

Connecticut Town & City



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THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT™

April 2013

Connecticut Town&City

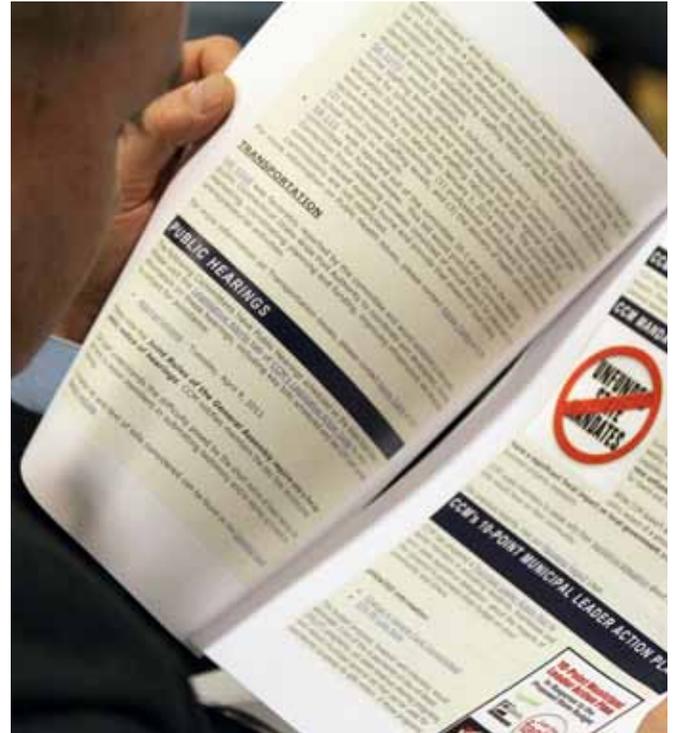
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Connecticut Town&City

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
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Appropriations Committee proposed state budget is a mixed bag for town and cities; State PILOT & Mohegan-Pequot funding restored; makes additional cuts in municipal aid

As CT&C went to press the Appropriation Committee released its state budget proposal. Here is CCM's initial response:

"Municipal leaders know that this latest state budget proposal is part of a process, and that we are still not yet at a final product. Today's proposed state budget is a mixed bag for towns and cities," said Jim Finley, CCM Executive Director and CEO. "State Legislators have answered some of the pleas of their local partners by partially restoring critical revenues to hometowns such as the PILOT reimbursement for state-owned property and Pequot-Mohegan funding. There is still much municipal aid progress to be made as the budget negotiation process continues.

"CCM's analysis shows that General Fund Unrestricted State Aid to Municipalities is being reduced by \$152 million under today's state budget proposal. This compares to the Governor's budget proposal that would have reduced General Fund Unrestricted State Aid to Municipalities by \$128 million. The \$11 million cuts in each of the main PILOT reimbursements, (State Property, Colleges, and Hospitals), as well as, the Pequot-Mohegan grant, will also hurt municipalities.

"The proposed elimination of public school transportation grant funding (-\$25 million), reimbursements for state-mandated property tax exemptions for manufacturing machinery and equipment (-\$47 million), and ground-breaking municipal revenue sharing funds (-\$45 million) are serious cause for concern. The fact remains, towns and cities – and local property taxpayers – cannot afford to pay for the State's budget deficit. Cuts in state aid to municipalities will cause increases in local property taxes, cuts in municipal services, and layoffs of municipal employees and teachers. To this end, CCM remains committed to working with the General Assembly and the Governor to enact a state budget that is fair to towns and cities."



CCM continues fight for relief against top 12 unfunded mandates

At the beginning of each session of the General Assembly there are many uncertainties – what bills will be proposed, which ones will go forward, and what issues will draw the battle lines for towns and cities.

There is also one constant: CCM's annual fight to stop and reform unfunded and underfunded mandates on towns and cities. CCM has waged this fight

throughout its entire 47-year history of defending the interests of Connecticut's towns and cities.

This year, CCM has rolled out a new strategy to try to convince lawmakers to approve meaningful mandate reform that would save towns and cities millions of dollars. "The List" is a compilation of the worst of the worst state mandates on municipalities.

In addition to testifying before the legislative Appropriations and Finance Committees about the dollar and cents effects of unfunded mandates, CCM is using "The List" to educate members of a Task Force appointed by House Speaker Brendan Sharkey charged with relieving pressures – including mandates – on towns.

(Cont. on page 3)

CCM asks for legislative help at mid-April “Day on the Hill” at state capitol



The 70 municipal leaders who participated in CCM’s annual “Day on the Hill” had the ear of the General Assembly’s legislative leadership – and they gave the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate and both Republican Minority leaders an “earful” about the problems with Governor Malloy’s proposed budget.

“Towns have already spent the last five years cutting services and losing staff to layoffs and attrition,” said Torrington Mayor and CCM President Ryan Bingham. “We ask the State government to do the same before placing more burdens on towns.”

Even though the General Assembly was in session on April 10th, the legislative leaders broke away from their legislative duties at staggered times to address the mayors, first selectmen, and town managers who turned out to make their case for a final State budget that does not do further harm to cities and towns.

CCM’s State Budget “Ask,” was clear and forceful: “Truly hold harmless towns and cities – maintain State funding for PILOT(s), Pequot-Mohegan and Municipal Revenue Sharing funds, and preserve other State aid to towns.”

Senate President Don Williams of Brooklyn led off the legislative speaking lineup by telling the municipal leaders that the legislature has spent the last five years

trying to protect municipal aid in a tough economy – and that it will continue to do so.

“I am a former First Selectman and I have put local budgets together,” Senator Williams said. “We will continue to try to protect municipal aid, the safety net and education. Our priority must continue to be education.”

Senate Minority Leader John McKinney told the assembled leaders that towns have had to cut back, but the State has not done the same.

“Governor Malloy’s proposed budget increases government spending by 9.6 percent over two years,” McKinney said. “How many of you increased spending in your budgets this year? That is not happening in cities and towns.”

Austin Tanner, First Selectman of Brooklyn asked where impending State budget cuts would come from and was told, “everywhere – hospitals, nonprofits, state agencies – across the board.”

House Minority Leader Larry Cafero told the local leaders to “demand from the legislature what you have demanded from yourselves – demand that the State live within its means as you have had to do and to cut spending as you have had to do.”

Speaker of the House Brendan Sharkey suspended the General Assembly ses-

sion to talk to the CCM-member officials, pledging to work on the budget “to find the right way to do this, and in some cases, the way not to do this.”

Sharkey said he expects the Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies commission to provide incentive-based recommendations for inclusion in the Appropriations Committee budget.

Mayor Art Ward of Bristol discussed CCM’s proposal that any new mandate require approval by a two-thirds vote in the legislature. “This is not a partisan issue,” Ward said. “It is supported by Republican and Democrat mayors alike.”

At the CCM news conference following the legislative forum, Mayor Betsy Paterson of Mansfield – home to UConn – said eliminating PILOT on state-owned property would put a \$7 million hole in her town’s \$45 million budget.

Speakers said the proposal to eliminate the property tax on automobiles – without reimbursing towns for the lost revenue – would cost municipalities at least \$633 million and “devastate town budgets.”

Litchfield First Selectman Leo Paul pressed for mandate relief, singling out the mandate to publish legal notices in newspapers which he said costs his town \$17,000 a year or 2 and a half percent of its total budget.



CCM continues fight for mandates relief *continued from page 1*

The Municipal Opportunities & Regional Efficiencies (MORE)

Commission, composed of by a bipartisan and bicameral group of legislators, also includes town officials, advocates, and other interested parties. With an emphasis on cost efficiency through regional collaboration, the MORE Commission looks for ways to put into law efficiencies including regionalizing some of the functions of local government. Since MORE's mission includes identifying policies to make our state more economically competitive in the short and long term, mandate reform is a natural fit.

Below is "The List" – the definitive guide to mandate relief – the top-twelve most cumbersome and costly state mandates on towns and cities and ways to reform them:

1. Allow Towns the Option to Post Legal Notices Online

In 2013, Connecticut's hometowns can only post legal notices in the back pages of printed newspapers – putting them online doesn't count. Statewide, this mandate costs municipalities almost \$3 million dollars. The Planning and Development Committee has favorably reported a bill, SB 1112, which would provide the requested relief.

2. Make Incremental Adjustments to MERS Contributions Rate

Already favorably reported by the Labor Committee by a 9-2 vote, the State Legislature should pass HB 5533 which addresses local officials' concerns about the disparity between the contributions rates within the Municipal Employee Retirement System (MERS) by increasing the **employee** contribution rate for non-social security participants from 5 percent to 8 percent over time, and adjust the contribution rate for Social Security participating employees from 2.25 percent to 5 percent, also over time.

MERS is financed through employer

contributions, employee contributions, and fund earnings. It receives no state funding and is administered through the State Comptroller's Office. Over the past eleven years, the State Employees Retirement Commission (SERC), which is authorized by the Legislature to do so, has increased contribution rates for municipalities participating in MERS nine times.

From 2002-2012, municipal contribution rates have risen 444 percent while employee contribution rates, which are established in state statute, have never changed.



3. Make Modest Adjustments to Thresholds that Trigger Costly Prevailing Wages

Local officials are asking their state partners in government to make reasonable adjustments to the thresholds for remodeling, refinishing, refurbishing, rehabilitation, alteration -- as well as new construction -- as follows:

- Renovation construction projects, from \$100,000 to \$400,000; and new construction projects, from \$400,000 to \$1 million;
- Exempt municipal school construction projects from the State's mandated prevailing wage rate law. This modest adjustment could offset reductions in state aid for school construction projects

and therefore enable such projects to continue; and

- Improve the process for determining whether a project is new construction or repair/renovation which often serves as a deterrent to break ground on a project.

The prevailing wage thresholds have not been adjusted since 1991.

4. Make Simple Adjustments to Binding Arbitration

Connecticut's local officials are seeking adjustments to compulsory binding arbitration, not repeal. Such adjustments would establish timetables under the Municipal Employees Relations Act (MERA), requiring that the negotiation process and binding arbitration be completed no later than one year from the date binding arbitration is imposed by the State.

Requiring that the process of negotiations and arbitration be concluded within a determined timeframe means greater certainty about working conditions, enhanced ability to plan and budget, less time that employees wait for any wage or benefit improvements the union has achieved, and less time for management to realize savings or operational benefits it has achieved in the process.

