

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD**  
**January 23, 2023**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=101v9CPIV50&t=1s>

A meeting of the Town of Fairfield was held on Monday, January 23, 2023 at 8 PM at 501 Kings Hwy East, Fairfield, CT and via Webex.

The meeting was called to order at 8 PM by Moderator Mark McDermott.

PRESENT: 38                      ABSENT: 2                      VACANCY: 0

PRESENT: Bateson, Furey, Ruggiero, Longo, Gerber, McCormack, Perham, Steele, Durrell, Galdenzi, Lambert, Pistilli, Karson, McCabe, Spolyar, Zezima, Barahona, Garskof, Siebert, Wolk, Berez, Gale, Graceffa, Havey, Kuhn, McDermott, Vergara, Wackerman, Choniski, Ference, Iacono, Meyers, Brown, Horton, Scinto, Astarita, Sparacino, S. Tallman

ABSENT: Georgiadis, Britton

**ITEM NO. 1 ON CALL:**            PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & MOMENT OF SILENCE

Moderator McDermott led the Body in the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence in memory of John Leahy, longtime Chief Fiscal Officer of the Town of Fairfield who recently passed away.

**ITEM NO. 2 ON CALL:**            FIRST SELECTWOMAN'S STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

See address attached hereto.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**        The Moderator reported that item numbers 7, 8 & 9 were eligible for the Consent Calendar.

**VOTE:** Items 7, 8 & 9 were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**ITEM NO. 3 ON CALL:**            LEASE REPORT OF TOWN PROPERTIES

This report was received in Committee.

**ITEM NO. 4 ON CALL:**            CONDEMNATION & BLIGHT REPORT

This report was received in Committee.

**ITEM NO. 5 ON CALL:**            RECOVERY OF COSTS RELATED TO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES

This report was received in Committee.

**ITEM NO. 6 ON CALL:**            CONSIDERATION OF THE DECEMBER 19 2022 MINUTES

Laura Karson, District 4 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

**VOTE:** The December 19, 2022 minutes were approved with 37 in favor 0 opposed and 1 abstention (Zezima).

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

JANUARY 23, 2023

Page 2 of 3

**ITEM NO. 7 ON CALL:** APPOINTMENT OF DAVE J HENRY (D) AS AN ALTERNATE TO THE HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION TERM NOV 2021-2023

This item was on the Consent Calendar.

**ITEM NO. 8 ON CALL:** TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE: “RESOLVED, THAT FIRST SELECTWOMAN BRENDA L. KUPCHICK, BE, AND HEREBY IS, AUTHORIZED TO ACCEPT, ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD, A 2022 CONNECTICUT STEAP GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$500,000 FOR SIDEWALK REHABILITATION AND EXTENSION; AND FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT FIRST SELECTWOMAN BRENDA L. KUPCHICK, IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO ENTER INTO AND EXECUTE ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS, CONTRACTS AND DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO OBTAIN SAID 2022 STEAP GRANT WITH THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.”

This item was on the Consent Calendar.

**ITEM NO. 9 ON CALL:** TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE: “RESOLVED, THAT FIRST SELECTWOMAN BRENDA L. KUPCHICK, BE, AND HEREBY IS, AUTHORIZED TO ACCEPT, ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD, A CONNECTICUT COMMUNITIES CHALLENGE GRANT (ROUND2) IN THE AMOUNT OF \$3,000,000 FOR REPLACEMENT OF A 2,800-FOOT SECTION OF THE EAST TRUNK SEWER LINE; AND FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT FIRST SELECTWOMAN BRENDA L. KUPCHICK, IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO ENTER INTO AND EXECUTE ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS, CONTRACTS AND DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO OBTAIN SAID CONNECTICUT COMMUNITIES CHALLENGE GRANT WITH THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.”

This item was on the Consent Calendar.

**ITEM NO. 10 ON CALL:** TO HEAR, CONSIDER AND ACT UPON A REDISTRICTING ORDINANCE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH §9-169 OF THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE RTM REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE.

Joe Siebert, District 5 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

Pamela Iacono, District 8 thanked her fellow Redistricting Committee members for their hard work She said when politics is set aside great things can happen and hopes this is an example for the Body working together for the remainder of the term.

REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

JANUARY 23, 2023

Page 3 of 3

Liz Zezima, District 4 encouraged everyone to vote in favor of the ordinance. She thanked Democratic ROV for his time and assistance. She agreed that partisanship has no place in this and it should guide the Body with legislation moving forward.

