

Town of Stonington

# Monthly Newsletter



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**March 2022**

*Thanks to a new collaborative partnership with Morgan Browning, a Stonington High School student, we are very excited to present a new version of the Monthly newsletter! We continue to welcome feedback on further potential enhancements and ideas.*

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## *-Getting to Know Us-*

*A look at the people behind our Departments and Boards.*

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*By Morgan Browning*

### **Board of Finance Chair, Timothy O'Brien**

When Tim moved to the area his dad was a member of the Board of Finance. At work and especially holidays when extended family was around, his dad would often talk about his work and involvement as a board member. His dad volunteered on the BOF for 15 years finishing up in the role of Chairman. Tim stated "Being around my dad and hearing about the work made me very interested". When his dad, John O'Brien decided to resign, Tim volunteered to fill his position. The Democratic Town Committee selected him out of four applicants.

Tim has three kids, a freshman in college, a junior in high school and a freshman in high school. He loves to spend his free time with his family. They like to travel and spend time outdoors. They enjoy being on the ocean in the summer and skiing in the winter. He has been a member of the Board of Finance for about 11 years now. I asked him, what is one thing someone might be surprised to know about you? He replied with "My Uncle was hired to be Captain Kangaroo when they re-casted the TV show. He got to film the show at Bush Gardens in Florida. We still have all the old episodes which were just so special!"

### **[Learning more about the Board of Finance](#)**

I asked O'Brien, Chair of the Board of Finance, what surprised him most about working on the BOF. He said he felt many people don't understand how much they care for the people in the town. They have a very difficult job because they have to balance the taxes for what every person in the town can handle to pay, while still providing top notch programs and education. O'Brien, shared "We are sympathetic to all taxpayers." They have to consider the lower 10% and top 10% of people in our community- and everyone in-between. Trying to balance all of the needs and wants in the town is a huge responsibility. A job he feels residents of our town might not realize is that they have fiscal oversight for the entire town. They are responsible for keeping the town's budget balanced. That includes authorizing all transactions between programs to keep the budgets balanced which is no easy feat.



### **Director of Solid Waste, John Phetteplace**

John graduated with a degree in Preservation and Planning. Once out of school he applied for an internship with the town. He worked in the town hall for one year and the day his internship was up, was offered the position of recycling coordinator. The previously coordinator had just resigned, and John had to quickly learn as he went. John was able

to greatly evolve the position over the 30+ years working in this exciting, ever-changing role.

Something you might not know about John is that he spent four months biking through Europe. Some of the countries he traveled to on this trip included France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and Belgium. When not working, he also spends much of his free time working on restoring old homes. (Image Courtesy- Bill Hobbs, The Day)

### **[Learning more about the Solid Waste Department](#)**

John said that he wants people to know what a hard-working crew we have on Stonington's Solid Waste team. He feels that most of the members of our community are appreciative of the work they do and don't always know just how much work is going on. For example, the town runs a

transfer station that is open six days a week. It also offers many recycling opportunities. There are disposal programs for items such as mattresses, oil, and fluorescent light bulbs. The Solid Waste services 8,200 households over 42 miles of road, including 480 commercial customers. Phetteplace says that the Solid Waste team work hard to be very customer focused.

“Because of the work Solid Waste has done over the years, Stonington is a leader in the State for solid waste disposal and recycling.” says John Phetteplace. An example of how Stonington is a leader in the State is its unit-based pricing (or “Pay-As-You-Throw”) program. This is an environmentally and fiscally responsible program. For instance, the average CT resident in areas without this program produce about 700 lbs per person, per year of waste, whereas Stonington residents generate about 380 lbs per person annually. Unit-based pricing a fair way to pay for trash, as residents and businesses only pay for what they produce. During COVID the team also began a new curbside textile recycling program, which has already eliminated nearly 142 tons of clothing from the waste stream.

The department has applied for a potentially exciting grant to support a greener town. The grant would support launching a curbside food collection and composting program in the town, which is something John Phetteplace has been working on for over five years. The grant would support curbside, town-wide pick up of food waste in green compost bags that would be transported to Quantum Biopower in Southington, CT. The food waste is processed and then creates energy and compost product. Quantum Biopower is one of the only places in the State that could do this, but the regional trash authority continues to work on finding a closer, more cost-effective location that could support regional composting efforts. Stonington could once again help lead the way for further improvements to solid waste management. It is projected that unit-based pricing, combined with curbside textile recycling and composting could reduce trash by up to 70%. If the majority of Towns in CT were



to follow this model, we could avoid the impending, and costly, solid waste crisis currently being debate in Hartford.

