

## TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Honorable Town Council Members

FROM: Karl F. Kilduff, Town Manager

DATE: December 21, 2022

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Please find my report concerning various items of interest to the Town Council and community.

### 1. Council Business:

- EDC Strategy – The EDC has held two sessions so far focused on developing a set of goals to keep the commission focused. We are making good progress and there has been very good level of engagement from EDC members. We will continue meeting into January to complete the process. The Commission members have been doing “homework assignments” to keep the momentum going in between meeting dates. I would expect that the EDC may want to make a presentation to the Town Council at the conclusion of their process to share the results and/or seek input.
- Noise Ordinance – The Noise Ordinance Subcommittee met to discuss the issues associated with such an ordinance. Representation from the Police Commission and staff helped clarify the current level of response to noise complaints as well as approaches which can be taken to complaint calls which does not require an ordinance on the books. Awareness within the Police Department is going to be raised over noise complaints and possible Police approaches. Data on complaint calls will also be tracked so reports can be provided to the Police Commission and the Town Council.
- Beautification Committee – The charge that was given to the Beautification Commission included a requirement that they prepare a report in November to be provided to the Council outlining plans for the next fiscal year and any associated funding requests. Attached to this report is a copy of the document prepared by Beautification. As this is a budget item, their request will be considered as part of the budget which will be reviewed in February.
- Possible Regional Solid Waste Management Authority – The area towns that take their municipal solid waste to the Essex Transfer station met to discuss the feasibility of creating a solid waste management authority to manage our waste given the closure of MIRA. This approach would be a replacement for MIRA and hope that pooled resources could deliver price stability over a stand-alone garbage bid.

There is value to this as a long-term conversation. At present, there are a number of issues to work through in creating an authority. It is not a short-term matter.

## **2. River COG:**

The Council of Governments met on December 14, 2022. The primary business before the COG was approval of the regions legislative issues and interaction with state representatives and senators to discuss elements of regional agenda. The regional legislative agenda is attached to this report for the Council's information. While not every issue is germane to Clinton, we have shared concerns about the future of solid waste policy in the State, timely payments of state grants-in-aid, and other issues.

## **3. Estuary Transit District:**

The Board of the transit district met on December 9, 2022. Highlights from the meeting included an update on marketing and branding the new merged transit district, raising awareness on free fares through the end of March 2023, unified fares across all bus systems is becoming a possibility due to the work of our district which the DOT now wants to loop in Shoreline East and the Hartford Rail line, ridership has increased to pre-COVID levels and district staffing has stabilized. Additionally, dues to participate in the district were increased by 3%. Local dues serve as a local match for funding that is provided from the DOT. It is expected that the DOT will be providing significant funding for transit in the upcoming budget.

## **4. Miscellaneous:**

- Winter Electricity Demand – Eversource provided a briefing to discuss the response should (albeit very unlikely) an electricity arise this winter due to disruptions in natural gas supplies or other extenuating circumstances. A similar briefing was provided during the summer when the electric grid operator – ISO New England – expressed concerns about spiking demand. For the winter, ISO New England is concerned that extended cold and/or global conflicts impact the availability of natural gas which fuels the electricity plants we rely on. Should there be an issue, “controlled outages” may be called for. Circuits in the power grid could be shut off for 4-6 hours to help shed load. This step would only come after voluntary conversation calls and surplus generation were unable to address the problem. This would be very different than a storm response as ISO New England would be setting the terms of utilities to respond. Lines would not be downed but bringing back the power would have to be staged to not impact household utilization that was interrupted as a result of the brown out.

Eversource will communicate with the towns if time allows before load has to be shed from the power grid which would give us time to notify the public and respond with warming centers if necessary. It was noted that in an extreme ISO New England could demand an immediate reduction of load which would give no notice.

- Façade Grants – I finally received the approval necessary from the State Historic Preservation Office to allow two façade applications to move forward. The properties are not in a designated historic district and the scope of work does not impact historical assets of the Town. This clearance is required for a project to move forward. Notices to proceed and agreements were sent to the two applicants so they can time their projects accordingly.

- STEAP Grant – The Town received a fully executed copy of the grant agreement for the \$500,000 STEAP grant to help fund part of the radio improvement project. The signed agreement gives us the green light to move forward with the project and move to the contracting phase. We are trying to move as fast as possible to commit to purchasing the needed equipment which will allow us to lock in favorable pricing before the end of the calendar year. In addition to working with the vendor to contract for equipment, we also need to satisfy contract requirements under the purview of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) which is trigger based on the size of the grant award. I am working to keep both of these pieces moving forward.

