

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 21st 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 11th 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.

ADDENDUM: 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

Happy New Year Fairfielders!

I'm ready to start 2023 with a renewed sense of purpose and dedication to our community.

For the last two years, I have sent out a year-in-review newsletter highlighting the good work of our Town employees and our collective accomplishments in service to the residents of Fairfield.

I want to sincerely thank Fairfielders who share their time and talent volunteering on the Town's many boards, commissions, nonprofits, and especially our residents who provide input with positivity and goodwill. While our Town has many challenging issues, I know we will tackle each one and move Fairfield forward together.

I look forward to serving you in 2023.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Working with our Community & Economic Development Director and department, our priority has been supporting smart growth in Fairfield in an effort to expand Fairfield's business footprint, with the ultimate goal of easing residential taxes that fund important services, while adding vibrancy to our Town.

Fairfield welcomed more than 75 new "bricks & mortar" businesses this past year, including Isla & Co., Sally's Apizza, Trek Bicycle, Evolution Gaming and Ryoma Coffee World (RCW USA), a subsidiary of CMA Industrial Technologies, one of the largest and leading manufacturers of commercial-grade espresso machines, based in Susegana, Italy. RCW USA relocated its US offices from Greensboro, NC to Fairfield in June of this past year.

Behind the scenes, the collaborative and productive work of our permitting departments assisting businesses throughout the process sends a message that

Fairfield welcomes new businesses to our community. A special thanks to our Community & Economic Development Department for organizing ribbon cuttings and partnering with Chamber President Beverly Balaz and the Fairfield Chamber of Commerce to highlight many new businesses opening in Fairfield. Our local business's success is Fairfield's success, and as a Town, we strive to assist in these efforts the best we can.

One such project that I worked closely with our Economic Development Director was assisting in moving forward the long-awaited transit-oriented, mixed-use development, adjacent to the Fairfield Metro Center Train Station. This project was originally announced in 2011 and finally broke ground in 2022. The Crossings at Fairfield Metro development was sold to a new developer and will consist of a hotel, 70,000 square feet of commercial office space; 40,000 square feet of retail space; and 357 new housing units, of which 20% will be affordable at varying levels. This project is expected to generate over \$4 million in net new taxes per year upon full build-out which will be a huge boost to our community's tax base and to economic development.

Our Building Department worked diligently to ensure all new buildings and renovations were built safely and to code. The department issued over 60 certificates of occupancy for new single-family homes and issued permits to many new businesses and the two large arenas at the Universities.

With the launch of our new online permitting system in February, spearheaded by the IT Department, our permitting departments have been able to track and assist applicants electronically and accept online payments. This system is all part of our efforts to modernize town government. Building, Zoning, Conservation, Engineering and Sewer are all online and the Health Department and the Fire Marshal's Office are planning to go live in 2023.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Our Town residents have felt real frustration with overdevelopment in residential neighborhoods overriding our local zoning laws, which is permitted under state statute. In order to help residents understand the development projects in Town that are built under this statute, we launched an 8-30g Q&A on the Town's website which can be viewed [here](#).

In an effort to combat these state mandates, I have actively worked to implement changes that will benefit Fairfield to have more control over our long-term planning.

As part of my efforts to increase Fairfield's affordable housing stock, we selected Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County as a development partner to construct two duplexes on Town-owned property at 244 Greenfield Street. The Town will ground-lease the property to Habitat, which will finance and oversee the construction and sale of the units to income-eligible first-time homebuyers. The project will provide four units of actual affordable ownership housing upon completion. I am excited about this partnership and look forward to opportunities to work with Habitat in the future.

The Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) updated the Town's Affordable Housing Plan which sets forth strategies to achieve enough points to qualify for a housing moratorium to protect our local zoning laws while also seeking to provide a broad array of housing options to meet the changing housing needs of Fairfield residents.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Here in Fairfield, we are so lucky to have one of, if not the best, police departments in the state. We have seen many positive changes under the leadership of Chief of Police, Robert Kalamaras.

- Over the course of 2022, our Fairfield Police Department:
- Responded to over 47,000 calls for service

- Officers received a combined total of almost 12,000 hours of training

In last year's budget, I added two police officers to the department. I swore in 13 new officers after many retirements and was honored to give the Oath of Office to 13 officers who were promoted into new roles in the department, including Deputy Chief Keith Broderick. These new officers bring the Fairfield Police Department's total to 109 sworn personnel (out of 110 budgeted).

