



TOWN OF DARIEN NEWSLETTER

June 23, 2023 - Issue 34

MESSAGE FROM MONICA MCNALLY

Dear Darienites,

I am pleased to update you on our work with the 60-acre property on Great Island.

As a reminder, at this time there is no public access to the property as we prepare it for safe use by our residents.

We have completed the interview process for the four resident-at-large positions on our new advisory committee. This nine-member group will be essential in advising on the future of the property and addressing environmental concerns. We are encouraged by the community spirit, with 45 residents stepping forward to participate. The Board of Selectmen will vote to appoint the four members at our meeting on July 3. We will continue our commitment to environmental stewardship, safety, and community engagement.



Prior to opening to the public we are taking active steps to ensure safety, and to maintain the property, including:

- the installation of 'No Public Access' and '24-hour video surveillance' warning signs, in addition to trail cameras across the property
- addressing safety concerns at the jetty by removing protruding pipes and safety marker buoys
- designing two schematic driveway plans for the main entrance
- initiating routine property maintenance, including tree and stump removal and safety-related structural adjustments
- developing plans for the safe removal and replacement of transformers and oil tanks on the property

Among environmental concerns is the presence of elevated arsenic levels in the soil in several locations on Great Island. The arsenic is a result of pesticide use on agricultural crops raised on the island a century ago. Traditional remediation methods, such as soil blending or soil removal and replacement, are expensive and environmentally disruptive. My research led to an eco-friendly and cost-effective potential solution - phytoremediation. This process uses hyper-accumulator plants such as mustard, soybean, arugula, and sunflowers, to absorb the arsenic. We are currently planting a small restricted test bed on the island to determine the effectiveness of the different plants to absorb the arsenic on site, a process that is being overseen by environmental experts. This will involve soil testing, planting, regular assessments throughout the summer, safe plant disposal at season's end, followed by the sowing of rye grass for winter protection.

Thank you for your unwavering support of the acquisition of Great Island. We are dedicated to transforming the property into a cherished asset for all residents, respecting both its environmental integrity and community value.

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

DATES & INFORMATION

UPCOMING MEETINGS

DARIEN HOUSING AUTHORITY
6.27.23 6:30 PM

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
6.27.23 7:30 PM

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
7.3.23 7:00 PM

INDEPENDENCE DAY
7.4.23
Town Hall Closed

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMISSION
7.5.23 7:00 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.



Thank you to the wonderful “Mystery Donor” at the Mather Center! For the second year in a row, a very generous member has donated \$5,000 specifically for musical entertainment and new program opportunities. This amazing donor has expressed sincere delight in watching others’ enjoy live entertainment.

FOLLOW THE TOWN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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RESIDENT REMINDERS, NEWS, & TIPS

Dog Licensing Reminder

All dogs over 6 months old must be licensed by June 30, 2023. The fee is \$8 for a neutered/spayed dog and \$19 for an unneutered/unspayed dog. All dogs must have a current rabies vaccination and the certification must be presented when licensing. For detailed information please contact the Town Clerk’s office or go to darienct.gov then “How do I?” and click on [GET A DOG LICENSE](#).

A \$1/month late fee will be imposed for licenses issued after June 30th. Any dog not licensed is subject to a \$75 fine from the Darien Animal Control Officer.

WestCOG Noise Abatement Study

On behalf of Stamford, Darien, and New Canaan, the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) is conducting a Noise Pollution Abatement Study of the Metro-North Railroad New Canaan line. A consultant has been hired to conduct the study to determine a cost-effective approach to implementing noise reduction measures, quiet zones(s), and other methods to reduce noise along the train line. The study also seeks to find ways to reduce environmental impacts on residents and businesses around crossings, while improving the safety of railway-highway grade crossings.

As part of the public engagement phase of the Noise Abatement Study, 7,400 residents in Darien and New Canaan, based on their vicinity to railroad crossings and stations, will receive postcards in the mail near the end of June. The cards will have a QR code, allowing people to respond to the survey on their phones. Anyone that is interested, even if you do not live along that branch line may respond to the survey on the [WestCOG](#) website. Study results and public participation opportunities will be posted on [WestCOG's](#) website.

