

11.24.2021

Last May, the Town of Canaan received the first half of the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds and next May will receive the second half. The total amount of the grant given to our town will be \$311,635.96. Of this amount, we have spent approximately \$48,000 for the septic system at 107 Main Street and dehumidifiers for the basement. We note that the old septic system was failing and would have had to be replaced shortly in any case.

That will leave \$263,000 in this grant available for spending. We have placed a survey on our website asking the town's residents to give their suggestions on how to spend that money. There are certain criteria for its use that are outlined on the survey document but we encourage everyone in town with an idea to submit it. We want your ideas.

After the submissions have been presented, we will have a public forum to discuss all of the suggestions and try and reach some consensus on how the funds should be spent. So please go to the town website at canaanfallsvillage.org and give us your input. It will be greatly appreciated. We have until the end of December, 2025 to commit these funds for projects but the planning must start now so we use these monies in the best possible way to benefit our village.

On Saturday, December 18th, we are planning on holding our annual tree lighting ceremony on the green from 3 to 5 PM. Santa will be coming into town on a fire truck and we will be distributing cookies, singing traditional holiday tunes and, of course, lighting the tree. The Recreation Commission is asking that families bring an ornament to add to the tree if they so wish. I look forward to seeing everyone for the festivities.

Falls Village has received Bronze Status under the auspices of Sustainable Connecticut and we appreciate all the effort by various people in the community led by Felicia Jones that helped in this endeavor. In order to achieve this, we did work in eleven different areas dictated by Sustainable CT. This award gives us additional access to funding sources in the state so it is important.

On the sustainability front, we are faced with the closure of MIRA plant at the end of the next fiscal year. This means that our refuse from the transfer station will no longer be recycled in the state but will have to be transported to landfills outside the state. The cost of this change will affect us directly in higher costs over the next 5 years. To offset some of this cost, we are exploring jointly with Salisbury, Sharon and Cornwall a plan to start separating our compostable waste from the normal trash so that we can reduce the amount that needs to be trucked out of state. North Canaan is also considering joining this effort.

About a third of our garbage is compostable. If we could convert half of this amount to an alternate location, we believe the cost savings to our town could offset some of the costs that will be incurred by the closure of the MIRA facility in Hartford. Over the course of the next few months, we hope to finalize an agreement on how this will work. It will require a lot of compliance with homeowners and businesses in our town. If it is successful, we will reduce our

costs and do our part to reduce the environmental impact of this decision to close the MIRA facility.

Excuse me, but I have to make an editorial comment on this. We, as a partner in MIRA, have been trying to work with the state for over 7 years on trying to find a solution to this. The State of Connecticut really dropped the ball on this one and was little or no help to MIRA in finding a solution to this problem. Everyone in the state knew this was happening and could not find the political will to get anything done. So, as a result, we all are going to suffer. Landfills are not a long term solution to the problem.

In other news, we have undertaken a study of potential solar panel locations in town. This is done through Staples for free in an effort to support the towns that they serve.

We are planning to hold a Town Meeting sometime in mid to late January to accept the audit and the town report, to approve a couple of items relative to taking funds from reserve accounts and approve the banking relationships for next year. Our audit is finished and we will be given to the Board of Finance in December at which time they will recommend it to Town Meeting at a date to be determined. Incidentally, our audit process was very smooth this year. With the addition of the funds from the sale of the water works to Aquarion, our general fund is now projected to be \$758,000 at year-end if budgets are fully spent which they generally are not.

Finally, let us take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and our best wishes for a wonderful holiday season which is fast approaching.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2021

On November 23, 2020, the Town of Canaan was advised that a Freedom of Information complaint was filed. The supposed complainant was listed on the letter that the town received. Basically, the complaint centered on a missing document which we could not find relating to the housing issue in the village. The Town can not produce something it cannot find.

Subsequently, a Hearing Notice was sent to our lawyer, Chip Roraback, on September 9, 2021 scheduling a hearing on this complaint. While the town felt very comfortable with our position in the case, we, acting prudently, spent considerable time in preparing for the hearing and our lawyer devoted hours of his time in preparation. This will cost the town money.

On Monday, September 28th, we received, via our attorney, a notice sent by the complainant listed on the documents stating that the named person did not send the documents to FOI and was withdrawing the complaint. This is arguably a criminal fraud perpetrated on our town and has cost us time and money.

We know that the River Roads project has created controversy in our village and we respect that every person in our town has the right to their own opinion about the proposed Affordable

Housing. However, scams like this are abominable. We hope the perpetrator will come forward and offer to pay for the damages incurred by our town.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

The end of summer is approaching and fall will start on the 22nd of the month. Hopefully, we will have a drier period ahead and, given all the rain we have had this summer, our fall foliage will be unusually colorful.

