

## MESSAGE FROM MONICA

August 18, 2022

Dear Darienites,

While you were enjoying a wonderful summer, the Board of Education has been busy preparing for the start of a new school year on August 29<sup>th</sup>. Along with the BOE administration and staff, members of the school building committees have continued their work over the summer. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the Ox Ridge Elementary School Building Committee. The committee held its first meeting on February 4, 2019, and has worked for almost four years to bring this new school to fruition. As a result of their hard work, Ox Ridge Elementary School will welcome students back into their newly completed academic building. On behalf of the Board of Selectman and the community, I extend our sincere gratitude for all the hard work and dedication of the Ox Ridge Building Committee.



With the return to school, it is important that everyone pay attention to the increased number of pedestrians, bicycles and cars on our roads and sidewalks. Thank you to our crossing guards who have the important job of helping our students and families navigate the intersections and crosswalks around our schools.

As we move into the fall, and deeper into hurricane season, the Town will continue to monitor stormwater management systems and keep residents informed about the work being done to ensure our systems are functioning at top performance. Please continue to keep in contact with me with your thoughts, questions, and concerns.

Sincerely,  
Monica McNally

## DATES & INFORMATION

### CODE RED NOTIFICATIONS

If you are not already registered with the CODE RED notification system, you can do so [here](#). CODE RED is the system used by the local emergency management response team to notify the public of emergency situations or critical community alerts.

### DARIEN FARMERS MARKET

The Darien Farmers Market, at Goodwives Shopping Center, is open every Wednesday from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm through November 23<sup>rd</sup>. It is a wonderful mid-week stop for fresh fruits, vegetables, plants, baked goods, and farm-raised meats. If you would like to know about what seasonal fruits and vegetables are available, click [here](#) for the CT Department of Agriculture crop guide.

### BOARD OF SELECTMEN

8.22.22 7:00 PM

### RTM PUBLIC WORKS

8.30.22 7:30 PM

### DARIEN POLICE COMMISSION

9.1.22 4:00 PM

The complete meeting schedule of all Boards and Commissions is available [here](#).

## RESIDENT REMINDERS NEWS & TIPS

### PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAM REGISTRATION

The Parks and Recreation Department Fall/Winter program registration begins on Wednesday, August 24<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am for residents, and Wednesday, August 31<sup>st</sup> at 8:30 am for non-residents. Please visit the Parks & Rec [page](#) on the Town



### **DROUGHT INFORMATION**

The combination of little rain and extended periods of above-normal temperatures have impacted water supply. Please refer to the Connecticut State Water Planning Council [page](#) to stay current on drought conditions and to learn more about water conservation.

Currently, residents are being asked to take steps to reduce their water usage. Here are a few voluntary measures to aid in minimizing future drought impact:

- Reduce automatic outdoor irrigation
- Postpone the planting of any new lawns or vegetation
- Minimize overall water use by fixing leaky plumbing and fixtures

## **GOVERNMENT 101**

### **ABSENTEE BALLOTS**

Absentee ballot applications for the November 8<sup>th</sup> midterm election are available on the Town website [here](#), or can be picked up in the Town Clerk's Office, Room 101, at Town Hall. If you complete the absentee ballot application now, a ballot will be mailed to you on October 7<sup>th</sup>. If you know someone leaving for college, or leaving the area before the November 8<sup>th</sup> midterm election, please encourage them to fill out the ballot. This election will decide several important local, state and federal offices.

### **CONNECTICUT HOUSING FINANCE AUTHORITY HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Connecticut has been awarded approximately \$123 million to establish MyHomeCT, a program funded by the Homeowner Assistance Fund. The goal of MyHomeCT is to cure mortgage delinquencies and defaults, and prevent foreclosures among eligible homeowners that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program also includes assistance for qualified non-mortgage expenses including, but not limited to, non-escrowed real estate taxes and insurance as well as condominium or homeowners' association fees.

Complete information about this program and eligibility can be found on the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority [page](#). Questions regarding this program should be directed to CHFA.

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

The Representative Town Meeting (RTM), Darien's legislative body has some vacant seats. To join the RTM, read more about the application process, and access the nominating petition, click [here](#). Completed forms should be returned to the Town Clerk's office between Aug 16<sup>th</sup> and Sept 13<sup>th</sup>, in order for your name to appear on the November ballot. Please call the Town Clerk's office directly with any questions: 203 656-7307.

## **INTERESTING INFORMATION**

This summer, Darien's TV79 was lucky to have Tyler Stimpson, a student at Hobart & William Smith Colleges and a DHS grad, join the staff as an intern. He was given special assignments, including the filming of the Sidewalk Sales, and creating a series of promos highlighting outdoor life in town, specifically our two beaches. He designed spots that showcased each beach's unique offerings. Click [here](#) to watch a wonderful video showing Weed Beach, which includes-music and a color filter that makes it look like an old 60's 8 mm reel.

