



TOWN OF DARIEN NEWSLETTER

March 17, 2023 - Issue 27

MESSAGE FROM MONICA MCNALLY

March 17, 2023

Dear Darienites,

The Great Island process started just about a year ago when I visited with Ned Steinkraus, whose family owns Great Island. The excitement about the possibility of owning this extraordinary piece of coastal property has continued since this first meeting, evidenced by the comments from many residents who spoke at the public hearing last year. We are grateful to the Steinkraus family for giving us the opportunity to bid on the property that has so much meaning for them.



Great Island will be a defining piece of land within Town that will be enjoyed by all. The exquisite views and landscapes are unlike anything else in Darien. Owning this land will increase our quality of life and our property values.

The Board of Finance will fund the acquisition of Great Island through the issuance of long-term tax-exempt bonds that will be paid over a period of 30 years, similar to our school debt which is usually issued for 20 years. The long-term payment schedule does not place undue pressure on education or public services. Our careful fiscal stewardship has earned Darien a 'Aaa' rating from Moody's Investors Service, which is the highest rating a municipality can receive, providing us access to attractive long-term borrowing costs.

Our first order of business is to complete the purchase in May. After closing, we will perform some physical work on the site to accommodate users, including widening roads, creating parking areas, and addressing some safety, access, and environmental issues. The reduced purchase price, to \$85 million from \$103 million, leaves us some room to make these required improvements and to address other issues.

My office will be meeting with Town departments prior to the closing to prioritize this work, in preparation for welcoming you to enjoy the property. I look forward to working closely with members of the community as we envision the future of Great Island together.

This past Wednesday, March 15th, the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) rejected a proposed \$36 million rate hike by Aquarion Water Company in favor of a decrease in rates of approximately \$2 million a year. The proposed increase would have raised rates by approximately 30% over a three-year period. With the new decrease, the average Aquarion customer will instead see a savings of \$67 a year.

In October of last year, I submitted testimony to PURA on behalf of Darien residents stating that the proposed spike in rates, combined with the overall increase in the current cost of living due to record-high inflation, would have a negative impact on all of our homeowners, businesses and the municipal operations of our town itself. I am pleased to share this positive news with residents.

Happy St. Patrick's Day to all of our Irish, Irish American, and Irish only on St. Patrick's Day residents. And, like you, I am looking forward to the first day of spring on Monday, March, 22nd.

Please continue to contact me with your thoughts, questions, and concerns.

Sincerely,
Monica McNally

DATES & INFORMATION

BOARD OF FINANCE & BOARD OF EDUCATION

3.18.23 8:30 AM
School Tours

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

3.20.23 7:00 PM

RTM

3.20.23 8:00 PM

BOARD OF FINANCE

3.21.23 7:30 PM

BOARD OF FINANCE

3.28.23 7:30 PM

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

3.28.23 7:30 PM

BOARD OF FINANCE

3.30.23 7:30 PM

The complete meeting schedule of all Boards and Commissions is available [here](#). Most meetings can be viewed on [DarienTV79.com](#).

For additional events and programs happening within Darien, click [here](#) to view the Darien Community Calendar available through the Darien Chamber of Commerce.

BUDGET UPDATE

On March 14th, the Board of Finance held its annual Public Hearing to receive comments on the proposed Board of Selectmen and Board of Education Budgets. Over the next few weeks the Board of Finance will hold 3 budget work sessions to review the proposed budgets and are expected to vote on April 6th.

WELCOME SPRING MARCH 22



FOLLOW THE TOWN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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@TownofDarienCT



RESIDENT REMINDERS, NEWS, & TIPS



Free Bulk Pick Up

The Darien Department of Public Works is continuing its bulk pickup program again this spring. Pickup is by appointment on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from April 4, 2023, through June 14, 2023. Each residence is permitted one pickup per calendar year.

Items are limited to those too large for transport by a passenger car or SUV. Items must be placed at the curb by 7:00 AM on the day of the scheduled pickup. Pickups will not be made at addresses on private streets unless the property has road frontage on a public street, and the material is placed along the public road frontage.

The following items will not be accepted:

- Hazardous waste

- Sealed containers or barrels
- Liquid waste and paint (paint disposal at transfer station)
- Propane tanks, fire extinguishers, or other pressure vessels
- Pathological or medical waste
- Logs, stumps, leaves, grass clippings, and brush
- Batteries
- Drywall (gypsum board, sheetrock, or wall board)
- Wood items must be less than 4 feet long and 6 inches in diameter

Refrigerators, dehumidifiers, and air conditioners require a refrigerant sticker, which must be purchased in advance for a fee of \$15.00. Stickers can be purchased at the Department of Public Works office, Room 208, at Town Hall, or at the Scale House at the Transfer Station, 126 Ledge Road. If purchasing the refrigerant sticker at the Scale House, please bring exact change. It is important that refrigerator doors are removed for safety. Pre-purchased stickers must be affixed to each item.

Residents are urged to utilize the Town's website and QAlert system to schedule pickup appointments. Go to www.darienct.gov, click on Citizen Service Requests on the home page, follow the prompts and fill in the blanks.