5. Allow Minimum Budget (MBR) Relief

The General Assembly and Governor should relieve our hometowns from the "minimum budget requirements" which mandates that they give all or a certain percentage of state education aid to their boards of education.

6. Phase-out Burdensome Tax on Local Health Insurance Premiums

The health insurance premium tax on municipalities is 1.75 percent tax on fully insured municipal premiums. Municipalities that are self-insured do not pay the premium tax. Long advocated by CCM, and part of Governor Malloy's 2012 legislative

(Cont. on page 10)

CCM plea to Appropriations Committee resonates across state legislative office building



A “Special Forum for Municipal Officials” conducted by the General Assembly’s Appropriations Committee in mid March filled a public hearing room with local officials who testified about the negative consequences of the Governor’s budget proposals on towns and cities. In addition to the 9 municipal leaders who testified, 40 other municipal CEOs attended the hearing to show their support.

Before the receptive and attentive members of the committee, CCM-member mayors, selectmen, city council members, and town managers from all four corners of Connecticut provided frank and compelling accounts of how the state’s enduring economic downturn has already affected their municipalities – and what they would have to do if the most onerous of Governor Malloy’s town aid cuts move forward.

Ryan Bingham, Mayor of Torrington and President of CCM, led off the forum with a simple but emphatic plea: “Do not transfer the burden of the State budget shortfall to already over-burdened local property taxpayers.” He added that the proposed State budget would “disproportionately hurt Connecticut’s poorest cities and towns.”

Mayor John DeStefano of New Haven said the budget document should be about jobs, but that the existing proposal would actually hurt job creation efforts rather than encourage them. He said if the goal was to restructure State aid, “let’s do it in a thoughtful, collaborative and transparent way” and he urged more flexibility for towns on the revenue side and asked for local tax options such as a penny tax on alcoholic beverages.

Speakers addressed in detail the Governor’s plans to eliminate three out of the four PILOT reimbursement programs and eliminate the tax on motor vehicles without providing state reimbursement for the lost revenues, saying that “such proposals

would have a devastating impact on local budgets.”

Barbara Gilbert, Town Manager of Rocky Hill, said that the loss of PILOT would have a “drastic effect” because her town would no longer be reimbursed for the State Veterans Home and Hospital and the new State Department of Public Health laboratory – properties valued at more than \$150 million.

John Elsesser, Town Manager of Coventry, said the car tax repeal proposal would cost his town \$2.2 million and force property tax increases because the “tax would be shifted from cars to houses.”

First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini of Somers said, “switching PILOT funds to ECS means those funds are restricted and it means that we will have to cut local services on the town side of the budget.”

Municipal leaders also maintained that their towns are getting a “double-whammy” with additional burdens being placed on local governments without corresponding relief from unfunded state mandates.

Leo Paul, First Selectman of Litchfield, said “meaningful mandates relief must be on the table,” citing the requirement to post legal notices in newspapers rather than electronically and the requirement that towns store the possessions of evicted tenants – a requirement imposed by no other state. Both mandates cost towns big money each year.

Paul also addressed binding arbitration reform and prevailing wage reform – perennial top contenders on the “worst of the worst” list of 1,200 existing mandates – and said they are still the mandates from which municipal relief is most needed.

Bridgeport City Council President Tom McCarthy ticked off the “tough choices” his city has made to deal with a tough economy: Cut spending each year for last five years;



CCM plea to Appropriations Committee *continued from page 4*

- Cut workforce by 15 percent over 5 years;
- Cut fire department and police overtime;
- Made buildings more energy and cost efficient;
- Negotiated a 25% increase in employee co-pay for health premiums;

- Negotiated multiple furlough days.

He said that metro centers are places where people come to get services and they accept the burdens of hosting services and facilities, but that eliminating PILOT “breaks the deal” and he added that the car tax proposal would put a \$17 million hole in Bridgeport’s budget.

“We understand tough choices,” he concluded. “We’ve made them. We do not have wiggle room.”

McCarthy was talking about Bridgeport – but he was speaking for all 169 Connecticut towns and cities.

Municipal leaders who testified included:

Ryan Bingham, Mayor of Torrington and President of CCM

John DeStefano, Mayor of New Haven and Past President of CCM

John Elsesser, Town Manager of Coventry and Vice President of COST

Barbara Gilbert, Town Manager of Rocky Hill and Treasurer of COST

Thomas McCarthy, President of the Bridgeport City Council

Leo Paul, First Selectman of Litchfield and Secretary of COST

Lisa Pellegrini, First Selectman of Somers and a CCM Board member

Laura Francis, First Selectman of Durham and Board Member of COST

Matthew Hart, Town Manager of Mansfield

Jim Finley, CCM Executive Director and CEO

At Finance Committee hearing, CCM leaders urge lawmakers to reject harmful budget proposals

As part of CCM's comprehensive effort to derail proposals in the Governor's budget that would harm towns and cities, CCM-member mayors, first selectmen, and town managers took their fight to the legislature's Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee at an early March public hearing.

The hearing provided an opportunity for Finance Committee members to hear first-hand from CCM and local officials how the Governor's budget proposals would harm their towns and the reasons for urging the committee to reject them.

The municipal leaders briefed lawmakers on budget proposals that, if enacted, would cost towns and cities over \$800 million in revenue and provided testimony on how that lost revenue would affect local services, tax rates, and employee layoffs in their individual towns.

The key proposals that municipal leaders continue to oppose are:

- The unprecedented changes in the structure of state grants and payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) reimbursements to towns and cities;
- Towns and cities losing \$128 million in state aid for non-education operating expenses under the proposal to divert state aid to education and capital programs; and
- The elimination of the property tax on motor vehicles without providing funding reimbursement to municipalities – resulting in at least a \$633 million loss in annual local

revenues.

Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch testified that “if the Governor's proposals were to pass, the average resident in Bridgeport who currently pays \$6,200 in taxes would have an estimated \$1,280 increase in taxes, roughly \$106 per month.

“I understand this is not fair, you understand this is not fair,” Finch said. “Let us collectively ensure that it does not happen,” he said.

Michael Milone, Town Manager of Cheshire, said the budget proposal would mean a tax increase of 11.3 percent in his town. “Cheshire is home to the second largest prison in Connecticut and PILOT is a critical revenue source for our community,” he said. “The Governor's proposal dismantles longstanding, critically important programs and shifts the State's problems to municipalities rather than finding real solutions.”

Paul Formica, First Selectman of East Lyme, also addressed PILOT. “The shift of PILOT to ECS would tie our collective hands on the municipal level and pit boards of finance against boards of education,” Formica said. “And without changes to the MBR, it would further handcuff the community with regard to education funding.”

CCM Executive Director and CEO Jim Finley said the PILOT proposal shifts funding to education at the expense of other critical local services.

(Cont. on page 7)



Finance Committee hearing *continued from page 6*



“Today, 62 cents out of every local property tax dollar goes to pay for PreK-12 public education. The State is underfunding the Education Cost Sharing Grant by over \$720 million dollars,” Finley said in his testimony. “Municipal aid dollars shifted to pay for chronic State underfunding of public education cannot be used to pay for police, firefighters, and other municipal employees and services.”

The Governor’s car tax proposal also came under fire as a “bait and switch” that would further drive up property taxes.

“Mayors and first selectmen across the state are adamantly opposed to eliminating this critical source of revenue,” said First Selectman Richard Smith of Deep River. “Eliminating the car tax would simply shift the tax burden onto homeowners and businesses.”

Barbara Gilbert, Town Manager of Rocky Hill and CCM Board member, said the car tax proposal would have “a disastrous impact, not only on Rocky Hill, but on all Connecticut municipalities.

“Rocky Hill stands to lose over \$3.7 million in a single tax year for our small town of 19,500 hard-working, tax paying citizens,” she said. “And this revenue loss will not be offset by changes in proposed General Fund revenues – it will be magnified.”

Wethersfield Town Manager Jeff Bridges said the loss of \$5 million in revenue from the Governor’s car tax proposal means



the town “would have to cut services including education, public safety, parks and recreation and a host of other services, or shift the burden to the real estate property tax.”

CCM leaders who testified before the Finance Committee included:

William Finch, Mayor of Bridgeport and First CCM Vice-President

Richard Moccia, Mayor of Norwalk and CCM Board member

Mark Boughton, Mayor of Danbury and CCM Board member

Elizabeth Paterson, Mayor of Mansfield and past CCM president

Barbara Gilbert, Town Manager of Rocky Hill and CCM Board member

Paul Formica, First Selectman of East Lyme

Richard Smith, First Selectman of Deep River

Anthony Candelora, Mayor of North Branford

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager of North Branford

Jeff Bridges, Town Manager of Wethersfield

Matt Hart, Town Manager of Mansfield

Michael Milone, Town Manager of Cheshire

Jim Finley, CCM Executive Director and CEO



Former long-time Southington town manager John Weichsel passes away at 80; longest serving town manager in the nation; past president of CCM and long-time CCM board member



John Weichsel, Southington's longtime Town Manager, died March 29 at the age of 80.

Weichsel served as Southington Town Manager from 1966 until early 2011. His 44-year service to the town made him the longest serving town manager ever for one community in the United States. All told, Weichsel served as a municipal manager for an astounding 55 years.

He was a member of CCM's Board of Directors for more than 25 years, and was the first appointed official as town manager ever to be elected CCM president. He was also a former long-time chairman of CCM's Legislative Subcommittee on Labor Relations. Never an ideologue, Weichsel was respected by public employee unions for his honesty and willingness to work through issues.

A tireless advocate for more state funding for towns, Weichsel also consistently argued that the legislature should impose fewer mandates that require expensive local programs. Weichsel often led the CCM charge in seeking relief from costly and burdensome state mandates on towns and cities.

"John was an ever-present voice advocating for the people of Southington and the municipal interest as a whole," said Jim Finley, CCM Executive Director and CEO. "He was a well known and effective advocate at the Capitol. His presence at numerous public hearings and his willingness to vocalize his expert opinion on crucial but controversial matters that affected municipalities earned him the respect of legislative leaders and governors throughout his career."

Weichsel was also a long-time member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA), the risk management and insurance services arms of CCM. At his prodding, Southington became a charter member of CIRMA in 1980.

Few entire careers last as long as Weichsel's did in Southington. But his actual career began in 1955, when he took a post in Kalamazoo, Michigan, after earning undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. He was village manager in Ellenville, N.Y. before he became the first town manager ever in Southington in 1966. The rest is history.