Our COVID problem is still wreaking havoc throughout the nation. While our state has high vaccination rates and a smaller number of cases than the national average, the Delta variant has proven to be much more contagious and virulent so exercise caution to protect yourself and others. We do ask that visitors to our offices in town hall wear a mask even if vaccinated.

We have instituted a program that all town job vacancies will be posted on our website, advertised in the paper with full job descriptions. Vacancies on town committees will continue to be handled on a case-by-case basis by the Board of Selectmen on recommendations by the committees themselves. If you have interest in being on any town committees, please contact the committee chairs. We are always looking to get new volunteers to fill positions that routinely occur.

During our meeting last week, we accepted the resignation of Tracey Wilson as Transfer Station Coordinator but she has subsequently decided to stay on in this position. She will no longer be the attendant on Tuesdays and Peter Roussis will take on the additional day as he is the current attendant on Fridays and Saturdays. This assures continuity at these vital roles. We are very pleased with this outcome.

During October, the Board of Selectmen will advertise for the position of Town Clerk because Mary's role as the elected Town Clerk ends in January. The decision to have this position be appointed was made by the previous Board of Selectmen and was enacted in a Town Meeting on September 6, 2017. Note that the Town Clerk is a sworn officer of the town and not a civil service position.

For informational purposes, we have removed the pile of dirt at the gas station in town. This was done with a donated truck from Century Aggregates, thanks to Greg Marlowe, with the assistance of a loader supplied by the town. This material is completely free of any contaminants and was tested for that by a certified service. This has been stored at the transfer station and will be used to cover the bulky waste material per state code. Consequently, we were able to help a new local business while concurrently preparing for the potential closure of the bulky waste section at the transfer station saving the town money in the future. It also removed an unsightly mound on the entryway to the town. Also, note that this is a quiet period for the town crew so freeing up a loader for the dirt did not divert attention from other tasks. Bottom line-this saves the town money and that this was done at the request of several citizens.

The CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) application that the town has made for the benefit of the Falls Village Housing Trust continues to be a bone of contention in the town. As many of you know, I was out of the country for the month of August for a much-needed vacation. During the proceeding period, there had been conflicting opinions from experts in the affordable housing arena as to whether the Town of Canaan, acting as fiduciary for making sure the money was properly spent, had any liability for repayment of the money. Most of the experts said that we had none. However, due to my absence and acting on their own behalf as concerned citizens, Lou Timolat and David Barger had a long telephone conversation with Miguel Rivera at the CT Department of Housing. In this conversation, Miguel did say the town had some potential liability due to the wording of the grants given from the Federal Department of Housing and passed on through the state to the town. Incidents of liability are rare but they have happened.

Consequently, we have found ways to negate this risk and a committee of the Board of Finance consisting of Dan Silverman and Dick Heinz has been formed to study the various alternatives and make a recommendation of the best way to eliminate any potential town liability.

In any case, we have not been awarded with the grant as that won't be done until late November or early December, 2021 according to the last information given to the town by the CT DOH. Obviously, if we don't get the grant, this is a moot point but, if we do, we will be prepared with a solution to any liability, no matter how remote.

One of the many reasons that we support the FVHT plan for the River Road Homes is that group is made up of people who live in the town and their plan reflects a desire to create a right-sized project that fits the needs of our community. Under current state law, the town could not stop a for-profit group from out of town from building a project that does not fit the town's needs by right. By right means they would not go through the scrutiny we have been able to devote through Planning and Zoning to the FVHT project plans. We do not believe that this possibility is a risk that is worth taking. We want Falls Village, the Town of Canaan, to be able to make those important decisions itself without outside interference.

Cardinal Engineering is moving ahead with the study of possible remedies to the Cobble Road problems. As many of you know, this road is subject to frequent flooding and the one culvert under the road has failed. Further, the bridge over the Hollenbeck River must be replaced. Consequently, when we close the bridge for replacement, those families living on the northern side of the river will have no way to access their homes if the road north of them is impassible. We hope to have the results of the study by later this year so we can start planning for the bridge replacement. This bridge is covered under the federal program because of its length being greater than 20' which will cover 80% of the cost.

Concurrent with this, we are planning limited work on bridges in 'fair' condition to lengthen their useful lives. This will be done mainly by the public works employees of the town.

