

DECEMBER 31, 2019

I hope everyone has had a wonderful Christmas and that the New Year brings you and your families health, happiness and prosperity! This is a quiet time of year here at Town Hall and a good time to reflect on my first full year as your First Selectman.

To begin, this is one of the most gratifying jobs I've ever had. It is a real privilege and honor to have been chosen to be your First Selectman and I thank everyone in the town for giving me this chance to serve you. Further, I want to thank everyone that works for the town for being so diligent in their efforts to serve the residents of Falls village in an effective and friendly manner.

Most importantly, I want to thank the many people who serve on boards and committees throughout the town, not only on those activities that serve the town government, but also those that participate in community groups outside of our governmental purview such as the Children's Theatre, the Historical Society, the David M. Hunt Library, the FVFD, the Board of Education, etc., etc. About 20% of the adult population of Falls Village serves as a volunteer on one thing or another. This is an amazing testament to the value that this town places on the importance of community and something in which we can take great pride.

So thanks to all the citizens of Falls Village. It is you who make this such a wonderful place to live and I celebrate this, with gratitude, as one of those who benefits from your gift of time and your investment in the place where you live.

DECEMBER 18, 2019

Happy Holidays to everyone in our village. We hope that you enjoy this time of peace and joy with your family and friends. Also, we look forward to a New Year filled with health, prosperity and happiness.

Celebrating our first Festival of Wreaths, we have three winners to announce. We would like to thank all the participants who took part in this event this year and expect it will grow even larger in years to come. The winners are as follows:

- Cheryl Aeschliman for Most Attractive
- Alexander Wilburn for Most Creative
- Karmela Quinion for Best Under 17

In mid-January, we will be updating our website again. During the past year, we have received several suggestions on making our site more usable and adding features that you would like to see. We appreciate your input and ask, as time passes, that you continue to pass these comments on to us to make our website more useful and attractive.

Over the next few months, we will begin the task of creating a database of your preferred

contact points for emergency messages. It might be that you would prefer to have us send an automated message to you to your cell phone via text, to your e-mail or both. Initially, we want this so that we can inform you of a situation like a dangerous weather event, a dam failure or any other threat to our community. Over time, if we have contact information, we might also evolve this into sending notices for Town Meetings for example. In any case, technology allows us to more quickly alert residents to situations that are critical and we want to be able to do this. We will update you in the next couple of months of how to send us your data.

As soon as the snow melts, we will be upgrading the Appalachian Trail portion in our village. With the help of First Light and Eversource, and through a donation to the trail by REI, we will be eliminating some of the barberry bushes along the trail, widening it in areas and generally making it more usable. Barberry is a notorious tick haven, so getting rid of these invasive species makes it less likely that you'll inadvertently pick up an unwanted co-traveler.

Another company has expressed interest in our water works which is good news for the town. Competition is always good.

DECEMBER 12, 2019

We had a nice meeting last night at the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen. One of the things we discussed was a change in the way we will be handling recycling at the Town Transfer Station. All of our recycling goes to MIRA, a public/private entity that turns our trash into electricity. We are a member of that organization. Mira does not separate cardboard from cans and bottles in its facility, combining both in a process called single streaming. We create two streams, one of cardboard and one of bottles, cans and plastic. Consequently, we are going to change over to single streaming as of January 1, 2019. One of our concerns is that this may increase our transportation costs over time so may we switch back to the two streams we have had in the past. We will keep you informed as we evaluate the change.

Over the past couple of weeks, I have had positive and productive meetings with both Ned Lamont and Maria Horn. It is very important to our town to maintain good working relationships with our governor and our representative in the state house and I look forward to collaborating with both in the future to further our village's interests. Let's all wish them the best to in returning Connecticut to a place of financial stability and keeping our little corner of the world such a fine area in which to live.

On January 10th, 2019, we are planning on holding a town meeting which will take place at 7 PM in Town Hall, 108 Main Street. The meeting will cover several matters for approval such as our Annual Audit and Town Report, approving our banking relationships, rescinding a town ordinance establishing a water commission in order to bring the waterworks under direct town control while maintaining the structure we have in place to take care of day to day responsibilities, authorizing a capital expense to replace our server, which is necessary every five years, approving a bear feeding ordinance and do some minor account clean up by retiring an unused reserve account and transferring the small balance in it to another. We encourage your participation in our Town Meeting which is one of the great aspects of our democracy-the

ability to directly participate in decisions that impact our village.

Though I do not wish to sound like a broken record, I again encourage everyone to volunteer for the Falls Village Volunteer Fire Department. Your participation would be a wonderful holiday gift to all of us who live here.

NOVEMBER 20, 2019

For all of you that came to our Town Meeting on November 13, 2019, thank you. The item that obviously generated most of the interest was the potential sale of the town water works. While the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance support the sale of this government function for many reasons which are listed below, we know that it is of concern to the users of the system. Mike Crawford, representing Aquarion, the potential purchaser, outlined the process of the sale, the timing, the PURA (Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority) process and the addition, in a year or two, of a low percentage chlorination system. Over a period of an hour or so, he answered questions about the system and why Aquarion is a good choice for us. My compliments to the attendees who asked very good questions about this. Currently, Aquarion is offering \$345,000 for the system which will leave the General Fund about \$130,000 or more greater after we pay off the remaining long term debt of the water works which was taken out originally for the tanks located on Beebe Hill Road. This debt is guaranteed by the Town of Canaan.