During his tenure, Southington grew in population from 27,000 to 42,000 and was noted as a community that provided a wide range of essential services, while still restraining the local property tax rate. He noted what he considered some of his most outstanding accomplishments in town, including having Southington become the first CT town to sign on with CIRMA; upgrading the town's aging sewage treatment plant, and leading the way in creating the Bristol Waste to Energy Plant.

Peter Romano, Town Council vice chairman, had served on the council during Weichsel's final years on the job. "He was a magnificent man," Romano recalled. "He did a lot for the community. There was a wealth of information that was lost with him." Council member Cheryl Lounsbury was in office for years during Weichsel's tenure. "John was a wonderful man. He had very high values, and really prided himself on doing what he thought was the best for the town," she said. The popular Weichsel garnered support from both sides of Southington's political aisle during his tenure. Town Hall employees praised him for his ethics, forthrightness, and expertise.

Weichsel's last day in Southington after 44 years was in February of 2011. At the time he said he was ready for leisure time with his wife, Dee, and their 12 grandchildren, but he hinted that there still might be a job out there for him. After retiring, a few months later he took a job as interim town manager for East Hampton for a while.

The Southington Historical Society honored Weichsel last year by putting his portrait on display, only the third time a notable Southington resident has been so enshrined. At the time, Ken DiMauro, historical society president, said the honor was appropriate because of Weichsel's exceptionally long and outstanding service to the town.

"Southington has lost a legend. CCM and Connecticut have lost a great municipal leader. I have lost a friend and mentor. Our thoughts and prayers go out to John's family," said Jim Finley.

Connecticut municipal leaders and Connecticut congressional leaders meet in D.C.



Torrington Mayor and CCM President Ryan Bingham, New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, and Bridgeport City Council President Thomas McCarthy led a delegation of sixteen Connecticut municipal leaders – all from CCM-member towns and cities – to the Congressional City Conference from March 9-13 in Washington D.C., presented by the National League of Cities (NLC).

Connecticut’s municipal leaders – along with CCM Executive Director and CEO Jim Finley – also met with Connecticut’s Congressional Leaders, including Senators Richard Blumenthal and Christopher Murphy and Congressman Jim Himes at a dinner forum sponsored by CCM.

The dinner provided an opportunity for Connecticut’s local leaders to discuss key federal issues of concern to towns and cities, particularly as they relate to a political landscape shaped by the President’s proposed budget, the still looming federal deficit, and the fallout from the battle over “sequestration.”

The conference provides an opportunity for CT local elected officials to meet with Congressional and Administration officials. Federal issues of concern include:

- Pushing for meaningful gun violence reduction;
- Fighting for funding to ensure full economic recovery of towns and cities including increases in education and CDBG funding;
- Partnering to rebuild the nation’s infrastructure;
- Coordinating federal and local energy efficiency efforts;
- Reforming mandatory collective bargaining; protecting public safety resources;
- Fighting poverty and increasing support for education and a trained workforce;
- Reforming the nation’s immigration system.

More than 3,000 municipal leaders from across the country attended NLC’s annual conference which provides the opportunity to discuss how federal policy issues impact local communities and identify municipal priorities for federal action.



Did you know?

Connecticut is home to the first hamburger (1895), Polaroid camera (1939), and color television (1948).

CCM continues fight for mandates relief *continued from page 3*

package – a reasonable means of relief would be to cut the tax rate by 50 percent beginning in 2014, by another 25 percent in 2015, and eliminate the premium tax on municipalities altogether for 2016.

The premium tax costs municipalities up to \$9 million each year.

7. Hometowns Should Not Be Forced to Store Evicted Tenants' Possessions

The mandate requiring towns and cities to store items continues to drain local finances and resources.

It is estimated that there are more than 2,500 residential evictions per year and municipalities must store the possessions for at least 15 days.

Last year, New Haven paid more than \$250,000 for the labor, storage, transportation, and disposal of property from evicted tenants.

8. Allow Your Hometown to Consolidate Polling Places for Primaries

Public Act 12-73, approved by the General Assembly, but vetoed by the Governor, would have among other things, “authorized registrars of voters to reduce the number of polling places for a primary, the location of which may be the same or different than the polling places for the election.”

It is estimated that a savings in excess of \$10,000 could have been achieved for smaller towns.

9. Champion Municipal Pension Reform

The most significant drivers of municipal costs are employee salaries and benefits. These are also some of the toughest costs

to contain. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “public employees earn salaries that are about one-third higher on average than what is provided to private workers per hour.” The private sector long ago moved from costly and unsustainable defined-benefit pension programs to defined-contribution plans.

10. Proposed State Budget: Do Over. Protect Municipal Aid.

The FY 14-15 proposed state budget (SB 843) would eliminate 3 out of 4 seminal, nation-leading PILOT programs, the proposed state budget would turn the clock back 40 years and terminate state funding responsibility for state-mandated property tax exemptions. It would immediately establish \$126 million in new unfunded state mandates, leaving other local property taxpayers and host municipalities holding the bag. Further, by eliminating the local property tax on most motor vehicles (those with assessed values of \$20,000 or less) beginning FY 15, the burden of the regressive property tax would then be shifted to homeowners and businesses. This proposal would create at least a \$633 million hole in municipal budgets. This comes at a time when many towns and cities are in the direst of straits, and could be pushed off the proverbial “fiscal cliff”.

11. Allow Hometowns the Option to Decide EMS Provider

Current law does not allow towns and cities the option to choose their local emergency medical service (EMS) provider. Such prohibitive law has resulted in another state mandate on local resources. Municipalities have always put the needs of their residents first, and have done so through the services they provide. It is therefore counterproductive to not permit local officials the option to decide their EMS provider – and the terms of contracts, particularly with any company that fails to adequately provide such essential services.

12. Statutory Prohibition on State Mandates

State lawmakers should support a statutory prohibition on unfunded state mandates which would (a) place the burden of proof on the State to demonstrate why a mandate is needed, and (b) present the General Assembly with the issue of municipal reimbursement up-front, as the issue of enactment is debated. The Legislature, through use of a “notwithstanding clause”, may avoid full or even partial reimbursement for a new or expanded mandate if there are compelling public policy reasons to do so.



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CCM, muni leaders, and city employees fight for municipal aid



CT mayors from across the state conducted a news conference with CCM on March 20 at the State Capitol to provide an update on how cutbacks in the Governor's proposed state budget would result in (1) higher property taxes; (2) deeper cuts in services; and (3) more municipal employee layoffs. Each mayor was accompanied by key union employees from their city.

Mayors and municipal employee unions teamed up to oppose the Governor's budget recommendations. The mayors of CT's biggest cities and union representatives appeared together to present a united front and send a message to state lawmakers. "We are here to plead our case. We want a better budget than what has been proposed so far," said Bridgeport Mayor William Finch. "This budget as it stands would be catastrophic," said Anna Montalvo, president of an AFSCME local representing Bridgeport workers.



The main speakers included William Finch, Mayor of Bridgeport and First Vice President of CCM; John DeStefano, Jr., Mayor of New Haven and Past President of CCM; Pedro Segarra, Mayor of Hartford and a member of the CCM Board of Directors; Neil O'Leary, Mayor of Waterbury; Michael Pavia, Mayor of Stamford; and Jim Finley, CCM Executive Director and CEO.

Municipal employees who attended included: From Bridgeport, Robert Whitbred, Firefighter, Anna Montalvo, Public Works Staff Member, and Richard Ditz, Public Works Staff Member; From New Haven, Daniel Leary, Parks Department Staff Member; Dominic Magliochetti, Parks Department Staff Member; From Hartford, Clarke King, Public Works Staff Member, From Waterbury, Jerry Hanson, Police Officer and Patton Garrell, Police Officer; and From Stamford, Timothy Beeble, Housing and Community Development Staff Member.

CCM task force on school safety makes wide ranging recommendations

A task force established by CCM in the aftermath of the Newtown tragedy has issued a set of wide-ranging and comprehensive recommendations to



Mayor Boughton

address the issues of school security and safety. Chaired by Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, members of the CCM Task Force on School Safety and Building Security studied a broad spectrum of possible measures during their deliberations.

"There is no one size that fits. All municipalities are a little different. They have different sized buildings and different finances," Mayor Boughton said.

Accordingly, the Task Force focused on safety procedures and best practices that would benefit, and could be implemented by, all schools. The following recommendations were proposed by the Task Force and approved by CCM's Legislative Committee.

1. Establish a Statewide School Security Center within the State Department of Education to serve as a central location for school safety information and best practices.
2. Require the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, in consultation with the Statewide School Security Center, to develop statewide standards and training for School Security Advocates (SSAs). The Advocates' duties and activities would be similar to those of School Resource Officers, except for any sworn law enforcement duties.
 - School Security Advocates would be a local option for towns and cities to adopt.
 - Towns and cities may provide private schools and daycare centers a list of approved SSAs.
3. Require the State to review current school building codes to ensure they take into account proper safety measures.
4. Establish a special state fund of \$100 million to enhance school safety measures including school security assessments. Funding would be retroactive for any security assessments or enhancements completed after December 14, 2012.
 - The assessment would determine what specific measures (i.e., security cameras, "buzz-in" door access, panic buttons, notification of school-wide emergency, reinforced windows and doors) may be needed in a particular school.
 - The fund would be allocated to towns through a fast-tracked application process.
5. Allow renovation and new construction school security and safety projects to be eligible for school construction grants with a 75 percent reimbursement rate statewide.
6. Provide state funding for mental health-related interventions within CT schools and Youth Service Bureaus.

CCM membership now stands at 155 – highest ever



Derby (pop. 12,909)
Mayor Anthony Staffieri



North Branford (pop. 14,387)
Mayor Anthony Candelora



North Canaan (pop 3,336)
First Selectman Douglas Humes

As Connecticut's leading voice on behalf of towns and cities, CCM benefits all municipalities – big, small and in-between and offers an unmatched variety of programs and services to members that range from research and energy purchasing to legislative advocacy and labor relations assistance, and much more.

Now six new communities have recognized that CCM "membership has its privileges" and have joined CCM.