Property Tax Bills

Property tax bills will be mailed Wednesday, June 28th. Taxpayers should expect to see them in their mailboxes by Saturday, July 1st. Tax bills will also be available at the following link through the Town [website](#) beginning July 1st: <https://gemsnt.com/darien-webtax>

FAQS AND CLARIFYING INFORMATION:

The tax bill has a due date of July 1, but I just received the bill. Taxpayers have the full month of July to pay without penalty.

What is the new mill rate? The new mill rate is 17.61, a 2.21% increase from the prior year.

To whom do I make the check payable? Darien Tax Collector

I never received the tax bill. Failure to receive a tax bill does not invalidate the tax or penalties thereon. Remember that tax bills are available to be viewed and paid [online](#).

My tax bill says the bill is for 2022. I bought the property in 2023. The current tax bills are for Grand List 2022, which means they are based on taxable property identified by the Darien Assessor's Office as of October 1, 2022. The tax bills are generated in July 2023, payable in July 2023 and January 2024.

I recently paid off my mortgage. Please contact the Darien Tax Office if you haven't received a tax bill by July 1st or you can access your tax bill from the website. Depending on the timing, the bill may have been coded for the bank to pay. 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.

My tax bills were mailed to the wrong address.

For real estate tax bills, the Tax Office requires written authorization from the property owner to change the mailing address. Authorizations by email should be sent to Dorothy McKay at: dmckay@darienct.gov

For motor vehicle tax bills, mailing address changes need to be processed through CT DMV. This can be done online through the [CT DMV website](#).

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 paid by the end of July to avoid interest. **Never ignore a tax bill**

What period of time does the tax payment span?

Real estate: The July 2023 payment timeline is from July 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023. The January 2024 payment timeline is from January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024.

Motor Vehicle: The July 2023 payment timeline is from October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023.

What payment options are available?

Mail: use the return envelope included with the tax bill(s).

In-person: the Tax Collector's Office is located in Room 104 on the 1st floor of the Darien Town Hall, 2 Renshaw Road, Darien, CT. Office hours are Monday-Thursday 8:00 AM - 5:15 PM, Closed Fridays.

On-Line: through the town website at the link provided above. Fees are charged by the payment link provider and depend on the method of payment selected:

ECH (electronic check)	\$1.50 flat fee
Credit Card	2.5% with \$2.00 minimum
Debit Card	\$3.50 flat fee

Multiple tax bills may be paid in one transaction. American Express, VISA, MasterCard, and Discover Card are accepted.

How do I contact the Tax Office?

Phone: (203) 656-7314. Calls are returned within two business days.

Email:

Tax Collector, Kathy Larkins, klarkins@darienct.go

Deputy Tax Collector, Inna Ginzburg, iginzburg@darienct.gov

Corbin District

Over the next two weeks, Everything is Rosey, Helen Ainson, the Darien Toy Box, Shoes N More, and Compass will relocate and open at 15 Corbin Drive, and Green & Tonic is expected to re-open a new and expanded cafe in the same building in July.

Downtown will continue to have ample parking to accommodate shoppers, diners, and employees. The Center Street Municipal Parking Lot behind The Goose and CVS will remain fully available in addition to the parking on Boston Post Road, Day Street, Grove Street, Brook Street, the lot by Grove Street Plaza, and Old Kings Highway South by Corbin Drive.

The second phase of the Corbin District construction project will be starting soon. This phase is expected to be less disruptive, given that the project is somewhat self-contained, away from the Center Street parking lot and across from Corbin Drive. Construction plans are being refined to minimize disruption and inconvenience. As with Phase I construction, updates will be posted regularly on the [Corbin District website](#) and on their Instagram and Facebook social media accounts.

Congratulations to Post 53

Darien EMS-Post 53 has been providing our community with high-quality medical services and a unique learning opportunity for Darien students since 1970. Many of its current and alumni volunteers celebrated the 53rd-anniversary last week. Congratulations to all of the current Post 52 members, graduates, and for continuing to provide Darien with this vital emergency service.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Spadtastics at Tilly Pond Park CANCELLED due to rainy weather forecast!

Unfortunately, the Spadtastics performance previously scheduled for tonight, Friday, June 23rd, has been cancelled due to the rainy weather forecast.