No vote was taken at the meeting as there is no agreement to vote on. We have signed a non-binding Letter of Intent and will now negotiate the details of the sale. After this is done, we have to get PURA approval which will entail more negotiations between the town, Aquarion and PURA. Should all this go well, we anticipate we might have the ability to proceed with a town meeting to allow the sale sometime in late June. However, in our analyses, we think that a sale might not happen until the August/October time frame. We will keep you posted on developments as they occur.

As an aside, the Town of Canaan owes a great debt of gratitude towards the people who have been ably running the water works for us over the years. They have done a great job but the regulatory burdens and risks of future problems pose an obligation that is becoming overwhelming. The Board of Selectmen outlined the reasons for selling now as follows:

1. Increasing Regulatory Requirements
2. The high rates necessitated by the low number of customers.
3. Lack of an adequate reserve that will require future increases in rates of approximately 10%.
4. The issue of contingent liability which could overwhelm our town finances.
5. Getting the water works as a tax paying entity which it would be if sold.
6. Freeing up the town crew which does most of the repairs to the system.

Moving these responsibilities to a large entity solves these issues.

The Town of Canaan did get approval of the teacher's contract for Kellogg School and for the additional cost of removing the oil tank and, separately, the purchase and burying of the propane tanks in the whole left behind by the oil tanks. Note that the school is now primarily heated by propane.

In other news, you might have seen the helicopter moving above the high-tension wires owned by Eversource. The purpose is to put fiber-optic cable on these towers to give Eversource enhanced communication capabilities that will benefit us in a more expeditious discovery of electrical outages and thus their repair.

Our town, through the munificence of private donors, is sponsoring a competition among townspeople for the holiday season which we are calling The Festival of Wreaths. Last year, we updated the town decoration and will be adding some small touches this year to make our village even more attractive during the holiday season. The Festival of Wreaths will give out \$50 prizes for the following:

1. Most Attractive
2. Most Creative
3. Best Done by Under 17 Years of Age

There are classes available for those who want to learn how to make a wreath for a small charge. We thought that this would just be a fun event that would get our village into the spirit of the holidays and plan on making this an annual affair. So get your creative juices flowing. Details are on the circulars around town or you can e-mail community@canaanfallsvillage.org for further information. Entries are due by midnight on December 11th and winners will be announced in this blog on December 14th.

NOVEMBER 2, 2019

We had two open forums outlining the strategy implementation that the Board of Selectmen believe will help us develop a more sustainable and future proof village for our future. If you couldn't attend or didn't see the recording of it on the local television channel, the following is a short synopsis of our discussion.

To begin, we went through the demographics of our town and its evolution from what many consider its optimum in the 1970's. Our median age is slightly above 51 years of age now, higher than the state median age of 40.4 which in itself places Connecticut as one of the oldest median states in the nation. Projecting into the future, we will become much older.

Another aspect of this is the number of homes that are not the primary residence of the

occupant. This has dramatically increased over the past 50 years. Also, the percentage of rentals available within our village is below the Litchfield County average and less than half of the national average. More importantly, housing ownership nationally is delayed by high housing cost, (our village is specifically higher), limited housing stock and student debt. The median debt upon graduation nationally is over thirty thousand dollars per year. Our children are graduating with a mortgage!

After going through the demographics, we went on to a discussion of how we might change the future.

The first item that we discussed was increasing our Downtown Charm and Vitality. We, as a community, have a lot to offer- a great school, natural beauty and recreational activity options, a culture of volunteerism- that make this town a wonderful place to live. While we have augmented this by the renovation of the old building done by Bunny Williams which is now called 100 Main, one new store in our town is not going to restore the attractiveness and vitality of our town center. We aim to do this by established a mixed-use zone in the heart of our village, perhaps creating a culture zone, encouraging density in the downtown area while preserving our natural resources and, most importantly, being careful to keep our distinctive character.

Following this we discussed the importance of increasing the availability of affordable rental units within the Town of Canaan. As mentioned above, home ownership is delayed due to a number of factors. An additional one is that our children tend to get married at an older age than we parents did.

Affordable rental units increase our tax base. These units, whether done by a home owner or a charitable trust are taxable. Further, we need a range of housing options for both young people and down-sizing seniors who find the physical requirements of owning a house too difficult. We want the children of our village to be able to afford to stay here.

Last, we want to increase the connectivity options available in our town. What does that mean and why is this important? Today, over 6.7 million Americans work in the technology industry and that number is growing by leaps and bounds yearly. It makes up 10% of our economy. It has more jobs than construction and the financial sector put together. And many of its employees have the option of working either part-time or full-time at home. The key component of this is having a high-speed fiber optic/wireless connection that allows the transmission of large amounts of data.

There is a large digital divide occurring in our nation and we don't want to be on the wrong side of this chasm. The truth is that private developers of fiber optic networks are concentrating their development efforts to large cities and the surrounding suburbs because those areas are the most profitable. Rural areas just don't have the density and profit potential that they find attractive.

