



## Connecting Fairfield

*News from First Selectman Bill Gerber*

Photo: Members of the Town coalition fighting the monopole installation proposal, from left to right: Christine Brown, Town of Fairfield Chief of Staff; Steve Ozyck and Andrea Ozyck, co-founders SCNETI/Empowering Fairfield (Sasco Creek Neighbors Environmental Trust Inc.); First Selectman Bill Gerber; State Representative Steve Stafstrom; State Representative Jenn Leeper; Pequot Library Executive Director Stephanie J. Coakley. Behind the group are renderings showing the potential impact of the massive monopoles, prepared by David Scott Parker Architects.

### A Personal Note

Dear Fairfielders,

Each January, the First Selectman delivers a State of the Town address to the Representative Town Meeting (RTM). It was my honor to give that address this past Monday, January 29. In it, I outlined my vision of a Fairfield where people want to and can afford to live, work and retire. I discussed five key areas where better long-term, strategic planning is vital to the Town's success:

- Smart commercial development that supports economic growth, along with residential development that is affordable and attractive.
- Necessary investment in the Town's decades-old sewer system.
- Avoiding short-term decision making that ultimately results in higher school budget costs.
- Implementing a Complete Streets program to address increased car traffic and balance the needs of people of all ages and abilities with automobiles.
- Flood resiliency for residents near the coastline and within our river basin systems.

Another key to keeping the budget in line is improving efficiencies in Town systems, and that is a huge goal of mine. I also discussed several important issues, including the fill pile, the Racial Equity and Justice Task Force Blueprint, the Charter, the UI monopole project, and the newly formed Arts Commission.

You can read the complete [address here](#).

We continue to meet on the 2024-2025 budget, preparing for budget hearings by department. Our challenge for the 2024-2025 budget begins with the Town's Grand List growth estimate at only one quarter of one percent, versus an average of two percent per year for the past four years. Another challenge is that American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, which have subsidized many projects in recent years, are now exhausted. This year, the Town's borrowing amounts will return to normal levels and will cost more than in the recent past due to higher interest rates. We'll be working hard to make sound financial decisions for the Town, and to provide the services you need while keeping taxes as low as possible.

Our opposition to the United Illuminating plan to install monopoles in Fairfield continues. Be sure to read the update in Primary Issues below.

Please continue to email your thoughts and concerns to me at **[firstselectman@fairfieldct.org](mailto:firstselectman@fairfieldct.org)**. We're better together!

Bill Gerber  
First Selectman

## Primary Issues

### **Penfield Pavilion**

The final vote required to move forward with work on Penfield Pavilion occurred at the Representative Town Meeting this week. RTM members joined the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance in approving \$1,429,950 in additional spending to begin construction on Penfield Pavilion to address the Notice of Violation (NOV) issued by FEMA. The approved work will include removing the existing grade beam as required by the FEMA NOV and replacing it with helical piles, work that will be closely overseen by FEMA on a step-by-step basis.

The financial approval by the BOS, the BOF and the RTM secures a plan for the rebuilt Pavilion to be complete by January or February 2025.

## **UI Monopoles**

On Thursday, February 1, the Connecticut Siting Council reviewed draft findings of fact in United Illuminating's monopoles project. A non-binding straw poll vote was taken in their public deliberations, and the vote was, I believe, a significant step in the right direction. Not one Siting Council member supported UI's proposal to construct massive overhead monopoles on the south side of the railroad tracks.

Another option was proposed at the meeting, with four Council members indicating support for an alternative overhead design that would combine the two transmission lines in the DOT right of way onto monopoles to the north of the railroad tracks – a “double circuit” design. While this may alleviate several important concerns, we have questions about the potential impact to the north side of the tracks. People on the north side of the tracks who may now be impacted must be given the opportunity to register as intervenors. We still firmly believe that undergrounding is the best solution.

The next step in the process will be the Town's attorneys submitting comments to the Siting Council by February 8th. The Council is planning to issue a draft decision and order on February 15th.

It is very important to email Governor Lamont with your opposition to this project. You can email the governor [here](#).

You can sign a [petition opposing this project here](#).

If you would like to remain up to date on all details of the proposed monopoles plan and be a critical part of the grass-roots opposition, please fill out a membership [form for Empowering Fairfield here](#).



