

Town of Stonington

Monthly Newsletter



Photo: Barn Island

May 2022

Thanks are due again to Morgan Browning, a Stonington High School student, for her continued collaboration on the monthly newsletter- and to all the staff and volunteers for their update submissions! We continue to welcome feedback on further potential enhancements and ideas.

-Getting to Know Us-

A look at the people behind our Departments and Boards.

By Morgan Browning

Learning about the Chair of Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Lee Reichart

Chair of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Lee Reichart first moved to Mystic in 2006, where he resides on Masons Island. He met many people who were a part of the Masons Island Yacht Club. He learned that many of them were working with different Commissions in the town. Reichart was intrigued by the idea of being able to have a positive influence on others, and being a part of something that is helpful to the community. Lee was originally interested in the Harbor Commission, but all the positions were full. There was an opening on the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, where he decided to apply and was appointed. Reichart said the Commission would not be possible without the work of Candy Palmer, who is part of the Planning Department and staffs the Commission.

When Lee is not working, he is very involved in Sailing, he is a past Commodore of Masons Island Yacht Club, has been a part of the Storm Trysail Club, and was Commodore of the Dartmouth Corinthian Yacht Club. Before being a part of the Inlands Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Lee had worked for the Scotts Miracle Gro company for 30 years. He then had switched to a startup company in alternative energy, the company was close to success many times, but ultimately did not make it.

One thing that you might not know about Lee Reichart is that while he is retired, he became an Uber driver. He felt that people could use a safe alternative, helping people avoid driving after having drinks.

Growing up Lee had always been around the water. He started sailing from the very beginning, his mother and father were excellent sailors. He felt that growing up around a family

of sailors led sailing to be a lifelong passion of his. Lee went to Dartmouth College, and he graduated in 1968 with an engineering degree and he stayed another year for engineering sciences. To further his education, he went to Indiana University to get his MBA. Lee humbly says that he feels he is uneducated compared to the other people on the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission. He says that the commission is made up of a retired doctor, a well-known entomologist, an environmental scientist and multiple members holding marine science degrees. One member, Bill, spent 20 years as an NCO in the Navy.

Learning more about the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission



Example of Upland Conditions

I asked Lee Reichart what has surprised him most about working with this Commission. He said that when he first joined, he had concerns it would be made-up of people who didn't want others to develop their property, but he learned that this was not the case at all. Lee says that the Commission takes their role very seriously and does a great job at balancing the needs to develop with environmental responsibility. They want to help people build homes and businesses in a responsible manner. Lee feels that a lot of people look at the Inland Wetland and Watercourses Commission as an obstacle to get to do what they want; however, the Commission members are also genuinely happy to help find reasonable solutions.

Chair Lee Reichart said that people are often surprised by the definition of the area the Commission has responsibility for. A wetland does not have to be a marsh, the thing that defines the wetland is the soil or land. The upland review area is within 100 feet of the boundary of water or wetland. If the property the resident wants to build on is within this distance, people have to come to the Commission to propose their building plan and get a permit approved.

The commission has a very organized procedure to efficiently inspect and approve or deny properties. They meet once a month on the first Thursday of the month. The previous Saturday they will go out and inspect the site that had requested building approval. They have a site walk and the owner explains to the Commission members what their building plans are.

Then on the following Thursday, the land owners make a formal presentation of their plans at their meeting. Members are able to pose questions that are discussed during this

meeting. There are usually around two to three properties per meeting, but it can go up to half a dozen. Lee says that applications sometimes sail right through, while others can face challenges if concerns are raised. Based on certain criteria, there can also be public hearings for projects, where the public is able to ask questions or raise concerns. Lee says that at the moment the Inlands Wetlands and Watercourses Commission is pretty settled in how they operate; conducting their work based on what is best for the town.

Town Department Updates

Assessment Department

The Department of Assessment would like to remind all residents that the **Income and Expense statements** were mailed out to all owners of primarily commercial rental property in April. The forms are due by June 1, 2022. Any owner who fails to file the form, or who files late, shall be subject to a one-year penalty assessment equal to ten percent of the net assessed value of the property per CGS 12-63c. Property owners who need an extension must request it in writing no later than May 1, 2022.

The Department also wants to be sure all taxpayers know about the programs available through this office, ranging from programs for veterans, the elderly or disabled, active-duty military, as well as geothermal and solar. If you would like to learn more, please visit our website or contact the Assessor's Office at (860) 535-5098.

First Selectman's Office

Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program

Stonington residents now have access to a new Town program that enhances access to quality housing. Thanks to an extensive collaboration with many staff, including members of the Human Services, Finance, Planning, and Selectman Offices, along with other issue experts, the Town of Stonington is now able to put forward this meaningful new program for Stonington

residents. The Housing Rehabilitation Program is funded with \$150,000 from the American Rescue Plan.