Make no mistake, this is, today, a utility that is just as important to growth as was the creation of electricity and the phone networks of prior generations. The difference is that these networks were created by giving monopolies to certain vendors in an area and requiring them to serve everyone in their area with service, no matter how remote, at the same price is everyone else. This is not a requirement when it comes to broadband. Consequently, we will have to do it ourselves or wait another generation to get it. Think of the internet based on a fiber optic/high speed wireless network as a super highway. Today, we live on a potholed, dirt road.

What we proposing to create is a network that would cover initially about 93% of our town, either through an actual fiber optic cable connected to our home or business or a faster speed wireless network that would exceed the speeds currently offered. In offering this network, we could provide both internet and the option to convert to a phone service using the Voice Over Internet Protocol, (VOIP) for less than people are paying today. If we can get 320 subscribers in our town, this would pay for network. It would be town-owned and operated. If we do this, the system would pay for itself and allow us to extend the fiber optic portion of the network over time to cover everyone in Falls Village. This is not a pipe-dream. We could do it.

Over the next month or two, we will be doing many 'dog and pony' meetings throughout the town to discuss this further. You can find the website outlining the economics of this on the Selectmen's page if you want to drive down into the details that was done by NEO Partners. Note that we have chosen the sixth option of the ones that have been given to us.

The success of these three main thrusts of our plans will be measurable. We will see a few new businesses come to town. Quality jobs will be created and new families will move into town. Most importantly, the demographic profile of our town will shift to younger age, populating our wonderful school, bringing new volunteers to our fire company and ambulance core and giving our children and seniors more housing options.

What can you do? Several things in fact. You can support the Fiber Optic initiative, the zoning changes to help us get more downtown vitality, support increasing our line item in the budget for downtown renovation and maintenance, continue to volunteer and embrace affordable, mixed use housing.

We, your selectmen, are optimists. We want to ensure that we prepare our little part of the world to get more than our fair share of what the future offers.

Moving on to other matters, we will have a Town Meeting on Wednesday, November 13th at Town Hall starting at 7 PM. Four items are on the agenda. First, by town ordinance, we must ratify the teachers contract at Kellogg school for the next three years. Second, we need to approve taking \$4100 from the environmental fund for removing the buried oil tank at Kellogg school. Third, the Kellogg school wants us to approve expending up to \$15,000 from their Capital Reserve to bury the propane tanks underground. Finally, we have received an offer from Aquarion to purchase the assets of our water works for \$345,000. We need your approval to proceed with the sale. Both the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen have given

their approval for the sale. Representatives of Aquarion will be at the meeting to answer any questions that you might have.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

In October, we are holding a Falls Village Community Forum. You will have received a postcard at your home by this time and we look forward to a good turnout. These meetings are for the purpose of outlining the three main strategic goals of our Selectmen and getting feedback from community members, both full and part-time. The new Emergency Services Facility will serve as the venue which is located at 188 Route 7 South and there will be two separate opportunities for you to hear and comment on our vision—the first on Friday, October 11, at 7 PM and the second on October 12, at 9 AM.

The subject matter will concern three major topics. First, we will give a short outline of the changing demographics of our community. Next, we will discuss our need for rental properties within the confines of our community. Following this, our vision for the reinvigoration of our downtown. To conclude, we will talk about the need for connectivity in our town, a fancy word for improving our communication within the Town of Canaan through the installation of fiber optic cable.

So please come and here us out. We want this to be an interactive process and need your input, whether positive or negative.

On another note, please be aware that we will have a lot of helicopter traffic in our area over our town in October and November as Eversource is installing new fiber optic cables on their transmission towers that run through our town. The purpose of this is for Eversource to more quickly identify outages and therefore to be nimble in rerouting electricity to areas effected by an outage. The main areas of activity will be around Water Street, Johnson Road and Under Mountain Road.

We will again be upgrading the Holiday decorations in our Town Center through donations received from members of the village. There will be more on this subject in my next blog. It's too early now. Personally, I am finding it difficult to accept that summer is basically over.

Our website will be undergoing another upgrade in the next month or so. We are going to be adding some new content, putting more informational links on it and are going to start collecting emergency contact numbers for residents in town. Our goal is to have either e-mail addresses or cell phone numbers so that we can quickly inform residents of situations that may arise by message or text. While we hope we never have to use it, we want to have this capability.

AUGUST 22, 2019

Summer is coming to a close and we hope that you have enjoyed the great outdoors in this most beautiful, (if sometime too warm), weather. If you haven't had the chance to visit the

town center recently, there have been a lot of little changes and one very big one that we would like you to see. Bunny Williams has opened her shop in the center of town. This has generated great interest in the village and will be an asset to this community for years to come. Traffic in the village, both on foot and by vehicle, has increased dramatically. I encourage you to visit the store.

The town plantings have started to really grow. As we have mentioned earlier, these plants will take a year or two to reach full maturity and, because they are native grasses, will be drought resistant so that they will be sustainable and will have less maintenance required due to crowding out weeds. We are trying to adopt a unifying look to the village center. Some small changes will continue to be made.