Photo: First Selectman Bill Gerber spoke to News 12 Connecticut about the impact of monopoles in Fairfield. You can [see the interview here](#).

## **Eversource Transmission Line**

My office is receiving calls and emails regarding the installation of large electrical transmission structures in another area of Town. This is a separate project being constructed by Eversource in the Congress Street neighborhood of Fairfield and is a previously approved Eversource project. It is a different project from the United Illuminating project that the town is presently fighting at the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC).

### **The background:**

On November 14, 2022, Eversource filed a petition with the CSC to replace about 9.4 miles of 115-kV electric transmission line between Eversource's substation at 85 Weston Street, Weston and its substation at 122 Kaechele Place, Bridgeport. Eversource sent the Town of Fairfield a notice at the time that the petition was filed. On November 17, 2022, the CSC sent a letter to the Town of Fairfield inviting the town to submit written comments on the petition by December 15, 2022. This letter is [available here](#).

Without any comments on the proposal from the Town's prior administration, on February 16, 2023, the CSC approved the project. You can read the [full docket for the petition here](#). Because the project was approved without the town providing any comments, our only recourse today is to monitor the implementation.



## **SantaCon**

More than one hundred Fairfielders attended the January 23rd SantaCon Community Conversation as a step forward in resolving this issue. A panel was available to hear comments, suggestions, frustrations, and ideas. I joined Town representatives from the Police, Fire and Health Departments, as well as Fairfield University and the Lantern Point Association. The discussion centered on the environmental damage done to the beach and the Sound by trash left behind, as well as safety concerns for the students and others on the beach at that time. This is a continuing discussion with the stakeholders (students, landlords, the Town, and the University). We will continue to update you with action plans to prevent a similar situation from occurring in December 2024.

If you were unable to attend, you can send comments to [firstselectman@fairfieldct.org](mailto:firstselectman@fairfieldct.org) with "SantaCon" in the subject line.



You Should Know



Photo from the Randolph-Ward Collection,  
Fairfield Museum and History Center  
Ward, Randolph and Williams Family Reunion, c. 1940s.  
Gift of Gwendolyn Ward, 2018, Ward and Randolph Family Collection, MSB 142.

## **February is Black History Month**

During Black History Month, the Town is honored to highlight the late Gwendolyn Ward, a Fairfield born-and-raised resident who was a trailblazer for others in many ways. Gwen was one of Fairfield County's African American pioneers, receiving the Black History Month Pioneer Award for not only keeping her loving family's history alive, but for also helping to open doors at the workplace and serving as a positive role model for young people. Gwen was the first African American group leader at General Electric in Fairfield where she worked for 45 years.

We encourage you to visit the Fairfield Museum and History Center and view pieces of the Randolph-Ward Collection.

The Randolph-Ward Photographic Collection spans approximately 100 years of photographic history from one of our Town's prominent African American families. The Collection, donated by family member Gwendolyn Ward to the Fairfield Museum in 2018, helps to deepen our understanding of local history. Examples from the Randolph-Ward Photographic Collection

are on view in the Museum's recently re-opened flagship exhibition Creating Community: 400 Years of Fairfield Stories.

The Fairfield Museum and History Center is currently working with a number of community partners, including Fairfield University and the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University, to provide a searchable genealogical database of more than 1,000 enslaved African Americans and their descendants who lived in Fairfield from 1639-1848. The database will provide students, scholars, and descendants of Connecticut's enslaved people with the most comprehensive study of enslaved people in the state.

### **Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis**

This resolution was delivered at the Board of Selectmen Meeting, January 31, and subsequently approved by the BOS:

To hear, consider, and act upon a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis:

WHEREAS, a goal for Fairfield is to achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve health for all people; and

WHEREAS, racial health inequities are not due to genetic or biological differences between races, but due to entrenched racism in American society; and

WHEREAS, a growing body of literature shows that social determinants of health - the conditions in which an individual lives, learns, works, and plays - are key drivers of health inequities; and

WHEREAS, disparities among social determinants of health negatively impact minorities due to barriers in housing, employment, health, economic, educational, and other opportunities; and

WHEREAS these disparities contribute to poor physical and mental health of racial and ethnic minorities; and

WHEREAS, in order to be effective in instituting change, we must start within our local communities by addressing racism, a root cause, that contributes to disparities among social determinants of health and health inequity.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Fairfield affirms that racism is a public health crisis that results in physical and mental health disparities. Based upon this affirmation, Fairfield will actively participate in dismantling racism by implementing evidence-based policies and programming that address racial health inequities; declaring racism and its public health manifestations to be a public health crisis; engaging actively with historically marginalized communities in problem identification and policy creation; and building and strengthening partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encouraging other local, state, regional, and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis.