Finally, we are putting together a survey which will be available on the town website as well as through the post office. This survey will seek out community ideas on what we should do with

the money given to the town through the American Rescue Plan Act. Our town was granted about \$309,000, with the first half of the money already dispersed in the amount of approximately \$154,500. These funds by law must be held in a separate account. The balance of the money will be disbursed in the second quarter of 2022. We did utilize about \$42,000 for the septic system for 107 Main Street. This is an authorized use of the funds.

After we get the survey results, we will hold a Town Forum to discuss those ideas we have received. Note that, under the terms of ARPA, the Board of Selectmen, with the advice of the Board of Finance, is conferred by Federal law with the duty of deciding the funding decisions. However, we are anxious to get the ideas of our citizens on what we should do with the ARPA money.

MAY 20, 2021

This is a busy time of year at Town Hall. We are having an in person budget meeting tomorrow night at the Emergency Services Center on Route 7 South at 7 PM. There has been a lot of misinformation around the budget in the town and that is your chance to express your opinion on what we plan to do in the next year.

In the past 5 years, the town budget has increased by a little under 7 percent. Last year, in fear that our town tax collection may be dramatically affected by the COVID-19 epidemic, we decided to not put any money aside for our reserve accounts. These are the savings accounts that the town has in order to have the money available to purchase things like new trucks or pay for expenses that we know will happen periodically like revaluations. This year we are restoring these contributions and have increased this line item by about \$10,000 to prepare for investments in the town infrastructure in future fiscal years. If we had not done so, we would have had to have a larger tax increase last year as it would have reduced our general funds balance to an unacceptable level. We did decrease the general fund by about \$300,000. This was due mainly to a \$230,000 increase in our pupil charges at Region One which could not have happened at a worse time.

This year, our total school budget is down \$120,000, mainly due to our pupil charges going down at Region One. The Kellogg School board also deferred a lot of technology needs for a year to help alleviate the pressure that the Region One budget had placed on the town as a whole.

We have sold the water works which will end up adding somewhere between \$185,000 to the general fund after paying off the remaining debt of the water works which was \$198,000. Our grand list increased by 3.29 percent which will give us additional tax revenue of about \$154,000. Also, the federal government is granting the town \$103,000 through the American Recovery Act. Also, to alleviate the pressure put on the town through much higher tipping fees for our refuse, we are increasing our transfer station fees by 50%. They will still be the lowest in

the area.

We know that taxes are important to all of our residents. We do the best that we can to keep our budgets as close to the bone as possible but we do have to make sure that we are paving the roads, plowing them in the winter, maintaining the functions of government that are mandated by law and ensuring that we do what we believe are in the best interests of the townspeople.

After the Town Hearing, the Board of Finance will make a final recommendation to Town Meeting on the budget that they propose for adoption. Remember that the Board of Selectmen only propose a budget. It is the Board of Finance that adopts it. This is probably their most important function and they take it very seriously.

The Town Meeting will be held in person at the Fire House on June 2, 2021 at 7 PM. There will be a couple of minor additional issues to be considered.

On June 7, 2021, there will be a hearing for the CDBG grant at 7 PM that is part of the grant process for the River Road home project. There will be informational presentations by the Falls Village Housing Trust, David Berto, the housing grant writer and then time for public comment. The agenda is set by the DOH and we will follow it to the letter.

On Memorial Day, there will be no parade but there will be a short celebration on the Village Green at 10 AM. Everyone is welcome.

A final note is that Governor Lamont has removed most of the mandates for masks both indoors and out. We do request that residents who are not vaccinated and attend crowded indoor town events to wear a mask. Also, we are fully opening Town Hall on June 1, 2021. We are pleased that our town came through this horrific pandemic largely untouched. This can be attributed to the town's residents who have been so cooperative during the last 16 months. We are at the end of the tunnel and we appreciate all that you have done to keep yourself and others safe.

APRIL 26, 2021

We are, hopefully, entering the last stage of the pandemic. Over the past few days, there have been many declarations from Governor Lamont reducing the restrictions on activities within the state with some taking effect on May 1st and the remainder taking effect on May 20th. One restriction that remains in force is the mask mandate when indoors.

Vaccinations are proceeding very well within our state. We encourage everyone to get vaccinated as the vaccines have proven to be safe and effective. There is a hold on the J and J shot for the moment but we believe that this will probably be lifted in the next few days with an appropriate warning label. Note that the odds of having any reaction to that particular vaccine is similar to the odds of getting hit with lightning. The important issue here is getting everyone a shot. The sooner that happens, the less the virus can mutate because the only way it can

mutate is within a human body. Therefore, getting the injection protects you and the community.

Consequently, just continue to be safe and careful for the next couple of months so we can all have a wonderful summer.

