

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

ROBERT J. BRULE, FIRST SELECTMAN

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

RICH MUCKLE, SELECTMAN

GREG ATTANASIO, SELECTMAN

SHANNON WITHEY, EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

It continues to be an honor to serve the Town of Waterford as the First Selectman. To me, commitment is truly the most important piece of serving our community. I continue to value trust, communication, transparency, a sense of belonging and always putting the Waterford community first in my decision-making. I am proud to work alongside Selectman Rich Muckle and Selectman Greg Attanasio and present the 2024 Board of Selectmen Annual Report.



**SELECTMAN GREG ATTANASIO, FIRST
SELECTMAN ROBERT BRULE AND SELECTMAN
RICHARD MUCKLE**

In 2024, the BOS presented an FY25 operating budget with an increase of 3.85%, highlighted by an increase of \$710,520 for Retirement Commission, and Public Safety 1) \$285,042 for Police Department 2) \$102,199 for Emergency Management and 3) \$100,807 for Fire Services. Previous general operating budget increases of 1.32%, 1.25%, 1.65% and 2.07%, have been respectfully submitted and approved. The 5-year Capital Plan, which is the responsibility of the First Selectmen, continues to highlight a “Snap Shot”, which identifies projects that fall into the following four categories 1) Road Paving 2) Infrastructure/Utilities 3) Building Maintenance 4) Board of Education. The “Snap Shot” tool remain an effective tool to transparently address the responsible use of the General Fund Balance for capital projects. The primary focus for the “Snap Shot” in 2024 was road paving, building maintenance and park improvements and Board of Education needs.

The First Selectman completed or closed 18 approved and funded capital projects in 2024, nearly \$5.8M in projects completed. The First Selectman continues to fund the Town’s Fleet Plan at \$1M annually as well the town’s retirement fund at \$1M. The First Selectman continues to work closely with the Board of Finance and RTM to complete existing capital projects and initiate necessary town-wide capital

infrastructure projects. The First Selectman continues to provide the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and the RTM quarterly updates to ensure transparency.

Over the past year, First Selectman Brule served as Chairman of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SECOG) and remains a member of the Executive Committee for SECOG and the Southeast Area Transit District (SEAT). Proudly, First Selectman Brule was selected into the Waterford Athletic Hall of Fame as the Waterford High School girls soccer team coach for twenty years, winning the school's first soccer state championship and amassing the most career wins in the ECC.

Community Engagement



FIRST SELECTMAN BRULE WITH STUDENTS WHO VOLUNTEERED FOR THE STAR WARS FOOD DRIVE AT TOWN HALL

The First Selectman's Office remains committed to community engagement and neighbors helping neighbors. The First Selectman's "Waterford Cares" initiative started 5 years ago and includes hosting First Selectman Food Drives for the Waterford Community Food Bank, providing donated holiday meals to veterans, seniors and families in need, supporting the holiday tree lightings at Jordan Green and Quaker Hill Green, sponsoring the Waterford Day Parade,

supporting Halloween Trunk or Treat and Socks for Seniors events, distributing Town Proclamations and Town Coins to honor scouts, milestones and residents, hosting the Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies and participating in Wreaths-Across-America every December, supporting survivors of domestic violence and Safe Futures as well as the Terri Brodeu Breast Cancer Foundation and sponsoring the Waterford Veterans Coffeehouse, which has become the largest attended Veterans Coffeehouse in eastern Connecticut.

The First Selectman participated in the town's first Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration and





FIRST SELECTMAN BRULE CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH AT THE WATERFORD LIBRARY

was proud to attend the “Women Between Cultures - Promoting Health and Wellness by Building Community” event in Waterford. Amazing energy, great dancing and incredible people getting together to celebrate and share their culture! Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from September 15 to October 15 each year to recognize the contributions of Hispanic and Latinx Americans to the United States. The First Selectman is excited to announce he will be sponsoring the Waterford

Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration in 2025. The 4th Annual 2024 Waterford Day Parade continued this summer and included over 90 entries, the largest number of participants in 5 years! “Unity in our Community” and seniors celebrating their 100th birthdays remain the themes every year. In 2024, the First Selectman recognized Police Chaplain Joseph Parise as the Grand Marshal. The Town of Waterford continues its strong relationship with the American Red Cross and has continued to host monthly blood drives at Town Hall.