As a means to remain progressive in mental health services, this year the Fairfield Police Department implemented the Fairfield Police Behavioral Health Network (FPBHN). This network is comprised of a variety of local and regional mental health agencies with the purpose of building awareness of, and familiarity amongst as many mental health services/partners as possible.

As a part of this effort, the Fairfield Police Department created a position for an embedded Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). The Town welcomed Jessica Bloomberg to this new position, who is a current LCSW and retired Stamford Police Officer. This position is invaluable to our community and the Police Department, with the goal of increasing services to our Town, specifically in the areas of mental health and addiction services.

To continually seek innovative ways to improve and modernize our services and invest in the safety of our community, the opening of the Fairfield County Regional Dispatch Center on March 14th of this year is a prime example of how we accomplish this goal and ensure the residents of Fairfield are provided with the most efficient services possible when facing a crisis. This new state-of-the-art facility, provided by Sacred Heart University, will be a regional dispatch center, bringing together the dispatch services of Police, Fire, and EMS of both our Town and Westport, as well as the dispatch services of the New Canaan Fire Department with new technologies implemented by the Town's IT Department.

The Town also applied for and received a \$3.5 million grant for a radio upgrade to replace the existing Police and Fire outdated radio system. This new solution will allow for interoperability amongst neighboring towns for enhanced coverage and communication. I am very excited about this opportunity and thank all of those who assisted with making this project come to fruition. It is truly a considerable investment in the safety of our Town's residents.

The Fairfield Fire Department improved their Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating from Category 3 up to Category 2. Our Fairfield Fire Department is now rated among the top 4% of Fire Departments nationwide for Fire Suppression Capabilities, Water Supply and Emergency Communications. The rating upgrade recognizes the years of hard work to improve their service capabilities and results in lower fire insurance premiums for our residential properties.

The Fire Department has continued to work with Aquarion to improve the water main system for fire suppression. This past year, substantial improvements were made to the lower Greenfield Hill and Southport Sections of Town. This project included installing many miles of new fire mains and the installation of new fire hydrants for better accessibility in case of emergency.

As a part of our growing workforce to meet the needs of our Town's size, I added a long-needed additional Fire Marshal to the budget. I was also proud to swear in three new firefighters and four members of the department moving into new leadership positions over the last year.

The Fire Marshal's Office has overseen the Code Enforcement of a few major construction projects working with other Town permitting departments, such as the Sacred Heart University Martire Family Hockey Arena and Fairfield University Leo Mahoney Arena, both new state-of-the-art arenas that are wonderful additions to our Town, and ideal venues for our community to watch and root for their hometown teams. Comprehensive code enforcement is a key element to the safe operation of

these major facilities, so I am grateful to our Fire Marshal's Office for ensuring the safety of these arenas and all of the residential and commercial buildings they inspect.

The department has completed training and developed a response plan to be able to respond to Lithium-Ion Battery Fires whether they are in a car or on a smaller device. Lithium-Ion Battery Fires present a new challenge to the fire service as they are hard to extinguish and give off many toxic gases when they burn.

TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE & OPERATIONS

Through the American Rescue Plan Recovery Act, the Town of Fairfield received \$24.8 million, and many projects Town bodies approved have been completed in 2022, including new playgrounds, outdoor improvements to Fairfield Theatre Company for free community concerts, and the acquisition of new body and dash cameras for our Police Department replacing outdated equipment that provides safety for our residents and police. We also upgraded Fire Station 2, finished significant Senior Center renovations, and replaced guard rails throughout Town. The remaining funds will go toward cleaning up the fill pile contamination, A/C in our schools, paving roads, flooding mitigation for the Rooster River area, electric/hybrid Town vehicles with charging stations and many more critical projects.

You can read the list of all the projects I submitted to the Town Boards [here](#).

As part of my reorganization of Town Hall, Teri Brown, the Town's new part-time grant coordinator, is working every day to help identify and apply for grants to offset the impact on Fairfield taxpayers. In 2022, Teri assisted Town departments in securing four discretionary grants totaling over \$7 million.

Under the leadership of our DPW Director and Deputy Director, we took the initiative to finally have our roads and sidewalks independently analyzed and

prioritized. After the condition of our roads was neglected for many years, the new roadway and sidewalk management plan began with the Department of Public Work's Highway & Construction Crews:

- 10,849 feet of new asphalt sidewalks, making it easier and safer to walk along the street
- 2.64 miles of road were chip sealed
- 9.19 miles of road were paved in 2022; surpassing last year's paving by 21% DPW's Tree Department, under the leadership of Tree Warden Jeff Minder, planted a record 305 trees this year, removed 310 hazardous trees and pruned 3,150 trees Town-wide.
- Fairfield achieved Tree City USA recognition for the 34th year, and I am proud to say we are the longest-running Connecticut town to earn this designation.