**VOTE:** The redistricting ordinance as recommended by the RTM Redistricting Committee was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Pamela Iacono announced that Ed Bateson has been elected Deputy Minority Leader replacing Jeff Steele who has resigned from the position due to work commitments.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, MMC, MCTC  
Town Clerk

FIRST SELECTWOMAN  
**Brenda L. Kupchick**



2023 State of the Town

Good evening. Members of the RTM, Distinguished Guests, and my Fellow Citizens:

In January of 2020, barely two months after being sworn into office, I delivered my first State of the Town address invoking the memory and service of two individuals who held this office before me John Sullivan, a Democrat, and Jacky Durrell, a Republican.

John and Jacky led our Town for a combined total of 34 years. Neither were guided by their political parties – but rather by their love of Fairfield and their commitment to work every day for the residents of our community.

I admired their leadership when I was growing up in Fairfield, but even more so when I became the First Selectwoman. To me, public service is putting people before politics and leading with integrity and common sense.

Over the last three years, I have appointed both Republicans and actually more Democrats, to serve in key positions of trust and accountability in my administration and to lead town departments. I believe a balanced government that incorporates the most qualified people results in a stronger and more effective government. We can disagree on policy as we sometimes do, but as elected officials and citizens, we should always engage respectfully on important issues facing our community.

Government is supposed to serve the people, but as we have experienced our community's trust in government suffered as a result of the actions stemming from the fill pile and Penfield Pavilion. Each of us have a responsibility to work together for the citizens who put their trust in us.

Cleaning up town government, modernizing and reorganizing to provide efficiencies to better serve our residents, has been a top goal for my administration. I am still amazed three years into my term, with the continued discovery of how past

mismanagement requires my administration to implement even more new fundamental protocols and policies which should have been basic practices for any municipal government. I continue to share in our residents' frustration of having to spend millions of dollars to "fix" Penfield Pavilion *again*, and to investigate and remediate the impact of the fill pile scandal. These are certainly not items any of us would choose to spend hard earned taxpayer dollars on.

The days of Fairfield officials breaking laws and disregarding regulatory agency directives because it may be politically expedient, are over.

The needs of Fairfield's residents and businesses have changed over the last decade, as our population and economy have grown, demanding greater attention from the town to facilitate this growth. Businesses innovate and modernize and so too should our town, which is exactly what my administration has been focused on doing for the last three years.

We have added a great deal of new technology to help make it easier for residents and businesses to work with the town. Positions no longer required have been consolidated and replaced with new positions that better fit the operational needs of our growing community. Two of our busiest departments, Engineering and Human Resources, are prime examples of this approach and the importance of this reorganization effort. They finally have the necessary staffing to meet the needs of today's infrastructure challenges and projects, and ensures we are building a workforce that is highly trained to respond to a 21<sup>st</sup> century community.

Town governments are facing significant recruitment and retention challenges in a post COVID world and in an inflationary economy. Making sure we have proper policies, protocols, support and training for our employees is critical for Fairfield's future. Having professional staff who are educated in their fields and can best serve our residents is critical for our collective success. As with any organization, the success depends on the people who work within it, and the same is

true for municipalities. I want to thank and acknowledge all of our town employees who work hard every day on behalf of our residents.

Since I stood before you to deliver last year's State of the Town I'm proud to share how much has been accomplished. I continue to prioritize transparent communication as a fundamental component of governing. Keeping residents updated through my bimonthly newsletter and with the year in review update, has been a welcomed new connection between town government and the people we serve.

While many of the initiatives in Town have been shared in recent newsletters, I did want to take time to mention a few highlights from this past year. My administration supported 75 new brick and mortar businesses opening their doors, our new Regional Dispatch Center is fully operational improving emergency response times, five brand new playgrounds have been installed for children and their families to enjoy with a beautiful new outdoor fitness park located at Gould Manor. We have also launched several new recycling initiatives in collaboration with the Conservation Commission and the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force and I'm proud that partly through these efforts, Fairfield was one of five towns in the state recognized with a new award for its work in sustainability.

We have invested in public safety with the purchase of new body and dash cam technology for our Police Department using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, which also provides enhanced training for our officers. I also added two new officers and a licensed clinical social worker to join the police force in an effort to meet the ever-changing needs of law enforcement and public safety. We also added an additional Fire Marshal to ensure fire safety and code compliance for buildings.

Our community welcomed Sacred Heart University Martire Family Hockey Arena and Fairfield University Leo Mahoney Arena, both new state-of-the-art

facilities and are wonderful additions to Fairfield. They are both ideal venues for our community to come together.

