



TOWN OF DARIEN NEWSLETTER

January 6, 2023 - Issue 22

MESSAGE FROM MONICA MCNALLY

Dear Darienites,

2023 is on track to be a busy year for the Town. Work has already begun on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget, with Department Heads submitting their proposed budgets to Finance Director Jennifer Charneski in December, and review meetings with Department Heads currently underway. As introduced in our last newsletter, we will be sharing budget updates in every issue until the final budget vote in May. FY23-24 budget information will be posted under "News" on the homepage of the Town website and I encourage residents to participate and stay informed.

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

Sincerely,
Monica McNally



DATES & INFORMATION

UPCOMING MEETINGS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
1.9.23 7:00 PM

MONUMENTS & CEREMONIES COMMISSION
1.10.23 3:30 PM

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
1.10.23 7:30 PM

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABILITY
1.11.23 12:00 PM

BLIGHT REVIEW BOARD
1.11.23 5:30 PM

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1.11.23 5:30 PM

HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
1.12.23 8:30 AM

OPERATIONS PLANNING COMMITTEE
1.12.23 8:30 AM

TOWN HALL CLOSED
1.16.23

Thank You!

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Thank you for all of the generous gifts and donations throughout the holidays! They were all greatly appreciated.



WREATH RETIREMENT AT SPRING GROVE VETERANS' CEMETERY

Martin Luther King Day

COMMISSION ON AGING

1.18.23 9:00 AM

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

1.18.23 7:30 PM

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

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

The Darien chapter of Wreaths Across America is asking for volunteers to help with removing wreaths from veterans' graves at Spring Grove Veterans' Cemetery at 9:00 AM, on Saturday, January 21st. Anyone interested in assisting in the wreath retirement, or next year's event, can contact the local site coordinator, Capt. JC Carter (U.S.Navy retired) at wreaths06820@gmail.com.

Wreaths Across America is a non-profit organization that strives to "REMEMBER the fallenHONOR those who serve....TEACH our children the value of FREEDOM."

REMINDERS NEWS & TIPS

TRAIN STATION PARKING RENEWALS

Renewals for the Noroton Heights and Leroy West train station parking lot waitlists were mailed out and are due back by February 1, 2023. You may renew online at [Darien Parking Authority \(nsolutions.com\)](http://Darien Parking Authority (nsolutions.com)), in person at Town Hall, or by mail. If no response is received by February 1, 2023, your name will be removed from the waitlist.

TAX BILL REMINDER

The 2nd installment of real estate and personal property taxes came due January 1, 2023. The original bills were mailed on June 28, 2022. In addition, motor vehicle taxes for ownership and registration in Darien between the dates of October 2, 2021, and July 31, 2022, came due January 1, 2023. These tax bills were mailed on December 28, 2022. All tax bills are available through the following link <https://gemsnt.com/darien-webtax>

FAQ:

1. The tax bill has a due date of January 1st, but I just received the bill. What is the last day for payment without a penalty?

Taxpayers have the full month of January to pay without penalty.

2. What is the current mill rate?

The mill rate is 17.23

3. To whom do I make the check payable?

Darien Tax Collector

4. What are my payment options?

In-person:

Town Hall, Room 104 Monday - Thursday 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM (Town Hall will be closed on Monday, January 16th for the MLK Holiday)

By Mail:

Darien Tax Collector PO Box 1252 Darien, CT 06820

Online:

www.darienct.gov

Go To: "How Do I?"

"Pay Taxes & Sewer Bills Online"

Follow the prompts

A service fee is charged - \$1.5 electronic check, 2.5% credit card, \$3.50 debit card

5. What do I do if I never received the tax bill?

*Failure to receive a tax bill does not invalidate the tax or penalties thereon.
Reminder tax bills are available online through the link provided above.*

6. My tax bill says it is for 2021. I bought the property in 2022. Do I still owe taxes?

The current tax bills are for Grand List 2021 which means they are based on taxable property identified by the Darien Assessor's Office on October 1, 2021. The tax bills are generated in July 2022, payable in July 2022 and January 2023.

7. I recently paid off my mortgage. Do I still owe taxes?

Please contact the Darien Tax Office if you have not received a tax bill by July 1st or you can access the tax bill from the website. Depending on the timing, the bill may have been coded for the bank to pay. As the Tax Office doesn't receive a notification when mortgages are paid off, the onus is on the taxpayer to obtain the bill and notify the Tax Office of the change.

