

# BOARD OF SELECTMEN

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

ROBERT J. BRULE, FIRST SELECTMAN

JODY NAZARCHYK, SELECTWOMAN

ELIZABETH SABILIA, SELECTWOMAN

CINDY DUPOINTE, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

It has truly been an honor to serve the Town of Waterford this year as the First Selectman. To me, commitment is truly the most important piece serving our community. I value trust, communication, dignity, inclusion and always putting the Waterford community at my forefront.

***Community Engagement***

***Capital Projects***

***Planning & Economic Development***

***Fleet Management Plan***

***Budget Management***



The pandemic created an understandable hardship for various businesses and residents within our community. As a town, we worked tirelessly with businesses, volunteers, the Cactus Jack Foundation, Waterford Rotary and

Waterford Youth & Family Services to create the "Waterford Cares" initiative. In doing so, we focused efforts and attention on the needs of our residents, emotionally, financially, spiritually and physically. We hosted the 2020 Waterford High School Graduation Ceremony at Waterford Beach, held multiple Food Drives at Town Hall, focused on community outreach for those in need, and addressed the local impact of food insecurity. Finally, we successfully donated and delivered full Thanksgiving dinners to our seniors and veterans in town. We created the Waterford Veterans Coffeehouse, a group that connects Veterans at monthly meetings and provides breakfast free to Veterans at Filomenas Restaurant. This Veterans group is organized by local volunteers in Waterford and supported by the Waterford Youth & Family Service Bureau. Its mission is simply providing for Waterford Veterans who have served so courageously in various military branches. We honored our veterans and extended the town's sincere appreciation on Veterans Day by giving out personalized blankets to Waterford Veterans. Community engagement is the component of strong economic and social transformation in a community as great as Waterford. The involvement of community engagement has created an effective, sustainable and vibrant town. Leaders in town, board members and commissioners established partnerships with



local businesses and non-profits and through committed volunteerism, has resulted in the development and implementation of creative initiatives and key safety principles providing a solid foundation of community participation. As many of us adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic, the safety of our community continues to be my highest priority. Partnering with Ledge Light Health District to host free community Flu Shots and COVID-19 testing at Waterford High School assured we had the convenience of in-town testing and commitment to residents' safety. Through communication with Ledge Light Health District, we have also offered the Town of Waterford to be a Regional Host for the COVID-19 Vaccine in 2021.



Our community is now stronger and safe with 24/7 emergency response teams. The Town of Waterford now has 24/7 ambulance coverage, 24/7 police officer coverage and 24/7 fire service coverage in town. All volunteer fire fighters are now eligible to receive stipends for their time protecting our community while two crews of paid fire fighters are on shift at all times in town (Jordan FD in the south end of town and Cohanzie FD in the north end of town). In 2020, we signed an agreement with the Waterford Ambulance Service (WAS) to provide residents 24/7 ambulance coverage. This formal agreement assures the Town of Waterford complies

with the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act and contracts out its ambulance service, to ensure that EMS calls in town are responded to within the desired timeframe. In 2020, we approved a capital expense for body cameras for the Waterford Police Department, which are in addition to vehicle cameras already in use. In 2020, we created a Full-Time Emergency Management Director position, which will ensure the Town of Waterford continues to assess its Emergency Evacuation, Disaster and KI Distribution Plans, discussing pandemic health concerns with our Public Health Director, coordinate the training of Dispatchers and updating the CAD system. In addition, we purchased a 3-year contract with Everbridge, an integrated communication technology system providing residents in Waterford immediate warnings, messages and necessary community updates. This Everbridge technology will also assist Department Heads in reaching out to constituents and employees for any and all messaging, quickly, efficiently and in real time. In the end, Everbridge will create a phone-based communication tool that will provide customer service and customer satisfaction. Finally, to review response times of emergency responders, we have created CAD Data Reports that enable Police, Fire and EMS dispatched data to be reviewed regularly and assure residents we are providing responsible coverage. A 2019 survey completed by the Planning Department showed a need for



improved communication, therefore, social media Facebook pages were created by the First Selectman and Emergency Management Department to provide information and community updates to residents. Town Hall has had interior updating to create a welcoming environment for the Waterford Community. The Town Hall Art Gallery is now a showcase for local artists to display their amazing skill set and to allow the community to see such talent, to take a self-care moment and take in the calmness and the beauty of peaceful art. New signage has been ordered in warm and welcoming colors, in addition to creating a consumer friendly approach that allows offices to be easily located.

## Capital Projects



The long-range capital plan remains a key focus to accomplishing our goals while maintaining a prudent view of the budget. The long-range capital plan focused on funding for the Waterford Beach Restroom and ADA Sidewalk Project, IT upgrades and equipment and continued review of the town's Fleet Management Plan. Accessibility for residents around town continues to be a priority for capital projects, as well as, town infrastructure.

Creating an inclusive environment has always been a large vision of mine aimed at making a difference in an individual's life, which was highlighted in 2020 with the Waterford Beach Restroom & ADA Sidewalk. The two Luxury portable restrooms (one located near the Summer Music venue and one located on the Causeway), Showers, Water Fountains, Concrete Sidewalk and a Mobi-Mat offering a safe, well-drained, firm and stable surface for individuals needing wheelchairs, strollers or walkers to access the beach and water. Lastly, the town replaced the roof at The Barn at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center.

