by project

- Category 1 (21.28% of total funds)
 - **Small business - \$300,000 (25.60%)**
 - New Economic assistance program to assist current and new Waterford small businesses
 - **Tourism (51.19%)**
 - Eugene O'Neill Theater
 - Nevins Cottage
 - **Mental health (23.21%)**
 - Human Service Coordinator Position within Youth & Family Services

Waterford's plan by project (Cont)

- Category 4 (78.72% of total funds)
 - **Broadband (42.97%)**
 - GIS Updates
 - New First responder cad module
 - Town-wide broadband infrastructure updates
 - **Water & sewer (57.03%)**
 - Fargo Lane Water Tower Rehab
 - Cross Road Pump Station Upgrade
 - Gorman-Rupp Pump Stations Control Panels
 - Old Norwich Road Pump Station Upgrade

Planning & Economic Development

Construction activity remained strong in FY21, with \$77,281,576 invested in new construction or improvements to existing properties. Waterford welcomed several new businesses, including Ollie's and Ace Hardware on Boston Post Road. Pro Endo and Dr. Milos Janicek built a state of the art dental facility on Cross Road, while Analytical Technologies Group (ATG) opened its'



laboratory equipment supply company on Cross Road as well. Arcrite and Shipman's opened locations on Foster Road, and construction began for medical offices on Cross Road and apartments over an expanded martial arts studio on Boston Post Road. The CT Siting Council approved a 16.78MW solar facility on Oil Mill Road, and construction is underway. Interest in residential developments grew, with 72 new apartments coming online at Waterford Parc on Miner Lane, and zoning regulation amendments to support additional Waterford Woods apartments on Willetts Avenue. The Planning

Department is currently developing strategies for the Crystal Mall's future and are excited about the recent \$3.5M purchase of the Macy's 10.5 acre property. The Planning Director is in close contact with the Crystal Mall and abutting landlords to continue to support Simon Properties, as needed. In addition, the Planning Department continues to assess economic development options for the property. Waterford Woods Luxury Apartments continues construction on Willetts Avenue to



continue to address housing needs for those who do not want to purchase or are unable to afford to purchase a home in Waterford. Waterford Woods, unlike Waterford Parc, will include an outdoor pool, clubhouse and garage units for additional storage for residents. Waterford Woods envisions every unit being filled quickly, providing the town additional tax revenue with limited town services needed, much like Waterford Parc. Hartford Healthcare is nearing completion of construction on their multi-million-dollar medical office building, housing seven privately run health care offices and is expected to generate new jobs and filling the void left at the old Toys-R-Us. The town is awaiting appraisals on Southwest and Cohanzie School properties and is looking for a potential buyer to redevelop the properties.

Fleet Management Plan

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 for Department Heads to get better returns on our auctioned vehicles and removing unnecessary vehicles from the plan. We are constantly reviewing the plan for accuracy and efficiency moving forward and a plan is in place to “share” vehicles inter-departmentally. The Long Range Fiscal Planning Committee continues to focus its’ priorities on Fleet Management.

Budget Management

In 2021, the Town of Waterford enjoyed a tax decrease again! We continue to see modest growth in new businesses coming into town and saw an increase in the Grand List for the 7th consecutive year. We continue to proudly develop a working budget for our town that supports the critical services programs we enjoy while minimizing the growth of the taxpayer’s burden. We continued that philosophy with a minimal increase in the budget in 2021 and continuing to increase efficiencies, review attrition, and assess job descriptions and functions throughout town. The pandemic has also highlighted employee hiring and retention strategies to nearly one in seven jobs now being filled throughout the country, being “remote.” Finding creative ways to

recruit and retain employees with our human resource department and Department Heads, labor counsel, and union representatives, in this changing market remains, a priority. The FY23 Budget will look to maintain town budgets as flat as possible to ensure residents do not feel the impact of inflation and revaluation when it occurs in 2022. Capital funding highlights for 2021-2022 includes 5 “connector” roads being paved (Butlertown, Lakes Pond, Daniels, Niantic River Road and Oil Mill) utilizing a recent \$1.8M transfer from the undesignated fund balance. In addition, 2021 saw the State of Connecticut DOT fund and complete the paving of Route 213 (Great Neck Road) and Route 156 (Rope Ferry Road) in Waterford. In 2022, the State of Connecticut DOT, with the support of the Southeastern Connecticut Conference of Governments (SCCOG), will be funding the \$2.8M Cross Road paving project. As it relates to the general operating budget, in 2021, I hired a new Library Director, a new Director of Fire Services, a new Human Resource Director, a new IT Director, a new Assistant Assessor and a new Assistant Fire Marshall. In 2022, I will work closely with the Long Range Fiscal Planning Committee to select a consultant to complete a comprehensive building maintenance study for the Town of Waterford, to ensure there is a long range plan for building maintenance.