Light up the Night Dance Party

On June 30th, the Parks and Recreation Department is hosting a free "Light Up the Night" Dance Party at Weed Beach. The "Red/White/Blue" themed party will feature live music beginning at 6:30 PM. Stamford fireworks are expected to take place at approximately 9:00 PM, so this will add a little extra fun to the evening. Additional details and information will be available at darienct.gov/events.



DECLARATION DAY CEREMONY

DARIEN HIGH SCHOOL

COURTYARD

9:30AM

4TH OF JULY
2023



Join us as we raise the flag
and honor the founding of our
country.

Organized by Darien Monuments and Ceremonies Commission

Declaration Day Ceremony

The Monuments and Ceremonies Commission will hold a Declaration Day Ceremony on July 4th, at 9.30 AM in the Darien High School courtyard. The twenty-five minute event will include selected readings from the Declaration of Independence, recognition of Darien students currently attending military academies and university ROTC programs, the naming of Revolutionary War soldiers from what is now Darien, formerly Middlesex Parish, and patriotic music.

This ceremony is an opportunity for all, toddlers to seniors, to hear and be reminded of remember the foundational values of our country as stated in the Declaration of Independence.

Families participating in the annual Push-n-Pull Parade are encouraged to attend this short and meaningful ceremony as they gather for the parade.

Push-n-Pull Parade

This fun annual tradition will step off at 10:00 AM from Darien High School and march down Noroton Avenue, ending at Darien VFW 6933. Families should arrive at 9:45 AM with their decorated bikes, scooters, wagons, and non-motorized vehicles. Festivities will continue at the VFW. The event is free and open to the public, although there is a suggested donation of \$20 per family payable at the VFW Post to help support the post and its headquarters.



Darien Town Fireworks

Mark your calendar! Darien fireworks are scheduled for Friday, July 14, 2023, at Darien High School. The rain date is Saturday, July 15th. Walk-ins are welcome at no charge. Live music will be provided by the Darien Community Band and local food trucks will be on-site selling food and refreshments. Residents are encouraged to bring blankets and

chairs. Face painting will be available this year, and again a sensory-friendly location will be offered for viewers with special needs. Fireworks will begin at approximately 9:00 PM.

A limited number of 2023 Darien resident-only parking passes go on sale at noon on Monday, June 26th. Parking passes are \$30. [Online purchases](#) may be picked up in the Parks and Recreation Department beginning Monday, July 3rd. To purchase or pick up in person, visit the Darien Parks & Recreation Department at Town Hall, Room 110, from 8:00 AM - 5:15 PM. Monday - Thursday. Town Hall is closed on Fridays and will be closed on July 4th in observance of the Holiday. Passes must be picked up no later than Wednesday, July 12th whether purchased online or in person. Due to the popularity of this event, no refunds will be given.

Thank you to our current sponsors: Orchard Tree Care Specialists; Rand Insurance; Sheree Frank: Realtor, Houlihan Lawrence; Darien/Rowayton; Rings End; Crestwood Advisors; Darien Sport Shop; and Palmer's Market.

FLOODING

Flood Related Investments

On June 5th, the Board of Selectman voted on a policy to manage flood-related investments. The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for investments in flood-related infrastructure projects. The key principles of this policy are as follows:
Maintenance: The Town will continue to diligently maintain its drainage and flood-related infrastructure, including culverts, flood walls, pipes, drains, levees, and other such assets.
Holistic Approach: The Town will ensure that all flooding infrastructure decisions are based on expert evaluations that consider the full scope of the flooding challenge. The Town will strive to keep its perspectives on flooding problems up to date, pursuing new studies when warranted. All options developed will include a cost/benefit analysis and an assessment of taxpayer impact. Areas of benefit to explore will include flood risk reduction, assurance of access for emergency vehicles during a flood event, property protection, reduced damage costs, community resilience, and reduced flood anxiety. The Board of Selectmen will consider the totality of the circumstances when evaluating flood-related investments.

The Flood Investment Policy is available to read on the [Board of Selectmen page](#) on the Town of Darien [website](#).

Flood Study Report

During the June 19th Board of Selectmen meeting, Ed Gentile, Director of Public Works gave an extensive presentation about the current flood studies being conducted to address the impacts of recent flooding in town from storms Ida and Elsa. The [presentation](#) to the Board of Selectmen can be viewed in its entirety on Darien's TV79.