8. My tax bills were mailed to the wrong address. How do I correct my address?

For real estate tax bills, the Tax Office requires written authorization from the property owner to change the mailing address.

For motor vehicle tax bills, mailing address changes need to be processed through CT DMV. This may be done online through the CT DMV website.

9. What do I do if I received a tax bill for a car I no longer own ?

*When a motor vehicle is sold, destroyed, or registered out of state, documentation must be provided to the Assessor's Office in order to delete or prorate the tax bill. This documentation must be provided and any resulting tax must be paid by the end of July in order to avoid interest. **Never ignore a tax bill!!!***

10. What period does the tax payment cover?

Real estate: The July 2022 payment covers the period July 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022. The January 2023 payment covers the period January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023.

Motor Vehicle: The July 2022 payment covers the period October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022.

Supplemental Motor Vehicle: Date of registration through September 30, 2022.

11. Questions related to tax payments should be directed to the Darien Tax Office (203)656-7314.

Questions related to assessments or exemptions should be directed to the Darien Assessor's Office (203)656-7310.

GOVERNMENT 101

ADVISORY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

The Board of Selectmen appoints volunteers to all non-elected Boards, Commissions, and Committees. Among the collection of Boards, Commissions and Committees are some that are considered advisory. Advisory boards, committees, and commissions are established by the Board of Selectmen for a defined purpose and may be convened for a short period of time or renewed by the Board of Selectmen each year. The primary advisory groups renewed annually are Advisory Board of Health, Advisory Committee on Government Access TV (TV79), Advisory Committee on Sustainability, and the Coastal

Waters Commission. These groups do not set policy on their own, but they may make policy recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. The Town is fortunate to have so many talented, eager volunteers willing to share their time and expertise to support the community. On occasion, a volunteer may wish to serve on two committees. This is allowed as long as one of them is an advisory committee or commission, not included in the Town Code of Ordinances.

TOWN BUDGET

The Town budget process is in motion. During this phase of planning and review, the Town Administration and the Board of Education prepare separate budgets. Beginning in January, the Town Administrator reviews department budget requests with department heads. Separate from the Town budget, the school budget process begins in October with the Superintendent of Schools meeting with building and departmental leadership.

The Town Administrator and the Superintendent of Schools each prepare their own proposed budgets and submit these proposals to their respective Boards for formal review: The Town Administrator's Budget is reviewed by the Board of Selectmen, and the Board of Education reviews the School Superintendent's budget. The Town Administrator submits the proposed Town budget in late January, and the Superintendent of Schools' proposed budget is presented on the first Saturday in January.

The Board of Finance and the RTM Finance and Budget Committees actively participate in both the Board of Selectmen's and Board of Education's review process. Public comment is also welcome. Taxpayers are also invited to attend review meetings.

Complete meeting schedules and documents can be found on the Town of Darien [website](#) and the Board of Education [website](#).

WATER MANAGEMENT

On December 24th Darien experienced a coastal flooding event that impacted some of our waterfront areas and residents. It caused some temporary road closures and power outages. The flooding occurred due to a combination of an intense westerly wind direction and astronomic high tide. These were both natural and uncontrollable occurrences. With rising water levels, Darien and other coastal communities are experiencing a higher frequency of flooding events. The Town continues to work with experts to study the most vulnerable areas in town to determine whether any corrective measures can be taken to decrease the severity of flooding. State and Federal regulations have a large impact on what, if anything, is able to be done near the coastline.

Coastal flooding and flooding caused by rain are distinct types of flooding with different impacts. To learn about the differences, residents are encouraged to refer to the flooding [page](#) of the Town website under the Emergency Management tab. In addition, during the December 19th Board of Selectmen meeting, a comprehensive presentation was given by the Pear Tree Beach Building Committee which included information about coastal flooding and the impact of high tides at Pear Tree Beach. The meeting can be viewed [here](#) on TV79. The committee's presentation begins at minute 9:30. The portion detailing coastal flooding and tide changes begins at minute 28:49.

MENTAL HEALTH

QUESTION, PERSUADE, REFER (QPR) SUICIDE GATEKEEPER TRAINING

You're Invited!

VIRTUAL Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Gatekeeper Training

Details:

Tuesday, January 10th from
7:00 PM - 8:30 PM
Via ZOOM
To RSVP, email
aramsteck@darienct.gov

What You'll Learn

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) is aimed to give you the confidence and skills to recognize when and individual is in an emotional crisis and how to take positive action.