The Center On Main boasts a refurbished door, due to volunteer work, that sets off the building. We have repainted the front door of Town Hall. All of this is to present our town center as a more attractive and vital place. It is one of the Board of Selectmen's main goals to make the town center more pleasing to the eye.

A training session was held by CERC for town officials on how best to foster development within our village while maintaining the culture of the community. It was a very interesting and thought provoking exercise that we hope will help us in our future efforts to make Falls Village more prosperous and self-sustaining.

In that light, we are planning on having a Community Forum to outline our principal strategic goals for the town for the next few years in October. This was originally going to be in September but we have been compiling information so furiously that we have delayed it a bit to incorporate all the new data we have. We, as the Board of Selectmen, hope that these meetings will be well attended so that we can have the maximum input from the community as a whole, both full-time residents and weekenders. These forums will be interactive so that everyone will be able to talk through these issues.

In order to maximize attendance, you will be receiving a postcard notification of the dates and times.

JULY 16, 2019

Last Thursday, CERC (Connecticut Economic Resource Center) held a workshop in the Center on Main to provide basic information in creating transformational economic development for our village. This was primarily for training purposes for town government and the larger community-based organizations such as the D. M. Hunt Library, Historical Society, Fire Department and Ambulance.

The meeting was well attended and quite informative. The information shared by CERC and Main Street Connecticut will help us to form a basis for a community-wide discussion about the strategic goals that we feel are important to pursue to achieve long-term sustainability and growth for our village. Our intention is to hold two initial meetings to discuss our goals with the

town at large. These forums are tentatively scheduled for the night of September 13th and the morning of September 14th. Our vision is that these meetings, will have short presentations on the demographics of our town, three separate big goals, and group break-outs to foster communication with all of us. There will be ample time for questions and comments.

Over time, our government has done a good job of identifying issues that face our town, like an aging population, affordability of our town from the perspective of our young, an under-utilized town center. Now is the time that we have to begin seriously implementing plans to help alleviate these issues. We have to do so in a way that doesn't change the basic character of this town and to make sure that a large majority of our town is supportive of the direction in which we think we should go.

Consequently, our desire is that we get substantial input from our residents and the forums will be set up in a way that will allow this to happen. More details of the exact time and place of these meetings will follow.

On Sunday, we had a fantastic Car Show. Attendance was high, the village looked like we had 5,000 residents, and a good time was had by all. Special kudos to the Falls Village Volunteer Fire Department, our public works employees and the Jacobs, who organize and run the whole program. Over time, this event has raised almost \$40,000 for our volunteer fire and ambulance services. Further, the number of positive comments about our town made by visitors is encouraging. It shows that we have something special in our town and that is something to build on.

Driving around the town center's various streets on Monday morning, the only evidence that the show took place were the various porta-potties that were awaiting pick-up and some tents on the town green. That is a real testament to the spirit of volunteerism in this town.

On a final note, I'm taking a little time off and visiting my son in France. I will be in daily contact with the office via e-mail and the phone but you won't see my car in front of Town Hall for a couple of weeks. Enjoy the summer. It doesn't last that long.

JUNE 17, 2019

Notice that we have finished putting in the native plants in the town center. Again, we have put in plugs that will take two years to reach maturity. Like all good things, they will take a little time.

Last night, at the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectman meetings, we discussed the withdrawal of the application of the Falls Village Housing Trust to construct transitional or ladder housing units on River Road. The term 'transitional or ladder' housing is a much more applicable description of what the FVHT is proposing. The experience in Litchfield, Kent and Salisbury shows that a large part of those who move into the communities they have built tend to stay in the town where they originally rented and move on to buying homes in the area. Their decision to withdraw the application reflects their willingness to listen to the

community, review their plans and consider options that might be more welcomed by all community members. They maintain their commitment to building such a project within Falls Village as soon as possible.

In leading to this end, we have decided to have an open forum for the community later this year, probably in Mid-September, to more carefully outline the driving factors that drive our consensus that this is one important tool in making sure that our town is sustainable for our children and grand-children. Presentations will be made by the town on our overall approach to sustainable development and to also give the FVHT a chance to explain their mission and how they plan to accomplish it. Ample time will be allowed for community questions and comments. The goal of all of us is to maintain the character of the town through activities that will ensure its long-term sustainability. More information about this will be forthcoming.

Another tool which the Board of Selectmen is pursuing is the development of Gig-speed internet services for the town. We believe that is critically important for the future of our village. Note that the Northwest Hills Council of Government has set this as the number one goal for our area. Last night, we took the first step by approving a Quickstart agreement with a Minnesota based firm, costing about \$1200, to get a clear idea of the cost of constructing this infrastructure in our town. This is only the first small step in moving this forward for our village. We estimate that the course we are taking will take at least 9 months before we will be in a position to make decisions about its economic feasibility. It would then be presented to the town. Nothing will come to fruition until we are absolutely sure that it is self-funding and economically viable. It also would have to be approved by a town meeting.

Our town has done a lot of very good, thoughtful planning. We consider it is our job, as Selectmen, to start implementing these plans. The beautification of our town center was a vital first step. Now, we have to use that as a basis for revitalizing our town center in a meaningful way. This is the another one of the key components of making our village vital and sustainable for the future.

