

## **State of the Town 2023**

Much has been accomplished on behalf of the citizens of the Town of Greenwich during the 2022 calendar year and into the beginning of the 2023 calendar year. Here are some of the highlights related to these accomplishments:

### **Development of a New Town/Village Comprehensive Plan**

Since the Town and Village of Greenwich are intricately connected regarding most matters to be included in a Comprehensive Plan, the Town and Village Boards voted to update the 2004 Town Comprehensive Plan by developing a new Town/Village Comprehensive Plan.

A Town/Village Comprehensive Plan Committee was created with representation from each municipality's Boards and Town and Village citizens. The Town and Village engaged the services of LaBella Associates to serve as consultants for the development of this new plan.

The following activities have taken place to-date:

- Proposal/Contract Execution with LaBella – June 2022
- Committee Kick-Off Meeting – July 2022
- Town Webpage and Public Announcement – July 2022
- Draft Community Profile – August 2022
- Hudson River Greenway Grant Application for \$15,000 – September 2022
- Committee Meeting #2 – September 2022
- Final Community Profile – November 2022
- GCS Student Workshop (30 students) – November 2022
- Public Workshop (45 participants)– November 2022
- Draft Vision Statement created – November 2022
- Hudson River Greenway Grant Approved for \$15,000 – December 2022

There will be more opportunities for public input as well as a concerted effort to reach out to business and property owners who may be affected by potential zoning changes and access to public water lines.

The new Town/Village Comprehensive Plan is expected to be completed in mid to late Summer 2023. More detailed information on progress and findings to date can be found on the Town's webpage.

### **Information Technology and Cybersecurity**

I believe it is important to review the reasons why we engaged the services of Symmetric Consulting to address the Town of Greenwich's information technology and cybersecurity needs. A little over two years ago, our Town Attorney advised the Town Board that all email communications involving Town business should be on Town-issued email addresses as opposed to using personal email addresses.

The previous Town Supervisor started this process by issuing all Town employees and Town Committee members new Town email addresses. Everyone was told how to use these email addresses and asked to use them exclusively for Town business.

When I became Town Supervisor, I took a look at the status of this change in policy as well as the current state of the Town's automated storage and cybersecurity preparedness. What I discovered is that several committee members were still using personal emails. In addition, New York State law requires all Town correspondence and documents, electronic or any other form, be permanently preserved. There were gaps in adherence to this mandate that placed the Town and certain individuals in serious legal jeopardy. In addition, a number of municipalities in New York State had been victims of ransomware attacks.

The Town Board approved working with Symmetric Consulting to address these issues. Subsequently, we agreed to enter into a contract with Symmetric Consulting to provide recommendations to address the gaps in records management and cybersecurity.

The first issue addressed was to finally get all Town employees and committee members using Town email addresses exclusively. November 1 was the deadline for all communication to move exclusively to Town-issued emails. This goal was met.

The second step was to move all Town computers to the Microsoft M365 platform. This provided additional security and 30 day cloud backup of everything stored on each computer in case anything needed to be retrieved. The result of this work is that all email communication is contained in Town-issued emails, all communications and work on Town computers is backed up into the cloud automatically, and significantly higher levels of security have been enlisted to combat cybersecurity threats.

Additionally, should Town electronic records and/or communications be FOILED and/or subpoenaed, only Town computer stored files, email accounts, and emails need be provided. Without this move, courts could force Town employees and Committee members to hand over personal devices if they were also used for Town business.

### **Town Hall Engineering Study**

The Town Hall building is in serious need of upgrades to its heating, electrical, roofing, and ADA compliance in several areas. In 2022, the Town Board engaged LaBella Engineering to conduct a full study of the building with the charge to identify all areas in need of attention as well as projected costs for addressing these issues. An extensive report was prepared and provided to the Town Board.

In 2023, the Town Board will discuss in detail the LaBella Engineering report and decide on actions to be taken in the short and long term.

### **Brownfield Opportunity Area Designation**

The BOA Study was started in 2020 and completed in early 2022. It was a highly interactive participative study featuring Village/Town partnership and significant public input. The Study resulted in identifiable initiatives to further economic development, increase senior and affordable housing, provide more public access to the Battenkill, and increase access to public waterlines.

NYS Secretary of State Robert Rodriguez informed the Town and Village on August 12, 2022 that we have been officially approved a Brownfield Opportunity Area. Secretary Rodriguez goes on to say that he will notify our State elected

representatives of the designation and advise them of the priority and preferences that will be afforded to certain projects and properties located within or impacted by the BOA, as well as additional Brownfield Clean Program tax credit incentives.

I am happy to announce that the Town of Greenwich, in a joint effort with the Village of Greenwich, has been awarded a New York State grant in the amount of \$166,500 to further redevelop Greenwich Brownfield Opportunity Areas. The award states:

The Town of Greenwich in a joint effort with the Village of Greenwich intends to complete predevelopment activities to advance zoning code amendments and analyze infrastructure upgrades to further the redevelopment of the Greenwich Brownfield Opportunity Area. Challenges to be addressed include: inconsistencies between the BOA Plan and existing zoning; review and revision of existing parking requirements; and analysis of local water infrastructure inhibiting infill development.