The First Selectman and Emergency Management Director attended the 2024 Connecticut Emergency Management Symposium, which took place at Camp Nett in Niantic. Each spring, the CT Division of Emergency Management & Homeland Security, the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, and the Connecticut Department of Public Health attract hundreds of local public safety officials and other local leaders responsible for responding to mass emergencies.



FIRST SELECTMAN BRULE WITH DESPP COMMISSIONER RONNELL HIGGINS AT THE 2024 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM HELD AT CAMP NETT

The First Selectman opened the EOC (Emergency Operations Center) with Police Chief Balestracci for the Secretary of State’s Emergency Contingency Model Plan for Elections drill and discussed the Scenarios/Modules and Injects to each module. This ensured a safe election process, which Waterford managed successfully. The First Selectman signed two additional Inter-local Agreements on behalf of the Waterford Police Department for the Southeastern Connecticut Special Response

Team. The Town of Montville and the City of Groton have now joined Waterford, the Town of East Lyme and the Town of Ledyard to form this impressive regional team. The Shoreline Traffic Accident Reconstruction Team (START) also saw growth. This regional agreement remains an excellent example of Waterford working together with East Lyme and new partner Montville Police Department. The First Selectman continues to work closely with the Boating Division of the CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) to split the cost of rehabilitating the large state-owned Mago Point Boat Launch Public Parking lot, which will offer Waterford residents after hour parking and encourage continued business development.



**FIRST SELECTMAN BRULE AND SUPERINTENDENT
TOM GIARD PARTICIPATING IN THE 2024 FEMA
MILLSTONE POWER STATION HOSTILE ACTION DRILL**

The Town of Waterford hosted a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for a Hostile Action Drill at Dominion Millstone Power Station at the Emergency Operations Center. The day-long exercise included the Waterford Police Department and Police Chief, Waterford Emergency Management Director, Waterford Fire Department and Director of Fire Services, Town Department Heads and Superintendent, State Police, FBI, DEEP, Public Health

Director, the Coast Guard and Dominion Security and Facility supervisors. The federally run FEMA drill simulated the progressive scenarios we have been trained to address. Each situational progression far more severe. Waterford police officers, firefighters, fire police, public works maintainers and ambulance service staff all participated at Forward Command and throughout town. The debriefing session after the drill by FEMA evaluators was very positive. Working alongside Waterford leaders, employees and professionals in our EOC remains my greatest responsibility to every resident we serve. Thank you to Dominion, FEMA, the FBI, the State Police and all our mutual aid partners that participated in the drill.

The First Selectman hosted the Ambassador of Finland, Mikko Hautala, Congressman Joe Courtney and Paul Murray, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Spent Fuel and Waste Disposition to Waterford. U.S. Congressman Joe Courtney and I were proud to tour



**FIRST SELECTMAN ROB BRULE WITH
FINLAND AMBASSADOR HAUTALA AND
CONGRESSMAN COURTNEY**

Dominion's Millstone Power Station and conduct a meeting at Waterford Town Hall. The discussion focused on Finland's proactive experience with storage of spent nuclear waste and the federal government's emerging plans for nuclear waste storage and consent-based siting. I want to thank Secretary Murray, Ambassador Hautala and Congressman Courtney as well as Dominion for their willingness to share their experience and expertise on this challenging but crucially important issue of long-term nuclear waste storage. Few communities across America are more significantly affected by this as yet unresolved issue than Waterford, and the First Selectman will continue to support the federal government's concept of consent-based siting of spent waste storage and visit national and international proposals to store nuclear waste.

Capital Projects



**THE ARNOLD E. HOLM JR. MEMORIAL PARK
GRAND OPENING**

The newly renovated Arnold E. Holm Jr. Memorial Park officially opened this summer! The park renovations included ADA accessible pathways, lighting, boardwalk, bridges, aerating pumps, basking logs for turtles, benches, memorial plaza, stonewall, streetscape trees and lighting on Rope Ferry Road. The First Selectman would like to thank the Recreation and Parks Commission and the Civic Triangle Ad Hoc Committee for their two-year commitment to overseeing the project. Most of

the funding came from ARPA, however, the dredging cost of \$945,000 and the final \$273,428 for ADA access and streetscape along Rope Ferry Road was from capital. The First Selectman's 5-year capital plan reflected a "Snap-Shot" for the responsible and transparent use of the general fund balance for capital projects. The 5-year capital plan reflected transparent use of the general fund balance as to ensure operating budgets and impact on the tax rate remains stable. Road paving projects will continue to include the Utility Commission replacing 30-year old plastic water connectors over to copper prior to road paving, eliminating the possibility of leaks forming under the newly paved roads. The First Selectman's \$2M request for funding school security improvements remains the largest capital project for school and community safety the town has ever requested. The largest part of the project, the video security cameras in and around schools, started at the beginning of summer.