### **Racial Equity and Justice Task Force Blueprint**

Additionally, the BOS also voted at its meeting on January 29 to accept into the public record the Racial Equity and Justice Task Force Blueprint for the Town of Fairfield. It was important for the Town's leadership to formally approve the tremendous work accomplished by the Racial Equity and Justice Task Force over an 18-month period. I am grateful to each and every member as well as residents who weighed in at the Task Force meetings. This vote is

symbolic of the Town's commitment to a more inclusive Fairfield, and to respecting the voices, experiences and rights of all people.

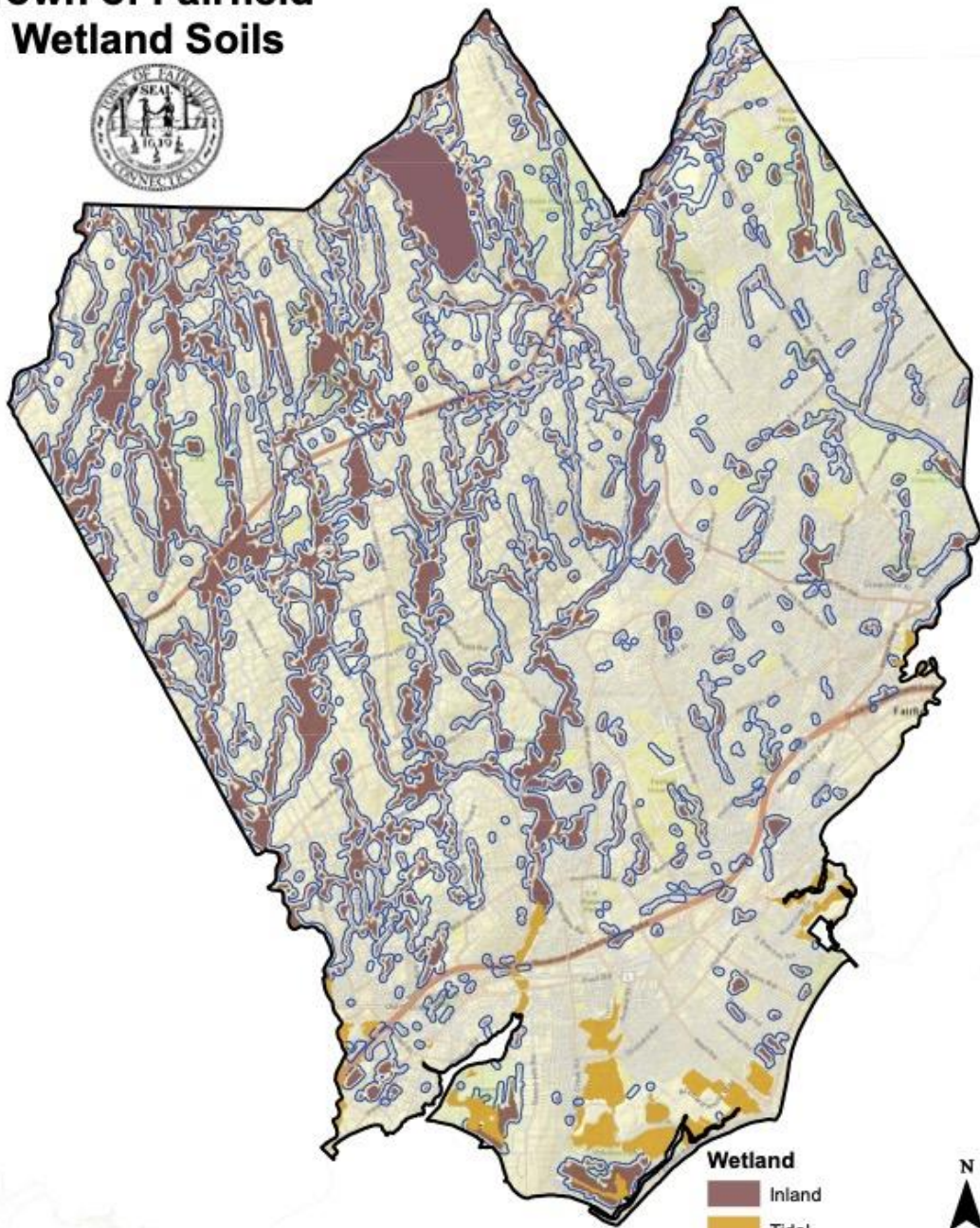
### **February 2 is World Wetlands Day**