The objective of the program is to improve housing occupied by low- and moderate-income households in the Town of Stonington. The revolving loans will enable residents to make home improvements that they otherwise may not be able to afford. This program has the potential to help residents remain in their homes, and in their community, for years to come.

The program will offer loans for specific home improvements and in exchange the Town will hold a mortgage and put in an affordable housing deed restriction for the length of the loan. The loan can be repaid through a payment plan, or for resident-owned properties can be repaid when the borrower sells, refinances, or transfers the property.

There are two types of loans available. First, no-interest, deferred loans are available to owner-occupied households earning 80% or less of median household income for the Norwich-New London Metropolitan Statistical Area. The loan can be repaid through a payment plan or when the borrower sells, refinances, or transfers the property. Secondly, low-interest loans are available to Investor-Owners, whose tenets meet income criteria and agree to specific affordable rent requirements. The loan rate shall be at 3%, payable monthly, over a five-year term.

Program guidelines and procedures are available on the Town of Stonington's website. Anyone interested in learning more about the program can contact the Human Services Department, and fill out a Social Service Intake Form. Applicants will be considered on a first come, first served basis with one exception—an applicant needing rehabilitation work to correct an emergency condition affecting the health and safety of the household will be moved to the top of the waiting list. You can find a news segment on the program here, courtesy of NBC CT, as well as article in both the Westerly Sun and The Day newspapers.

Bike2Work Challenge

Thank you to friends at Bike Stonington and Mystic Cycle Centre for the courage to try the #BIKE2WORK challenge this month. Biking is not just good for the environment and our physical health, but also our mental health! Our office continues to explore ways to make our community more bike and pedestrian friendly. Thanks to a small group, led by a member of the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development Implementation Committee, we are making some progress on this goal. Stay tuned for more dialogue on this topic, along with our partners on the Board of Police Commissioners.



Veterans Monument- We have hit our halfway mark! Thanks to the efforts of Town staff member Stacy Haskell, along with support from a small group of volunteers, the project has raised \$100,000 and have an additional \$100,000 to still raise. If you are interested in making a donation, hosting a fundraiser or helping to reach out to other possible donors that is very appreciated. Donations are tax deductible. We also continue to collect new names to add to our existing list of 7,000+ Stonington veterans, and are currently working on finalizing plans for the design of the panels on the sides of the monument. Finally, we are excited to start working on our plan for bringing history to life through the monument's dedicated website. Anyone interested in getting involved or learning more please visit our page [here](#).

ARPA Grants- Thanks to a partnership between the Town of Stonington, CT and Ocean



Community Chamber, we were able to present three COVID response grants this past week to small businesses negatively impacted by the pandemic. In total, \$62,000 will be awarded to those who qualify and were vetted by a dedicated committee consisting of Stonington Selectwoman June Strunk Selectwoman, John Godin of the EDC, James Sullivan of the Town Finance Dept. and OCCC Board members Matt

Cunningham and Suzie Flores. Grants were issued to Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, The Stanton-Davis Homestead Museum and Sound Waves



Magazine. The next round of grant applications has about \$6,000 available and the deadline to apply



is June 5 at oceanchamber.org. To learn more visit the Town or Chamber website, or reach out to Lisa Konicki at 401-596-7761.

Also, stay tuned for more information on the arts and culture grants being issued in partnership with the Cultural Coalition, whose application period closed at the end of May.

Human Services

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU? General paperwork assistance; one-time financial assistance; help in meeting basic needs; ongoing case management – we are **HERE** for you! For more information or to make an appointment with a case manager, please call (860) 535-5015 or email mrbanks@stonington-ct.gov.

DID YOU KNOW... From 4/1-4/30/2022 the Department fielded 463 social services contacts – (139) Housing/Homelessness; (87) Energy Assistance; (73) Programs for the Elderly/Disabled; (58) Advocacy/Case Management; (55) Basic Needs (Food, Transportation, etc.); (23) Financial Assistance; (18) Legal Aid; (6) Medical Assistance; (4) Supportive Programs

FREE COUNSELING is available to residents of all ages. For more information, or to schedule an intake appointment, please call (860) 535-5015.



TRUE TEAMWORK! The Recreation Department wanted to share a huge THANK YOU to the Town of Stonington Public Works, and Administrative Services teams, as well as Town residents Paula & Neil Solar for their help and contribution in getting a new ADA swing, walkway and safety matting installed in Spellman Park. We can't wait to see the smiles on the children's faces! #StoningtonRec #GetOutside



♪ TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME ♪ Join us for one, or both, upcoming day trips as we travel to Yankee Stadium on July 16th as the Yankees take on the Sox and Fenway Park on September 18th when the Sox take on the Royals. For more information, go to: <https://stonington.recdesk.com>.