The median age of our town is tending higher. We have to find ways to attract young families that will keep our village vibrant. They will support Kellogg school, our Falls Village Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance Corps.

The building that Bunny Williams is renovating in the town center is really taking shape. Already, even before opening, is making the center of town a much more attractive place. Some cosmetic work is being done on the Center on Main that will improve its look. These are steps both big and small. Over time, these will lead us to a brighter future.

MAY 29, 2019

We apologize for the delay in posting. We have been going though domain reconfiguration.

Please note that due a conflict the P+Z meeting, the P+Z meeting that was scheduled 23rd has been changed to Wednesday, May 29th.

The Connecticut Legislature still hasn't finalized their budget for the year but most elements that pertain to local governments have been decided provisionally. One key element that remains in doubt is the transfer of pension costs for teachers partially to towns. While this bill didn't make it out of committee, it has been a real priority of Governor Lamont and was referred to another committee. So it still may become law. Again, we reiterate our position that this bill is just a transfer of tax to local communities and does nothing to solve the pension crisis. The state government has underfunded these liabilities for two generations and now seems to believe putting them back on our shoulders is good policy. It is not.

You may have noticed that we are doing some work on the Town Center. On May 24th, we will be planting native plants in some of the areas that were populated by the yellow roses. These native plants will take two years to completely fill in the spaces between them because buying small plugs is much more economical (one seventh the cost of mature plants) and the survival rate is much higher over time. Also, we are fixing the doors on the Center on Main. So if you see that there is a gaping hole in front of the Center, don't be alarmed. The doors need some repair work and a good coat of paint. This is being done through the work of volunteers, namely Bruce Marston and myself—with the gracious assistance of the public works crew.

Last week, I had a long talk with a group from Minneapolis, Minnesota concerning their work on creating software for the analysis of the viability of installing fiber optic networks in towns and regions. My personal belief is that having the ability to connect efficiently and economically to the internet is crucial to the economic development of the town. The goal is make our community a more attractive and desirable place to live, especially for the younger generation. However, we cannot move forward on a project of this magnitude without answering several critical questions. First, is it economically viable. Second, will the service we provide be cheap enough to actually save money for subscribers.

In order to start getting some answers, I am going to ask the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen to fund a study, costing about \$1200, to allow for the determination of the costs of providing this service to our town. This is just a first step in many that the town will have to take. If the numbers verify the information that we have, we will then have to see how many people in the town would like to move down this road: in other words, how many subscribers would we anticipate. In any case, the system would have to pay for itself or it is a non-starter. Preliminary information shows that this system may be a cost-saving for many in the town. Because of the capacity and speed of this service, it can handle VOIP communications, thus creating a viable alternative to hard lines. VOIP stands for 'voice over internet protocol'. We also think that the village may qualify for some grants which would greatly reduce the cost of the system. While the country as a whole may benefit from the installation of 5G, it is impractical in our area due to the topography of our village and the sparse density of our residents.

In other town news, we have learned this week that we may have to make some sizable investments in our town transfer station. The garbage compactor is on its last legs and is in danger of failure at any time. While it is still operating without issue, on inspection, we found that there is significant rust damage to the old system, especially to the ribs that protect the sides from collapse. New compactors are expensive, costing up to \$75,000. And there may be additional ancillary costs in the installation of the system. This is in the early stages and we have a lot of work to do to harden these numbers.

Last Saturday was a busy one in town. Along with the annual Trade Secrets tour, we had a very well attended D. M. Hunt library art exhibition, the plant sale at D.M. Hunt Library and an open house at Harper Blanchett's gallery on Main Street.

This upcoming Memorial Day, we will have our usual gathering on the Town Green. Special thanks to the crew, led by Betty Tyburski, with her minions of Kent Allyn, Terry and Kay Blass, Dick and Donna Heinz and myself, that placed flags on all the graves of veterans in the community cemeteries. There are 180 graves of veterans in our town in seven different locations. The program commences at 9:45 on Monday, May 27th with a parade and the ceremony begins at 10:00. We hope that you will come to honor our veterans on their very special day.

MAY 1, 2019

As usual, there has been a lot going on in the village in the past few weeks. Most importantly, we have completed all the budgets for the year and held our initial hearing last Friday night at Kellogg School. Our Town Meeting will be held at Kellogg School on May 23rd at 7PM to approve the budgets proposed by the Board of Finance. To recap, our Municipal Budget shows a reduction of \$7,868.08. While town expenses were up marginally by 2.33%, this was offset by a reduction in debt service interest and principal payments.

On the school budget, this was up substantially. The main cost increases were caused by additional staff members subscribing to our health insurance, an increase in labor costs due to contractual obligations and, most importantly, a large change in the percentage of the high school budget which is based on the percentage of the school population coming from Falls Village. Because we had our largest graduating group of eighth graders in 2018, this percentage jumped from a little over 7% to over 10%. The final proposed budget shows a total increase of \$371,641 for a total proposed budget of \$3,433,670. The increase in the proposed budget is made up of a \$92,655 increase in Kellogg expenditures and \$278,986 for Region One which combine to come to the total increase mentioned above.

There will be a Special Meeting of the Board of Finance to officially recommend final numbers for presentation to the Town Meeting for approval and it is tentatively scheduled for May 6, 2010 at Town Hall at 6:30 PM.