Other Notable Capital Projects Completed in 2024:

- Town paved Kingfisher Way, Brill Avenue, Kestral Way, Lark Street, Mackenzie Avenue, Quail Street, Robin Street and Thrush Street.
- The Community Center HVAC System upgrade was completed.
- The Cohanzie Firehouse Underground Septic Tank was removed.
- 8 Goshen Road home abutting Great Neck School was purchased.
- Oswegatchie Firehouse architectural drawings were completed.
- Oswegatchie Firehouse project manager was funded.
- Clark Lane Chillers replaced for the AC system.
- Fargo Water Tank antennas replaced during the rehab project.
- Town Hall Basketball Court funding approved.



THE ARNOLD E. HOLM JR. MEMORIAL PARK
SEEN HERE AT NIGHT

Fleet Management Plan

In 2024, the Town received three large pieces of apparatus for Public Works, including a Sweeper for \$348,209, a 5-ton Dump Truck for \$276,695 and a Side Load Refuse Truck for \$391,997. The Public Works Department and the Police Department fleet plans remain a priority. As supply chain issues have occurred, the Town remains in good position to purchase the fleet necessary to keep our town safe and operating efficiently. The Town continues to remove vehicles and equipment from the fleet in an effort to reduce the size of the fleet. The new Municipal Complex's 70,000 square foot garage continues to keep our trucks and other fleet equipment inside and protected from the elements. The First Selectman will

continue to focus on Fleet Management, focusing on how many vehicles the Town has in its fleet, maintenance of vehicles to extend life and budgeting for large vehicle replacement when the time is needed. The Waterford Fire Department included its' vehicles within the Fleetio fleet management system, which will ensure the town manages fleet budget fire,



THE PUBLIC WORKS FLEET PARKED INSIDE THE
MUNICIPAL COMPLEX GARAGE READY FOR
INCLEMENT WEATHER

inspections, work orders, preventative maintenance schedules and parts inventory in a single dashboard.

Planning & Economic Development

Over the past year, there continues to be commitment towards responsible economic development and our continued efforts to “fill empty storefronts” and attract new businesses to Waterford. In 2024, residents were excited to see Chipotle Mexican Grill open next to M&T Bank. Fish Market moved to Waterford from Niantic and opened next to Ivy’s off Boston Post Road. Fish Market features fresh shellfish and seafood, with a focus on “knowing the source”. Aesthetics Ink Day Spa opened behind the Dunkin Donuts on Boston Post Road as well. Phase Two of the Waterford Woods Luxury Apartment Complex on Willetts



FIRST SELECTMAN BRULE WITH
AESTHETICS INK OWNER GIA
REAGAN



THE CRYSTAL MALL HAS SIX SEPARATE PARCELS ON THE PROPERTY OWNED BY THREE DIFFERENT COMPANIES

Avenue was completed in 2024 and included a clubhouse, pool, pickleball court, walking trail, vegetable and herb gardens and additional storage units on the property. Phase Three, the final phase of Waterford Woods, started in the summer of 2024 and is expected to be completed by summer of 2025. This \$120M project has brought much needed workforce family housing to the region and will have a positive tax impact on the town. The Town of Waterford is currently completing the town’s Plan of Conservation and Development. "Plan Waterford" is our Town’s guide for the future. It shows where we have been and lays out the vision for where we are going. Thank you to the staff and Planning & Zoning Commission for the effort put forward as we complete the final phases, including the online survey. Finally, the Planning & Zoning Commission and First Selectman worked closely with a consultant in 2024 developing a draft Planned Development District (PDD) for the Crystal Mall property, which will encourage mixed-use development, provide flexibility for the owners and needed tax revenue for the residents.



