

Town of Stonington

Monthly Newsletter



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(Mark your calendar for the Mystic River Bridge 100-year anniversary celebration October 15th)

September 2022

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 are once again grateful to all who have contributed to our Newsletter. 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

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-Getting to Know Us-

A look at the people behind our Departments and Boards.

By Morgan Browning, Stonington Youth Volunteer

Town Tax Collector, Linda Camelio

In Stonington, the Tax Collector is an elected position. Linda Camelio was nominated by the Republican Town Committee, and cross endorsed by the Democratic Town Committee. She previously worked for Connecticut College in the Center for International Studies and for Rob Simmons when he was a U.S. Congressman. During college she earned a degree in Chinese and Linguistics and a Masters in Management. When Ms. Camelio is not working, she loves to bike, swim, play tennis, read, and cook. She has been working for the past 40 years and has had other jobs in the town such as a tutor at Stonington High School. Something that Ms. Camelio thinks people don't know about her is that she studied and graduated with a degree in Chinese and Linguistics ...and she studied on the SS Universe Campus, taking classes while at sea, and visiting many countries around the world. She also lived and worked in Beijing, China for a year.

Learning more about the position

The thing that Ms. Camelio said surprised her the most about her job was that people in our town don't seem to mind paying taxes, for the most part. She says this is because people in our town are appreciative of how many services they get in return from their taxes. Our town has a strong education system, police department, and highway department all because of its tax payers. Ms. Camelio stated "I love my job, and I love coming to work every day." She went on to share that she wished more people knew that the Tax Collector should not be an elected position. She feels it should be based on qualifications, any person with no qualifications or even no motivation to work could be elected and they legally would not even have to show up if they did not want to. I asked Ms. Camelio if there are any responsibilities the department has that other residents might not realize and she said that everyone thinks that they are only busy in July. Ms. Camelio says that this is not true at all, "the most time-consuming part of the job is trying to get delinquent taxpayers to pay." July is mainly filled with people coming in and out to pay, which is the least stressful. In the past few years, the town has conjoined 11 tax bills, which means residents are now able to pay their taxes all on one bill. Stonington is fortunate enough to have three certified tax collectors in their office; not many other towns have these assets. Ms. Camelio says it is extremely helpful to our town because everyone knows how to do pretty much everything in the office, which allows it to run smoothly and efficiently.

Jay Spalding, Chair, Stonington Harbor Management Commission

Jay first got involved in the community because he was interested in the work that the Harbor Management Commission did and he wanted to help out in the town. When he isn't working, he enjoys sailing, boating, and spending time with his family. He has been working on the Commission for the past eight years. I asked him if he had always wanted to do community work or if the job came to him unexpectedly. Mr. Spalding said that his parents did a lot of work in his community growing up so it was something that always interested him. He says he not only takes the opportunity he has to work with the town directly, through the commission, but he likes to participate in charities in the town as well. One thing that people might be surprised to know about Jay is that he runs a robotics educational non-profit with his wife, Irene. Their children had been interested in robotics, which led them to starting the non-profit seven years ago. This last Spring their organization went to the robotics world championship!

Learning more about the Stonington Harbor Management Commission

Mr. Spalding says that everybody on the Commission is very cooperative and committed to their work. He feels that there is no politics and everybody wants what is best for the harbor, Borough

and the Town. The work is very gratifying and there is little contention from the public. Jay hopes that people in the community are aware of how hard all the commissioner's work. Each individual's job is a lot more work beyond monthly meetings, each member is responsible for surveying a specific section of moorings a few times each summer. They must ensure that the moorings are maintained, being used, and occupied by the boats assigned to the moorings.