HUMAN SERVICES

Summer Availability

Darien Human Services is available to provide support and assistance with mental health issues or other personal challenges that may arise throughout the summer. Additionally, mental health resources are just a click away on the Town website. There you will find a [list of providers](#) currently accepting new clients, resources, and links to prior programming. Contact Human Services Director Ali Ramsteck, LCSW at aramsteck@darienct.gov to schedule an appointment or for further information.

Mental Health First Aid Training

The Town of Darien is offering another session of Mental Health First Aid Training. The two-day class will be held August 1st and August 3rd, 8:30 AM – 1:00 PM, at EMS Post 53, 0 Ledge Road, Darien. This class is highly recommended for adults 18 and over who are beginning or returning to college or trade school. To register, email aramsteck@darienct.gov. Seating is limited to 30 participants.

Mental Health First Aid is an interactive course designed to give members of the public key skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a

mental health crisis. Like CPR training, which helps a non-medical professional assist an individual following a heart attack, the 8-hour certification in Mental Health First Aid helps an individual who does not have clinical training assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis.

About the Instructors: Ali Ramsteck, LCSW is the Director of Darien Human Services and she has been a social worker for over 25 years. Paula Sutcliffe, MA, RN-BC, CHC is Darien Health Department's Public Health Nurse who has been practicing for over 50 years. The program is available at no cost to participants.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Revised Food Service Establishment Regulations

On June 14, 2023, the Advisory Board of Health voted to approve revisions to the Health Department regulations pertaining to Food Service Establishments. The Statewide adoption of the FDA Food Code necessitated the revision of local food regulations. Highlights of the changes are below and the fully updated regulations are available on the [Health Department webpage](#).

Definitions

- *Food Service Classifications* are now based on the risk category of food preparation and population served
- *Inspection Reports* are no longer score based, they are now "risk-based"
- *Violations* are now evaluated by risk to health using the terms "Priority", "Priority Foundation" and "Core", with priority violations being the most serious
 - Priority violations need to be addressed within three days
 - Priority Foundation violations need to be addressed within 10 days
 - Core violations need to be addressed within 90 days.

Inspection Reports, Availability & Ratings

- Timeframes for correcting violations are now specified
- A placard must be posted in a visible location notifying patrons of inspection report availability
- Ratings are currently suspended and will be reinstated in the fall

Enforcement

The enforcement section has been completely revised and is based on a compliance schedule determined by the risk category of noted violations. Failure to comply could result in hearings (or permit suspension).

Vaping

The Region 1 Health Departments collaborate and share health-related information and videos to provide extensive information to residents. Recently, the Fairfield Health Department produced a YouTube video discouraging vaping among our youth. The very powerful video, [Don't Start Now – Every Play](#) is available on YouTube.

POLICE INFORMATION & CRIME TIP



The Darien Police Department has seen a recent rise in “distraction thefts” at stores like Whole Foods, Stop & Shop, and Trader Joe’s. Typically, a female shopper is lured away from her shopping cart by one suspect asking a question, or needing to be shown where to find something. While the suspect has the attention of the victim, a second suspect removes the victim’s wallet from her unattended purse in the shopping cart. Often the theft is not discovered until the victim goes to checkout.

Prevention Tip: An ideal method of preventing distraction theft would be to carry cash, credit cards, and a driver’s license in a front pants pocket, if possible. If you carry a handbag or purse when shopping, use one that has a zipper or snap-flap closure. More importantly; never let your bag out of your sight especially when it is in a shopping cart. Always be aware of your surroundings. If you turn away from your shopping cart for any reason, pick up your handbag and hold it in front of you. If you have fallen victim to this crime, please call the Darien Police as soon as possible at 203-662-5300.

INTERESTING INFORMATION

With the summer here, dry weather and drought conditions are always a possibility. In 2000, 2016, 2020, and 2022, New York and New England experienced historic drought conditions.

NOAA’s National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) launched the Northeast [Drought Early Warning System](#) (DEWS) to improve drought early warning capacity and build long-term drought resilience throughout New England and New York. The [Northeast DEWS](#) is a network of regional and national partners that share information and coordinate actions to help communities in the region cope with drought.

The State of Connecticut has its own drought tracking webpage, <https://www.drought.gov/states/connecticut>, to assist residents in following and tracking drought conditions.

Sign up here to receive the newsletter



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

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