## **WATER MANAGEMENT**

The Public Works and Planning and Zoning departments work closely together to ensure that all new construction projects in Town, both residential and commercial, have the proper water retention and drainage systems to manage stormwater and prevent flooding. These systems can include “cultec systems ” which are underground chambers that store and collect storm water until the underground soil is able to accept it into the ground, underground pipes systems to move water to different locations, ponds, and landscaped rain gardens. These various systems help to properly collect and divert water. Here are several pieces of information for residents about managing stormwater and preventing flooding on their property, and surrounding properties:

- Residents can check if their property is in a designated flood zone on the [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov) website.
- Refer to the Town website [here](#) to see if your property has designated wetlands.
- Work with licensed engineers to design the proper system for your property prior to submitting plans for approval. All submitted plans are reviewed by Town engineers for accuracy and effectiveness.
- Inspect and maintain all water and drainage systems including sump pumps and gutters annually. A poorly functioning gutter can contribute to flooding on your own property and surrounding properties.
- Residents unsure about existing drainage systems on their property can contact the Planning and Zoning Department to review historical information on record about their property.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### **EMPLOYEE: MINDY CHAMBRELLI, RS Sanitarian, Department of Health**

*In Mindy's words...*

I have been working in the Darien Health Department as a Registered Sanitarian since 2013. I graduated from Southern Connecticut State University with a degree in public health and a minor in biology. While I thought I would practice medicine, I became intrigued by public health, which is the science of protecting and improving population health. In May of 2023 I will complete my master's degree with the University of New England.

My professional background includes working in public health emergency preparedness directly after the events of 911 and environmental health. In 2020 I received the CT Sanitarian of the Year award. The target is always moving in local public health, which is exciting and challenging. It is impossible to remain stagnant in this field when we shift from a variety of mandated responsibilities to covid, cyanobacteria concerns, beach water testing, vector diseases surveillance, and the new declared public health emergency - monkeypox.

As a state and nationally licensed sanitarian, I conduct complex engineered septic plan reviews, oversee lead remediation projects, public pools, daycares, cosmetology establishments, drinking and recreational water quality, and conduct restaurant inspections. The protective role/service we provide in the community often goes unnoticed, but residents seem to be most curious about our restaurant inspection program.

The frequency of restaurant inspections is a mandate by the state health department. Restaurants are classified according to illness risk factors and inspected based on this. Some of the major risk factors for foodborne illness include employee wellness, handwashing practices, temperature violations, sanitation, and cross-contamination. During a routine unannounced health inspection, all these risk factors are evaluated and documented. A corresponding rating (A, B or C) is used based on the results of the food inspection form. Anyone interested in viewing a recent inspection can visit our health department website or by scanning the QR code on a posted rating sheet found at a permitted establishment.



The Darien Beautification Commission consists of 9 members each appointed for 3-year terms by the Board of Selectmen. The stated purpose of the Commission is to improve the “overall physical appearance of the town” and we strive to achieve this in a way that simultaneously focuses on the environment. All of our projects are undertaken without pesticides or other synthetic chemicals to create safe and healthy habitats for pollinators and people alike, with natural healthy soils and no risk to our water sources.

Commission projects include:

- This year, plantings were added in the raised cement beds around Town Hall to include non-native hydrangeas for consistent color and tidiness, in addition to the native rhododendron. The Public Works department replaced the broken irrigation system, provided all the mulch, and continues to monitor the watering.
- In 2019 “Habitat Hill” (the slope between the Town Hall and the Mather Center) was replanted with hundreds of native plants, all installed in collaboration with our Public Works (PW) department which did the hard work of preparing the site and extending the irrigation system. The new plantings created a home for a diverse selection of pollinators that are in drastic decline. The 4 birdhouses at the top of the slope were crafted in the Senior Men’s Woodworking Shop and installed by PW.
- The next major project is the berm at the Darien Railroad Station. The entire area will be redone through a combination of removing invasive plants and adding native plants in all cleared patches.
- We have a newly formed partnership with the Commuter Action Group (CAG) who generously donated funds to help us restore and plant 2 gardens at the Noroton Heights Rail Road Station. This project is challenging because the beds are infested with invasive plants and other weeds, and because of the lack of irrigation and hot weather. Some new plants have been added and we now aim to finish planting when the weather cools. We remain excited about this project and are thankful to Jim Cameron, who founded and heads the CAG, for the encouragement and publicity he gives us.

The Commission is able to do this work, as well as purchase the more than 200 hanging baskets around town, thanks to a generous operating budget. If you would like to learn more about the Commission, please contact us at [DarienBC@darienct.gov](mailto:DarienBC@darienct.gov). We would love to hear from you if you are interested in participating in what we do, creating a habitat in your own yard, or if you have ideas or questions for us.