Jay says that the town does not have much jurisdiction over the water below the Coastal Jurisdiction Line (just above high tide line). The only way that the town is able to have a say over what happens in the harbor is through making an official Harbor Management Plan. The town then gets a review on construction of docks, and dredging. The commission works hand in hand with the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection involving permitting structures built in the water and floating docks. The next big thing that the Stonington Harbor Management is working on is the rewrite of the Stonington Harbor Management Plan. They are not going to be making any large changes, but there are things that need to be updated. Jay says that the rules are not going to be changed, but they are going to be made to be more understandable. Once the rewrite is done its approval has to be voted by the town residents. Something that Chair Jay Spalding felt the community might not know is that all the funding for the commission is entirely paid for by the mooring fees. From those fees the commission has saved up enough money this year to buy the harbor master a new boat.

-Town Department Updates-

Assessment Department

The Department of Assessment would like to thank all residents and property owners for their cooperation with the 2022 Revaluation Project. We mailed 7,958 data mailers and to date we received 6,749. **That is a return rate of 85%, which is phenomenal.** Thank you to everyone for helping us not only verify accurate property data, but also achieve cost savings in such an important project.

Please keep in mind that properties that did not return a data mailer, or have active building permits, will continue to be inspected by either Assessment Staff or Revaluation Staff. All

personnel and their vehicle information are on file with the Town and the Police Department. Residents can always call the Assessor's Office, or the Police Department if it is outside of Town Hall hours to verify a staff member's identity or answer any questions or concerns.

Personal Property Declarations will be mailed the last week of September to all known owners of tangible personal property in Town. Personal Property consist of non-registered and out of state motor vehicles, trailers, construction equipment, machinery, commercial furniture fixtures and equipment and various other types of property. Declarations are due November 1st. If you need an extension, you must request one in writing at the latest by November 1st. Please do not hesitate to contact the Assessor's Office for any questions at 860-535-5098.

Applications for the PA-490 program (Farm & Forest) may be submitted to the Department of Assessment beginning October 1, 2022. If you have questions about either the Farm or Forest classification program, please contact the Assessor's Office.

Department of Public Works

Pavement Management

When it comes to moving people and materials in the Town of Stonington, the streets are our most vital asset. We believe an investment this important should be carefully preserved and maintained for our residents. Stonington's Pavement Management Program does just that.

This year we completed our largest project in September, the milling and overlaying of Palmer and Prospect Streets in Pawcatuck. Before final paving we repaired drainage infrastructure, improved accessibility, trimmed trees and replaced curbing, and backfilled curbs and sidewalks. We also provided all traffic control for roadway construction activities. The Town **replaced 10,764 sq feet of sidewalks, driveway aprons and accessible ramps** on Palmer and Prospect Streets. During paving we placed 2,175 tons of asphalt and 1850 linear feet of asphalt curb.

Winter Preparation

Preparing for winter begins in the summer for the Stonington DPW. We have **more than 115 miles of roads to maintain**. In order to achieve a high level of service, long range planning and equipment readiness are undertaken by the Public Works Department months before the winter season. At this time approximately half of our fleet is ready for winter storm response. We currently have 300 tons of salt in storage and will be obtaining another 100 tons to fill our salt storage shed.

Catch Basin Cleaning

In order to direct the flow of rainwater and prevent flooding, the Town maintains a storm sewer system. Rainwater enters the storm sewer system through a grate in the street called a “catch basin”. Catch basins are connected to storm drains that discharge rainwater runoff directly into the nearest brook, river, pond or Long Island Sound.

During September and continuing into October, we are conducting catch basin cleaning for all roads within the Town except for state and private roads and federal properties. During cleaning, the catch basin is also inspected to determine if any repairs are required, such as fixing broken asphalt or replacing a broken grate. **The DPW maintains approximately 1600 catch basins.** We are currently refining our GIS mapping of all our basins and drainage infrastructure, which is a large but important new undertaking.