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## *Town Department Updates*

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### **Assessment Department**

The Department of Assessment is pleased to welcome our new Deputy Assessor, Derek Berube to the Town of Stonington. Derek joined the team on March 21<sup>st</sup> and is looking forward to getting to know the Town and its residents.

The Department would also like to remind all residents that the Homeowners-Totally Disabled Program and the Additional Veteran Program opened for applications February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. The application period for the Homeowners ends on **May 13, 2022** and the Additional Veterans ends on **September 30, 2022**. Both of these programs are income based with the maximum income for a single person being \$38,100 and for married couples \$46,400. Please contact the Department of Assessment at 860-535-5098 or [assessor@stonington-ct.gov](mailto:assessor@stonington-ct.gov) for more information or to schedule an appointment.

If you have not yet returned your data mailer for the 2022 Revaluation, you still have time to do so! Data mailers can be mailed, faxed or emailed to the Department of Assessment.

### **First Selectman's Office**

**Major Project Wins-** Thanks to ongoing collaboration between the Stonington team and our Federal Delegation, Stonington will be receiving approximately \$1.9 million to address a long-standing issue that Pawcatuck Fire Department brought to the Town's attention. The funding will be used to create a loop in our water system, where it currently has 'dead-ends'. We also obtained \$750,000 to help address infrastructure improvements within our sewer system.



## **STONINGTON COVID RESPONSE**

**GRANTS-** Thanks to the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce and voters who engaged in our ARPA funding process we were able to launch this opportunity earlier this month. Stonington is

delighted to have the opportunity to partner with the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce to offer this one-time allocation of funds to help small businesses and nonprofits in our community. Our small business and nonprofit community are such a big part of what makes Stonington so special. This was only highlighted more throughout the pandemic. The Deadline to Apply for the first round is March 31, 2022. There will likely be a second round that will open up with a May 1 deadline. To read more about this program, as well as download the application form, please visit our dedicated page found [here](#).

**Partnerships with Stonington Schools-** We were honored to have had numerous opportunities to support some of the wonderful work coming from the children and staff within our schools. First, students from both our local elementary schools held different drives for Ukraine families (read more [here](#)). Then, we got to participate in Kindness Week kick-off at WVSS. We are also so happy to have a new segment of this newsletter with insights from the school. And, of course, this Newsletter itself has been greatly improved thanks to the initiative of a local high school volunteer!

**Budget Season-** With the close of the public hearing and final Board of Finance deliberations on the budget, the next step will be to send the budget to referendum. In the weeks leading up to the vote, we highly encourage all residents to review the budget and reach out with questions, as the investments being made in our community will impact many aspects of daily life in both the short- and long-term. You can read more about the budget process, dates, and review the budget [here](#).

## **Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience and Erosion Control Board-**

The new Flood Prevention, Climate Resilience and Erosion Control Board which will also be taking on the duties that were overseen by the Stormwater Task Force is seeking applications until April 29. If you are interested or wish to learn more, please call the First Selectman's Office. We also have openings on a number of our Boards and Commission, please read more [here](#).



**AI Harvey-** We continue to work with Trust for Public Land towards the conservation of the 200+ acre property. TPL has been busy working on a great deal of final due diligence on their end. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working on completing a review of comments as part of their Pre-acquisition Compatibility Determination process. The Town of Stonington, Trust for Public Land, and Avalonia meanwhile are working on a MOU, which should go before the Board of Selectman in April.

## **Human Services**



**Read to a Dog-** This exciting new program for children grades K-2 has two more dates available (April 6 and 27). Children gain confidence and fluency in reading through this new Read to a Dog program. Thanks to Chase and Lake for making this program possible! Learn more [here](#).