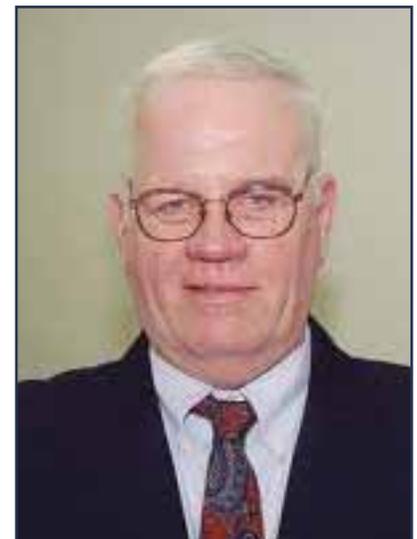
CCM membership now stands at 155 towns and cities representing 93 percent of Connecticut's population. This is the highest number of members in the history of CCM. CCM is pleased to welcome these six municipalities as new CCM members:



Sharon (pop. 3,209)
First Selectman Robert Loucks



Wallingford (pop 44, 881)
Mayor William Dickinson



Warren (pop. 1469)
First Selectman Jack Travers

CCM program to connect businesses with municipal clients keeps on growing

The benefits of becoming a Municipal Business Associate (MBA) member of CCM make it a three-for: membership raises your company's profile in the Connecticut municipal market, it helps support services to Connecticut towns and cities, and it keeps your company connected to a client base of municipal officials that spends more than \$3 billion each year on products and services.

Identifying and recruiting new business clients is a critically important and often challenging issue for any company, and CCM established the MBA program in 2007 to provide businesses throughout the Northeast with direct access to an essential economic market – Connecticut's municipal officials.

Since its inception, nearly 80 private sector businesses have become members – banks, consultants, law firms, and firms that provide security, accounting, engineering, construction, damage restoration – as well as companies that provide most other services and goods that municipalities commonly purchase.

CCM's MBA program empowers businesses with online, print, and in-person resources to help members access this important and reliable purchasing market. Members get a web listing of their business on the CCM website and a direct link to their website, access to CCM's mailing lists, ad space in Connecticut Town & City Digital Magazine, and all of CCM's research and information tools for reaching out to local officials.

Companies participating in the MBA corporate partner program gain a competitive advantage in the municipal marketplace because the program provides a host of benefits, resources, and opportunities available only to MBA members:



Online

- Access to the CCM Business-Members-Only website
- Access to the CCM Municipal Directory
- A link from the CCM website to the MBA company website

Print

- Free Listings in the CCM Directory of Products and Services
- Recognition, discounts, and/or listings in Connecticut Town & City magazine
- Free Copies of CCM's Municipal Directory & CEO Directory

In Person

- Participation in CCM speakers' bureau for workshops and seminars
- Free or Discounted Exhibit Booth at CCM's Fall Convention
- Attendance and recognition at CCM's Annual Meeting

To stay on the leading edge, companies continually seek creative ways improve their fiscal position. CCM's MBA program provides online, print and direct communications services that open doors to new clients – which means new revenue sources and stronger bottom lines.

There are three levels of membership to choose from based on how you wish to reach this lucrative market: GOLD, SILVER, and BRONZE. Each offers a unique opportunity to work with CCM in connecting to Connecticut's towns and cities.

For more information, please contact Beth Scanlon, Program Administrator at (203) 946-3782, or bscanlon@ccm-ct.org.

Visit ccm-ct.org/Plugs/Alpha.aspx for a complete list of MBA members.

Welcome to our newest
CCM Municipal Business
Associates!

Commercial Storefront
Services Inc.

Best practices, planning updates at CCM Emergency Management Symposium on May 8



Freak snow storms, hurricanes, Nor'easters and even an earthquake have all visited Connecticut over the last two years and disaster preparation and homeland security planning continue to be in the forefront of the public conscience as well as top priorities for state and local officials.

For the 8th straight year, the highly-attended annual Connecticut Emergency Management Symposium will bring together disaster response and security officials and staff from the local, state and federal levels for a day-long learning symposium and exposition.

This year's event will take place on Wednesday, May 8, 2013 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Cromwell.

Co-sponsored by CCM, the CT Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security and the CT Department of Public Health, the event has grown larger each year and attracts hundreds of local public safety officials and others responsible for responding to mass emergencies.

EMS 2013 is the premiere program of its kind in Connecticut that will bring together a cross-section of federal, state and local government officials, public health providers, and municipal decision-makers who oversee or are directly responsible for disaster-response and emergency management issues.

Scores of providers of products and services needed by emergency responders also exhibit at the symposium's Emergency Management Tradeshow.

The day-long schedule opens with keynote addresses and then breaks into morning and afternoon workshop sessions to discuss best practices, strategies and the challenge of coordinating state, local and federal emergency response planning.

With Hurricane Sandy and its overwhelming aftermath slamming the state in 2012, the 2013 Emergency Management Symposium is an opportunity not to be missed!

To register please click here! (<http://programs.ccm-ct.org/Plugs/2013-EMS-Attendee-Registration.aspx>)

Save the Date! 2013 CCM Annual Convention - October 2, 2013



Mark your calendars for CCM's 31st Annual Convention and Exposition which will be held on Wednesday, October 2 at the Connecticut Convention Center. Over 1,000 people attended last year's convention. The CCM Convention is open to all municipal officials and employees and is the single largest gathering of town and city leaders in Connecticut. The 2013 convention will offer an impressive choice of workshops designed to provide leading-edge information and strategies to improve the quality of

life in Connecticut communities.

The Convention features the largest industry trade show geared to municipalities in Connecticut. The trade show will offer the latest products and services for one-stop shopping convenience.

And last but not least, the 2013 CCM Convention will provide an un-paralleled opportunity to network with colleagues from across the state.

CCM Prescription Drug Discount program gets overwhelming response

Since CCM began offering the “CCM Prescription Drug Discount” program last September, 75 towns and cities have signed up – and in less than six months, local residents have already saved over \$365,000 on the cost of their prescription medications.

The savings can add up quickly – in Coventry for example, the 128 residents participating in the program have already realized a total savings of \$7,000.

The program is free and only available to CCM-member towns. The program helps uninsured and under-insured residents by providing savings on any prescriptions not covered by insurance. There are no costs to either the participating towns or their residents.

Residents get immediate fiscal relief at the pharmacy counter by participating in the program which offers the following features and benefits:

- anyone can participate regardless of age or income;
- all prescription medications are covered;
- there is no cost to the municipality or to participating residents;
- cost savings average 10-40 percent on brand medications and 20-70 percent on generics for a total average savings of 45 percent; and
- 56,000 pharmacies participate nationwide, including most chain pharmacies and many independent pharmacies.

When Wallingford recently joined CCM to become the 154th

member out of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities, Mayor William Dickenson singled out the CCM Prescription Discount program as an important reason for joining CCM, saying it is “a great way to assist people in a very practical, direct way.”

“This is a program where the town becomes a member, and every person in town has a chance to benefit in a certain way,” he said. “For the membership fee we’re paying, I think we have a chance of extending a real helping hand.”

“CCM is proud and pleased to offer this valuable community service,” said CCM Executive Director and CEO Jim Finley. “Many families are struggling and even some families with health insurance may not have all their prescriptions covered. This program helps them save money and get needed medicines.”

The program is completely free and open to all residents. Discount cards may also be used to save on medications prescribed for family pets that can be filled at participating retail pharmacies.

Discounts are also offered on other medical services including vision, Lasik, and hearing services:

- eye exams up to 20 percent off
- frames up to 50 percent off
- lenses up to 50 percent off
- Lasik services up to 50 percent off
- hearing products and services between 35-65 percent off.

Towns that have mailed or are mailing in April to residents:

Ashford	East Haven	Lisbon	Pomfret
Avon	East Lyme	Lyme	Portland
Barkhamsted	East Windsor	Madison	Putnam
Beacon Falls	Essex	Mansfield	Roxbury
Bethel	Goshen	Marlborough	Scotland
Bolton	Granby	Middletown	Simsbury
Branford	Griswold	Montville	Somers
Brooklyn	Guilford	Newton	Southbury
Clinton	Haddam	New Milford	South Windsor
Colchester	Hampton	Norfolk	Stonington
Columbia	Harwinton	North Branford	Tolland
Coventry	Hebron	North Stonington	Torrington
Danbury	Kent	Norwich	Vernon
Durham	Killingworth	Old Lyme	Voluntown
Eastford	Lebanon	Old Saybrook	Waterford
East Hampton	Ledyard	Orange	Westbrook

Towns that are mailing in May:

Bloomfield	Stafford
Derby	Suffield
East Haddam	Wallingford
Franklin	Washington



If you have any questions or wish to have your town join the program, contact Gina Calabro, CCM Director of Member Services and Marketing, at gcalabro@ccm-ct.org or (203) 498-3041.

New CIRMA Law Enforcement Advisory Committee established

It's official. CIRMA's Law Enforcement Task Force became a full-fledged CIRMA Advisory Committee in March 2013 with Chief Darren Stewart of Stonington as its chair. In its newly expanded role, the committee will provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and best practices for managing law enforcement risks. It will establish benchmarks for police departments and related law-enforcement activities, and work to reduce injuries and losses within police departments.

Since its formation two years ago, the task force made a number of accomplishments to increase the safety of CIRMA-member police officers. The eleven-member task force began by performing a drill-down analysis of police Workers' Comp losses that identified auto accidents as a significant cause of work-related injuries. These findings became the basis for CIRMA's Defensive Drivers' Training for Police, the first program developed outside the law-enforcement community to be approved by Police Officers Standards and Training Council (POSTC) for in-service

training credit. To date, over 314 police officers from 12 CIRMA-member towns have been trained in the program's specialized driving techniques.

CIRMA's Law Enforcement Committee created training and information-sharing alliances with the Connecticut Police Chiefs' Association and other regional law enforcement training centers. Three other CIRMA training programs targeted to police risks have also been approved by POSTC for in-service training credits: Bloodborne Pathogens, Employment Practices for Law Enforcement, and Preventing Sexual Harassment & Ethics.

Next up on the committee's docket are the development of Return-to-Work programs specifically for police departments and the development of training and best practices programs for building security. A new Workers' Comp Accident Review Best Practices Guide, developed under the direction of the committee, will be released in June 2013.

For more information about the Committee, please contact George Tammaro, CIRMA Risk Management Services.