World Wetlands Day is observed on February 2 every year. The day aims to raise awareness and bring communities together for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. In Fairfield, Conservation Director Timothy Bishop oversees the Town's Conservation Department and the Inlands Wetlands Program. Wetlands are an interrelated web of nature essential to the adequate supply of surface and underground water, the control of flooding and erosion, the purification of groundwater, and the existence of many forms of animal, aquatic and plant life. A map below shows wetlands throughout the Town, and a photo of wetlands in Brett Woods.

It is crucial that we all work together to protect wetlands from threats including pollution and habitat destruction to safeguard biodiversity and ensure the well-being of our Town.



**2023  
Town of Fairfield  
Wetland Soils**



**Wetland**

Inland

Tidal

— 100-foot Upland Review Area





Wetlands in Brett Woods Conservation Area.  
Photo credit: Conservation Commissioner Peter Hood

### **Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) Maintenance**

The treatment facility's second digester is scheduled to be emptied and serviced soon. We do not anticipate any adverse odor emissions from the process; any odors will be similar to normal treatment plant operations. This service is scheduled to prevent operational failures through regular maintenance.

### **Board of Assessment Appeals Process**

This is a reminder that the deadline to appeal your assessment is by end-of-business on Tuesday, February 20. Applications are available on the website from the Tax Assessor. You can access the application [here](#).

### **One Book, One Town**

Have you started reading the 2024 selection for One Book One Town, *Warrior Girl Unearthed*, by Angeline Boulley, yet? Copies are available to borrow in print or digitally from Fairfield's libraries, or to purchase at the Fairfield University Bookstore on Post Road. The middle grade selection is *We Still Belong*, by Christine Daya. For younger readers, the selection is *Berry Song*, by Michaela Goade. Angeline Boulley will appear in person on Tuesday, March 5 at 7 p.m. at Fairfield University's Quick Center for the Arts. Let's all read together!





Connie Saxl, Internal Auditor in the Town's Finance Department, is reading One Book One Town *Warrior Girl Unearthed* by Angeline Bouley.

### **Fairfield Police Department: Tier One Accreditation**

The Fairfield Police Department achieved a significant milestone by being honored with Tier One Accreditation by the State of Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC). This achievement is a testament to the Department's unwavering commitment to professional excellence. Every Police Department in the state is mandated to achieve Tier One Accreditation by 2026. Chief Robert Kalamaras says that the Fairfield Police Department's goal is to achieve Tier Two and Three Accreditation by July 2024.

The Town of Fairfield is grateful for the Department's dedication to upholding stringent standards and service to the community.



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
POLICE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING COUNCIL  
ACCREDITATION AWARD**

September 14, 2023

Chief Robert Kalamaras  
Fairfield Police Department  
100 Reef Road  
Fairfield, CT 06824

Dear Chief Kalamaras:

On behalf of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council, we commend you and your agency for demonstrating a commitment to professional excellence in policy and practice. It is a privilege to award the Fairfield Police Department the State Tier I Accreditation.

The State Tier I Accreditation award represents your agency's thorough self-evaluation which concluded with an independent audit of State Assessors and appointed members of council assigned to the Police Officer Standards and Training Accreditation Subcommittee.

This award also represents your agency's ongoing acceptance of the obligation to continue the quest for professional excellence by working toward fulfillment of any future standards set forth by POSTC that may be applicable to your department.

Congratulations and thank you for your continued support to enhance Connecticut Law Enforcement. We commend you and all the members of the Fairfield Police Department for demonstrating commitment to liability standards in policy and practice.