Speaking of summer, we are doing a fund-raising through the Falls Village Community Development Corporation for the Recreation Commission of Falls Village. The FVCDC was created as a conduit to funding of this type as a governmental unit is not permitted to access it directly. This is a matching grant with Sustainable CT. If the community raises \$7,500 dollars, Sustainable CT matches it. The funds will be used to construct a pergola at the pool so that people can get out of the sun, do some landscaping including several mature trees and provide some soil, compost, etc. for the play area. To contribute to this, please use the following: [Creating a Community Gathering Space in Falls Village](#).

During our last Board of Selectmen meeting, we approved putting signage on the entrance to Dublin Road stating "No Access to Great Falls". We also intend to put no parking signs on the road. This is to discourage people using Google Maps from driving down the street when their intention is to get to the falls. During last summer, the Falls was overrun with visitors as we had the only access on the river open—others having been closed by the towns or the state. We have been working with the Housatonic Valley Association on this problem so as not to have a repeat of the events of last year. HVA is having a virtual community meeting on Thursday, May 6th at 7 PM and we encourage concerned community members to register and receive a zoom link @ <https://rebrand.ly/river/community/meeting>.

Next week, we plan on closing on the sale of our waterworks to Aquarion. While we know that a few residents weren't in favor of the sale, we believe ensuring the water supply of the town is in professional hands- whose sole job is delivering water- will protect the town now and into the future.

Budget season is upon us and we intend to have a public hearing, probably in late May and a Town Meeting, probably in early June, like we have had for almost three hundred years. (The actual dates will be set by the Board of Finance.) That is, it will be public and open to tax payers. While we will mandate masks and maintain distances, we want to get back to normal. It felt very surreal for the selectmen to act as the legislative body during the pandemic and it was a role that we performed very reluctantly. A Town Meeting is one of the most democratic forms of government and we are delighted to see it return.

Over the past few years, we have lost several old trees that festooned our roads due to storms and old age. We have started a tree fund reserve in order to plant new trees in our town and Susan Dempsey was kind enough to drop off at Town Hall a list of native trees that can be used for replanting. If anyone would like a copy of this list, please contact Town Hall and we'll see that it is sent to you.

We are slowly making progress on bridge repair in the village. Most of the bridges in town can have their useful lives significantly extended with small interventions by the Public Works staff. The big bridge on Cobble Road and a culvert near Beavertides Farm is a different story. In the budget this year, we are putting aside sufficient monies to provide for a study by Cardinal Engineering. This will lead to the best option for raising the road north of the bridge and culvert to allow year-long navigation. In turn, this will permit access to homes north of the bridge during the replacement of the bridge. The bridge, being longer than 20', is eligible for federal funding in the amount of 80% of the total cost. The road cost will be at the expense of the town as will the remaining 20% of the bridge. In all probability this will have to be financed through a loan.

To sum up, get vaccinated, stay safe, wear masks and let's ensure we can enjoy a normal summer this year. Barring any new variants showing up and a continuation of our progress against the virus, we can have a car show, go to the pool, congregate in our new coffee shop which should open in the summer along with the art gallery at 107 Main, have public meetings and return to the 'old normal' way of life we have enjoyed.

Quick addendum---- We are having another COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Firehouse on Monday, May 3, 2021. Registration is required and the number to call is 860.605.4822. It will be the Pfizer vaccine. So please, if you haven't been vaccinated, take this opportunity to do so.

JANUARY 25, 2021

Best of the New Year to everyone. Let's hope this year is a little better than the one we have just left.

The Covid-19 vaccine has arrived and shots have been given to our emergency workers and fire department staff. I personally encourage anyone who can get the vaccine to get it as soon as they can. The State of Connecticut has begun vaccinating those who are 75 and older. Tomorrow, our state government is going to review its distribution plan and may extend the approval for shots to those 65 and older starting in February. The state website is a valuable tool to find vaccination sites and instruct those who want vaccines on how to get on the list and places where they can get them. Note that our pharmacies, Walgreen's and CVS, have been added to the list as well as a new mass vaccine site at the Armory on Main Street in Torrington. You can call the state at 211 if you do not have a computer or go to the state website for more information. If you have further questions or are having difficulty in accessing or navigating the enrollment process, please contact Theresa Graney at 860-824-9855 or email her at socialservices@canaanfallsvillage.org.

The main constraint in getting vaccines is availability. All the information we have is that the volume of doses available in the next month or two will increase dramatically from the two companies now approved, Moderna and Pfizer. We also believe, based on news accounts, that a third vaccine from Johnson and Johnson will be approved in February. This will accelerate the delivery of vaccines to our state.