## Beautification Committee Plans for 2023

The inaugural year of the Committee was a great success, and we intend to build on that for 2023. Here is a list of the projects that we feel will have the greatest impact for Clinton in the next budget cycle. Please note: We are supplying all of the labor which minimizes the cost impact the town budget.

- 1) Purchase plants for the three existing self-watering planters; 3@ \$100 each. These planters are stationed at each side of the bridge on Rte 1 crossing the Indian River.
- 2) Purchase plants for the eleven (11) Indian River bridge railing planters; two(2) geraniums for each of the planters @ \$7 each = \$154. We would like to take this over, and ensure that they are planted and watered throughout the summer.
- 3) We propose that we create small gardens below or near the Town of Clinton signs on both ends of Rte 1. Cost to purchase plants for two Clinton entrance signs; one on Rt.1Westbrook/Clinton line and one on Rt.1 Madison/Clinton bridge: \$500 each (\$1,000)
- 4) Purchase plants for Indian River Garden: \$100 – Last year we planted and maintained a series of perennials along the Indian River. It would be nice to expand this so that it joins up with the proposed vegetative buffer along the Indian River.
- 5) We are proposing to purchase plants for the Hanging Basket Pilot Program for the five (5) streetlights at Post Office Square. This project was abandoned last year due to concerns about watering. We propose that the Public Works investigate and try to manage these 5 baskets. We will get town businesses to sponsor the cost of hardware, baskets and flowers. If this pilot has success, we could broaden it out for the entire downtown area.
- 6) Possible plantings by the white fence by the Comcast Building. This fence is in the heart of Clinton and could be spruced up with plantings. We believe the cost for the first year is \$200.

Additional Projects that can be added with appropriate budget:

- 7) Serpentine bulb garden – This has been employed at several towns around CT, and provides a terrific visual upon getting off the highway. In our case, we would put it in off Exit 63. The garden would absolutely pop in the following spring. \$500
- 8) More Planters – Building on our success of the first year. We would order two more large, self watering planters for Liberty Green. These would help beautify and fill in Liberty Green after the tree removal. These would cost an additional \$2000 and would be filled not only during the spring / summer months, but additionally during the holiday season.

All in, we believe that our budget will be:

Budget for Beautication Plans		
Project Number	Description	Cost
1	Plants for 3 Planters	300
2	Indian River Bridge Planters	154
3	Gardens for Clinton Entrance	1000
4	Indian River Garden Extension	100
5	Postal Square Pilot	0
6	Comcast Building Garden	200
Total		1754
Additional Projects		
7	Bulb Garden	500
8	Additional Planters	2000
Addl Project Total		\$2500

## **Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure, and Economic Development**

- The COG's Regional Services Grant should be increased to support and provide additional funding for COGs to further expand regional planning efforts. The RSG is currently funded at \$4.1 million statewide and in a previous budget COGs were promised \$7 million. Unfortunately, that level of funding was never realized.
- Rollback recent changes to the Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) that overly complicate, limit funding opportunities, and unnecessarily restrict the useability of the grant.
- Attract youth to the region by supporting policies that grow jobs, expand housing options, and provide opportunities for revitalization of the region's central business districts. The region also seeks to support legislation that will help implement recommendations from the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD) and Regional Housing Plan (RHP) that seek to further diversify the region.
- Request that the newly formed Office of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) create a standardized coding guideline to ensure a uniform collection of all relevant zoning and parcel data. The unfortunate lack of a standardized collection process slows regional planning efforts and unnecessarily complicates analysis of regional parcel data.
- The region will be better served if the state provides a more consistent message concerning their goals around long-term development and conservation initiatives outlined in the State POCD and Consolidated Housing Plan. Consistency and further clarification of developmental goals will allow for more effective planning efforts both regionally and locally.
- Support efforts to better establish stability and housing security for our region's residents including the creation of rent control measures that would create reasonable caps on increases that occur during a lease renewal process. Currently, the state lacks any statutory language or protections to renters that limit a landlord's ability to raise rental fees each year.
- The RiverCOG communities encourage the state to provide additional funding for the upkeep, maintenance, and modernization of our region's state-owned parks. Multiple repair projects of these parks and open spaces are currently backlogged and awaiting funding to proceed. The region hopes that the state will continue to invest in preserving these treasured open spaces.
- Reduce the region's carbon emissions from the transportation sector by providing additional grant opportunities that will expand publicly available EV charging stations and networks.
- Ensure that the state facilitates more municipal and regional applications to federal discretionary grant programs, by making some state funds available for match. Connecticut has the worst rate of return of any state on the federal money it receives back from federal tax payments.

