

# THE NORTH STONINGTON QUARTERLY

## WINTER 2021

### BOARD OF SELECTMEN

We hope this issue of the Winter Quarterly finds your family safe and well. It has certainly been a year for the books and while there have been many hurdles, there have also been a great deal of accomplishments. While the past three months have now featured our highest COVID-19 cases to date, drought conditions, & the cancellation of some of our normal traditions, it also featured some bright spots.

We were able to see enough funds raised through community contributions and a matching grant from SustainableCT to help preserve the Sheets Family Forest on Putker Road. This Avalonia property will soon be available for your hiking pleasure. Also, speaking of SustainableCT, our community was once again recognized as a Bronze Level community in Sustainability. This certification is good for 3 years and shows not only our commitment to being an eco-friendly town, but also opens up unique grant funding opportunities for us.

Over the past couple of months we have seen some exciting investments in our community. The old Subway has been transformed, soon to be opening as “the Tin Peddler”, a small shop to pick up local foods and wares. The old Tim Hortons is soon being transformed to be a bakery. Dunkin Donuts has repaired its roof, which had shingles falling off, and the Red Onion, which suffered a fire, has been torn down.

Our schools now consistently rank among the highest in the State. We have been saying for some time that if the town invested in itself (which we did with our schools, emergency services, signage, cleaning things up) that others would invest in us. We are now seeing that and it is inspiring. Thanks to all of our community partners for planting your roots in our special corner of Connecticut!

While our holidays looked different this year, we found some new and creative ways to come together. Though we couldn't have our traditional tree lighting, a wonderful light parade and Santa Run took place courtesy of our North Stonington Volunteer Fire Company and our neighbor Jen Strunk organizing some community members. This also happened for Halloween. These traditions may become annual, as they were so well received and fun for all involved!

We had safe and successful elections this past November and welcome our new registrars Connie Berardi and Amy French to serve the public. We also welcome newly elected State Leadership Representative Greg Howard and returning Senator Heather Somers. We thank outgoing State Rep Kate Rotella for her leadership and work during her term.



The town has completed all but the final phase of the Solar installation on our buildings, with one array yet to go on the gymnasium at the new High School/Middle School. This puts solar on nearly all town buildings and helps us to lower our carbon footprint and save on utility costs.

The full revaluation of properties has been completed and we thank eQuality and our Assessor Darryl Delgrosso and Assistant Cecile

McGrath for their hard work on this project which happens only every 10 years.

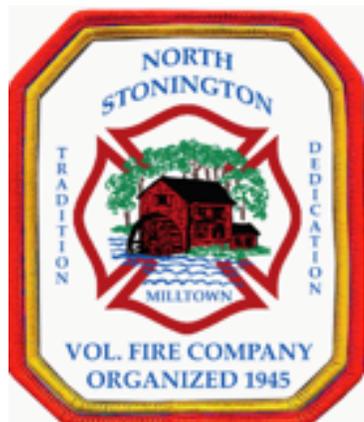
In closing, we know the next couple of months are going to be rough with the virus. The best thing we can do is continue to care about our neighbors. By wearing masks, washing hands, and limiting close contacts we can do our part to slow the spread and protect one another. If we do these things, we hope by the time we are writing the next quarterly article things are starting to head in the right direction. Stay safe and stay well!

MIKE URGO, NITA KINCAID & BOB CARLSON

SELECTMEN@NORTHSTONINGTONCT.GOV

## NORTH STONINGTON VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY INC

As of the writing of this article, the NSVFC has finished our 2021-2022 budget proposal.



Currently, volunteer emergency responders make up approximately 1% of our population. Of that, a majority work outside the community, leaving the available number significantly less. Of those remaining, some are retirees who have decades of service.

As populations have changed, the available free-time to train and respond has diminished in today's society. A new recruit is required to undergo almost six (6) months of fire related training before they are permitted to be utilized as a firefighter.

After investigating other bedroom communities in our area who are experiencing the same problem, the Fire Company feels it reasonable to request funding for two (2) per diem firefighters during the weekday hours from 6AM – 4PM. This will be an addition of (1) per diem firefighter since last year (1) was approved.

Back in September our first per diem Firefighters started working. They do daily checks of all the apparatus, basic maintenance, clean the station and respond to all emergencies they are dispatched to. These Firefighters have been critical during this pandemic, ensuring we have skilled Fire and R-1 response in the building days when we are short-staffed. As I am typing this update, NSVFC has already done 351 Emergency calls this year. This number over the years has continued to climb and will continue this trend.