Along with our DPW regular maintenance of maintaining, cleaning and routine repairs of our historical, public and government buildings, I'm happy to announce that 2022 marks the completion of the following construction projects throughout Town, including:

Dover Park Shelter Remodel, DPW Salt Dome Roof Replacement, Brookside Comfort Station Remodel, Gould Manor Comfort Station Remodel, New Siding on Jennings Beach Pavilion, Burr Homestead Waste Line Replacement, Owen Fish American Legion Post 143 Painted, Cedar Roof Replacement at Sherman Green Gazebo and much more.

Fairfield was awarded a grant in the amount of \$3,000,000 under the Connecticut Communities Challenge Grant to upgrade the East Trunk Sewer line that services two-thirds of our Town. The Town has been working to identify a fix to the East Trunk Sewer since 2016.

The project will replace a 2,800-foot section of sewer line, serving 60% of Fairfield residents. These upgrades will also enable further development of the Fairfield Metro transit-oriented community which broke ground earlier this year, as well as address sewer capacity more generally.

The Town completed work on the Post Road Circle Safety Study that began in 2019, which examined opportunities to make improvements to a portion of the Post Road & King's Highway that hosts over 20,000 vehicles per day and has seen more than its fair share of accidents and close calls.

The study, which was funded by a \$375,000 State grant, identified and evaluated several design concepts, aimed at creating a safer environment for vehicles and pedestrians alike. The Town is now pursuing funding for the full design.

The Engineering Department has had a busy year revitalizing our sidewalks, sanitary sewers and bridges. Through the Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP), Fairfield was awarded infrastructure improvement funding that will be invested into the rehabilitation of our Town's sidewalks on Round Hill Road from Barlow Road to Post Road (US 1) and Reef Road from Nichols Street to Fairfield Beach Road.

Other projects that are currently under the design phase within the department are the Commerce Drive Bridge, Wakeman Lane Bridge, Kings Highway West Bridge, Grasmere-Post neighborhood pedestrian improvements, Southport Connectivity, Perry's Green Bulkhead and Rooster River Detention Areas.

As a result of my reorganization and modernization of our Town government, we welcomed three new engineers this past year who have been extraordinarily helpful in managing the many projects underway around Town including Duck Farm Bridge, Penfield Pavilion, the WPCF, Rooster River and much more. I am proud of the necessary improvements the Engineering Department has made for our Town this year, and I look forward to the major projects that will be completed in 2023.

In 2022, the clean-up continued of the contaminated fill that was identified at over 40 locations around Town. About 75% of the sites have been cleaned with eight sites left to go, not including Penfield Pavilion and the actual fill pile itself. Those two sites are still pending varying stages of review with FEMA, DEEP and EPA.

Town Planning & Zoning (TPZ) worked on the Post Road Circle Safety Plan with the Engineering Department and Economic Development Department and was recently recognized with an award by the CT Chapter of the American Planning Association for “Engaging with Graphics.”

A collaboration amongst the Affordable Housing Committee, Town Plan & Zoning, the Fairfield Senior Advocates and FairPLAN yielded a workshop and panel discussion in November on recent changes to the Town’s zoning regulations to enable new accessory dwelling units, also known as granny flats or in-law apartments. You can watch the informational workshop [here](#).

Updating the Plan of Conservation and Development sets the Town’s policy “roadmap” for preservation and growth looking forward to the next decade and modernizing the format of Fairfield’s Zoning Regulations is well underway thanks to ARPA funding.

The department also ascertained recertification for the Town’s Community Rating System to a Class 7 Rating through the National Flood Insurance that provides Fairfield’s flood policyholders with approximately \$400,000 worth of premium savings.

Fairfield has received another AAA rating from Moody’s Investors Services and S&P Global Ratings, which is always great news for our taxpayers, and a tribute to the Town's fiscal responsibility.

The Town held a bond refunding sale on July 26th with a principal refunding amount of \$13,455,000. Bond refinancings or “refundings” are used by local governments most frequently to achieve debt service savings on outstanding bonds. The Town was able to refinance bonds issued at higher rates in 2012 and 2014. I want to thank our Chief Fiscal Officer, Jared Schmitt, and the Town's Financial advisors for their efforts on behalf of Fairfield. The timing of the refunding resulted in better-than-expected savings and exceeded industry standards. The refunding allowed the Town to reduce its debt by more than \$740,000 over the 12-year refunding period.