CIRMA welcomes new members

CIRMA Welcomes three new board members for 2013-14:

- Barbara Gilbert, Town Manager, Rocky Hill
- Joyce Okonuk, First Selectman, Lebanon
- Lisa Pellegrini, First Selectman, Somers

The new members join:

- John Elsesser, Chairman, Town Manager, Coventry
- Ryan Bingham, Vice Chairman, Mayor, Torrington
- Mark D. Boughton, Mayor, Danbury
- Susan Bransfield, First Selectwoman, Portland
- Stephen T. Cassano, Selectman, Manchester
- Robert J. Chatfield, Mayor, Prospect
- Robert M. Congdon, First Selectman, Preston

- John DeStefano, Jr., Mayor, New Haven
- Matthew B. Galligan, Town Manager, South Windsor
- Mary Glassman, First Selectwoman, Simsbury,
- Barbara Henry, First Selectman, Roxbury
- Scott Jackson, Mayor, Hamden
- Cynthia Mangini, Council Member, Enfield
- Denise Menard, First Selectman, East Windsor
- Richard Moccia, Mayor, Norwalk
- Elizabeth C. Paterson, Mayor, Mansfield
- Leo Paul, First Selectman, Litchfield
- Herbert C. Rosenthal, Selectman, Newtown
- Mark Walter, First Selectman, East Haddam
- Steven Werbner, Town Manager of Tolland

Events

- **Risk Management Achievement Awards for 2013**

Twenty CIRMA members will be honored on May 10th for their successful risk management programs. Two seminars will be held after the event: Locking Down the Facts on Building Security, presented by Capt Mike Spera, Old Saybrook, and Joey Barbera, CIRMA Risk management Services, and Managing a Reduction in Force, Michael Rose, Esq., Rose Kallor, LLP.

CIRMA

Our Members Share in Our Success



\$9 Million Total
Members' Equity Distribution

CIRMA will deliver \$3 Million through our Members' Equity Distribution Program in July, 2013, bringing our three year total distributions to \$9 Million. Visit CIRMA.org or contact Steve Bixler, VP for Underwriting to learn how CIRMA delivers value.



Q & A



Food trucks

Over the past few years, the food truck craze has been making its way into Connecticut. Originally, food trucks could only be found in the big cities, but they now seem to be popping up on every street in every town. While these mobile bistros may be a delicious delight to residents, they can cause headaches for municipal officials.

How do municipalities typically regulate food trucks?

Many municipalities, such as Bridgeport and Milford, have adopted ordinances that regulate the activities of food trucks. Typically, these ordinances require that all potential food trucks file an application for a permit with the municipality.

What are typical requirements for permits or licenses?

Municipalities usually require mobile vendors supply general information on the truck itself (even sometimes requiring photos), the drivers/operators, and the type of food that will be served. Nearly every municipality requires an inspection by the local health authority before granting a mobile food vendor permit. Some municipalities, such as New Haven, require criminal background checks before granting a mobile food vendor permit.

Can towns place limitations on where mobile food trucks can operate?

Many ordinances place restrictions on where food trucks

can operate. Typical restrictions include distance from schools, intersections, and driveways. Some municipalities also place specific limitations on where the mobile food trucks can operate, and require separate applications to vend in different areas.

Should towns require that food trucks display their permits?

Municipalities typically require that the mobile food permit be prominently displayed.

Can towns collect some fees?

Mobile food vendors can be another source of revenue for your town, and municipalities often assess fees on food truck operations. Some municipalities have a flat annual fee, others have monthly fees and still others have a combination of both.

What are some other limitations that towns have imposed?

Some towns, such as Ridgefield, have limited the number of food truck permits available in the municipality.

Who can we call for help?

CCM has sample ordinances and applications that we can supply to help get you started. Please feel free to contact Rebecca Adams, Esq., CCM's Research & Information Services Manager, at 203-498-3000.

CCM's Research & Information Service

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Technology

Accurate GIS information now just a click away in Cheshire

Cheshire has gone live with a new geographic information system that allows residents, town staff, and other users to get accurate ownership information and house data by clicking on any parcel on the town map.

One of the key advantages of the new GIS system is accuracy, said Town Manager Matt Milone.

The new GIS system is built on "layered information" and provides a specific outline of every building in town. Layers on the GIS map allow users to highlight specific information. Sewers and storm water drains are viewable on the map as an added layer. There is an open space layer, as well as topography, wetland, vegetation, and fence layers – and additional layers may be added if needed.

Milone says one of the most important layers shows fire hydrants and water mains. Combined with the ability to check the specifics of every home, including room layouts, Milone believes

first responders have a valuable tool at their hands.

When police and firefighters respond to a structure fire, they will know how to safely enter and exit a building and find trapped occupants "because they know the exact layout," he said.

In addition, the mapping and other images provided by the new system are new and sharper.

"The flyover photos used to map the old GIS were taken in 2005," Milone said. "For the new system, the town contracted a flyover to map Cheshire exclusively, so it will be the only town

that appears on the new GIS."

"The flyover was performed at lower altitudes, providing more accuracy and higher quality," he said. "It allows us to more easily identify features."

The flyover plane also traveled slower, providing crisper photos. Now, the "layers of information on the GIS are more relevant to us and the people in town," Milone said.



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Education

Early childhood literacy gets boost in Norwalk

With the help of a private grant, Norwalk officials are creating a system of early childhood education for children from birth to 8 years old that city leaders are calling a game changer for early literacy in the city.

Board of Education members say it will give the city the “gold standard” in early literacy programs because the city will soon have a consolidated system of services and data management for the city’s youngest residents.

The first year of the grant will help expand several city early childhood education programs including Child FIRST, which helps at-risk families build parent-child relationships, and the parent support program Parents as Teachers.

The Parents as Teachers program goes into homes and helps families with literacy and language development because, officials say, “some parents have not had a role model to know what they can do and how they can best help their kids.”

School grants administrator Italia Negroni said the grant will

help children get up to speed right from the start, so they are ready to “read to learn” by the time they’re in third grade.

Early Childhood Instructional Specialist Pam Augustine-

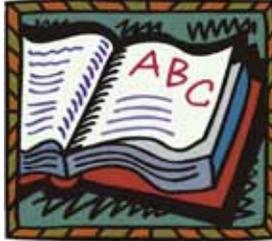
Jefferson said the grant has already helped bolster early childhood personnel by enabling the school system to hire a coach to help with community programs.

“This position will allow us to make sure teachers have training and support around literacy instruction and will be able to meet the individual needs of kids,” she said.

Local education officials were grateful for the funding and say it will help close the achievement gap.

“We are lucky to have the best of the best in terms of the model that we’re using,” said board of education member Sue Haynie.

“I’d like to thank the Grossman Family Foundation for putting Norwalk on a track that puts us above what a lot of other urban districts are doing to address the really deep needs of literacy and reading at our pre-K and 3 levels, doing it from the ground up,” she said.



Corporate and philanthropic donors back Hartford education reforms

It may take a village to raise a child, but a big checkbook doesn’t hurt either. According to a recent Hartford school district report, Hartford-area corporations, community groups, and local agencies contributed nearly \$15 million to support the school system’s reform efforts during the 2011-12 year.

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving gave \$3 million to fund a range of initiatives, including \$1.09 million to Capital Workforce Partners, which conducts a summer youth employment and learning program, and \$150,000 to Hartford Performs to support the arts in city schools.

Travelers, the largest corporate donor, invested more than \$1.1 million, including \$350,000 for the Principal Leadership Academy – a program that funds salaries for three resident principals who are trained throughout the year, said Kelvin Roldan, Hartford schools’ chief

institutional advancement officer.

A 2012 survey of community providers reported that 51 organizations are offering 326 programs in 47 city schools, many of them for elementary-age children. For example, Milner School received about \$700,000 worth of programming, largely from its lead agency, Catholic Charities, which offers after-school activities, case management, and parent engagement.

Another major contributor, the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, distributed \$2 million to benefit the schools, the report stated. Donations included \$100,000 to the Opportunity High alternative education program.

And the forecast for the future is bright: Roldan said he expects grants and donations in the current 2012-13 year to surpass \$15 million because of two recent gifts.

In December 2012, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a three-year, \$5 million grant managed by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to expand the city schools’ relationship with the Achievement First and Jumokey Academy charter school networks.

In addition, the city launched the Hartford Promise college scholarship fund after receiving \$4.1 million from six donors, including Travelers, Hartford Hospital, and the nonprofit Say Yes to Education. The program, which begins with the Class of 2016, will award graduating high school seniors up to \$20,000 over four years to help pay for college.

Superintendent Christina Kishimoto said the corporate and philanthropic gifts are “fundamental” to the city’s education reform work. “I will continue to work with our partners to target investments to accelerate student achievement,” Kishimoto said.

True community effort to renovate park

Thomaston's effort to build an outdoor track and sports complex at a local park has been a true community venture involving the town government, volunteers, residents, and local and state companies.

Proposed improvements for Nystrom's Park include a six-lane track with an eight-lane straightaway circling a regulation-size soccer field. Nystrom's Park would also see the addition of four tennis courts, a full-sized basketball court, enhancements to its beach area, and other upgrades.

The plan got a boost last month when the fundraising team received a check for \$21,491 from the insurance company ConnectiCare, raising the insurance company's total donation to nearly \$64,000.

"ConnectiCare has been a committed supporter of the Thomaston Track and Tennis Facility at Nystrom's Park," said Thomaston First Selectman Ed Mone.

The total project is estimated to cost \$2.4 million and has been completely self-funded so far.

In addition to ConnectiCare, the facility has been supported



financially through Connecticut's Small Town Economic Assistance Program, private foundations, and federal money. An annual Triathlon in town and a local road race have also raised funds for the project. Thomaston Savings Bank has made multiple donations as well.

Donations like those received from ConnectiCare are crucial, Mone said. "Without them this plan would be nothing more than a vision in someone's mind."

Mone said many Thomaston residents hope to see construction get underway soon.

"The plan continues to move forward," he said. "It is our hope that ConnectiCare's generosity will become contagious and lead others to make considerable contributions as well."

Depending on the pace of future fundraising, the project may be built in phases or the entire project could be built together.

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Civic Amenities

Norwich rallies behind “waterfront destination” harbor plan

Local government and business leaders in Norwich – along with fishermen, boaters, and just plain lovers of the water – are working to make the city’s waterfront a destination for fishing and recreational boating, with canoeing trails, fishing tournaments, a fishing blog, live fish migration cameras, and clean river banks.

From the 1830s throughout the rest of the century, Norwich’s location at the mouth of the Thames River made it a prosperous harbor and a shipping and mill town with a thriving economy and growing population.

Now a coalition of stakeholders is trying to go “back to the future” by investing in the city’s storied waterfront.

With state and local funding sources in short supply, the city’s Harbor Management Commission plans to rely

on grants, fundraisers, and low-cost promotional efforts to boost Norwich Harbor as a waterfront destination.