Detailed instructions are:

1. Enter town website (www.darienct.gov) and click on citizen service requests icon
2. Enter your address where prompted
3. Click "Next"
4. In type of issue, select "Bulk Pickup Appointment"
5. Select date of requested pickup under "Bulk Pickup Date Request"
6. In comments section you may write anything that you would like to convey to the DPW regarding your pickup
7. Click "Next"
8. Fill in your first and last name and email address and phone number
9. Click on "Create Request"

If you are unable to enter your information, you may need to use "Google Chrome".

If you are using an Internet Explorer browser, please enter your address along with your comments (Step 6 above).

Appointments will be confirmed in advance. Contact the Department of Public Works at 203.656.7346 with questions, scheduling assistance, or if you do not have email/internet access to schedule online and the office staff will be happy to assist you.

Sewer Bill

The second installment of sewer bill payments are due April 1st. Orange payment reminder cards were mailed out on March 13th to residents who have a balance due. Payments can be made [online](#), through the mail, or in the Tax Collector's office, Room 104, at Town Hall. Please call the Department of Public Works with billing questions.

Road Paving Schedule

Paving is scheduled to begin on Monday, April 10th. Paving on Hollow Tree Ridge Road, between West Avenue and Middlesex Road, will take place during school recess. Milling of the current pavement on Hollow Tree Ridge Road will occur on April 10th and 11th, with paving scheduled to begin on April 12th. The complete Town paving schedule is available under [News](#) on the Town of Darien website. Minor traffic delays will occur during paving, so please plan accordingly. You may call the Department of Public Works at 203.656.7346 with questions or for further information.

Weed Beach Dog Policy

The Weed Beach Park Dog Program will end on March 31st. The program runs from November 1st - March 31st only. Dogs are not permitted in Weed Beach Park from April 1st - October 31st.

The full dog policy governing all parks can be viewed via the Town Clerk [page](#) of the Town

of Darien website.

Street Cleaning

In the early spring and summer, the Department of Public Works sweeps all public streets to pick up sand and debris in the roadside gutters before it makes its way into the roadside catch basins. During the winter months, a large amount of material is left in the gutters of our roads. Cleaning the roads and gutters allows water to flow more easily to the catch basins helping to prevent future blockages and flooding on our roadways. Catch basins are also cleaned after the streets are swept.

Spring Surprise for Seniors

The Youth Commission is again partnering with the Mather Senior Center for a fun spring activity: "Spring Surprise for Seniors." Middle and high school students will decorate 6" terra cotta pots to be given to the seniors during their special spring luncheon on Wednesday, April 12th. Registration is required and will begin Monday, March 20th via this [link](#) to the Youth Commission website. Pots will be available for pick up in the Youth Commission office, Room 110, in Town Hall, starting Wednesday, March 29th. Completed pots must be returned no later than Monday, April 10th.



Creativity is the name of the game with this activity. If students wish, pots may be filled with some fun spring treats to add to the surprise- a list of suggested items will be provided. Pots do not have to be "planted" unless that's the student's desire. The Youth Commission and the Senior Center are pleased to continue their partnership with another activity that will deliver joy to so many.

COMMUNITY NEWS



Restoration of the Cherry Lawn Gazebo

The Dordelman family wanted to support a project in town to honor their father who passed in 2020. The family contacted Pam Gery, Director of Parks and Recreation, about their desire to honor their father with a permanent gift. After being told that the gazebo in Cherry Lawn Park needed work and may have to be knocked down and rebuilt, the family offered to donate \$20,000 towards the renovation of the gazebo instead.

The four Dordelman children grew up in Darien, and while they all currently live in different parts of the world, their mother still lives here. As children, they spent many days at Cherry Lawn Park with their dad, who taught them and their friends how to ice skate on the pond. It was for this reason the gazebo restoration project appealed to them.

Thanks to the Dordelman Family and their generous donation, the roof of the gazebo was replaced in early December 2022 with capital improvement funding and the restoration of the body of the gazebo (handicap ramp, railings, and various floorboards) has recently begun. When completed, the gazebo will have a plaque that reads:

Lovingly restored
by the Dordelman family
in thanksgiving for the life of
William Forsyth Dordelman
1940-2020

We are grateful to the Dordelman's for their kindness and generosity.

Food Drive Saturday, April 1

The Darien Youth Commission is hosting a "drive through" food drive for Person to Person