Waterford continues to be on a path that is stable and constantly improving. Waterford continues to effectively pay down its school bonding responsibilities, that includes past school construction projects and the current \$17M Municipal Complex Project on 1000 Hartford Road. We continue to be creative to increase efficiencies by introducing new program software in the Recreation & Parks Department and we are continually updating technology to keep resident's information safe, and above all else, taking pride in the work done and being customer friendly. We continue to look for new and exciting economic development that will have long term effects and will enhance our Net Taxable Grand List, including redefining commercial spaces, working closely with the Planning & Zoning Department to create new zoning regulations that



will help attract future regional commercial, housing, healthcare, educational and recreational development. This new approach in the Planning & Zoning Department will provide the town much needed flexibility as it responds to the impact of Covid-19 on the private sector, the economy and the financial impact on residents.

## Planning & Economic Development



Planning and Zoning has been very busy with new development applications and a record number of permits, most likely due to Covid-19, and homeowner remodels and repairs. The town has recently hired a zoning enforcement official and filled the open assistant building official position, which will expedite construction projects and customer service.

The Planning Director continues to work closely with the Economic Development Commission as it navigates the impact of the pandemic. The Planning Director is in close contact with the Crystal Mall and abutting landlords to continue to support Simon Properties, as needed. In addition, the Planning Department continues to assess economic development options for the property. Over the past year there has been a positive response to “filling empty storefronts”, attracting new businesses and supporting existing Waterford businesses. We worked diligently with local restaurants, long-term care facilities, retail stores and residents to help those who needed support.

As scheduled, Waterford PARC Luxury Apartments opened in the spring and filled nearly all 80 units within months. As a result of their success, Waterford Central recently applied and received approval to create twice the number of luxury apartments down the street on Willetts Avenue, including an outdoor pool, clubhouse and garage units for additional storage for residents. Waterford Central envisions every unit being filled quickly, providing the town additional tax revenue with limited town services needed. The grand opening of Ollies Superstore store at the former King Buffet and Joanne's Fabrics has opened. Hartford Healthcare has begun construction on their multi-million-dollar medical office building, housing 7 privately run health care offices and is expected to generate new jobs and filling the void left at the old Toys-R-Us. Ace Hardware is currently looking at opening near Planet Fitness. In November 2020,



Greenskies Energy was approved by the state's Siting Council to create a 75-acre solar field off Waterford Parkway North, which could provide an estimated \$450k in annual taxes. FabCon concrete business, the world's largest pre-fab concrete manufacturer, is currently in the final stages of Special Permit approvals to purchase and build a state-of-the-art manufacturing plant on the old airport property on Waterford Parkway South. While the town of Waterford purchased a small lot of land which abutted our town-owned kayak launch on Alewife Cove, thus doubling the waterfront access to residents. Environmentally, we have successfully removed the two septic tanks located in the flood plains at Waterford Beach Park. We successfully completed 1600 feet of trench work for city sewer and water from the entrance at Waterford Beach all the way to the Causeway restroom, ensuring electrical conduit remains 6ft above the flood plain, to meet federal regulations. Cohanzie School property is looking for a potential buyer to redevelop the property. The former Southwest School property is vacant and plans and discussions have started for developing the property responsibly.

### **Fleet Management Plan**

We have continued the use of the Fleet Management Plan as a way to provide quality vehicles without having major spikes in our budget. By planning a life cycle for the various vehicles and constantly reviewing the need for these, we have been able to provide our employees with safe efficient and affordable equipment. Implementation of the Utilization Plan has already been helpful for Department Heads to get better returns on our auctioned vehicles and removing unnecessary vehicles from the plan. We are constantly reviewing the plan for accuracy and efficiency moving forward and a plan is in place to "share" vehicles inter-departmentally.

### **Budget Management**



The Town of Waterford enjoyed a tax decrease this year! We continue to see modest growth in new businesses coming into town and saw an increase in the Grand List for the 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. Most recently, our Town has completed several projects, embarked on some new programs and continues to work on process improvement and customer service. We continue to proudly develop a working budget for our town that

supports the critical services programs we enjoy while minimizing the growth of the taxpayer's burden. We have continued that philosophy with a minimal increase in the budget and a continuing to increase efficiencies, review attrition, and assess job descriptions throughout town.

We continue to value the knowledge and experience of our long-term employees. We have recruited new talented employees to our workforce, which has created opportunities for new initiatives and ideas. The FY22 Budget will look to increase Capital funding including; more roads in town being paved, pump stations and water/sewer line maintenance, creation of walking trails and a Farmers Market in the Civic Triangle, Sidewalk capital plan, Amphitheatre at Waterford Beach for Summer Music.

## **Conclusion**

Waterford has grown in traffic and services. We have some of the largest retail shopping facilities in the State and we are home to two nuclear power plants. These provide some obstacles for our town, but I am proud to say that our staff team continues to meet these challenges every day with resiliency and a positive outlook. We have additional growth and development in our forecast and look forward to planning out that growth with the various builders and developers. The year posed serious challenges, significant obstacles and great opportunities that resulted in realistic goals being accomplished. The Board of Selectmen delivered substantial government accomplishments of the people's goals in 2020. Waterford has 218 years of history and our future reflects the substantial achievements of our successful past. I will continue to work diligently for all Waterford residents and continuously plan for our future. One town, one team!