For starters, the commission garnered a federal Long Island Sound Futures grant to produce laminated canoeing and kayaking river trails maps depicting river conditions, portage spots, and features of note along the way. The grant also will pay for a display panel to be placed at the harbor-front Brown Memorial Park showing the canoe and kayak river routes.

The Harbor Commission’s effort began with a volunteer cleanup party at Brown Memorial Park, sponsored by Thayer’s Marine & RV and avid local fisherman Matt Creamer. Volunteers were dispatched to three locations - the harbor, the Greenville Dam, and the Yantic

Falls area to pick up litter and clean the riverbanks and surrounding areas.

The Harbor Commission is also planning fundraising activities with the hope of purchasing a harbor camera and to pay for other waterfront cosmetic improvements.

The city is also already on board: a new website already features a new fishing information center that will include waterfront events, fishing blogs, and photos from local fishermen describing their experiences and best fishing spots.

In addition, the site may soon have a link to the live camera at the Greenville Dam fish elevator – one more step along the way toward realizing the town’s vision of the harbor as a community asset, recreational outlet, and tourist destination.

Wood from iconic trees to be used in new library

Seven oak trees – century-old icons in downtown Ridgefield that were taken down because they were deemed a safety threat – will be used in the construction of the new library and new theater they would have shaded.

The century-old oaks that once stood tall over Prospect Street may have been chopped down, but they are not leaving the neighborhood. In fact, library officials and the developer of the theater both say the wood will stay right on Prospect Street as part of their new buildings.

Usually the cut wood is transported to the highway department, where it is chipped and reused as mulch, according to First Selectman Rudy Marconi.

However, the oak in this case could be milled into floor planks, or used in some other form of lumber or trim.

“Reusing the wood is a fantastic idea,” said Valerie Jensen, who is building the Prospector Theater. “We are having them milled and we are going to reuse pieces of the trees in the theater.”

Library officials have similar intentions, but have not finalized a plan.

“There is a sentiment in town to use the trees in our construction of the new library,” library Director Chris Nolan said. “There’s no definitive plan, but they will be reused – now we just have to figure out how and where.”



And in a twist of an old cliché, it’s “what comes down, must go up,” as Nolan is also working on plans to plant new trees inside the stone wall fronting the library.

Marconi said the town hopes to plant new trees inside the stone wall, working within the parameters of the necessary safety codes.

“We don’t want to lose the historic streetscape that has been there for so many years,” said Mr. Marconi. “We’d rather have the process of replanting done quickly, but we will have to take our time and make sure that area is safe and stable for tree growth before any plan is set in motion.”

Berlin checkpoints crack down on drunk driving



As part of a continuing effort to keep local roads safe, the Berlin police department has been cracking down on drunk driving by conducting a series of DUI checkpoints in different parts of town and on sections of the heavily traveled Berlin Turnpike.

Deputy Police Chief John Klett said the goal of the patrols and checkpoints is to reduce the number of accidents and injuries related to drivers who are under the influence and to help ensure overall safe travel.

Based on the most recent data from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Connecticut ranked 49 out of the 50

states, as well as the District of Columbia, in terms of the percentage of deaths in DUI-related traffic accidents, with only North Dakota and Hawaii posting higher death rates.

Forty-two percent of total traffic deaths in Connecticut were DUI related, and the Berlin DUI checkpoints are trying to get those numbers down by getting drunk drivers off the road.

The sobriety checks are made possible through a federal grant that supports increased DUI detection and enforcement efforts. The grant has allowed the town to hold several checks that began last Thanksgiving, ran through the holiday season, and will continue until next Labor Day.

Klett said the grant provides “75 percent reimbursement of the overtime costs related to these efforts” and “will help to provide funding for staff and additional DUI patrols as well as roadside sobriety checkpoints.”

The deputy chief added that roadside checkpoints have been shown to be the most effective method to detect and apprehend intoxicated drivers. Checkpoints also allow police to enforce other driving violations, such as driving an unregistered vehicle or driving without a valid license.

Police are required by a 1990 Supreme Court ruling to announce DUI checkpoints in advance.

Centralized dispatch center boosts collaboration

When Branford residents call 911 and get connected to a dispatcher, everything may sound the same to the caller – but for the dispatchers, it’s a whole new world thanks to a recent \$1.65 million technology upgrade at the police department.

The town is now among just a few municipalities in the state that do all dispatches – fire, police, and emergency medical services – from one location according to police Capt. Geoffrey Morgan.

The telecommunications upgrades were the first for the town in nearly two decades. The improvements were challenging because the work had to be accomplished while the room was still functioning as a 911 center.

Having everyone “on the same page”

allows for a better collaborative effort, Morgan said, especially during major events such as snowstorms and other bad weather. “The ability to dispatch everyone from a central location keeps things reliable and efficient,” he said. “Every 911 call to Branford is answered and handled right here.”

The replacement of the telecommunication consoles is part of the town’s comprehensive effort to update and replace the communications equipment for the police and public works departments. The upgrade was necessary because much of the equipment and technology was so outdated it could no longer be fixed or replaced.

As a result, the equipment in the

telecommunications room was nearly doubled – from two computers and four monitors to four computers and seven monitors for each dispatcher. The new furniture and consoles allow for customization for dispatch staff, which makes the work environment more efficient and comfortable, Morgan said. Dispatchers often work shifts longer than eight hours – sometimes working up to 16 hours.

The next step in the technology improvement project will be the replacement of the portable and mobile radios used by police, as well as updates in communications devices in patrol cars. The town’s public works department will also receive a technological upgrade and will operate on the same radio frequency.

Public Safety

Task force casts wide net for school safety study

A new school security task force formed by the Danbury Board of Education will tap state and national expertise to improve safety equipment and protocols in the city's school buildings.

The task force was formed -- like other groups around the state and country -- in the wake of the Newtown tragedy. Mayor Mark Boughton, who chairs CCM's subcommittee on school safety, will also be involved with the school board's task force.

Danbury Human Resources Director Kim Thompson and Board of Education member Kathleen Molinaro are co-chairs of the local task force.

"We will start with the work that has already been done internally by our school finance director and building and grounds official in assessing our buildings, and then reach out from there," Thompson said. "We will be looking for lots of collaboration with the city."

The task force will present recommendations to the school board at its first meeting in April.

Boughton said he is hiring a consultant to audit the city school buildings, adding that the CCM working committee report will



also provide about a dozen recommendations that will be forwarded to the committee for review.

He said issues being discussed include locks, layouts of new buildings and personnel issues.

"Every first selectman and mayor has heard the pros and cons of having a police officer in every building. There are a lot of logistical challenges to putting a cop in every building, and that's what the public needs to hear," Boughton said.

But Boughton said he supports adding "safety advocates" at the 11 elementary schools in Danbury. Since the shooting, there has been a private security firm providing a security officer in those schools. The city's middle and high schools already have advocates and police officers.

"Across the state, we need to have common training procedures for advocates so they approach the job in the same way," Boughton said. "So if you walk into Danbury or into New Fairfield, you want to be sure that everyone has the same training and could provide the same information to the first responders."

Montville consolidates public safety functions in new complex

For the last 30 years, the Montville police department has operated out of a former highway toll office leased from the State. Since it was never intended as a police facility, police officers for years have had to conduct interviews with victims in drab, semi-public areas and deal with the challenges of an antiquated building that only Rube Goldberg could have admired.

Those days are over, now that the police force has a brand new 17,000 square-foot permanent place to call home for its big law enforcement family. After several years of planning and construction, the public safety complex is home to the police department, resident state trooper, animal control offices, and an expanded dispatch center.

"Moving into the new complex was like

coming out of the dark ages," said Fire Marshall Raymond Occhialini. "This facility has cutting-edge technology."

John Platt, chairman of the building committee for the project, said the members traveled to numerous police stations in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts to learn what worked and what didn't at their facilities.

The new complex is "U-shaped" with the dispatch center at its center. The center features four dispatching stations -- each with eight computer screens and the capability of receiving emergency radio traffic, taking 911 calls, dispatching emergency services, and mapping calls.

The facility has four holding cells and a shower. It is equipped with a kitchen, a sergeant's room and television screens to monitor security.

It has private locker rooms for male and female officers -- a convenience the old barracks lacked -- as well as a roll call area, an on-site evidence laboratory, private interview rooms and a large, open space for community gatherings.

Each officer's locker has its own power source so officers can charge their portable radios. The locker rooms are divided by a fitness room -- a place where officers can unwind or get a work-out before or after a shift.

Even the desks are state-of-the-art -- they can be raised if the dispatcher wants to stand or lowered to an ergonomically correct seating level.

"We built it for the police department, and we built it for the future," Platt said. "It's bringing our police and dispatch into the 21st century."

Local groups take lifesaving to HEART

North Haven has earned a designation as a HEARTSafe Community by participating in a program that helps Connecticut's towns and cities improve the chances that any member of the community who suffers a sudden cardiac arrest will have the best possible chance for survival.

The program helps towns determine whether their employees and residents are likely to be heart attack survivors due to quick access to life-saving treatment, how many ordinary citizens can recognize the signs and symptoms of a sudden cardiac event, and how many know how to provide immediate emergency care and get additional help on the way, right away.

HEARTSafe is a voluntary, community-driven program and most communities already have the most important requirements for designation: ordinary

citizens trained in CPR and trained in the use of automated external defibrillators (AED), and AEDs available in public locations. The program utilizes "Champions" to gather the required documentation for HEARTSafe designation.

For well over two years, former Rotary Club president Richard DiNorscia has been that Champion in North Haven – dedicated to delivering life saving devices for public buildings in town and providing training for town employees in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Under his leadership, the North Haven Rotary supported a multi-year drive to provide defibrillators for public buildings throughout the community, as well as staff training. In addition, many of the town-owned AEDs were provided through the efforts of the North Haven Rotary Club.

In 2010, a combination of Rotary resources, a donation from a local business, and a partnership with a local children's organization funded the initial purchase of three AED units for the town's elementary schools.

Since then, AEDs have been installed at the town library and community pool directly through the Rotary's annual fund raisers, and partially through a matching grant obtained by DiNorscia in order to obtain the state's recognition of North Haven as a HEART Safe Community. In addition, CPR training and training in the use of the defibrillators was provided at no cost to the town by a local ambulance company – arranged by a Rotary member.

In praising DiNorscia's efforts, Rotary officials have described his HEARTSafe accomplishments as his "personal legacy."

Gun buy-back and turn-in programs get weapons off streets



Like law enforcement agencies across the state and country trying to curb violence, Stamford and Trumbull police have conducted weapon collection events that yielded pistols, revolvers, rifles and ammunition – as well as 2 swords and a battle axe.