! Note: Registration will be capped at 30 individuals



We are here to help
you so
you can help your
community!



HUMAN SERVICES



EMERGENCY CALL LIST

The Darien Human Services Department maintains an *Emergency Call List* with the names of vulnerable seniors and individuals with disabilities to contact prior to and after a storm or town-wide emergency. If you or someone you know is vulnerable or has medical conditions that might make them vulnerable during an emergency, please notify Darien Human Services (203-656-7328) to be added to the Emergency Call list.

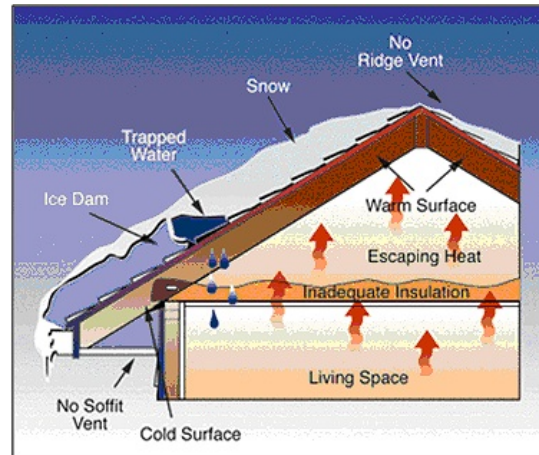
OPERATION FUEL

Beginning Monday, December 19, 2022, Operation Fuel began administering an energy assistance program for clients who need aid with meeting their home utility or heating needs (electricity, gas, or deliverable fuel). This energy assistance program is for households living on up to 100% of state median income (\$66,270 per individual) with no asset limit: a household with one person has an income limit of \$66,270, a household of four has an income limit of \$127,443. The maximum grant amount will be up to \$1,000. This is a large increase in assistance from the previous 75% of the state median income limit. Clients may now apply for assistance two times a year versus only once a year previously. The dramatic increases are a result of utility companies Eversource and United Illuminating (UI) working with state leaders on a short-term/interim *Customer Relief Plan*. Due to the unusually high energy prices this winter, the program is designed to provide immediate energy assistance to customers in need, including moderate and middle-income customers who are struggling to pay their bills. The Customer Relief Plan

INTERESTING INFORMATION

ICE DAMS

An ice dam is a mass of ice that gathers along the lower edge of a roofline where it overhangs the edge of the home. Ice dams begin when snow melts on an upper, warmer part of a roof, then flows down to the colder eave overhang, where it refreezes. As the ice accumulates, it forms a blockage that prevents additional snowmelt from flowing off the roof. The ice then begins to back up under the roof shingles, where it melts again, soaking the roof sheathing and leaking into the attic. There, it soaks the insulation (rendering it much less effective). Once in the insulation, it may leak through the ceiling



drywall below. In addition to possible interior water damage, large ice dams can be very heavy and can damage gutters and even present a safety hazard to people below. Ice dams usually start or worsen after a heavy snow because of snow's insulating properties. The snow layer traps warm air beneath the snow, which causes it to melt. Preventing ice dams is a matter of simple thermal physics. If the air in the attic or against the bottom of the roof deck remains cold, it can never melt the snow lying on top of the roof, eliminating the water necessary for ice dams. Preventing ice dams can be done through a combination of:

- **Ventilation under the roof deck** keeps colder outside air circulating through the attic and prevents it from warming above the freezing point so it can melt snow on the roof.
- **Insulation in the ceiling** below the attic will prevent warm air from rising up into the attic space to melt snow on the roof.
- **Blocking any heat sources** that may be contributing to high temperatures in the attic.

Preventive efforts are best conducted during the spring, summer, or fall, but there are also several options for battling them during the cold months:

- **Keep gutters clean.** Get rid of fall leaves before the snow comes. Also, make sure your downspouts are functioning properly. Melted snow has nowhere to go if the gutters are clogged.
- **Use a roof rake after heavy snowfalls:** Ice dams appear quickly after a heavy snow because of the insulating properties of snow. Using a long-handled roof rake to remove the snow from at least the lower 4 feet of roof edge can help prevent ice dams from forming. This is the only safe way to remove snow from a roof; never get onto a roof to remove snow in the winter. When using a roof rake, use light pressure to avoid scraping the shingles too hard.
- **Use calcium chloride or an ice-melt product:** If you have an ice dam forming, you can apply [calcium chloride or a similar product](#) to the ice.
- **Chip off the ice:** Although climbing onto the roof is never advised, you may be able to chip away some of the ice by hand if you can reach the eaves with an extension ladder. It is usually not necessary to remove the entire ice dam, since opening up a channel may be enough to allow additional meltwater to flow off the roof. This method will require repeated work, though, as the ice will quickly build up again and block the channel you have cut. A chisel, ice pick, or small hatchet are the best tools for this work but don't attempt it if the ice dam is too high to reach safely.
- **Hire a professional:** When ice dam buildup is too much for you to handle, the solution is to call in a firm specializing in this service. Some roofing contractors offer this service during the winter when there is little roofing work to do. Professionals are insured and will remove your ice dam using special equipment such as a high-