CHIPOLTE MEXICAN GRILL OPENED IN 2024



**WATERFORD WOODS LUXURY
APARTMENTS COMPLEX WILL ADD TAX
REVENUE TO THE TOWN**

The town continues to look for new economic development that will have long-term effects and will enhance our Net Taxable Grand List. The First Selectman's Office continues to have communication with the three owners of the Crystal Mall property. The Town continues to discuss multiple conceptual multi-use options that would include demolition and partial demolition. The Town continues to discuss conceptual ideas for the project with the owners as well as the Connecticut

Department of Economic Development. The town's Board of Selectmen and RTM voted unanimously back in February 2023 to support Dominion Energy's interest in building data centers on its property; however, Siting Council denied Dominion's initial permit application. There has been no application re-submitted to Siting Council in 2024. Data centers on Dominion property would provide \$8M annually for 30 years to the town if completed. The 40-home Ivy Hill Village residential project off Great Neck Road completed construction of 12 of the 40 energy efficient, smaller homes with an HOA that will take care of the lawn, trash and recycling and provide owners a nature walking trail. While Waterford Woods \$120M estimated housing project, mentioned earlier, will have a positive impact on tax revenue. In 2024, the Town successfully negotiated a tax appeal by Dominion Energy. Both sides were respectful, thoughtful and exhibited the importance of being the largest taxpayer in a host community.



**IVY HILL VILLAGE PROVIDES SMALLER
HOMES OFFERING MODERN LIVING IN A
BEAUTIFUL TOWN**

Budget Management

Again in 2024, the Town of Waterford enjoyed a stable mill rate of 22.3. The Board of Finance voted to use \$1M of fund balance to offset the increase in the FY25 BOE operating budget of \$3,417,198 and town operating budget of \$1,454,111. The Town continues to prioritize a working budget for our town that supports first responders, critical services and level of education we expect in town, while minimizing the growth of the taxpayers' burden. The Town, like many of its neighboring communities, has seen a continuation of retirements by eligible employees. There continues to be a focus placed on recruitment and retention of town employees, most notably, building officials, police officers and firefighters. In



FIRST SELECTMAN BRULE WITH NEWLY PROMOTED UTILITY DIRECTOR JILL STEVENS

2024, the Town of Waterford saw the retirement of Utility Director Jim Bartelli after 39 years of service and hired Jill Stevens as Jim's replacement. The First Selectman will continue to focus on infrastructure and road paving with the general fund balance, while staffing levels and fleet management will be a priority for review. Waterford continues to host some of the largest retail shopping stores and plazas in southeastern CT and are home to two nuclear power plants and the beautiful Great Neck Country Club. These provide many benefits to our town. We have more growth

forecast for the town and look forward to planning that growth with the various builders and developers. Like so many of our neighboring communities, the year posed serious challenges due to supply chain issues and significant cost increases within capital expenses, adjusting to post-pandemic realities and the impact Electric Boat hiring thousands of highly compensated employees has had, and will continue to have, on the recruitment and retention of town employees.



IN 2012, THE MORTIMER FAMILY PURCHASED AND COMPLETELY TRANSFORMED THE GREAT NECK COUNTRY CLUB INTO ONE OF CT'S BEST PRIVATE GOLF COURSES

American Rescue Plan Act

All expected ARPA funding from the federal government has been received by the Town of Waterford (\$5,547,889) and was encumbered, per law, by December 31, 2024. The allocation the Town of Waterford received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Plan to spend the funding was submitted to the RTM – appropriating the funding to emergency service upgrades, small businesses, tourism, mental health needs, water utility upgrades and maintenance and outdoor parks. The Town continues to provide the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and the RTM quarterly updates on all appropriations to ensure transparency.



THE 750,000 GALLON FARGO ROAD WATER TANK \$1.3M REHABILITATION PROJECT

Projects completed with ARPA funds in 2024:

- Fargo Lane Water (Tank) Tower Rehabilitation
- Waterford Park Pond ADA Pathways, Holm Memorial and Boardwalk
- Waterford Park Streetscape – Along Rope Ferry Road
- Waterford Park Playground ADA Pathways to Pond / Restrooms
- Old Norwich Road Pump Station Upgrade
- Town GIS Updates
- Eugene O'Neill Theater Hammond Mansion Roof Replacement



THE FARGO ROAD TANK PRIOR TO THE REHAB WORK

Conclusion

The First Selectman is proud of the work we continue to accomplish in a bi-partisan and professional manner in 2024 and remains committed to continuing positive, transparent and thoughtful discussions in the year ahead. Finally, the First Selectman is proud to acknowledge the 2024 Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut Citizen of the Year, Mike Buscetto. This is not just an honor for Mike and his family, but for the entire town of Waterford. As the Chairman of the Waterford Youth & Family Services Bureau and member of the Waterford Economic Development Commission, Mike is always at the heart of helping people in our town. The First Selectman would also like to acknowledge Quaker Hill Elementary School custodian, William “Billy” Krajewski, who was selected a Top 10 Finalist for the Cintas National Custodian of the Year award!