Again, I know that many people are wary of getting the vaccines. However, the evidence is overwhelming, given the millions of doses injected to date, that the vaccines are safe and very effective. So please get them. The sooner we reach the goal of 70-80 percent of our population being vaccinated, the sooner we obtain 'herd immunity' which will allow us to return to some degree of normalcy in our daily life. Meanwhile, until told otherwise by responsible authorities, wear your mask, keep social distancing, wash your hands and do everything you can do to keep yourself and others safe.

The other big news, of which everyone is aware, is the installation of a new administration in Washington, despite the regrettable events of January 6th. It gives me a great appreciation of the way we run governments at the local level. We all disagree about certain actions taken by the leaders of our town, which is a very healthy sign of a vibrant democracy. At the same time, while we disagree, we can and do show a commitment to civility, the art of disagreeing in a respectful and thoughtful way without resorting to personal attacks on the integrity of those with opposing views or name-calling. No person has ownership of the truth or the right answer to any problem. We try to achieve consensus and failing that have to take actions with which people may disagree. In the end, you decide whether or not to re-elect those who lead you.

Budget discussions will start shortly for the fiscal year 2021-22. A piece of good news is that our portion of the Region One budget will fall dramatically this year based on preliminary information from them. The amount will be slightly less than \$240,000 which is substantial for our village. Also, we believe that the sale of the waterworks of the town to Aquarion will occur in this calendar year which will be added to our general fund. The sale price will be \$340,000 from which proceeds we will pay off our debt on the water tanks and current liabilities of about \$206,000 and attorney fees payable accrued from the sale. We will also receive all the cash and receivables outstanding in the waterworks accounts which currently stand at about \$50,000. These figures will change a bit during the next 3 months but this will give you some idea of where we stand as of today. On the negative side, we will re-institute our practice of putting money aside for capital projects which we eliminated last year because of the pressure on our budget from both the Region One increase in expenditures and uncertainty of our receipts for taxes given the pandemic. While the former of these came to pass, our collections for taxes were maintained at their normal high level.

Many people have asked us about the progress on leasing out the space at 107 Main Street. We have leased a small portion of the space for an art store and are continuing our discussions with a potential renter who would establish a café in the remaining space. We will keep you apprised of any further developments.

Our bridge committee remains active and we are meeting shortly with Cardinal Engineering about the biggest issue facing us which is the bridge over Cobble Road. This bridge will have to be replaced at some time in the near future. The issue here is simple in that three residents are on the north side of the bridge. If the bridge is demolished and replaced, these residents will not have access to their properties for a period of time except over the part of the road that connects to Under Mountain Road. That section of the road is subject to flooding, especially in the spring, and would have to be improved prior to construction of the replacement bridge. It

may be possible to fix one side of the bridge at a time but that would be much more costly and time-consuming so we would like to avoid this if we can. Many of the other bridges in town can be repaired by our town crew over time but the bridge over Cobble Road must be replaced in the next few years. Because this bridge is eligible for federal funding for replacement, whereby we would pay only a fraction of the cost, we want to make sure we follow the best guidance we can get to minimize the disruption to residents and keep the cost down as far as possible.

Last week, we appointed a committee to represent us for the Municipal Housing Study which we are mandated to do every 5 years. We had placed an application on our website and were pleasantly surprised at the number of applicants who wanted to be a part of this. Therefore, we doubled the number of community members on the committee from three to six, with one alternate. We apologize to those who were not chosen and appreciate that you were willing to volunteer but wanted to keep the number of the committee to a manageable size. Please note that all the meetings will be public and there will be several community forums in which residents can participate. We encourage community input.

We are planning on seeking a community grant for our town. This in the preliminary stages and more information will be forthcoming as we move through the process. At this stage, we are just notifying the state that we are planning on applying. We will need someone to write the grant and will be putting out an RFP to get this done.

On another note, we are forming a committee in our town to study and identify how our village might install a fiber-optic network for our village. Similar committees have been formed in Norfolk, Cornwall, Sharon and other towns in our Northwest Hills COG. Hopefully, the state and federal governments will start to provide funding to facilitate establishing these services in rural areas. Given the pandemic, we can see the necessity of this especially for those who need to connect to the school or other services. Coverage in our area is not adequate.

Finally, let me add that the participation of people in our meetings of our Boards and commissions has increased dramatically which we believe is due to the pandemic. In the future, we hope that we can continue the practice of letting our residents continue to log on through Zoom even after we go back to in person meetings. Maintaining citizen participation is a crucial part of our unique manner of democracy in a small village and we will do whatever we can to continue to foster it.