Stamford police collected 54 weapons during a three-day collection drive spread out over a two month weapons buy-back initiative. The number of weapons collected each day was 13, 24, and 17.

All weapons collected are processed through the National Crime Information Center, an FBI database, to ensure that the guns were not involved in any crimes. Once weapons are cleared, they are turned over to Connecticut State Police to be destroyed.

The Stamford police have so far issued \$4,350 in gift cards for

the weapons collected. Payout rates for functional weapons are \$50 for rifles and shotguns, \$75 for handguns, and \$100 for assault weapons.

The last time a gun buy-back program was hosted in Stamford in 2001, police collected 67 guns over five events for an average of 13.4 guns per day. For the recent buy-backs, Stamford is topping those numbers with 16.3 guns-per-event.

A voluntary gun and ammunition turn-in program in Trumbull netted 16 guns and about 500 rounds of assorted ammunition from local residents.

Local officials said the turn-in event was part of an overall effort to set the tone for change in the wake of the Newtown tragedy.

The day-long program was held at police headquarters and Police Chief Tom Kiely said the goal was to reduce the pipeline of illegal guns that flow onto the streets.

"What we see a lot are situations where someone who owned a few guns dies and their wife or children now have them," Kiely said. "They don't really want them, but they don't know how to get rid of them so they end up sitting in the closet for years and then if someone breaks into the house, those guns end up on the street."

Norwalk, Greenwich, Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London are just a few of the many Connecticut towns that have conducted, are conducting, or are planning to conduct gun buy-back or turn-in drives.

New Haven cleans harbor site for new development

The long-awaited redevelopment of a strategic but formerly polluted property in New Haven may be drawing near. The city is hoping to attract a maritime-oriented business to a spacious, environmentally-scrubbed lot at a location where the Quinnipiac and Mill rivers converge in a meeting of marine beauty before running out to the harbor.

The cleanup of the long-empty and long-polluted property is nearing completion and local economic development officials are hoping to attract canoe and kayak makers, propeller repair shops, bait-and-tackle stores or other marine trades to the site.

Economic development officer Helen Rosenberg has been spearheading an effort for years to breathe new life into abandoned factories along that stretch of

town and her efforts got a boost when New Haven recently purchased the site in the city's Mill River district from the Amerada Hess Corporation.

Hess has been working on remediating and capping the property for years, a job that will be completed in a few months. Rosenberg said she will then "pump up the volume" to market the property to a job-creating and preferably maritime-focused business interested in 8 acres with a river view.

Rosenberg said the city has been considering the purchase of the property for more than a decade, but the site required remediation for serious contamination. After several development proposals fell through, the city decided to purchase and market the parcel itself.



Hess is approaching the finish line on the clean-up project which will conclude with an overall capping of topsoil and grass seed. The remediation also included transporting the most contaminated soil off the premises and re-grading the area with new soil, according to Rosenberg.

Rosenberg said she pursued the marine idea some years back, during earlier stages of the cleanup.

"We sent letters out to boat builders in New England, but we weren't ready for them," she said. "We didn't own the land at that point and it wasn't cleaned up.

"Now we are ready."

New Milford preservation efforts are connecting the dots

The town of New Milford has partnered with the State to purchase the development rights for 80 acres of farmland known as the Harris Hill Farm. Mayor Patricia Murphy noted the strategic benefit of purchasing the parcel, which abuts Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust property as well as acreage of the Davenport Farm acquired by the town in 2011.

"The agreement is similar to the one we had regarding the purchase of Davenport Farm," said Mayor Patricia Murphy. "The town partnered with the State in buying the development rights, but the ownership of the 92 acres is still with the family."

The Harris family has owned the farm, which occupies a total of 150 acres, since 1958. George Harris died last year but said a few years ago that "it's a very pretty piece of property" and that "the one significant thing it needs is to be continually farmed, not given over to brush."

Harris' daughter Susan and her husband Ed Bailey have been responsible for farm operations since 1981.

While the State and Town own the development rights to the 80 acres, they do not own the property and the use of the land is permanently restricted to agricultural applications. If the farm ever ceases to be a working farm, the land would be open space and could be used for passive recreation. There is also a conservation restriction on the property.

As part of the agreement, agricultural structures may be built or improved in the four-acre farmstead area that surrounds the residence as long as notice is given to the State and approval is received.

Within that area, a one-acre "residential envelope" that contains the residence would not be restricted to agricultural use. The language does require however that the home "remain tied to the farm."

The mayor also pointed out that if the property is sold, "it could only be conveyed as one farm."

The town's commitment to preserving farmland is supported in its plan of conservation and development.

"It's forward thinking," the mayor said. "We always have to feed ourselves."



Windsor Locks plans to link downtown development with high-speed rail

Windsor Locks is planning to rejuvenate its downtown area and address the future of its historic train station by linking them both together.

The town is planning to relocate the train platform from its present location to a strategic spot that will create expanded opportunities for redevelopment.

The goal is to develop Windsor Locks into a town that can compete with other area towns by offering quality housing and commercial retail in the decades ahead – and the lynchpin to the effort is the arrival of high-speed rail, once the New Haven to Springfield line is completed.

When that happens, Windsor Locks hopes to see commuters hopping on or off the many high-speed trains that will pass through their town – so local officials want to make it an important stop on the route.

The historic train station will be moved to a more central location to encourage transit-oriented development and the station building will be completely renovated. As part of the town's overall planning, retail and housing development

opportunities in the area are also being explored.

One of the keys to the downtown development plan is the Montgomery Mill complex, a former wire manufacturer that closed 22 years ago. Over time, the mill buildings have been ravaged by arson, graffiti, and scrap metal thieves – and home only to vagrants and vandals.

But the property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the town considers it a potential “catalyst project” because it consists of three contiguous parcels comprising 3.3 acres of commercial land in the downtown area.

Combined with its proximity to high-speed rail, the development at the site of a hotel, a hotel and restaurant, or an apartment complex would also attract new housing and retail development to the area.

When downtown Windsor Locks is developed to its maximum potential, the town estimates a total of 675 new living units could be developed.

“It’s a great vision,” said Con O’Leary, a member of the Board of Finance. “It’s moving forward. It’s important that we have commercial development.”



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Youth

East Haven fifth-graders lobby DOT, save local landmark



East Haven's Farm River bridge is a stone arch structure and a historical monument. It was erected in 1644, and rebuilt in 1876. It was also slated for replacement by the State Department of Transportation – that is, until the DOT ran into the “Bridge Brigade,” a group of local fifth-graders who fought to save it.

After an extensive letter-writing campaign, a petition and a meeting with DOT officials, DOT has decided to refurbish rather than replace the historic structure, providing the students with a valuable lesson about civics and government – and getting involved.

Elementary school teacher Dana Nelson's class started learning about bridges last

year. After hearing about the proposed fate of the historic bridge in their own backyard –and with the encouragement of local officials – they swung into action.

In addition to writing letters and garnering petition signatures, the students held a bake sale and raised more than \$400 to donate to the historical society, whose members also lobbied against replacing the bridge. The historical society then visited Nelson's class to discuss the bridge's history as the students ramped up their campaign.

When the students met with DOT officials last year, they pressed for more information. Nearly every student had a question, including why structures in Rome have withstood the test of time while newer bridges have not.

Students also asked specific questions about the maintenance

and inspection schedules of the stone bridge, availability of federal funding and how long officials believed the bridge would last if nothing was done.

“A group made up of officials, the students, the people from the historical society and people from town all fought to save that bridge,” said East Haven Mayor Joe Maturo. “You can fight City Hall per say, and I don't just mean the town. They fought to save it. And I think it's fantastic that the DOT capitulated and they're going to work around replacing that bridge.”

In calling for its replacement, DOT engineers had said the bridge was structurally and hydraulically inadequate. Now the work to refurbish the bridge will include repointing the masonry mortar, removing the Jersey barriers that line the bridge, and replacing them with a bridge rail.



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Meriden surveys its past to plan for its future

Meriden is taking an inventory of historical properties in its downtown area and throughout an area the city has designated as a transit-oriented district in order to protect the past as it plans for future development.

With the help of a state grant, the city has hired a consultant to take stock of all historical properties in the center of the city. The consultant will be responsible for photographing and listing the buildings, as well as keeping track of the history of at least 150 structures.

“We had a survey done in the early '70s that has not been updated since,” said city Development and Enforcement Director Dominick Caruso. “A lot of places have been torn down or have changed since then.”

Many downtown buildings were built in the early 1900s or late 1800s. The first goal of the survey will be to “find out what we have” downtown, Caruso said, by identifying historical buildings in the specified TOD zone, which includes the streets

that fall within a half-mile of the train station.

By identifying buildings that are considered “historical,” the city and state could help owners obtain tax credits. Documentation of historical status could also lead to state and federal grants to rehabilitate the buildings.

“This will allow us to see if we can preserve certain buildings or not,” Caruso said.

Mayor Michael S. Rohde said the survey is needed and that he is enthusiastic about it.

“The timing is good because there will be some major changes in downtown,” Rohde said. “I always thought we had good bones down there with the historic buildings and interesting architecture.”

“If you take a walking tour and take more time to look at the architecture, it can be quite extraordinary,” Rohde said. “You are going to see more buildings pop up ... It’s important to start with a base and decide what you want to preserve.”

Bethel ordinance will put bite on blight

Bethel is tweaking its proposed new blight ordinance after residents suggested changes at a public hearing. First Selectman Matt Knickerbocker said the goal is to give the town the legal authority to address properties that represent a health or safety concern for the community.

Knickerbocker said the town’s proposal is not as tough as those in some other towns, but he understands residents’ fears that the language would give the town too much authority over minor aspects of a property.

Town officials have been working on the language of an ordinance for about two years.

“We have been looking at ordinances from other towns and also looked at research from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities,” he said. “We have backed away from some of the language of tougher ordinances. It’s not a real tough ordinance. It is primarily meant to deal with issues of public safety.”

New Milford and Danbury have blight ordinances, and Ridgefield has been considering drafting one. In New Milford, a dilapidated barn on Route 7 and another on Route 67 were torn down under that town’s blight act.

Bethel’s proposal would require that property owners be approached and given time to correct problems before penalties kicked in.

The proposal provides penalties for continuous violations and blight conditions would include a structure or parcel of land that



poses a serious threat to the safety, health, and general welfare of the community, properties documented as attracting illegal activity, and properties that constitute fire hazards.