As a reminder, our daily activities can impact the health of our waterways. As stormwater runoff, goes into our storm drains and out into our waterways it can carry pollution from our homes, lawns, pets, cars, and other means. In recent years, sources of water pollution originating from industrial and sewage treatment plants have been greatly reduced. If we want to continue to make progress, more effort is needed to control

polluted runoff, such as fertilizer washing off lawns. And remember, don't dump! Only rainwater should go down a storm drain. Let's all do our part and keep our waterways clean. **YOU CAN HELP BE PART OF THE SOLUTION!**

- Eliminate Fertilizers & Pesticides- Lawn treatments are a top polluter
- More Plants, Less Pavement- Increase (native) plant cover
- Use Permeable Pavers- For your driveway or patio
- Disconnect Downspouts- Direct roof runoff into plants or soil
- Scoop the Poop! Dispose of pet waste properly

You can learn more at www.stonington-ct.gov/engineering/pages/npdes-phase-2-ms4-stormwater-permitting

Human Services

Over 100 energy applications have already been sent out to residents. We encourage all those interested in applying for **assistance with heating** their home this season to complete the process as soon as possible – BEFORE the cold weather hits! For an application, please email LTheodore@stonington-ct.gov.

We are now currently taking names, ages and shoe sizes of Stonington youth who are interested in enrolling in the 2022-2023 **Winter Boot Project**. This program works to provide new, warm winter boots to local children in need. Sign up today, or reach out to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.

Construction has BEGUN on the **tennis and pickleball court(s)** in Spellman Park! Plan a **hike** through the trails, or a fun day trying out the new **Disc Golf Course**, and check out the progress for yourself. The Recreation Division is also busy planning out the Fall/Winter COMO Rec **Basketball** Program and Indoor NFL **Flag Football** League.

Our Friday **Senior Luncheon** Series returns on October 7th at Enders Island, followed by November 4th at Mystic Diner and December 2nd at Babcock Smith House. \$25/participant – enjoy a nice afternoon out! Register soon as spaces are limited.

From **Mommy & Me** classes to the return of the popular “**Read to a Dog**” program – our Youth & Family Services Division has a variety of experiences to offer. Get in the spirit of the season... Save the date for the **21st Annual Halloween Egg Hunt** – Sunday, October 30th from 5-6:30pm or consider participating in the **Stonington Scarecrow Contest** – a program jointly sponsored by the Stonington Beautification Committee.

For more information, or to register for a program, go to: <https://stonington.recdesk.com>; email to: LTheodore@stonington-ct.gov; or call (860) 535-5015.

Planning Department

The Department of Planning manages Stonington’s land use decision-making, permitting and enforcement processes and provides technical assistance to several local boards and commissions. The Department is involved with long-range planning initiatives such as the Plan of Conservation and Development. The Department also leads Community Development efforts, often administering special grant-related projects.

Responsibilities also include enforcement of the Town's Zoning and Inland Wetlands regulations on behalf of relevant commissions. The Department includes 5 full time employees – Director of Economic and Community Development, Town Planner, Zoning/Wetlands Official, and 2 Land Use Application Facilitators. An additional position to support the Grants and Floodplain Management was approved during the last budget cycle and should be posted soon (if you know any applicants- please send them our way!).

Zoning Regulations Comprehensive Update

The Stonington Planning and Zoning Commission is excited to begin the task of comprehensively rewriting the Zoning Regulations. The Town's regulations were adopted in 1961 and have not been comprehensively updated since 1979.

With the help of the Town's consultant, FHI Studios, this project will be done in 2 phases:

- Phase 1 will consist of a holistic reorganization of the regulations to improve readability, consistency and eliminate sections that no longer comply with state statutes.
- Phase 2 will consist of potential changes to the many specific rules that make up the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map. These could include changes to zoning district boundaries, allowed uses and bulk (dimensional) requirements.

While both phases will include ample opportunities for public input, Phase 2 is where the need to hear from the public is even more crucial. No substantive changes will be made without hearing from residents and business owners. The Commission is holding virtual workshop meetings on the 4th Tuesday of each month. As the Zoning Regulations are complex and cover a host of issues this is expected to be a roughly two-year process.