Honestly, there are so many new initiatives that I couldn't possibly share them all in one speech, however I would encourage residents and elected officials alike to take the time learn more about what we are doing through the newsletter updates, and more importantly get out and enjoy all Fairfield has to offer.

In my last State of the Town, I announced the creation of a bipartisan Capital Plan Working Group made up of varying stakeholders, to assess and prioritize the many needs the Town, Water Pollution Control Authority and Board of Education have on the horizon. Over the course of eight public meetings in the last year, which have just completed, the group heard from department heads and the School District and explored many projects from pickleball courts, to sewer infrastructure, flood prevention, dog parks and new schools, to name a few. This process is new for our town but I believe we can use it as an opportunity to take a deep dive into the many competing needs Fairfield faces. It's not an easy task and I want to thank all those who participated and provided helpful and genuine input.

I also implemented a bonding cap in consultation with the town's financial advisors to control the amount the town puts on its credit card, to protect our fiscal health and guide the capital planning process.

To address the lack of planning documents and analyses of town facilities that existed when I came into office, we hired outside experts to conduct independent analysis of Town resources. Our roads and sidewalks have been scientifically analyzed and we now have a five-year prioritization plan to bring them into good condition. Sidewalks are critical to connectivity and safe pedestrian access, which is why we have invested in sidewalks using ARPA funds, and secured a number of grants to improve and expand walkability. I look forward to working with all



stakeholders to continue to implement initiatives of Fairfield's Complete Streets policy.

All our town buildings have now been examined to ensure their safety, compliance and longevity. A study of our tide gates is also underway through Conservation and Engineering, to ensure appropriate flood prevention measures are in place. As we have seen, increased flooding is becoming an issue throughout Fairfield.

The Town Plan & Zoning Department is conducting a Plan of Conservation and Development with community input to help guide our Town's development and protect our open spaces for the future. The Parks & Recreation Department also just completed their Master Plan which includes concepts to improve recreational spaces across our town. All of this planning was necessary and helpful for Fairfield to assess what we have and what our needs are, in an effort to put together a comprehensive analysis, one that everyone can have confidence in.

While I've made it a priority to grow our commercial tax base, we must continue to work to enhance that growth, which will help lessen the burden on our residential taxpayers. After a great many meetings with our planning departments and the developer, the long stalled transit-oriented Metro Center development has finally broken ground. This project provides an opportunity to expand office and retail space and a much needed hotel in Fairfield. When finished, this revitalized former Brownfield site will broaden the Town's tax base further reducing the residential tax burden, which is a priority for me.

This year, we look forward to the completion of many more projects we have been working on including our new Town website, fully operational hybrid meeting rooms, securing a new location for the beloved Operation Hope, partnering with Habitat for Humanity to build "true" affordable housing units in an effort to reach a moratorium under the state's 8-30g statute, and continuing our efforts to modernize

town government to better serve our residents. It's also been exciting to work closely with our Economic Development Department to bring to Fairfield a new brewery restaurant scheduled to open in 2023. We worked very closely with the landlords and business owners to cut through bureaucracy to get this project moving and we are excited for this new addition to our town. I'm looking forward to the efforts made during 2022 coming to fruition in 2023, including the ARPA funded fleet of electric cars that will replace the inefficient Crown Victoria cars used by town employees who work in the field.

I would be remiss in not mentioning how much our community and our local government benefit from the hundreds volunteers who dedicate their time serving on various boards and commissions. I want to sincerely thank those Fairfielders who share their talent and expertise volunteering for the good of our community and contributing to our small town feel of representative government, even though we are the 11<sup>th</sup> largest municipality in Connecticut.

As we embark on a new year full of promise, let us be thankful for the beautiful, historic coastal community we live in. Let us work together to continue providing affordable services for our residents while enhancing our excellent schools.

Fairfield enjoys urban style amenities in a family-friendly suburban setting. We have two flagship universities that provide a pool of talent for businesses and their students add vibrancy to our community.

Fairfield has something for everyone, while I may be biased having grown up, raised my family and started a small business with my husband all right in town, I firmly believe Fairfield is the best town in all of Connecticut.

I have a deep humility for the responsibility of serving as the First Selectwoman for the town that has always been my home. I pledge to the residents of Fairfield that I will continue to wake up every morning ready to go to work for you

and continue to earn the trust that you have placed in me. I look forward to working with all of you to move our town forward in a positive direction together.

Thank you and good night. God bless the great Town of Fairfield.