Police



Over the past six months the Stonington Police Department / Human Service prescription drop box located in the Police Department lobby, along with visits from the Police & Human Services to local retirement facilities have collected a total of 322.9 lbs of prescription medications. All collections were turned over to the DEA for destruction. This effort continues to remove dangerous prescription unused medications from homes.

You can read about another fantastic, new Police program in the Schools Update below as well!

Planning Department

Recent land use approvals include the following:

- Approval of Special Permit application for construction of a 100 unit mixed income, Affordable Housing development at 111 S. Broad St., Pawcatuck, in front of the existing Brookside residential development.

- Approval of 8 lot residential Subdivision located on N. Stonington Rd.
- Approval of Site Plan application for construction of a 4,080SF boat repair and storage building at 20 Clark St., Pawcatuck.

The Department and the Town's various land use boards are currently reviewing several development applications including the following:

- Special Permit application for a proposed gas station and convenience store at 54 South Broad St., Pawcatuck. Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing scheduled for 6/21/22.
- Special Permit application for conversion of the Odd Fellows Building at 11 Cottrell St. into 5 hotel suites including exterior renovations. Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing scheduled for 6/7/22.
- Subdivision application for 9 lot Open Space Development (including open space lot). Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing scheduled for 6/7/22.

Affordable Housing Plan

Using a grant from the CT Department of Housing, the Town 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. A public hearing for this plan was held on April 5. After substantial modifications to the plan, it was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission on 5/3/22.

Public Works & Engineers

Allen Street Drainage

Bids were received April 26th, 2022 for the Allen Street Drainage Project. At the 05/25/2022 Board of Selectmen Meeting, an award of contract was approved for AMCON Services LLC. Pursuant to Bonding, Insurance and an Agreement, the contractor is expected to start construction in a month or so. The drainage design includes a provision to infiltrate the first inch of rain utilizing an underground retention system which is in an LID method in conformance with the DEEP Ms4 Permit.

GRANTS: (CIRCA)

DPW lead the efforts on procuring a grant from CIRCA for funding of an extensive design initiative for the Holmes Street Seawall. The CIRCA Grant Agreement is now authorized, therefore allowing the Town advance by executing an agreement with a design consultant. The design consultant will commence investigation efforts in preparation of Preliminary Engineering Design. The goal of the design is to incorporate a “Resiliency” design element into the seawall repair. The addition of a Resiliency mechanism will help extend the service life of the seawall as sea level rise progresses.

Town Dock Pump-Out

The Town of Stonington successful replaced an aged and failing Pump on 05/11/2022 in advance of the Memorial Day weekend and official season opening! The double bonus is that the TOS has applied and will be granted funding to cover 75% of the project cost. This is a beneficial project to the community as it serves the boating and swimming public.

Fourth District Vote Hall

The Martin Laviero Construction Company installed the Rain Gardens this week at the 4th District Vote Hall. This activity culminates the Drainage Project, which entailed the installation of a Tidal Valve, Box Culverts and Rain Gardens. The Rain Gardens are a Low Impact Development (LID) technique to both remove pollutants and infiltrate water in accordance with the DEEP MS4 Permit. A second Phase of the Project Site will include the removal of the asphalt parking and installation of permeable pavers. This will be a wonderful showcase for the Town on how to create resilient, environmentally friendly parking areas! This Phase of the Project is at the cusp of Preliminary Design



Celebrating our Team: Please click on the link [here](#) to see the article featuring DPW's Grounds Leader Steve McNair and the High School athletic fields. The Town is fortunate to have such a dedicated and talented member!

In addition to the Department's many regularly scheduled work, DPW is often stepping in to help with ad hoc projects that benefit the community. As noted in the Human Services update this month and last, the team worked to help with both ADA accessibility in a playground and establishing a new disc golf course. This month they also found time to assist with the creation of a new shuttle stop in downtown Mystic. This is part of a broader effort to reduce traffic in the downtown by having more cars park at the Mystic Seaport's new public parking lot!



Town Clerk's Office

DOG LICENSE RENEWALS

Town Clerk, Sally Duplice, would like to remind Stonington dog owners that it is time to license their dogs for the 2022-2023 year. Licenses are available in the Town Clerk's office Monday through Friday, 8:30am-4:00pm. Also, licenses may be renewed through the mail or dropped in the drop box located by the front door outside Town Hall with a self-addressed stamped envelope (2 postage stamps please!) and the proper paper work.

