

# Town of Stonington

# Quarterly Newsletter



## First Quarter- 2024

*There have been many positive happenings in Town thanks to the dedicated work of many of our Town staff, elected officials, volunteers and our extensive nonprofit and business community. We continue to welcome feedback on further potential enhancements and ideas. We are also always happy to set-up a time to connect in-person or on a call to discuss any existing projects, new ideas or areas of concern.*

*Thank you, Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington First Selectman*

Dear Stonington Residents,

We have such a wonderful community! Below you can find just a handful of moments, along with a few updates we thought you may be interested in.



Our Emergency Operations Manager, Captain Schneider and the broader Emergency Management (EM) team continue to meet, coordinating responses to existing and potential impacts. As part of these efforts, a Stop the Bleed training was held thanks to partnerships with our other community first responders. Human Services and Stonington Public Schools also worked with the EM team to install 3 new AEDs at Spellman Park. Using an AED within 5-8 minutes of a heart distress can significantly increase survival rates. As a reminder, **if we can't reach you, we can't alert you**. Please take a moment to sign-up for [Stonington Alerts](#).

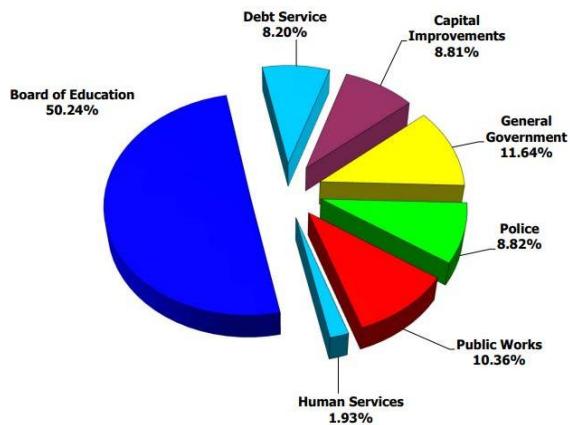
Did you know that mushrooms are one of the most sustainable foods? And in Stonington, they will be even more so thanks to a \$280,000 federal grant from the Rural Energy for America Program, which will help our very own local business- Seacoast Mushrooms-install a \$600,000, 199.6 kilowatt solar system. It was great having Rep. Joe Courtney, the newly appointed Under Secretary for Rural Development Dr. Basil Gooden (U.S. Department of Agriculture), along with other federal and state partners join us in Stonington to celebrate this important milestone for a locally owned, veteran run business.

In other grant news, the Town has been actively pursuing external funding for various projects, including two bridges, the Boathouse Park, Circus Lot, drainage/flooding, and Complete Streets.



Stonington is one step closer to having two, state-recognized Cultural Districts, thanks to the work of volunteers that make-up our new Cultural District Commission and support from our Economic Development Commission and SECT Cultural Coalition. According to Americans for the Arts, Cultural Districts help strengthen local economies, create an enhanced sense of place, and deepen local cultural capacity. We were delighted to have CT's new Director of Tourism and Director of Arts, Preservation & Museums, along with other local, regional and state partners join for a day in Stonington to walk and explore these two proposed Districts.

All departments represented in the budget started working on their segments earlier this Fall. Months of work have gone into creating what will be voted on during the April 30<sup>th</sup> Referendum. The volunteers on our Board of Finance spent weeks listening and engaging with town, school and nonprofit representatives to assess both current and future needs across a range of areas. Those who came before the Board of Finance advocated ardently for investments, they believe are necessary in our budget. While it can be challenging, and not all areas of investment are able to be funded, it offers an opportunity for enhancing civil discourse and building trust through open and transparent communication.



The Stonington Police Department welcomed another new officer to their team at a swearing-in event. Recently, they also shared their gratitude with three additional officers who have made the decision to retire or take on new opportunities. We thank them all for their years of service! We also welcomed two new chiefs to the Mystic Fire Department- Chief Chris Clarkin & Deputy Chief Jay Alvaran. We are glad to have you all as partners in our community.



Stonington Public Schools have offered various opportunities for community engagement within all of our schools. This included town staff, first responders, business and nonprofit leaders coming in to read to students, engage in panel discussions and have small group discussions on a range of topics. Stonington's Prevention Council also partnered with our middle and high school to bring former NBA basketball player and founder of the nonprofit Herren Project, Chris Herren to share his story with students and faculty. Chris talked about the disease of addiction & shared learnings from his journey. There is also a new class at the middle school focused on first responders & civic engagement.