## HUMAN SERVICES

### **SENIORS FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM**

Darien seniors may now be eligible to receive discount vouchers for locally grown fruits and vegetables through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Vouchers can be redeemed at any local Farmers Market and are valid through November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Darien Human Services is a designated Local Coordinating Agency for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) which provides vouchers for locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey to eligible low-income seniors. Seniors, 60 years of age or older, must be Darien residents and have a maximum household income of no more than 185% of the federal poverty level (\$2,096/month for a single person and \$2,823 for a couple). Proof of income is required. Please contact Darien Human Services at (203) 656-7328 Monday through Thursday 8:00 am - 5:15 pm to schedule an appointment to receive a voucher.

### **BACK-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAM**

The Darien Human Services department is welcoming donations of gift cards for their Back-to-School Program. Gift card distribution for eligible families began on August 8<sup>th</sup> and continues through August 25<sup>th</sup> (Monday through Thursday between 8:00 am and

5:15 pm). To learn details and program requirements refer to the Human Services [page](#) on the Town website.

### 9-8-8

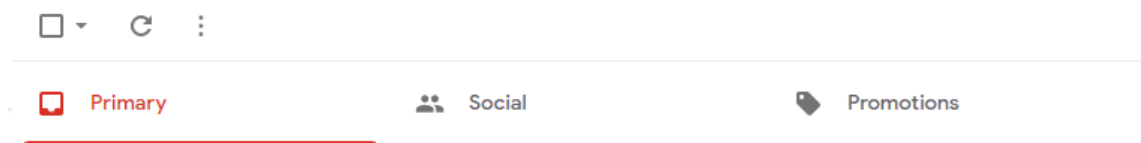
This three-digit number, formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, is a 24/7 call, text, and chat line which will connect you to trained crisis counselors should you or someone you know be experiencing suicidal thoughts, mental health concerns, substance use, or other emotional crises. 9-8-8 has been built off of the existing lifeline (1-800-273-8255). Both numbers will be able to connect you to the exact same services and will remain in effect.



## EMAIL NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

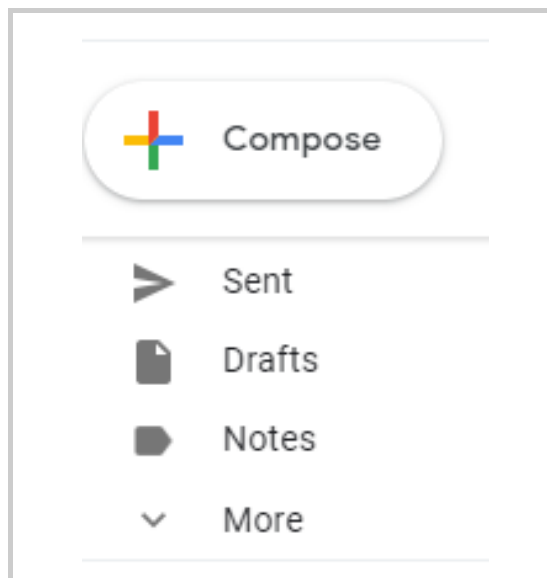
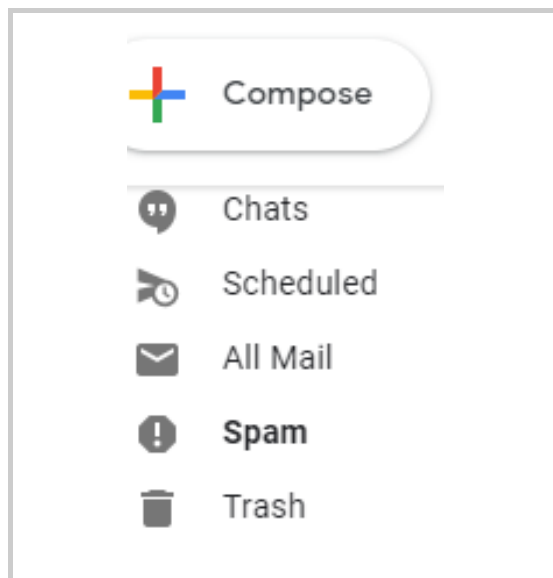
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\*Note: The SPAM folder is located under the INBOX folders on the left side of your screen. If you do not see it listed, scroll down until you see MORE and click the arrow to show more inboxes. SPAM should be located just above TRASH.



In addition to receiving the newsletter via email, it can also be found under the “Government” tab, through the Newsletter link on the [darienct.gov](http://darienct.gov) website. If you have any additional questions please email [newsletter@darienct.gov](mailto:newsletter@darienct.gov).

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