Missing, damaged, or boarded windows or doors, collapsing or missing walls and other signs of disrepair would be covered. Debris such as parts of automobiles, unused indoor furniture, appliances and garbage in public view might also constitute a violation.

School Safety

New school safety measures being considered by CT towns



Towns and cities across Connecticut have spent the days and months that followed the tragedy in Newtown in near-constant study and discussion of issues relating to school safety. Below are summaries of just a few of the measures being implemented and considered by towns:

New Milford is reviewing, upgrading, and strengthening its school safety policies, plans, and infrastructure to reflect “a world changed by Newtown.” The town is also hiring an outside agency specializing in security to conduct a school vulnerability assessment of each campus in order to create customized school emergency management plans.

In addition, a “significant police presence will continue at each of the town’s schools for the rest of the school year,” according to local officials. Officers will be stationed at each school at the beginning of the day and at dismissal time. Two additional school resource officers were also added to the schools’ staff.

Access to hallways and classrooms at all schools has been limited. All staff members are wearing ID badges, as do visitors, who must be buzzed in to gain entry and then checked in by office staff. In addition, the district’s facility and technology departments are working with police to install software to allow police to remotely access security cameras in each school.

Further security enhancements are being considered, including security film for windows, creating second vestibule areas in each school with required buzz-in, and installing emergency response (911/panic) buttons in each school.

In **Groton**, cameras accessible online by police, panic buttons and security patrols are just some of the ideas being considered by the town as it reviews ways to enhance security at its 10 schools. Officials say layers of protection, such as panic buttons that automatically dial 911, can provide valuable time

for response during an emergency.

Improvements already undertaken include the replacement of locking systems in some classrooms to allow teachers to secure doors from inside the classroom.

Ridgefield is strengthening security measures including the addition of security guards at their schools. A town-appointed committee is looking into an increased police presence in schools, staff security cards, and a background check system for visitors. The committee’s goals are to:

- Research best security practices regarding school physical plant, communication, staffing, procedures, and training;
- Establish short, medium, and long-term security goals;
- Conduct security audits and monitor each school site’s security;
- Ensure appropriate training for all staff;
- Establish a school security committee in each building; and
- Develop a security implementation plan with recommended budget.

Putnam has installed a new locking system in the town’s middle and elementary schools and has authorized funding for an expanded video monitoring system which would enhance current surveillance.

Ellington’s board of selectmen voted to ask for a state trooper to patrol all five schools in town to provide a police presence and conduct prevention programs for students.

Did you know?

On May 15th, 1809, Mary Kies, of South Killingly, was the first woman to receive a U.S. patent for a method of weaving straw with silk.



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Inter-Municipal Cooperation

Towns team up on study of regional dispatch center



The top elected officials from Waterford, East Lyme, and New London are considering the creation of a regional dispatch center for fire, police, and emergency medical services that would serve all three communities.

“We have to recognize that there are efficiencies to be had in services, and there is an economic focus as well,” said

Waterford First Selectman Daniel Steward.

Staff members from each community are working together as part of a planning group to explore options for technology solutions, governance, legal and financial structure, labor and management organization, and policies and procedures.

East Lyme First Selectman Paul Formica said, “the study will determine once and for all if it’s a good fit.”

New London Mayor Daryl Justin Finizio said the communities already partner in other ventures, so creating a regional dispatch center would make sense.

The regional dispatch center would be located in Waterford’s existing center. State Emergency Planning funds would help with implementation and operating costs if the leaders agree to move forward.

The percentages of the operating costs would be based on the volume of calls for service in each municipality and calculated annually. For example, if there are 100

calls and New London is responsible for 25 of them, New London’s portion of the cost would be 25 percent.

Formica said the study would also look at how the unions would blend together. New London and East Lyme dispatchers belong to unions while Waterford’s dispatchers do not.

In August, Waterford and New London agreed to share Waterford’s emergency communications equipment, saving New London the expense of building its own system.

Waterford, which installed a \$6 million state-of-the-art network several years ago, has the radio capacity to meet all of New London’s needs. The signal from Waterford covers 95 percent of New London, with none of the dead spots that were part of the old system.

All three local leaders said the goal of a regional dispatch center is to provide better and more cost-effective services.

Did you know?

The Scoville Memorial Library in Salisbury, is the United States’ oldest publicly funded library.

The library collection began in 1771, when Richard Smith, owner of a local blast furnace, used community contributions to buy 200 books in London. Patrons could borrow and return books on the third Monday of every third month. Fees were collected for damages, the most common being “greasing” by wax dripped from the candles by which the patrons read.

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Ansonia mayor takes energy conservation pledge



Ansonia recently became the first Naugatuck valley town to commit to the new Clean Energy Communities program, a nationally recognized initiative that offers incentives to municipalities for achieving energy reduction milestones and embracing clean energy.

As part of a statewide effort to reduce energy consumption and increase the use of renewal energy, Ansonia Mayor James Della Volpe recently signed the Clean Energy Communities pledge which signaled Ansonia's official commitment to improve its energy efficiency and promote the use of renewable energy sources.

"Ansonia strives to become a greener community, not just within our city buildings, but we also encourage our local businesses and residents to join in this effort," said Mayor Della Volpe. "I personally challenge Derby Mayor Staffieri and Shelton Mayor Lauretti to try and surpass Ansonia, both in reducing energy use and increasing support for clean, renewable energy."

Under the Clean Energy Communities program, Ansonia has pledged to reduce its energy consumption by 20 percent by 2018. Along the way, the town's success in saving energy and supporting renewable energy will make it eligible to earn clean energy systems and grants that can be used toward energy efficiency projects.

As it meets certain milestones, the town will be eligible for grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 and clean energy systems equivalent to 1 kilowatt (kW) of solar PV.

Mayor Della Volpe said he is kicking off the Clean Energy Communities program by getting a Home Energy Solutions assessment at his home in order to help raise energy efficiency awareness among Ansonia residents and start the ball rolling toward achieving Ansonia's first energy reduction milestone.

Provided by the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund, the Home Energy Solutions assessment is a home energy audit that helps homeowners save money on their monthly energy bills by pinpointing where homes are losing energy and identifying the improvements that will conserve the most energy and save the most money.

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Did you know?

The USS Nautilus, the world's first nuclear powered submarine, was built in Groton in 1954.

Volunteers

Community services building gets needed space

The building that houses Southington Community Services was built in the late 1800s as a one-room school house. Later it became the town's community center and during the 1960s, an addition turned the building into a firehouse. The organization moved to their current location due to a lack of space – their offices were originally in the basement of the Town Hall.

Over the last few years, it has become déjà vu all over again. While the need for services and the number of donations have swelled, the room used to store donations was also being used to store voting machines. The cramped quarters have forced Community Services to use off-site storage and even turn down donations.

"Part of the reason is, with so many people needing our services, it's expanded," said Mark Fazzolari, assistant director of Southington Community Services.

Fazzolari said the country's economic woes have driven more people to depend upon donations, such as clothing, appliances or furniture. While Fazzolari said there are plenty

of people donating to the town, there isn't enough space to store everything.

Once the town moved the voting machines, the building gained 700 square feet of extra space that was renovated by local volunteers – effectively doubling the size of the existing storage room. New shelves were built and new sheetrock walls and floors were installed by the volunteers with help from employees from the nearby Home Depot – which also provided \$8,400 worth of project supplies.

During the renovation project, Town Manager Garry Brumback visited the site and thanked the workers who donated their time and skills to put the room together.

"This is no small thing for us," Brumback said. "To give time the way you're doing in order to transition this into something that's even better is very special."

SCS Director Janet Mellon said before the renovation there was no easy way to keep track of inventory, but the new shelves will help take care of that.

Bikers, boarders and bladers gather to clean local park



After being cooped up and snowed in for much of the winter, a sunny weekend and 50 degree weather recently found more than a dozen New Britain teens – as well as a few adults – at a local skate park, not only ready to roll, but ready to clean.

They arrived – some with skate boards in hand, some toting rollerblades, and others sitting atop their BMX bikes – to do some spring cleaning and then some long-awaited riding, blading or boarding on "toys" that had been tucked away in closets and garages for a long winter's nap.

For city resident Teddy Luciano, it was the eighth straight year he has helped with the annual clean-up.

Luciano said he tries to treat the park with the same respect it treats him – as a safe, fun place

to go – and he spent part of the day clearing out snow and leaves from inside the concrete bowl scaled by bikes, boards, and blades.

After the work was done, there were more than 15 teenage boys and young men using the skate area and enjoying the sunshine on their bikes, skateboards and rollerblades.

Brendan Brown, also from New Britain, watched the crowd from a staircase overlooking the skate park. He and two other friends brought their rollerblades, but deemed the pavement too wet for safe blading. Brown said he and a group of friends have made "clever use of the skate park" to accommodate the sport of skating.

The volunteers say a few minor improvements would make the park an even better place to hang out – and they plan to approach New Britain officials with an offer they hope the city can't refuse.

"We could do so much with just two jersey barriers – any sort of metal rails the city gets their hands on and can donate," Brown said.

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Municipal Ethics Dilemma

A city-owned lot is in deplorable condition, filled with trash, weeds and rats. A local business owner and property abutter has repeatedly petitioned the city to clean it up. The businessman has also offered to buy or lease the land. Finally, the business owner could not stand the mess anymore and spent his own money to remove the junk, garbage, and trash.

Now the city is threatening legal action against the businessman for trespassing, explaining that “the city does not permit unauthorized access to or alteration of its property.” The city zoning officer says the no trespassing policy is designed to “limit taxpayer liability.” The city says it must require that the business owner return the land to its original condition—that is, fill it up with garbage so it is an eyesore, dangerous, and useless again. Must the zoning officer apply the letter of the law in this case?

“I understand that risk and possible liability are involved with trespassing, including the potential for trespassers to hurt themselves or others, but the city government should have addressed the issue long before the business owner took matters into his own hands. The businessman did the city a favor and the city should have made every effort to work with the business owner, which it did not do.

To resolve the zoning enforcement issue, I would have the business owner work with the city attorney to achieve a common-sense solution. Going forward, I would ask the city council to review and discuss the existing policies and make appropriate changes.”

Lisa Pellegrini, First Selectman of Somers

Here’s a new dilemma:



Matt is a Public Works employee who coordinates the facility rentals of municipal parks. A business that often rents such spaces to hold their company functions offers Matt a part-time consulting position to help them organize and facilitate their events. Since this would not interfere with his current job at the City, can Matt accept the offer?

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