Other than the approval of the proposed budgets at Town Meeting, we will be asking for

approval of several other items which are:

1. An approval for transferring funds from the Lee H. Kellogg technology reserve account #1703228155 for \$30,522.91 for various items that need to be replaced every 3 to 5 years.
2. An approval for transferring funds from the Environmental Reserve account #51001426 in the amount of approximately \$8500 for the removal of an underground fuel oil storage tank at Lee H. Kellogg school.
3. An approval of the bank relationships we foresee for the calendar year 2019-2020. This has been done retroactively in the past and we will do this in advance this year.

Item number two above completes the removal of the last underground storage unit on town property.

During April, through the offices of the Northwest Hills Council of Government, we have met with Governor Lamont, representatives of our local area at the state level and with our U.S Congresswoman Jahanna Hayes. Each of these is discussed individually below.

The meeting with Governor Lamont centered on 5 local issues which the Northwest Hill Council of Governments felt were critical to the well-being of our area as follows:

1. Help Our Towns Control Local Tax Increases. The principal points here were that reducing state aid to towns is effectively just a tax shift from state taxation to local property tax holders. Specifically, proposals like SB (state bill) 431, "An Act Concerning Property Tax Reform" would have a devastating effect on local communities. Also, we again opposed any transfer of a portion of teacher's pensions to municipalities.
2. We support voluntary regionalism and emphasized that we, in our region, have already moved to do this when practically possible, noting several instances in this regard. We also asked that the cutbacks proposed for COG's throughout the state were in direct conflict with this and were counter-productive in accomplishing Governor Lamont's goal of greater regional cooperation.
3. That we were very supportive of Broadband Development in the Region and the State. Specifically, we wanted his support for SB 846 "An Act Concerning the Municipal Gain....". As many of you know, PURA, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority took this right away due to pressure from the current suppliers of internet despite the state law giving us this right. Installing a fiber optic network throughout the COG region is one of the most important initiatives in the Economic Development Plan endorsed by the Northwest Hills Council of Government.
4. Consideration of Additional Bond Fund Releases for Critical Ongoing Projects. I talked specifically on this point because the bond funding was reduced from \$300 million to zero for public housing projects. Because we desire to continue the work the Falls Village Housing Trust is doing to construct some first class housing units that would

attract younger people to our town, we consider this a critical part of our development efforts. Having affordable rental units in town as transitional housing for young people until they can save for a house purchase keeps our town growing. It provides for volunteers from this age group to hopefully staff up our fire and ambulance staff as well as provide increasing enrollment in our great school.

5. Help Protect Towns from Various Education Proposals. We expressed concerns regarding the accelerated reduction in Education Cost Sharing funding as well as asking for adjustments in the Minimum Budgeting Requirement to allow local governments greater flexibility. We again outlined our opposition to forced regionalization of our schools.

While I have little idea if these ideas fell on deaf ears or not, I do give the Governor credit for meeting with us as a group and listening to our concerns. I firmly believe that passing costs to local government from the state does nothing to curb costs and is just a way of transferring expenditures to a different taxing entity. We need meaningful cost reduction in the state, not gimmicks.

The local state representative meeting was specifically about point 4 above and they were very supportive of our position.

Finally, our meeting with Congresswoman Hayes was very helpful and productive.

All in all, these meetings are very important in ensuring that our concerns as local leaders are heard. Having them under the aegis of our COG gives us a chance to collectively advocate for our little corner of the world which, especially in Hartford, gets little attention.

Over the last few months, we have been working on a project to ensure that everyone in the town pays for the use of the transfer station. During the last few years, payments for transfer station stickers have fallen dramatically. As of last year, slightly over 40% of residents paid the fee. Consequently, we have decided to add this fee directly to the first property tax bill we pay every year. It will be delineated separately as a user fee. After the tax payment is made, you will be mailed your annual tag. Since seniors pay less, we have gone through the list carefully to ensure that the proper fees are being assessed. If yours happen to be in error, let us know so we can adjust it. Those who own rental units will have to buy one for each unit and issue the stickers to their tenants once they have paid their property tax bills. Charges for the transfer station will not increase from their current level. Please note that our fees are among the very lowest in the entire state. Also, we have gone to single streaming for our recyclables and want you to know how important recycling is to our community. It costs us \$83 a ton to dispose of our garbage and \$0 a ton to dispose of recyclables. We ask that you keep this in mind when sorting.

APRIL 3, 2019

This is a very busy time of year in town hall. Budget Season! The Budgets need to be prepared, a proposed spending plan presented to the Board of Finance for comment and adjustment. Finally, the Board of Finance adopts the adjusted budgets to a Town Meeting for approval by the voters present. The Board of Selectmen presented their proposed budget at the regular meeting of the BOF on March 11, 2019. It shows decreased expenditures for the 2019-20 fiscal year. On Monday, March 25, 2019, the Board of Education will present their proposed spending plan to the BOF at a special meeting.