The Town Clerk’s Office received a \$7,500 grant from the State Library Historic Documents Preservation Program that was used to add several more years of land records to the existing online search database, for added convenience.

I am grateful to have a Town Clerk's Office that is dedicated to preserving the rich history of our Town and maintaining important residential and Town documents.

The Tax Collector’s Office remains a highly professional and service-oriented department that's always responsive and helpful to taxpayers. As part of my Town modernization efforts, a reorganization was implemented that brought all aspects of the sewer use taxes into the office including billing, adjustments and the processing of payments which has provided added efficiencies and convenience for residents.

RECREATION

Under the direction of Anthony Calabrese, the Parks & Recreation Department has taken on more responsibility as part of the town government reorganization efforts and has expanded recreational opportunities for our community.

The Parks & Recreation Department has completed its Master Plan with input from the public to identify gaps in services and allow the Town to plan new additions to the department's offerings. A presentation from the consultant to assemble the plan

will be given to the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Board of Education and RTM on January 12th. You can view information on the Master Plan [here](#).

The department was recently awarded the 2022 Facility of Merit Award for H. Smith Richardson Golf Course Clubhouse by Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association (CRPA).

On top of this large accomplishment, using federal ARPA funds, the department has also completed upgrades to the Jennings Beach Concession/Lifeguard building, a beautiful new Gould Manor Park and the replacement of five brand new neighborhood playgrounds:

Dover, Highwood, Lincoln, Melville, Tunxis Hill

The Lake Mohegan Splash Pad has been replaced and improvements at our Town's athletic fields are underway. In addition to a successful Beach Bunny 5k with over 1000 registered participants, in 2022 the department planned 36 summer concerts, hosted 340 events at the pavilions, 35 free events around Town for adults and children, and registered and hosted summer camp programs and recreation soccer & basketball for over 6,500 participants.

I was especially impressed by this year's Winter Whimsy, which was added to the annual tree lighting and was a big hit for residents. Our Parks & Recreation team is always looking to offer new and improved recreational opportunities for our residents to enjoy every year. I am very grateful for their dedication and commitment to Fairfield.

The activities the Fairfield Public Library continues to provide are a great way to get children and their families active by immersing themselves in literature that is both fun and educational.

The Library's signature annual program, One Book, One Town, was hugely successful and something I was grateful to be a part of. The author talk by TJ Klune brought 375 patrons to the SHU Theater, while 131 participants enjoyed the program from the comfort of their homes.

This year, the library opened new study rooms at the Main Branch due to the high demand from our residents. These new rooms have been reserved 6,613 times for academic or business purposes. The library also purchased upgraded furniture for the Main Library's Adult Section and the Woods Branch Teen area.

This year's Summer Reading Challenge had 2,520 participants, with community members of all ages participating. The library also saw the return of regular art shows in the Bruce Kershner Gallery, First Friday Jazz, Storytime on the Green, and the full reopening of our Children's Room. I am proud to say all of this activity brought 274,424 visits to the library in 2022, 110% more than last year.

Looking back on 2022, the Pequot Library is proud to have continued to work with a number of organizations, including the Aspetuck Land Trust, Sasquanaug Association, Sustainable Fairfield, Fairfield Public Library's One Book/One Town, and more, to host an array of important and meaningful public programs and events. The Library brought back and expanded many beloved Fairfield traditions including the Fourth of July Bike Parade, the Holiday Caroling Party and Open House, and Miss Susan's Campout, to name a few.

The Town is happy to continue its critical support of the Pequot Library's commitment to the arts.

The Town is blessed to have a private/public third library for our community to enjoy.

HUMAN & SOCIAL SERVICES

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded projects are underway or have been completed at the Bigelow Center for Senior Activities, including updating all bathrooms and the patio and grounds of the building. The patio and outdoor seating area enhance both the appearance of the Center and outdoor programming.

The Center's membership has grown to more than 6,200 registered members, including 550 in 2022.

We are fortunate to have a Center in Fairfield that continues to offer new programs while continuing to offer much-loved classes.

Another positive impact of the Town's reorganization efforts includes making the important positions of Senior Center Director and Social Services Coordinator full-time in July, providing continuity and increased support and services to Fairfield seniors and residents in need. Both Senior Center Director, Brenda Steele, and Social Services Coordinator, Malinda Johnson, have already made a positive impact on the community. I also want to thank our Director of Human & Social Services, Julie DeMarco, who has exceptionally led the Senior Center and Town Social Services in a positive direction.