Respectfully,

Chief Keith L. Mello  
Chairman  
Police Officer Standards and Training Council



The Pequot Library offers programs for the public on a regular basis. Here are three upcoming programs with links to find out more:

[Meet the author with Melissa Newman](#), daughter of Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward, to discuss her new book.

[Valentine's Day Candy Making Workshop](#)

[A visit from bestselling author Adam Hochschild](#)

### **Free Tax Assistance at Fairfield Public Library**

On Tuesdays through April 9 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., free tax preparation help will be available to library patrons through the services of AARP/VITA/IRS Volunteer Tax Assistance Program. This service is especially suited to seniors and low-to-moderate income households. No appointment is necessary; patrons will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis. Patrons requesting assistance will need a government-issued ID (e.g., driver's license, US passport, CT State ID card); Social Security cards for all household members, and any necessary tax documents, such as W-2 forms and past tax returns.

### **Start of Legislative Session**

On Wednesday, February 7th, the [Connecticut's General Assembly's](#) Regular Session convenes. I encourage you to reach out to your legislators with questions or comments on their legislative work. Click on the name below to contact them at their website.

State Senator [Tony Hwang](#)

State Representative [Cristin McCarthy Vahey](#)

State Representative [Jennifer Leeper](#)

State Representative [Sarah Keitt](#)

### **"Comics Bring the Heat" for Fairfield Families**

"Comics Bring the Heat" features seven stand-up comics raising funds for Fairfield Social Services to help families, seniors and veterans with heating costs. Don't miss this fun evening and help cover energy costs for up to 20 Fairfield families, ensuring they can stay warm in their own homes. [Tickets are available here.](#)

# RAISING CONFIDENT AND COMPASSIONATE BOYS: NURTURING TOMORROW'S RESILIENT MEN





**Jay Taylor**  
LCSW


## An evening of growth & support!

Join Jay Taylor, LCSW, a family therapy expert and national trainer for A Call to Men, in a conversation about society's messages on manhood, masculinity, relationships, and sex.

Discover profound understanding and practical strategies to nurture your sons' emotional well-being and foster healthy masculinity, creating a safer space for all. Connect with other parents and pave the way for a brighter future for our boys, where love, respect, and authenticity thrive.

Wednesday, February 7, 2024 

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM 

Fairfield Regional Fire School  
205 Richard White Way  
Fairfield, CT 06824 

SCAN  
ME



Presented and facilitated by the  
**FAIRFIELD COLLABORATIVE FOR  
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH**

FAIRFIELD COLLABORATIVE FOR YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH  
A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
AND THE FAIRFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN

### **Town Boards and Commissions**

Fairfield is blessed with a highly talented pool of residents eager to volunteer their time and talent for the betterment of our community. If you think your skills might benefit the Town, you can learn more about the process of serving on a Town Board or Commission and apply [here](#). Regarding the opening on the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), the Town is

seeking a resident with a technical or engineering background. If that's you, we'd love to hear from you!

### **Board of Selectmen Meetings**

Our next regular Board of Selectmen meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 14 at 4 p.m. Meetings are held in Independence Hall and open to public, and you can attend either in person or on Webex. You can also read minutes of previous meetings [here](#).

### **Eyes on Fairfield**

Help us celebrate the unique beauty of life in Fairfield by sharing your photos with your community. We've received so many beautiful photos of our Town—keep them coming! Submit your photos at 300 dpi to [firstselectman@fairfieldct.org](mailto:firstselectman@fairfieldct.org). We live in such a special Town. Share with us the sites and sights you love.



**Photo credit: Jonathan Klein,  
Powder House behind Tomlinson Middle School**

**The Powder House was built in 1814 to house ammunition during the War of 1812 when the residents feared another invasion by the British. It is believed to be the only structure left in the state built for that conflict.**

---

# ***We're Better Together!***

---

## WHY YOU'RE RECEIVING THIS EMAIL:

As a resident, business owner, student, or individual interested in news about the Town of Fairfield, your name appears on an email list that belongs to the Town database. You might have requested to be on this list or added your name to another Town communication in the past.

This email arrives in your inbox every other Friday and is official news from Fairfield's First Selectman and the Town of Fairfield. If this email was forwarded to you and you want to receive official emails from your First Selectman, [click here](#). You can also unsubscribe from any newsletter you don't want to receive. Go to the bottom of the email and click unsubscribe.