The cost of a license in June is \$8.00 for an altered dog and \$ 19.00 for non-altered. After June 30th, by state law, there will be an additional charge of \$1.00 per month for each month that a dog over six months of age is not licensed. The owner must show proof that the rabies vaccination is current at the time of applying for the license.

For further information call the Town Clerk's office at (860) 535-5060 or visit us at www.stonington-ct.gov, Town Clerk's Department, Dog Licenses.

School Department Updates

Welcoming Schools

All four schools completed their CT Welcoming Schools walkthroughs as of May 25th. The goal of this process is to make the schools across the district more welcoming to all students, families, and community members. Some of the recommendations include improvements to the outdoor/indoor signage, providing documents in languages other than English, creating a welcoming onboarding process for new families and students, and updating the school websites. Formal written reports will be sent to each principal within the next two weeks. Family members of these teams are invited to join the new Curriculum, Climate and Conversation Teams next fall to increase opportunities for families to exchange information with district and school leaders.

High Five Fridays



Stonington Police Officers have started a wonderful new collaboration with Stonington Public Schools (SPS). On Friday mornings for the remainder of the school year, officers will be outside greeting staff and students as they arrive at school. The officers will be giving high fives and fist bumps to all in celebration of finishing the

week of teaching and learning. Deans Mill participated on Friday, May 27th, West Vine Street School is on deck for June 3rd and Stonington Middle School for June 10th. SPS is enormously grateful to the officers for their assistance as they keep our schools welcoming and safe.

Board and Commission Updates

Beautification Committee

There are some beautiful new plantings at the Korean Memorial and existing bridge planters will be getting all new plantings for Memorial Day! The Committee also just allocated \$2000.00 dollars from fundraising efforts to support new tree plantings on the Mystic and Pawcatuck village areas of town.

The Rain Barrel project is underway! The Rotary of the Stonington's is interested in purchasing Rain Barrels to place around town. Very Exciting. Each rain barrel holds 60 gallons of rain water! The rain barrels are \$89 each with \$10 being donated to the Beautification Committee! They can be ordered at www.greatamericanrainbarrel.com/community/. Just select Town and State and hit order. Pick up will be on Wednesday, June 29, 2022 at Stonington Human Services. Last day to order is June 19, 2022 at midnight!

The Stonington Beautification Committee is also seeking volunteers for watering and weeding and clean ups! To volunteer please email stoningtonbeautification@stonington-ct.gov! Great idea for students needing volunteer hours!

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!

Lawns – Do You Know... Footprint calculator – Do You Know...

...Do you know how your family's daily activities are impacting the climate crisis? People living in the wealthier nations of the world generally have much higher rates of carbon emissions than the less wealthy nations. In order to achieve the goal set by governments around the world, we

all must reduce our carbon footprints. So gather your family members and try out one of these calculators (you may be surprised – even people who are trying to reduce their impact are a bit amazed at the results of the calculators):

- <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>
- <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/resources/footprint-calculator/>
- <https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/calculator>

Economic Development Commission

Once a month or so, the EDC sends out their own eNews to 1,800+ Stonington residents who like to know what the EDC is doing. Often, they pass on links to online resources useful to our businesses and residents. If you know any they have missed and would like to share, please let them know! See the EDC's [Stonington 1649](#) website for the latest news, and [subscribe](#) to alerts for EDC Agendas and Minutes as they are posted on the Town website.

The EDC is making progress on these exciting initiatives!

- **"Stuck" property analysis:** The EDC is undertaking a census of historically “stuck” properties. These properties include those that have been on the real estate market for a lengthy period of time and/or have unrealized economic opportunity. The goal of this census activity is to better understand barriers that prevent greater economic value realization from these underutilized assets and identify potential solutions.
- **"Calling Creatives":** Artists and creative businesses are invited to join the Cultural District Committee, a subcommittee of the EDC pending formal recognition of a District(s). Let us know you are here and please tell us about your business. Community members will be gathering information to create a Cultural Asset Inventory, compiling a list and map of locations of artists and businesses related to the creative economy. Whether it be an historical site or a co-op of artists, educational or tourism related, including businesses related to enriching our lives; each one is important to this effort.

We meet once a month to share ideas as we plan for State designation, assisted by the Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition. Contact Elsie Bisset, Economic Development Commission, elsiebis@yahoo.com.

The EDC is an energetic, committed team of 12 volunteers striving to grow the tax base, while preserving the residential character of the Town as described by the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). We are an advisory body, and make recommendations to our key partners the Board of Selectmen, Department of Planning, and the Planning & Zoning Commission. The EDC focuses on initiatives that support economic growth: table of our initiatives and progress is included on all Regular Meeting Agendas and Minutes available on the EDC page of the Town website.

Thank you for reading our update. We are looking forward to another productive month.

Thank you, Stonington!