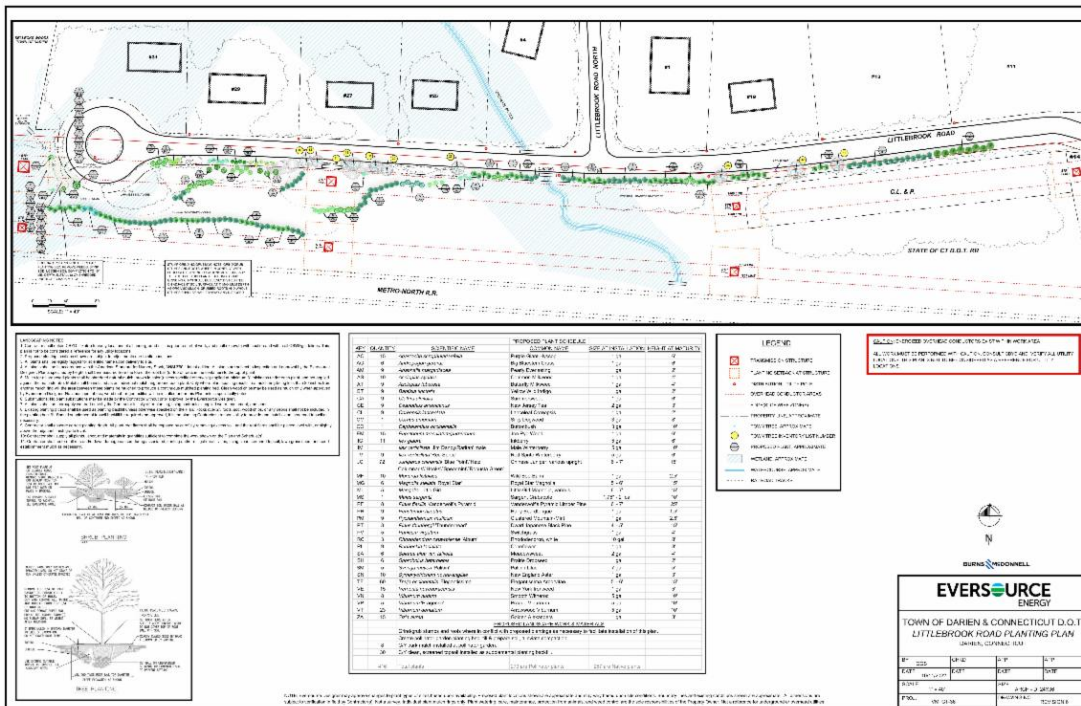
on Saturday, April 1st, at the Kings parking lot by the Darien Train Station, across from Tilly Pond Park. Donations will be collected between 9:00 AM and 12:00 PM. Items that best serve our community include: hearty soups, cereal, oatmeal, pancake mix, peanut butter, jelly, canned fruits and vegetables, dried and canned beans, fresh produce, pasta, sauce, protein/granola bars, shelf-stable milk, and, baby food.

Eversource Planting Plan

The results of the Eversource clear-cutting along the rail line Darien and throughout Fairfield County, are devastating to see. Over the past two years, the Town has spent hundreds of man-hours and tens of thousands of dollars on mediation with PURA and Eversource to fight for the preservation of trees on Little Brook Road. This is the only property for which the Town was afforded an opportunity to fight for the preservation of trees, because the Town owns a right-of-way there. The Town owns none of the land that experienced the rest of the clear-cutting, and therefore has no jurisdiction over the process.

The Town was able to negotiate a replanting plan in the Littlebrook area. The planting plan may be viewed by clicking [here](#). A large version of the plan is available for review in the Selectmen's office in Town Hall. Per the agreement, Eversource must: complete the replanting no later than July 1, 2023, maintain the plantings for 18 months, and replace plants that don't thrive. The entire agreement with Eversource, including the replanting plan, is posted to the homepage of the Town website.

The Town will continue to meet with Eversource, Metro North, and DOT representatives to mitigate unsightly and unsafe conditions along the tracks in our community. Residents will be kept informed of any future developments.



IMPORTANT BILLS



Vegetation

SB122 is a bill presently before the Environment Committee of the State's General Assembly; "AN ACT CONCERNING THE REPLANTING OF TREES IN PUBLIC AREAS"

CLEARED BY UTILITY COMPANIES.” To view the full bill you may click [here](#). The purpose of this bill is “to require utility companies to create and administer a fund that distributes money to municipalities for tree planting projects in public areas.” Many towns in Connecticut are being directly, and negatively, impacted by Eversource’s clearing of vegetation to maintain power lines. This bill is targeted at restoration.

HB6744 is a bill in the Transportation Committee that also deals with vegetation management. The point of the bill is “to require the Department of Transportation to develop guidelines governing tree removal and vegetation management, to obtain approval from a certified arborist prior to any tree removal and to provide certain notices and disclosures regarding tree removal and vegetation management.” This bill is targeted at prevention.

Housing and Development

HB6890 is “AN ACT CONCERNING QUALIFYING TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES.” This has been an important discussion in many communities, especially in Fairfield County, where housing density is tight and property values are already higher than other areas. In part, this proposal would restrict or eliminate the ability of local officials to regulate housing density in their communities, within proximity of a single transit station, by creating “as of right” housing based on various data interpreted by officials in Hartford. For example, as a “Qualifying Rapid Transit Community,” Darien would be required to have a minimum net density of 20 homes per acre within a “reasonably sized area” of one of our stations. There was a public meeting in Harford on Wednesday March 15th, where many local residents plus State officials submitted both oral and written testimony.

Residents are strongly urged to follow all of these bills and to share your thoughts and concerns.

Sign up here to receive the
newsletter



Town of Darien | 2 Renshaw Road, Darien, CT 06820

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