Our Social Services Department has been putting in its best effort to provide residents with the assistance they need with new programs. A new, quarterly Social Services newsletter keeps Fairfield residents informed. New classes and support groups offered by Social Services staff are providing residents with learning opportunities and ongoing support. For more information email Malinda Johnson at mjohnson@fairfieldct.org or call Malinda at (203) 256-3170.

HEALTH & HUMAN RESOURCES

After my budget request to reorganize our Human Resources Department was denied during the budget process last year, we were able to successfully have the Board approve a transfer from surplus funds in October to bring the department to

the appropriate staffing level for a town of our size. Our goal was to hire appropriate staff to professionalize the department to manage the many issues that face our town government employees every day. For years the department has been understaffed and did not have policies in place for a government our size, which ultimately has an impact on the residents we serve.

This was a top priority for me to provide a supportive work environment for our employees and also protect the Town's liability.

Our Health Department continued their great work in 2022 under the direction of Sands Cleary by providing free COVID-19 test kits and N95 masks at the drive-thru with the CERT Team and then giving out over 10,000 kits in December at various sites in Town. The department held numerous adult and pediatric vaccination clinics throughout the year and conducted several flu clinics.

The department also facilitated the enrollment of several Ukrainian refugee students into the schools assisting with the translation of medical records.

The department furthered their efforts to provide community and school-based education and guidance on COVID as well as responding to the United States outbreak of Monkey Pox this year and the recent Ebola outbreak in Africa.

VETERANS

During the Sea Memorial Day ceremony this past May, Fairfield officially received its designation as a Purple Heart Town and is now listed as a Town on the Purple Heart Trail. With its designation as a Purple Heart Town, Fairfield has become one of only ten communities in the State to receive the honor. Human Services has collected the names of more than 40 Purple Heart recipients with Fairfield connections. The Wall of Honor in the Bigelow Center features photos and stories gathered from family and friends of Purple Heart recipients.

Thank you to all the Town departments and Memorial Day Committee for providing this time-honored tradition to our Town.

CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

The Conservation Department, under the leadership of our new Director Tim Bishop, accomplished a great deal in 2022 working with other organizations in our community. Along with the Shellfish Commission, they expanded the capacity for shell recycling by creating a community drop-off site located at 265 Richard White Way.

The Town launched three more new initiatives that include a Pumpkin Recycling Project in conjunction with the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force, a Food Waste Drop-off Program that was launched in October and a Single Stream Recycling, the most viable and cost-effective way to convert waste into reusable material. The Town also began separating glass recycling and food waste drop off at the Transfer Station.

The Conservation Department, in collaboration with the Land Acquisition Commission, created an inventory of strategic properties to pursue adding to existing open space.

Five Eagle Scout candidates assisted the department with boardwalk replacement and other improvements for their projects on Town open spaces.

In a historic joint effort between the City of Bridgeport and the Ash Creek Conservation Association, the department successfully established 42,000 plugs of beach grass on the Ash Creek sand spit, which stabilizes the sand spit and reduces erosion.

Through generous donations to the Tucker Fund, the Conservation Department completed the bird observation blind at the trail terminus on Oldfield Road's North Marsh for bird lovers from in and out of Town to relax and enjoy the sounds and sights of nature.

I am also excited about our Conservation Director's new initiative to obtain goats or sheep to help control invasive plants on Hoydens Hill. The animals will graze on about 8 acres of fields to help reduce mugwort, instead of using chemicals. I appreciate this type of creative thinking and problem-solving and look forward to implementing this program in 2023.

There has also been a tremendous increase in solar installs and electric vehicle (EV) chargers, including at Town Hall, ushered through by our permitting departments. To find your nearest electric vehicle charging station, please [click here](#).

Fairfield was recently honored as Municipality of the Year for having the largest network of EV charging stations in Fairfield County, receiving a 2022 Fleet and EV Readiness Award from the CT Southwestern Area Clean Cities Coalition.

The WPCF continued its commitment to removing Nitrogen from the water we discharge into Long Island Sound, by being under the limit set forth by DEEP. The Town received a check for \$44,247 for our efforts.

It has been my honor to serve as First Selectwoman of my hometown for the last three years and work with the professional employees in our town government. While we have implemented many changes, I know we still have a lot of work to do.

I have sincerely appreciated the support and feedback from our residents over the last year, and I want to wish you and your families a Happy & Healthy 2023!