### **Town Waterline Study**

The Town Waterline Committee met with consultants from two engineering firms (Barton & Loguidace and LaBella) to discuss the next steps in advancing the possible creation of a Town waterline out through the commercial district of the Town. We will be engaging with the Village on this proposed project as well as developing a tentative timeline for the project. With the awarding of the BOA Pre-Development as well as the Hudson River Valley Greenway grants, this committee will now work on costing out the proposed waterline cost and fees given commercial, residential, and developer interest along with the commencement of negotiations with the Village on the cost of water supplied.

### **Hudson Riverside Park**

Supervisor Nolan and Councilman Mumby accompanied a landscape architect and a building architect around the Hudson Riverside Park grounds and buildings. The Town Board discussed the architects' suggestions that we re-engage the Barton &

Loguidice Engineering firm to draw up bid specs for replacing the roof with either a metal or asphalt roof, make the two classroom building bathrooms ADA compliant, and remove and install more secure doors on the back entry and just past the two bathrooms inside the back entrance of the classroom building. These bid specs are now completed; the Town Board will discuss issuing bid requests shortly.

We are also in the initial stages of developing a plan to open viewing access to the Hudson River, remove invasive shrubbery and trees present throughout the property, plant native trees/shrubbery along the borders of the property, and improve the parking areas. The goal would be to create public access to the park and bathrooms in 2023 while the Town Board examines longer range options for further developing this park.

### **Cannabis Dispensaries and On-site Consumption Lounges**

In 2021, the Town Board attempted to hold a vote on whether to allow cannabis lounges and on-site consumption lounges in the Town. Due to several missed deadlines, the vote was never held. Subsequently, the Town Board voted to opt out of cannabis dispensaries and consumption lounges.

In 2022, a Public Hearing on Cannabis Dispensaries and On-site Consumption Lounges was held at the Greenwich High School Auditorium on Tuesday, August 30. The vast majority of attendees approved of allowing Cannabis Dispensaries and in some cases, Cannabis Consumption Lounges. The Town Board held an additional public hearing in the Town Hall. The majority of speakers supported opting in to both cannabis dispensaries and cannabis lounges. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Town Board voted to allow both Cannabis Dispensaries and Consumption Lounges in the Town.

### **Highway Department Heavy Equipment Upgrade**

The Town Board authorized the purchase of a new road grader in order to replace a road grader with transmission and several other mechanical problems. The old grader was well beyond its useful life. It would have been catastrophic if it broke

down during dirt road grading season. The new grader arrived in early February of 2023 and is being outfitted for use this Spring.

The Highway Department is still waiting the delivery of a new plow truck that was ordered over one year ago.

### **Veterans Banners**

55 Veterans Banners have been installed in the Village and Town during 2022. A new call for additional Veterans Banners has been issued for 2023.

### **Town of Greenwich Summer Youth Program**

The Town of Greenwich Summer Youth Program started on Tuesday, July 5 with a record 152 campers. The last day of the Summer Youth Camp was Friday, August 5. A big thank you to Joanna Messina for coordinating this as well as Town Board Youth Committee members Tom Graves and Jim Mumby and all the staff and volunteers. A special thank you goes to the Village of Greenwich for allowing us to use a large venue in Village Hall on days when there was inclement weather.

### **Everlasting Lights**

Everlasting Lights is a tradition started 22 years ago to honor family members who have passed away. 50 Christmas trees arrived in late November. Our Highway Department employees installed stands, prepared the trees for placement in the stands, and placed the trees in the stands in the area behind Town Hall.

The lighting ceremony was held on Sunday, December 4 at 5 PM. Thank you to Elaine Kelly for starting this tradition 22 years ago and to the organizers of this year's event, Judy Patrick and Jen Sharp.

### **Environmental and Green Energy Initiatives**

Both the Town Hall engineering study and the grant opportunities available will allow the Town to reduce its carbon footprint as well as provide the community

with access to services that promote environmental good. For instance, the Town Hall engineering study identified our heating system as antiquated and in need of replacement. This gives the Town the opportunity to proactively investigate more environmentally friendly HVAC solutions for the Town Hall. In addition, the Town Supervisor is pursuing grant opportunities to place EV Rapid Charging Stations in commercial areas in the Town.

### **2023 Budget Development Process**

The 2023 budget development process began in the Fall. On September 1, Department Heads were asked to submit requests for 2023. After receiving this information, the Supervisor/Budget Director and Deputy Budget Director crafted a tentative budget and presented it to the Town Board at a Budget Workshop on September 19. After receiving input from Town Board members, a public meeting was held in October to receive public input on the preliminary budget. Final revisions to the preliminary budget were made and the 2023 budget was adopted by the Town Board in November. Despite an inflation rate of 6.5% and significant increases in the price of fuel, asphalt, road salt, and electricity, the adopted 2023 budget resulted in no tax increase to Town taxpayers.