The initial meeting of the Community Economic Development Committee is to be held this week in town hall. The concentration of this committee in the short run is to accomplish several things:

1. To establish a Farmer's Market in town, if possible. This is complicated to do.
2. To plan and implement a gardening plan to augment the charm and beauty of our village center.
3. To accentuate the Appalachian Trail and the Mohawk Trail.
4. To get two or three new commercial operations into the town

Over time, this group will probably morph into more of a Community Development team. What's the difference? While economic development is key to our town, it doesn't answer all the important issues a small town like ours faces. For one, let's focus on one key ingredient to community health that is going to be vital in the future.

During the last couple of months, we have attended many meetings at which experts in this field have discussed what is going to be the most crucial element in seeing that the town can attract young people, keep up with the rest of world and enable the utilization of emerging technologies like remote medicine, the internet of things, smart agriculture, etc., etc. In other words, the new world.

The critical infrastructure necessary to access this upcoming revolution in the way we do things is a fiber optic network that can connect all the homes and businesses in our small village in an economical way. I know what you're thinking---why do we have to do this when we've gotten along well without it for all these years. The answer in short is that the whole world is going in this direction whether we like it or not. Do we become one of the leaders in doing so or do we get into it at the tail end when everyone else has it?

And don't expect the state to do it. And don't expect the federal government to do it. Not now and not in the foreseeable future. If it is to be accomplished, it will have to be done locally. Our Council of Governments has put a lot of time, money and energy at looking at this problem and we realize that do this jointly as a whole group or as a consortium of several towns will probably lead to a better outcome than trying to go it alone.

In the future (by that I mean tomorrow), I personally believe that this will be as important as electricity, telephone or water to a community. In other words, it will be a necessity. It will be just another community utility. So we will have to do it in a way that allows everyone to have it, not just a few. Realistically, the future is now; this is happening so rapidly that we can't wait for it to come to us, we have to come to it.

Don't think that this will happen tomorrow. It won't. It will require a lot of study, work and preparation to put us at the point where we can even begin to consider our options of how to accomplish this. But it is something that we have to start investigating because it is the future. This village has not survived for almost three hundred years by just looking forward to the day after tomorrow. We survived the Revolutionary War, the Civil War and two World Wars by imagining what the future might hold. I truly believe we are at the tipping point of a whole new world and we must prepare ourselves to join it.

FEBRUARY 22, 2019

This is a busy time of year for all towns and cities across the state as we are preparing budgets for the upcoming year. While it sounds simple, it isn't. Given the fluctuations and vagaries of the state government funding, we often do this with a great deal of uncertainty. This year is no different. We are notified by one state agency that our education funding will be even with next year while the governor, in his proposed budget, cites a lower number. There is seemingly agreement between the Governor and the Legislature on Town Road Aid, which is one of the highest allotments promised by the state to towns and cities.

One idea proposed by Malloy originally is that the towns and cities contribute to the deficit in the pension funds for educators and Ned Lamont has also proposed that we pay 25% of the shortfall on an annual basis. In my view, this is just one way to transfer the costs of gross mismanagement of these funds by the state to individual property owners since the only way we have to offset these costs is to raise property taxes. Given that there was a firm promise made in the campaign to lower the property tax burden on homeowners, I find this particularly upsetting. Legislative action can prevent this.

Finally, there is a move afoot to have a uniform car tax, collected by municipalities but paid to the state. Again, that would put an additional burden on homeowners. Supposedly, the money collected would be transferred back to the towns in the form of grants but we have a history of how that goes. And for towns it goes badly.

We all know that the state needs to put its fiscal house in order. However, I personally believe that doing so on the backs of property owners is regretful and unfair.

Let's go on to happier things, like our village. To begin, we have created an Economic Development Committee whose principal starting purpose is to create businesses in the town center. Bunny Williams has undertaken the start of this by completely renovating the old car garage/town market building. However, to make this community prosper, we cannot rely on one new business to do it. We need several well-functioning businesses to draw people to our

town center. We have also hired a Director of Economic Development for Falls Village, who will be paid out of the previously budgeted Economic Development line in our town budget. Most of this budget expenditure this year was spent on our new website which is a distinct improvement on our old one. Also, the design gives us the ability to continue to improve and change the website over time to keep the content fresh and entertaining.

The Recreation Commission is looking to hire a new Director. This has been vacant for almost a year. You can get a description of the duties and responsibilities outlined for the job by contacting Town Hall or the Recreation Commission directly. This is an important role in the town and we hope to get some good response to our job listing.

At the last Town Meeting, we approved the repeal of the ordinance that established a Water Commission, effectively therefore bringing the waterworks under direct control of the Board of Selectmen. With the able assistance of Pat Mechare, who was the Chairman of that commission, we have put together a formal charge of the duties of the Waterworks Committee and believe that this will be a seamless change. This was approved at our last Board of Selectmen meeting.

On Sunday June 23, 2019, Falls Village will host a Discover Connecticut Bicycle Tour. Details concerning the event will be distributed at a later date but it has several different routes for novice, intermediate and advanced riders (or walkers). We anticipate a few hundred riders will participate including one of our own Selectmen, Greg Marlowe.

MIRA has informed us that their increase in fees will not be as steep as they had planned. They will increase our fees for the last quarter of the year by \$9.65 per ton and an additional \$1.35 per ton for next year, for a total increase amounting to \$11 per ton for fiscal year 2019-20. While no one wants to see an increase, this is a lot better result for our town.