## **Finance Revenue and Bonding & Appropriations**

- Oppose any taxing policies and proposals that further limit a municipality's ability to generate revenue including but not limited to caps on automobile and real estate tax collection. Modify the statutes to guarantee that the anticipated reimbursements from 2022's automobile mill rate cap do not sunset.
- Support initiatives that ensure that our region's municipalities receive all their state funded allocations, including PILOT payments and MRSA, in a timely fashion and at their fully established statutorily dictated levels.

## **Public Safety, Health and Human Services**

- Revisit 2020's Police Accountability Law and simplify the police department accreditation processes to improve compliance. The existing law also requires the costly storage and upkeep of all body and dash cameras footage and the region would be better served by the creation of a state sponsored storage program.
- Request the creation of a new grant program designed to support the repair, maintenance, and restoration of privately-owned dams. The program would be tailored to apply specifically to applicants or municipalities who can demonstrate that the lack of maintenance poses a public safety risk. Presently, many owners are limited by financial constraints and are unable to have the dams adequately repaired. If these privately-owned dams fail, massive property damage could occur.

## **Environment and Energy**

- Unfortunately, the state continues to ship its municipal solid waste out of the state. Without a centralized effort to address the solid waste crisis, the region's municipalities continue to see tipping fees rise. The region requests that the state develop long-term and short-term solutions for solid waste management. The state must pursue a program that is both cost effective for municipalities and that leverages existing technology that limits the environmental impact of the waste management processing. The region would also request that DEEP reallocate funding to the MSW Grant Program.
- Continue to combat the region's ongoing aquatic invasive species problem through increased funding of DEEP's Clean, Drain, Dry Boat program and support an increase to the overall budget allocation for newly formed Office of Aquatic Invasive Species. Increasing funding will better support cleanup and mitigation efforts already in place.
- The region requires an increase in state support for the cleanup of sites that have been identified as being contaminated by PFAS based chemicals. These contaminated sites pose a risk to the health and well-being of the region's residents and adequate cleanup is a cost that should not be the sole responsibility of the municipality.
- Support efforts to improve the region's access to high-speed internet. Investing in this infrastructure will improve economic development goals, further educational opportunities and make the region more attractive for existing and prospective employers.
- Expand funding for DEEP's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program.
- Support the creation of new extended producer responsibilities for manufacturers of tires and smoke Alarms sold in Connecticut. The ongoing illegal dumping of these products is expensive to cleanup and pose safety risks to residents.

## **Municipal Law and Labor**

- Support the creation of a municipal employee pathways program with the region's institutes of higher education. The programing would be designed to create a pipeline of potential employees for various roles. The region's municipalities would be best served with a statewide effort to assist in the staffing of crucial roles such as Zoning Enforcement Officers and Building Inspectors. Furthermore, there are opportunities to amend and improve relevant statutory language concerning these shared services. Existing language complicates the creation of intermunicipal compacts for

shared services of ZEOs and Building Inspectors. The region requests that this language is modified to be more permissive of creating shared services contracts and agreements.

- Section 9 of Public Act 21-29 requires that all Zoning and Land Use Officials complete 4 hours of training in 2023. Under current law, each municipality is required to self-manage and offer the required training to their respective commissioners. The region recognizes the importance of adequate training but believes that the option of a state sponsored program will help ensure that the training is completed in a timely fashion. Providing a state-run alternative to completing this training would better serve the region.
- Public Safety: Municipalities are feeling the same pinch that our Emergency Medical Responders are feeling as they struggle with personnel issues and payments to keep their businesses afloat. The current protocol in place is that these EMT organizations are given the license to operate in a particular town location, not simply to operate. When the needs of the town are not being met, the PSA ownership holds the town hostage to the EMS service provider. Some CEOs would like to have ownership of the PSA to ensure quality service to citizenry.