**Now hiring!** Seasonal positions are currently posted on the Town website for open Playground Counselor positions. Come join our team and be a part of our very

popular summer day camp, held at the Spellman Park playground. Applications accepted now through April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Stonington Scavenger Hunt-** Join in the fun and register today for the 3rd Annual Stonington (Town-Wide) Scavenger Hunt! This fun, exciting, FREE, family-friendly event is open to residents of ALL AGES! THE AMAZING RACE: Similar to the popular CBS gameshow, this race will test your team's physical endurance and skills, mental agility, problem solving and teamwork! Teams will work together to solve clues, find destinations, complete detours, road blocks and team challenges until they make their way to the final "pit stop." Race kicks off from Stonington Human Services at 11am. To register: <https://stonington.recdesk.com>

## Planning Department

### **Affordable Housing Plan**

Using a grant from the CT Department of Housing, the town has developed a final draft of an Affordable Housing Plan for the community. As per State Statutes, the town is required to prepare and adopt such a plan every 5 years. Residents are encouraged to read the draft plan ahead of the upcoming meeting. A key focus of the draft plan is to identify potential strategies to enhance the diversity of our housing stock. To create the best possible plan for Stonington, we need input from residents on the type of strategies they agree with, ones they see challenges with, and possible new ideas not yet brought forward. In order to create the best possible Plan for Stonington, input is needed from a diverse range of perspectives. We invite all members of the community to join the upcoming Planning and Zoning Public Hearing on the plan's adoption on April 5, 2022 at 7:00PM. To read more about the plan, and the process, please visit [here](#).

### **Request for Proposals– Former Stillman Mill and Boathouse Park**

The RFP for the Stillman Mill property should be awarded in the coming week. The RFP for the Boathouse is still open, and all proposals will be due on April 14<sup>th</sup>. A review panel will be



compiled so a firm can be selected and brought on as quickly as possible. We are very much looking forward to moving both of these projects forward.

## Police Department

This month Chief J. Darren Stewart, who has led the police department for the past 13 years, retired as Police Chief. He was a member of the department for the past 38 years, starting when he was just 19. He is the longest-serving chief in the department's history. We are grateful for his service and wish him well in his next endeavors. The Board of Police Commissioners also named a new Chief, Lt. Colonel Jay DelGrosso, who we are looking forward to welcoming to the Stonington family later in April.



Officers from our agency represented STONINGTON at the 2022 Law Enforcement Torch Run kickoff event for the CT Special Olympics. Every year law-enforcement agencies raise awareness and funds for the Special Olympics by hosting different events. We thank all those who have helped support our fundraisers over the years and look forward to hosting events again this year. We hope to see you there so we can step up our fundraising goal

## Tax

The tax office will, for the first time, send out reminder postcards in January for the 2<sup>nd</sup> installment of your real estate bills.

As a reminder, all the town and fire district bills are now combined into one bill. Bills will be mailed out at the end of June, and will be due and payable from July 1<sup>st</sup> thru August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Your tax dollars pay for most services provided by the town – schools, police, roads, etc. Stonington has one of the lowest mill rates in the state of CT.

## Solid Waste

Spring has arrived at the Transfer Station. The Regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection schedule begins with the April 2<sup>nd</sup> collection to be held at the Stonington High School from 9am to 1pm. Again, this year the collection will offer paper shredding. Please note this a new location, moved from the Town Highway Garage to accommodate the increasing attendance. Additional collections available for Stonington residents include:

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| <b>NEW LOCATION</b><br><b>Sat. April 2, 2022 - Stonington</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Stonington High School   176 S. Broad St |
| <b>NEW LOCATION</b><br><b>Sat. May 7, 2022 - Waterford</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Waterford High School   20 Rope Ferry Rd    |
| <b>Sat. June 4, 2022 - Colchester</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Colchester Town Hall   127 Norwich Ave                           |
| <b>Sat. June 18, 2022 - Norwich</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Norwich Public Works   50 Clinton Ave                              |
| <b>Sat. July 9, 2022 - Groton</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Fitch High School   101 Groton Long Point Rd                         |
| <b>Sat. August 6, 2022 - Montville</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Tyl Middle School   166 Chesterfield Rd (Oakdale)               |
| <b>Sat. Sept. 10, 2022 - North Stonington</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Wheeler High School   297 Norwich-Westerly Rd            |
| <b>Sat. Oct. 15, 2022 - Griswold</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Griswold Hwy Garage   1148 Voluntown Rd (Rt 138)                  |
| <b>Sat. Nov. 5, 2022 - Ledyard</b><br>9:00am - 1:00pm at Ledyard High School   24 Gallup Hill Rd                             |

Limited quantities of wood chips and leaf compost are now available for residents free of charge on a first come first serve basis while supplies last. A limited supply of composted wood chips will be available later this year.