Land Use Applications

Recent land use approvals include the following:

- Approval of an eleven-lot residential Subdivision with dedicated open space off Cormorant Rd., Mystic.
- Approval of modifications to the previously approved Crescent Club residential development at Mary Hall and Greenhaven Roads. Modifications reduce the project from 71 approved units, which included 64 townhouse units and 7 single family homes, to 42 single family homes.
- Approval of new Zoning Regulations for cannabis establishments. Retail establishments are allowed by Special Permit in the TC-80 and HI-60 commercial districts (Exits 90 and

92) with other types of cannabis establishments allowed by Special Permit in the Town's industrial districts. A maximum of one retail and one non-retail cannabis establishments are permitted in Town. During a 2021 Town referendum, voters approved of the concept of such businesses in Stonington as allowed per State law.

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

- Inland Wetlands and Watercourses application for seeking a permit to fill 4,960SF of wetlands and create 5,000SF of wetlands for future construction of a 14,400SF 2-story residential building, 2 retail buildings with parking and associated site improvements at 16-20 Stonington Rd, Mystic.
- Zoning Variance application seeking to vary Flood Hazard Substantial Improvement requirements for the redevelopment of an existing commercial structure at 2-6 Mechanic St., Pawcatuck.

In addition, the Planning and Zoning Commission will be holding a public hearing on 10/4 on the issue of whether to opt out of State Statutes related to Accessory Dwelling Units. Public Act 21-29 was approved by the State in 2021. The Act requires municipalities to allow Accessory Dwelling Units on any property with a single-family dwelling, but does give towns the ability to formally opt out of the Act's requirements before 1/1/23. Opting Out would allow the Town to maintain its current Zoning Regulations which were amended in 2018 to allow Accessory Dwelling Units for more property owners.

Online Permitting

The Department of Planning is currently working with the firm OpenGov to develop an online land use application process. Currently online permitting is only available for Building Permit applications. Online permitting is expected to be available in 2023.

Record Scanning

The Department is currently working with the firm Merritt Graphics to digitize six decades' worth of land use application files. This project will protect historical records, create a searchable database, streamline department functionality and free up much needed space in Town Hall.

Brownfield Grant – Former Stillmanville Mill Brownfield Assessment Grant

Since the time that the Town was granted \$139,000 to fund the Brownfield Assessment of the Former Stillmanville Mill Property at 75 Stillman Avenue, Weston and Sampson have established testing areas on the site and have taken samples to determine the levels of contamination from the former manufacturing facility. This is an important step in understanding the extent of the contamination on the property so that it may have a better chance of being revitalized in the future. The Town met with Weston and Sampson this month to preview the laboratory reports. A final report of the results should be coming in the next month, and will be shared publicly. We are looking forward to engaging with residents on potential next steps with this property over the coming year.

Route One Sidewalk Project – Office of Policy and Management Grant

The Town received a \$600,000 grant from OPM to design and install a sidewalk on the Route One Corridor between Spellman Drive and Mayflower Avenue. The Town has requested easements from property owners to establish the connection between the downtown Pawcatuck village and Stonington High School. BL Companies was hired to assist the town in the design of the project and is currently putting together a bid package, which should be reviewed this Fall by the State DOT and then will go out for the public bid. We are hopeful to see shovels in the ground on this project in the Spring of 2023. Since the last update, we also received two additional easements to allow for sidewalks.

2022 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Competitive Funding

The Town is currently advertising for a competitive proposal to hire a consultant to assist the town in the writing of an application for \$600,000 in CDBG funding to relocate leaching fields under the parking lot as a “green septic system” for St. Edmund’s on Ender’s Island. The town expects to hire a consultant and hold a public hearing for this project in October.

Establishment of Cultural District

Through four community conversations and an ongoing series of subcommittee meetings the establishment of a local cultural district is being explored and researched. This geographically designated area could be a resource to both the Town and Borough for future grant money to bolster our local Arts & Culture community. To learn more or get involved with this exciting new project please contact Elsie Bisset elsiebis@yahoo.com.