Over the next couple of months, we are going to be collecting e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers that can be used for several purposes, such as noting when new blog posts are made (least important probably), for uses in emergency notifications (most important) and for those who want to be notified of certain meetings. As we move to a world dominated by the internet and the cell phone, we want to be able to better communicate with our residents.

JANUARY 29, 2019

As we approach budget time and start to look forward to the 2019-20 year, there are some difficulties that we can foresee. The first results from the breakdown in the MIRA plant which receives both our recycling and our garbage. MIRA has two separate furnaces for combusting our waste. One of these was shut down for routine maintenance and replacement of some critical components. During this scheduled shutdown, the other furnace had a catastrophic failure. The result of this is that an alternate disposal site had to be found to handle the waste of the towns who are participants in the MIRA operation. The cost of this including trucking and dumping charges leads in excess costs of over \$100 per ton.

While MIRA has held some money in reserve to handle issues like these, those funds have long been exhausted during the long period between the failure and the restoration of full operations. MIRA hopes to be back to full operation sometime in mid-February. As a consequence, MIRA has warned us of a sizable increase next year in tipping fees of 57%. This year, we are paying \$72 per ton. Next year, they anticipate increasing this to \$113 per ton. Given the fact that we generate about 450 tons per year of garbage, this will amount to an increase of our expense by approximately \$18,000. We hope this is one year problem in that reserves and cost recovery will be done in one year but we do not know that now.

Coupled with this is a push by the state, independent of the MIRA problem, to get towns to increase their recycling to 40% of their current levels. We are well below that figure today. It is important for all of us to take recycling seriously and to start to consider new initiatives to reduce our waste as a town and as a society. Tracey Wilson is posting the statistics each quarter at the Transfer Station that detail the activity in tonnages.

Under the direction of Tracey, we will be looking at some innovative ways to reduce waste in our community over time and reach our goal of recycling 40% of our municipal waste.

Another issue is that our costs for Region One will increase dramatically in 2019-20 due to FV's enrollment percentage in the high school. Because we had one of our largest recent classes graduate from 8th grade a year ago, we anticipate an additional cost of about \$240,000 in our budget for Region One expenses. There is always a one-year lag in calculating enrollment percentages.

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JANUARY 16, 2019

Last Thursday, the Town Meeting approved all the motions made, a bear feeding ordinance, a rescission of the ordinance establishing a water commission, the town annual report, the audit, a server replacement and a small change in an account that was no longer used. We had a substantial crowd attend for which we are very grateful. A Town Meeting is democracy in the purest sense of the word.

We are undertaking a couple of initiatives in the town. We are trying to create a Farmer's Market on the town green on Sundays during the crop season. While we have several tentative participants, we are always looking for more. While these have had varying degrees of success in the area, this is way to support agriculture in our community and in our area as a whole. We will keep you informed of our progress.

With the assistance of many people in the town, we are examining means of contacting residents through e-mail, text messaging and potential phone calls to be used in times of emergency or for purposes of reminding people that a new blog post has been made, of meetings that they may have a special interest in attending, etc. Again, this too is in its infancy and we have a distance to go before we start this process formally.

One final note that we believe will good news for the village is that I have been told by the owners of the Citgo station that they will be installing new gas tanks in the early

spring. Personally, I look forward to having the opportunity to buy gas in our town and hope that residents will support the station once it is up and running again.

JANUARY 8, 2019

This week is an important one for Connecticut. Tomorrow, our new Governor is being sworn in and I am going to the inauguration but skipping the ball. Let's all wish that Ned Lamont and the legislature can jointly find ways to return our state to financial stability for the long-term without reducing funds allocated to local entities. When the monies we receive from the state for education, roads, Pilot, etc., etc. are reduced, it results in the necessity to raise property taxes. Thus, it is only a tax transfer from the state to local government.

So let us wish all of our representatives in the executive and legislative the best for coming to common sense solutions to our long term problems. We as citizens of this great state should do all that we can to support these efforts.

On a local level, we are having a Town Meeting on Thursday night at 7 PM in Town Hall. The principal issues to be discussed are approving the annual audit and town report for the year 2017-2018, approving the banks with which we hold funds, approving some minor account changes to simplify our accounting, approving a transfer from the technology fund for a new server and an attached Network Attached Storage device, (these need to be done every 5 years and the time is up), approving a bear feeding ordinance and approving a rescission of the ordinance establishing an independent water commission that was enacted in 1951. This would bring the water works under direct town control since we are guarantors of their loan for the water tanks as well as being financially and legally liable ultimately for any problems that might arise. The Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen both support this agenda item. No operational changes are anticipated except that there would have to be advance approval by the Board of Selectmen of any capital expenditures before they are undertaken.

Several people have come to me with the idea of having a Farmer's Market in town. This will be discussed at the Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday, January 14, 2019 after the conclusion of the Board of Finance meeting. These would be held on Sundays on the Town Green during the crop season, thus starting in late spring, going on through the summer and concluding in the fall. Anyone who would like to be a seller should contact me at Town Hall or Daly Reville at home. She has volunteered to be the Keeper of the List. I, for one, am in support of any activity that draws people into our town.