We are working with a local contractor to utilize asphalt millings at the Transfer Station. This will help improve road conditions, create better drop off areas for brush, help reduce dust and reduce operating costs.

We are still waiting to hear back from the DEEP regarding the status of our food waste and collection program grant. The closing date for applications is March 31<sup>st</sup>. We hope to hear very soon after that.

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## *School Department Updates*

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### **District Office Updated**

The district administration is in the beginning transition stages of the appointment of Mary Anne Butler to Superintendent of Schools, which will formally begin on July 1<sup>st</sup>. As part of her promotion, the search to find the new Assistant Superintendent has begun. Two more searches are also underway as we work to find the replacement for the Director of Finance, Gary Shettle, who plans to retire at the end of the school year, and the SHS Assistant Principal to replace the newly appointed SHS Principal, Alicia Dawe. Interviews for all three positions are slated to begin in April with the hope to announce their replacements by the end of the school year.

### **SPS Technology Update**

As Stonington Public Schools continue to improve our cyber security posture, we are rolling out multi-factor authentication for district accounts as well as adding additional security measures to protect our students and staff. The safety and privacy of our district remains a top priority as we work to prevent malicious threats from attacking our networks.

We are preparing to launch our Student Chromebook Repair program, which gives SHS students the knowledge and tools to perform device repairs. This will give them training and experience for those interested in entering the technology field, as well as provide a fun opportunity for tech

tinkering! In addition, we are launching a new esports club as an after-school program for SHS students interested in the world of competitive gaming. This is in preparation for next fall when we will roster our first esports league as an official sport offered at SHS, allowing for competitive league play against other school districts across the US.

### SPS Operations Update

At the end of 2021 we closed out a large LED upgrade with the help of Eversource and their contractor Earthlight. All schools including the baseball field and turf field are now illuminated with high efficiency LED lighting. This light upgrade not only saves tens of thousands of annual taxpayer dollars but will also reduce the town's carbon footprint by requiring less energy to power the lights - a win-win situation!

In preparation for spring, the SPS maintenance crew and the town DPW have come together to install a much-needed foul ball net along the third base line at the school's baseball field. Both crews working efficiently together is a great example of "Stonington Spirit".

First Student Stonington is looking to hire more school bus drivers. If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact First Student.

And finally, we are actively preparing for the return of summer school activities for the first time in two years! Organizing and planning for summer school, recreation league activities, and summer cleaning will keep the crew super busy! However, the crew and myself are looking forward to the challenge and the sense of getting back to normal. See you around campus!

**HOP INTO A NEW CAREER THIS EASTER!**

FIRST STUDENT STONINGTON IS HIRING SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS!

**BENEFITS INCLUDE:**

\$22/HR STARTING WAGE

\$5,000 SIGN ON BONUS\*

\$1500 BONUS FOR NON CDL

CDL TRAINING

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First Student

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## *Board and Commission Updates*

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### **Beautification Committee**

The Beautification Committee continues to seek volunteers to help with projects, weeding, watering and town cleanups. Interested residents can email [stoningtonbeautification@stonington-ct.gov](mailto:stoningtonbeautification@stonington-ct.gov)

### **Commission on Aging**

Recognizing the challenges that the growing number of caregivers face, the Mystic Geriatrics Institute (MGI) has developed a program to help caregivers. In May, the MGI plans to partner with our Commission on Aging to offer a program for Stonington residents. More details will be shared soon, and you can also learn more by contacting the Commission.

### **Climate Change Task Force**

Each month the CCTF will share one 'Do you Know' facts. This series will highlight town actions and/or present a different idea each month that can be adopted by residents and businesses alike. To learn more or get involved please contact us or attend a CCTF meeting!

### **Roof income & energy storage – Do You Know...**

...Do you know there may be a way for commercial or nonprofit building owners to obtain income from their roofs? A solar roof lease through the Connecticut Green Bank may be able to help you earn a passive income stream from solar panels on your roof without the hassles of worrying about maintenance of the system. This can be a good option for business owners or nonprofits who cannot take advantage of tax credits. Visit the CT Green Bank [website](#) for more information.

There is also a recently launched website for the Energy Storage Solutions program, a statewide electric storage program for residential, commercial and industrial customers that will lead to a more reliable distributions system. Interested? Visit this [website here](#).

**Thank you for reading our update and we are looking forward to another productive month.**

**Thank you, Stonington!**