Stonington Business Directory

A brand-new Stonington Business Directory has been produced and is currently being distributed in both digital and paper format. If you would like a copy of the directory visit our website or paper copies are available in the lobby of the Town Hall.

Others stories you may have missed... ‘Stonington launches local Seafood Campaign’, ‘Stuck Property Census’, or ‘Stonington Promotional Documentary’. To read more on these, and stay updated on other community news, please visit the Economic Development Commission’s fantastic website; stonington1649.com

Solid Waste



Autumn is the Season that teaches us that change can be beautiful

- Unknown

Autumn is a beautiful time of year. Yes, it’s always sad that summer is over, but that doesn’t mean Fall isn’t worthy of the same affection. The crispness in the air brings thoughts of pumpkins, cider donuts and autumn sweaters. The squirrels are stockpiling acorns and the leaves on the trees are changing and displaying their beautiful fall colors.

Fall is a special time when nature recycles nutrients and prepares for winter, and there are plenty of things you can do to take advantage of the current season and prepare for the colder months ahead. Autumn leaves are gardener’s gold, and this time of year is the perfect opportunity for collecting those fallen leaves so you can use them later.

Don’t have a garden or spot to compost? You may bring those leaves down to the Stonington Transfer Station at no charge and we will happily compost them for you. Just a reminder about the leaf recycle piles, only leaves and small twigs, please no brush or grass clippings! You can drop them off in lawn paper bags or add to our piles from your containers. Once composting is complete, you will be welcomed to stop in and pick up some of that black gold, again for no charge for our Stonington residents! We currently have compost and mulch available on a self-serve basis free of charge to Stonington residents for gardening and lawn applications. An

Attendant may also be available to load your truck or trailer for you. That service will not be available during the lunch hour or half hour prior to closing. Supply is subject to availability and limits may apply.

Composting is an easy and natural way to recycle. Compost can be made from most organic materials such as leaves, kitchen scraps, and yard trimmings, and it can improve the health of your soil and plants. You can be as involved as you like with your compost pile: simply stack things up and wait for nature to take its course, or turn, water, and monitor the pile to speed up the process. When mixed with soil, compost increases the organic matter content, improves the physical properties of the soil, and supplies essential nutrients, enhancing the soil's ability to support plant growth. Compost can also be applied to the soil surface to conserve moisture, control weeds, reduce erosion, improve appearance, and keep the soil from gaining or losing heat too rapidly.

The brush pile at the Transfer Station is for branches, trees, and lawn clippings. Residential brush accompanied by the home owner can be disposed of at no charge. This material is run through a commercial tub grinder at least twice per year at no charge to the Town, a benefit of being a SCRRRA (Southeastern CT Regional Resources Recovery Authority) member.

The Stonington Transfer Station, located at 151 Greenhaven Road, Pawcatuck, is an exceptionally run facility by a knowledgeable staff. Open weekdays (closed Wednesday) 9AM – 3PM. Saturdays 8AM – 3PM and Sundays 8AM – 1PM.

Speaking of composting, we hope to have very exciting news shortly as we get closer to being a recipient of a CT DEEP Sustainable Materials Management (SSM) grant to have a one-year food waste collection pilot program here in Stonington. Should the funds be granted, the contracted trash hauler will be picking up food scraps in green bags that residents have separated from the non-recyclable trash of your yellow bag.

This program, once the grant is received and the logistics ironed out, will begin with a mailer to each Stonington resident with directions on how to pick up their free 4-gallon green compost pail and a year's supply (52) of green bags. On your regularly scheduled trash pick-up day, the green bag will be placed out with your yellow bags and recycling. That's it!