temperature/low-pressure steamer to melt the ice and snow from your roof. While this service may cost a few hundred dollars, it can prevent significant damage to your home. Do not hire a contractor that uses a high-pressure power washer with a steam box, which can damage shingles.

*Sources:

<https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-prevent-remove-ice-dams-1824696>

<https://www.weather.gov/grr/roofIceDams>

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

After so many holiday gatherings and increased travel, it is possible that we will see a spike in COVID cases and other respiratory illnesses. Please maintain good hand-washing practices and stay home when feeling ill.

Free COVID test kits can be obtained at the following website:

<https://special.usps.com/testkits>.

We encourage all who have traveled and/or feel sick to continue to test.

COMMISSION HIGHLIGHT

COMMISSION ON AGING

Darien has over 3600 residents aged 60 and higher. This equates to 17% of our population. The Commission on Aging works to ensure that the needs of our seniors are being met, including but not limited to: health, recreation, housing, transportation, economics, legal and financial challenges, general well-being, as well as services and programs available through private or public agencies. The Commission coordinates with other Boards, Commissions and agencies to disseminate information about resources that affect our older residents.

The Commission has 11 members dedicated to the way seniors live in Darien. They advocate for seniors' rights both locally and at the state level. After COVID lockdowns, the Commission worked on legislation requiring Nursing Homes and Senior Living Facilities to have cameras in each room so residents can stay connected with loved ones virtually. Currently, they are working with the Planning and Zoning Commission to create a "Walkability Zone" in downtown Darien and the Corbin District. The walkability zone will create a path for older people who may not walk as quickly and may no longer drive, to safely navigate the "new" downtown.

A special thank you to all 11 Commission on Aging members who are all serving multiple terms, and to Joe Pankowski for Chairing the Commission for 11 years.

PLANNING & ZONING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Low Income Housing is geared towards individuals or families with a certain maximum income level. Low Income Housing is designed to ensure that middle income people are able to afford housing in the area in which they live. These people earn no more than the median income in the area where they live. The median income level is based upon a State Median Income (SMI) or an Area Median Level (AMI). A unit is affordable only if it costs people no more than 30% of their income. It is important to note that in Fairfield Country the AMI is much higher than the SMI.

Affordable rents are based upon a set formula (see chart). They will vary depending upon the number of bedrooms in the unit, and if the unit is deed-restricted to those earning less than 80% of State Median Income (SMI); 60% SMI; or 80% AMI; 60% AMI; etc.

DARIEN HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Darien Housing Authority ("DHA") owns and operates The Royle at Darien (719 Boston Post Road) and, in addition to owning the land, is a partner in The Heights at Darien (24 Allen O'Neill Drive). There are 161 affordable units between the two properties. All DHA properties are owned, managed, and operated in accordance with State and Federal regulations. Both properties are fully leased and closed their waitlist effective April 5, 2022, until further notice. To view the properties please see <https://theheightsdarien.com/>.

The Heights at Darien

Originally Allen-O'Neill Homes, The Heights at Darien is an affordable apartment community developed in partnership with the Darien Housing Authority. The Heights consists of 106 high-quality apartments and townhouses. It includes a mix of income restricted one, two, and three-bedroom dwellings. It also offers a community room with a business center, on-site management offices, and an entertainment area for residents to enjoy. For details and information see their website, <https://theheightsdarien.com/>.

The Royle at Darien

The Royle is on the site formerly occupied by the Old Town Hall Homes. It is located at the intersection of the Boston Post Road and Academy Street. The original "Old Town Hall Homes" were constructed in the 1980s after the former Town Hall at that site was demolished. The property was redeveloped in 2021 into a single building containing 55 affordable units for those age 55+ and the disabled and is now known as The Royle at Darien.

Sign up here to receive the
newsletter



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

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