



# NEWS FROM TOWN HALL

April 2024

## LETTER FROM FIRST SELECTMAN DIONNA CARLSON

Dear Members of the New Canaan Community,

Happy Spring! Welcome to the 2nd edition of News from Town Hall. As we head into the season of longer days and warmer weather, I encourage everyone to be mindful of the increased pedestrian and bike traffic in town and SLOW DOWN IN OUR TOWN. Our Department of Public Works has a more in-depth discussion of pedestrian safety in this month's newsletter that I encourage everyone to read. In addition, the Police Department will have Facebook and Instagram posts during Safe Driving Week (4th - 4th) highlighting its partnership with New Canaan High School to prepare our youngest drivers to be responsible drivers.



First Selectman Dianna Carlson  
Phone: 203-594-3000

The Board of Finance (BOF) approved a 5.22% increase to the General Fund Budget on March 7th. The budget then moved to the Town Council. On April 2nd, the Town Council approved a 4.99% General Fund Budget increase. The budget now moves back to the BOF who will take a last look to see if there is any ability to use the general fund balance to help offset some of the budget increase before setting the final mill rate by its June 11th meeting.

We have been busy in Town Hall requesting bids for four services: pension plan management, legal services and internal and external auditing. We received 12 proposals from pension plan managers, five proposals from legal firms, six internal audit and two external audit proposals. We are in the process of interviewing respondents to our requests for proposal and will look to make decisions on contracting for these services later this spring and summer.

The Affordable Housing Committee is up and running and holding public meetings. They have constituted both finance and project sub-committees and are hosting learning sessions with a variety of experts in the field to help them make informed recommendations as they move forward. If you'd like to learn more about what is happening on this committee, please follow this link: [https://www.newcanaan.info/government/committees/affordable\\_housing.php](https://www.newcanaan.info/government/committees/affordable_housing.php) If you click on the agendas and minutes link, you will also see access to all meeting videos. Another simple way to access meeting recordings is by simply clicking on the YouTube logo in the upper right corner of the website's home page - <https://www.newcanaan.info>

Thank you to everyone who has submitted feedback on this newsletter. Please continue to let me know what you want to hear about by emailing me by clicking [here](#).

Best,  
Dianna Carlson  
First Selectman

## TOWN COUNCIL APPROVES 2024-2025 BUDGET OF \$174.93 MILLION – AN INCREASE OF 4.99% OVER CURRENT FISCAL YEAR

The Town Council on April 2, 2024 approved a Town of New Canaan Total Expenditure Budget of \$174.93 million for fiscal year 2024-25, representing an increase of 4.99% over the current fiscal year.

The Total Expenditure Budget includes Board of Education operating expenses of \$91.55 million (up 3.67%) and Board of Education transfers to the Health Internal Service Fund expenses of \$17.59 million (up 19.44%) for a combined Board of Education expense budget of \$109.14 (up 5.93%). In addition to these expenses, the budget includes \$8.96 million of other Board of Education expenses paid by the Town. Town department operational expenses were approved at \$33.83 million (up 4.33%). Other budget items include a combined Town and Board of Education debt service of \$18.91 million (up 2.83%) and tax-funded capital projects of \$0.38 million (down 31.25%). To fund this budget, the amount to be raised from taxation is \$158.10 (up 5.27%).

As with last year, the Town continues to address the challenges of acute inflationary pressure and ever-increasing costs for items such as labor, energy, materials and healthcare. Town Council Chairman Michael Mauro said, "Underscoring the challenge in restraining the tax burden to residents within these unfavorable atmospheres is the revaluation year we find ourselves in. Nevertheless, Town Council worked with the leadership teams from the Town's departments in scrutinizing the operating and capital budgets to ensure that the standard of excellence expected by town residents will continue to be provided at the best value possible. Although a tax hike is not desirable, the Town's process focused on minimizing the overall burden while still providing the Town's departments with the resources they need to continue to outperform our peers. After months of intensive analysis, we have achieved that goal."

The Town Council's budget takes into account the Town Assessor's reported 2023 Grand List increase of 23.53% to \$9.90 billion from the 2022 Grand List of \$8.01 billion. This Grand List combined with a \$5 million fund balance drawdown will result in projected decrease of the mill rate from the current 18.940 to an estimated 16.144 (down 14.77%). The final mill rate, which determines property taxes, is to be set by the Board of Finance by June 11, 2024.

Attached is the Town Council FY 2024-2025 Budget Summary showing further details of Town Department and Board of Education (BOE) year-over-year budget changes. The full Town Council Approved Operating and Capital Budgets for FY 2024-25 can be found at the Finance Department homepage at [www.newcanaan.info/Departments/Finance](http://www.newcanaan.info/Departments/Finance).

### TOWN INVITES COMMUNITY TO SELECT INFORMATION THEY WANT TO RECEIVE

The Town of New Canaan has expanded its communications outreach beyond emergency notifications to include the First Selectman's newsletter and information about road closures, tree work, police activity, fire prevention, community center programming, local health issues, and more.

Every local resident and businessperson – whether you have been receiving notices from the Town or not – is urged to visit [www.newcanaan.info/alerts](http://www.newcanaan.info/alerts), register your contact information and select the topics of information that you would like to receive from the Town. You may choose to receive the alerts by email or text. Voice phone calls are used only during true emergencies and disasters.

When you register with your selections you will be asked to provide your street address, as some notifications such as road closures and other Public Works activity can be targeted to only the affected geographic areas. To sign up, [click here](#).

Once you have registered, you can change your selections or delete your account and unsubscribe at any time.

### PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE – PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Spring is upon us and with this comes better weather and more opportunities for enjoying the out of doors by walking, hiking and biking. This will bring more people onto our more than 20 miles of local sidewalks and into the downtown area.

Recent Town initiatives to increase pedestrian safety include the installation of Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFB) at uncontrolled mid-block crosswalks around town. We currently have 11 separate intersections serviced by RRFB's and have plans to install them at four other intersections.

The RRFBs supplement our seasonal installation of approximately 30 in-street pedestrian stanchions at crosswalks around town from April 1 through Thanksgiving.

These measures, however, are only as good as the motorists traveling our roadways and their attentiveness to these warning devices.

From the website [WatchForMeCT](#) pedestrians and motorists are reminded of the following:

- Pedestrians have the right of way in marked and unmarked crosswalks, meaning cars must yield (slow or stop) for pedestrians, wherever they are in the crosswalk.
- State law requires pedestrians to use crosswalks when they are provided.
- State law requires pedestrians walking along the road to use sidewalks when available.
- When sidewalks are not available, pedestrians are to walk facing traffic on the far-left edge of the road. Walking in this direction gives pedestrians the best view of traffic.
- Cars may not pass a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk if that car is stopped to let pedestrians cross.

It is up to each of us to ensure the safety of the pedestrians and bicyclists and other non-motorized means of transportation on our road and sidewalk networks. We thank you in advance for your help and cooperation.

If residents have areas of concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Department of Public Works at 203-594-3054, or email [Trigermann@newcanaanct.gov](mailto:Trigermann@newcanaanct.gov).

### MEET THE NEW CANAAN PARKS DEPARTMENT

The Parks Department consists of 15 dedicated full-time employees who serve to preserve and maintain the grounds for schools, parks and properties owned by the Town of New Canaan. Our staff strives to provide safe and aesthetically pleasing grounds for visitors and residents of all abilities and age groups. The department is led by Director John Howe, Superintendent Todd Deklyn and Assistant Superintendent Ryan Restivo.

Parks operations consist of sports field management, general landscaping, snow and ice removal, sanitation, and accommodating special public needs. All of our operations serve to create good health and recreation for those who use our grounds.

**Steps to Achieving Premier Conditions:**

Using Integrated Pest Management (IPM):

- Our practices are performed physically, such as mulch in flower beds and routine mowing; biologically, such as specific products to combat grubs; culturally, such as appropriate irrigation and pest resistant plants; and organically, such as leaf compost for topsoil.

Aerating and Seeding:

- Due to the high amount of activity on our playing fields it is essential to aerate and seed at the most favorable times in the spring and fall. It may not look pretty immediately after soil cores are removed, but it's vital for new growth and the future of our fields.

Grooming and Adding Infill to Artificial Turf Fields:

- To combat high traffic, low spot areas and fiber degradation on our synthetic turf fields we sweep and add infill. Our staff also makes grooming and "vacuuming" a habit to ensure a clean, safe and level playing surface.

Our Town Parks, Schools and Athletic Fields:

Mead Memorial Park, Waverly Park, Kiwanis Park, Dixon Memorial Park, East Canaan High School, Conner Field, Saxe Middle School, South School, New School, West School, Nature Center, Center School Parking Lot, Richmond Hill Parking Lot, Train Station, other Town-owned properties.

Ready for competitive softball at Orchard Field in Waverly Park.

The Parks crew preparing for a NCHS tennis match after heavy rainfall.

Parks leaders, from left: Ryan Restivo, John Howe and Todd Deklyn.

### EXPERTS TO SPEAK TO PARENTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND THEIR ANXIETY

May is recognized as Mental Health Awareness Month and our Health Department is holding an event where parents will hear from experts on children, the internet and anxiety. The event, "Unraveling Anxiety: Building Resilience and Healthy Coping Skills," will be held Monday, May 13 at 11 a.m. at Waverly House and is open to the general public. Registration is required by April 30.

Kimberly Morgan, board certified Advanced Practice Registered Nurse from the Mindwell Center, will speak on parenting with children of the internet age. Devon Suzzo, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and supervising psychotherapist at The Mindwell Center will speak on things your children want you to know about their anxiety. Both speakers are New Canaan residents.

Light brunch will be provided by the New Canaan Community Foundation.

So that the Health department can get a headcount for planning purposes, register before April 30 with [this link](#), or this QR code:

### LAPHAM COMMUNITY CENTER EXPANDING HOURS APRIL THROUGH OCTOBER

Lapham Community Center is offering new expanded hours from April 16 through October 16, 2024.

Lapham will add being open on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings until 7 p.m., and two Saturday mornings each month. The expanded hours are funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) through a State of Connecticut grant to the Town of New Canaan.

New offerings will include live performances, trivia nights, mahjongg, canasta, and bridge classes; foreign language for travel; and wine-and-craft nights.

Additionally, rooms are available for book clubs, games, meetings, and various social gatherings.

Lapham is the community center serving all New Canaan residents, age 21 and older in a friendly and informal setting. Continuing education courses, various health and exercise programs, and numerous special events are offered throughout the year with the goal of enriching lives and building a stronger community. All are encouraged to visit, get involved and enjoy good company.

For more information and to sign up for the activities, please stop in, call 203-594-3620, or log onto the Lapham web page by clicking [here](#).

**ONLINE SERVICES**

**PARKS & RECREATION**

**BUDGET DOCUMENTS**

**EXPERIENCE NEW CANAAN**

**AGENDAS & MINUTES**

**NEWSLETTER SIGN UP**

**DOCUMENTS & FORMS**

**REPORT A PROBLEM**