In an industry with rising costs and a practice of the more it weighs the more you have to pay to dispose of it, eliminating heavy, wet food waste from Stonington's trash sent to the incinerator in Lisbon would be environmentally and fiscally conscientious. The Sustainable Materials

Management coalition is trying to significantly reduce the amount of material going into the waste stream. The Pay-As-You-Throw unit-based system (yellow bags) here in Stonington already works to reduce the amount of disposed waste. Connecticut produces 2.4 million tons of trash per year, of which about 1.4 million tons is managed by in-state incinerators. This means almost a million tons must be shipped to out of state landfills. Connecticut residents produce 740 pounds per capita of municipal solid waste per year, about average. In Stonington, with our Pay-As-You-Throw yellow bag program and successful recycling program, that figure is 389 pounds. Yellow bags with recycling work to reduce the amount of waste sent to the incinerator. Now we will encourage residents to separate their food scraps from other trash so the organic waste can be turned into biogas and fertilizer instead of paying to incinerate it. This will be a grant funded, one year pilot program, that if successful could be replicated in other communities and significantly reduce the stream of waste generated here in Connecticut. We hope to be sharing this news shortly!

Regarding residential curbside collection, below are the holiday hours for the remainder of 2022:

CURBSIDE COLLECTION ROUTES

October 10th – Monday	Columbus Day	No Disruption in Curbside Service
November 11th – Friday	Veteran’s Day	No Disruption in Curbside Service
November 24th – Thursday	Thanksgiving	No scheduled pick up on this day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday service route will be picked up Friday Nov 25th • Friday service route will be picked up Saturday Nov 26th 		

TRANSFER STATION HOURS

October 10th – Monday	Columbus Day	CLOSED
November 11th – Friday	Veteran’s Day	CLOSED
November 24th – Thursday	Thanksgiving	CLOSED
November 25th – Friday	Day After	CLOSED
December 24th – Saturday	Christmas Eve	Open 8 AM – 12 NOON
December 25th – Sunday	Christmas Day	CLOSED
December 26th – Monday	Christmas Observed	CLOSED

We still have 2 Hazardous Waste and Paper Shredding events remaining in 2022. Saturday, October 8th, at the Griswold Hwy Garage, 1148 Voluntown Road (RT 138) 9am – 1pm and Saturday, November 5th, at the Ledyard High School, 24 Gallup Hill Road from 9am – 1pm.

Proper waste management practices are an essential part of clean, sustainable communities. Help Stonington do its part in creating a *Sustainable CT* and utilize all the benefits our Transfer Station has to offer. We look forward to serving you!

Tax Collector

July, the tax office's biggest collection month, has successfully passed, and the tax office is now in a phase of using many available collection tools to collect the taxes that have not been paid. It's quite a process! The second installment of real estate and personal property taxes may be paid any time between now and February 1st, 2023. For the first time, the tax office will be mailing reminder postcards for 2nd installments. We hope that this effort proves successful.

Taxes, while universally disliked, pay for all of our town services such as police, teachers, keeping roads and buildings maintained, as well as many other services. Stonington has a AAA bond rating, in part because so much of our population pays its taxes in a timely manner.

Town Clerk's Office

As we gear up for the upcoming State Election on Nov. 8th, I can't help but ask myself where has the summer gone? As I reflect back, it seems like just last month we were issuing dog licenses and that was 3 months ago! Speaking of dog licenses, to date we have issued **1741 licenses for the dog fiscal year** which runs June 1st through May 31st. This is up more than 200 compared to the same time period the year before. Part of this increase is because borders are now requiring proof of licensing and not just proof of rabies vaccinations in order to leave your dog.

Stonington continues to be a very popular venue for marriage ceremonies no matter what the time of year! With the influx of summer residents and vacationers, we realized an uptick in the sale of fishing licenses and shellfish licenses.

In August there was both a Democratic and Republican State Primary Election. In the Democratic race, 16% of those eligible to vote voted and in the Republican race, 20%. Getting back to the State Election on Nov. 8th, I expect a high voter turnout as there seems to already be a lot of interest. In August all the Town Clerks in Connecticut were surprised with grant money from the State of Connecticut to help defray the costs incurred from the printing and mailing and anything else associated with absentee ballots. Stonington received \$7,665.41! Stay tuned for more information in the upcoming weeks by visiting the Town Clerk's webpage and calendar.

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