Opening Day at the State Legislature was a great time to connect with our local delegation, along with others, regarding various matters facing our community. Our delegation has been working to help Stonington on matters ranging from traffic congestion to solid waste management to increasing state funding for our community.





The State of Stonington and Groton gathering, hosted by the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Commerce of Eastern show case positive activities within our shared communities, along with plans for addressing various challenges.



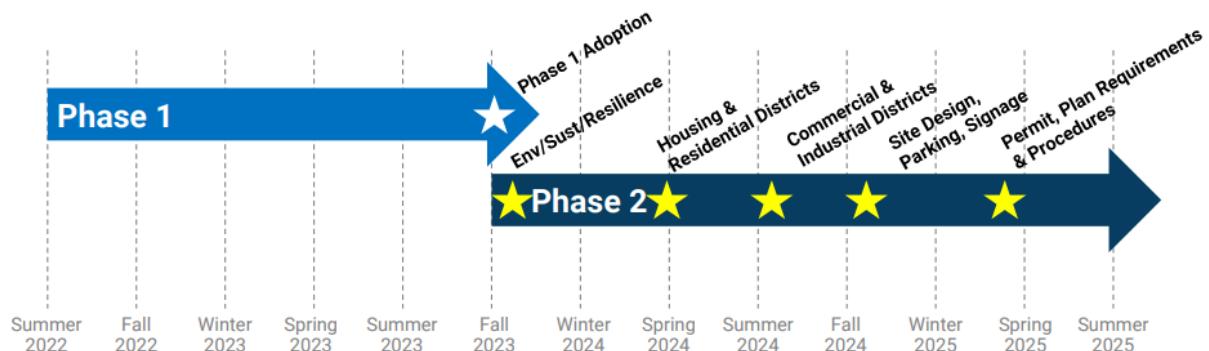
Stonington's zoning regulations were originally adopted in 1961 and have been updated on a piecemeal basis by multiple authors. The purpose of our two-year zoning update initiative is to:

- Provide user-friendly regulations that are accessible to a wide audience and efficient and effective for staff and the Commission to administer.
- Be fully compliant with statute and best practices as established by case law.
- Ensure that the consistency with best planning practices and responsiveness to current conditions including: Environmental concerns; Housing demand; Development pressures; Changing building practices and technologies; Changes to codes, statutes, and policies.

We are taking a phased approach to the update.

The Phase 1 updates focused on addressing errors, inconsistencies, and omissions while improving formatting and ease of use and fully complying with Statutes and best zoning practices. The benefit of a phased approach is that we were able to immediately address known issues with the regulations, while preparing to address more substantive issues in Phase 2. We want your input. If you can attend upcoming meetings, please do. Also, if you can take a moment to fill out our survey found [here](#).

**The update process will continue into 2025 with adoption of recommended amendments potentially occurring in the Summer of 2025.**



Did you know that 1 in 5 members of our local YMCA's receive financial assistance? Touching stories were shared during the YMCA's Annual Support Campaign Kick-Off, which brought together residents, staff, volunteers and officials from CT and RI. It was a great reminder of the important work the more than 30 nonprofits that serve our community do for our residents. We benefit greatly from these partnerships. If you are able consider volunteering or making a donation to one of the many organizations, every little bit helps!





After an initial site walk with local partners and State officials, outreach has begun with CT DOT and DEEP to explore the viability of a water taxi off of exit 90. Stay tuned for more updates on this potential project.

Public Works has been busy preparing for warmer weather projects. Paving preparations and field work are underway, alongside ongoing drainage, bridge, roadway and facilities projects. Additionally, support for various special projects keeps the team extremely busy.

Help us spread the word! Clothing and other textiles can now be placed in the Apparel Impact Collection Shed 24/7 at Human Services. Almost all textiles can be reused or recycled, making it a sustainable solution for the environment! Speaking of sustainability, Stonington residents have kept nearly 300 tons of food out of our trash stream. If you aren't participating in our curbside composting program please reach out for free green bags. Let's keep Stonington a leader in the State!



Thanks to a connection with a local business owner (Judy Mann, Pot of Green), members of the Stonington team have started volunteering at the New London Community Meal Center.

We are a community that is fortunate to have so many important nonprofits. If you are interested in volunteering with any of these organizations, please reach out as there are many ways you can help and we are happy to help you make a connection!

If you aren't already signed-up, consider joining Stonington's news update mailing list on the town website. Additionally, for more updates on Economic and Community efforts across the community check out <https://stonington1649.com/>

Stay tuned for some exciting updates on new ways your local government is working to enhance direct communication!

Thank you, Stonington,

Danielle Chesebrough  
First Selectman