As a rural community, we ask that you properly label your mail box with your number on both sides. In an emergency, responders don't want to delay rendering aid because they can't find your house due to poor numbering. We also ask that the number be at least 2' off the ground so that snow will not cover the number.

The Members and Officers of the North Stonington Volunteer Fire Company wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

CHARLES A. STEINHART V, FIRE CHIEF



**AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY** was excited to receive a donation of 23 acres from Ellen Dodge. This wooded parcel borders on Spaulding Pond and abuts the Conservancy's Bell Cedar Swamp preserve. There is no public land access, but there is a landing spot for canoes and kayaks. A rudimentary trail will be improved. And look for news on a potential preserve in town. Avalonia hopes to acquire a large and beautiful parcel in Laurel Glen along the Green Falls River, part of the newly federally designated Wood Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic River System.



We hope you will continue to use the trails on preserves throughout town. Winter is a great time to get out on any of the trails. You can see deeper into the woods without leaves on the trees, especially if there is snow on the ground. Get out and breathe the fresh clean air! Trail maps and descriptions are easy to find on our website at [www.avalonia.org](http://www.avalonia.org) and you can download the navigation tool Explorer for ArcGIS and search Avalonia Online Map. The TriTown Forest Preserve on Miller Road has several new improvements- new water crossings, a bench to rest and take in a view, and clearing to stabilize a historic foundation.

Do you live near an Avalonia property or visit one frequently? The Land Trust is looking for volunteers to keep trails clear and to report any problems or issues. If you can help, contact Pat Turner at [jmt.pst@gmail.com](mailto:jmt.pst@gmail.com).

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Little did we know at the beginning of the year what was in store for us in 2020! Thankfully we have persevered, and North Stonington continues to have one of the highest economic growth indexes in the state of CT.



Many of you might not know that last year the EDC adopted the logo and slogan above to represent the town for marketing purposes. It represents our vibrancy and location. When I look at the logo now it means so much more than it did a year ago. It reminds me that our residents are the heartbeat of our town, and without you, our businesses can't survive.

We would like to thank our residents for the overwhelming support you have shown North Stonington businesses throughout this year by shopping local. With all of this in mind we have created the "Shop, Share, Win" campaign to help get the word out to people in the surrounding areas all that North Stonington businesses have to offer. The process is simple - a customer shops at a local business, takes a picture with the "Shop, Share, Win" sign, and posts it to their personal Facebook or Instagram while tagging the business and #ShopNorthStonington. There will be a drawing every 2 weeks where participants will win North Stonington products or services.

Word of mouth is a powerful tool in helping our local businesses prosper. When people share the businesses they utilize with their friends and family on social media, it really demonstrates that North Stonington truly is "The Heart of Southeastern Connecticut". Ask to take a picture with the sign when you are visiting a North Stonington business so you can "Shop, Share, Win"!

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Juliet Hodge the Planning, Development and Zoning Official, and all the town employees that help contribute to the healthy economic growth of our community, especially through this challenging past year.

BRETT MASTROIANNI, CHAIRMAN

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## NORTH STONINGTON EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The North Stonington Education Foundation (NSEF) hopes this newsletter finds everyone safe and healthy as we move into our 11<sup>th</sup> month of this pandemic. Thank you to everyone who has graciously contributed to our recent fundraising efforts. With on-going COVID-19 restrictions, our organization is still unable to hold in-person fundraisers, so these donations are much needed, and greatly appreciated. Educators and community members thinking of new ways to educate in this challenging environment should be commended. These donations will allow us to continue to grant money for innovative ideas within the community.



We are excited to announce that we will have our popular Trivia Contest on February 5th. We usually have this event at the Pawcatuck VFW, but this year it will be completely virtually via ZOOM. To run this virtual event, we have hired a teacher in the DC area who runs these events in his spare time. Will the new format throw the Italian Stallions off their game? Only time will tell. Make sure to sign up early on our website ([nsedfoundation.org/events/](https://nsedfoundation.org/events/)).

As we have said many times before, we are lucky to live in such a small, supportive community in times like these. Stay safe, North Stonington.

CHRISTOPHER P. ANDERSON

860-608-4549

[cpa@andersontriallawyers.com](mailto:cpa@andersontriallawyers.com)

## **NORTH STONINGTON CEMETERY COMMISSION**

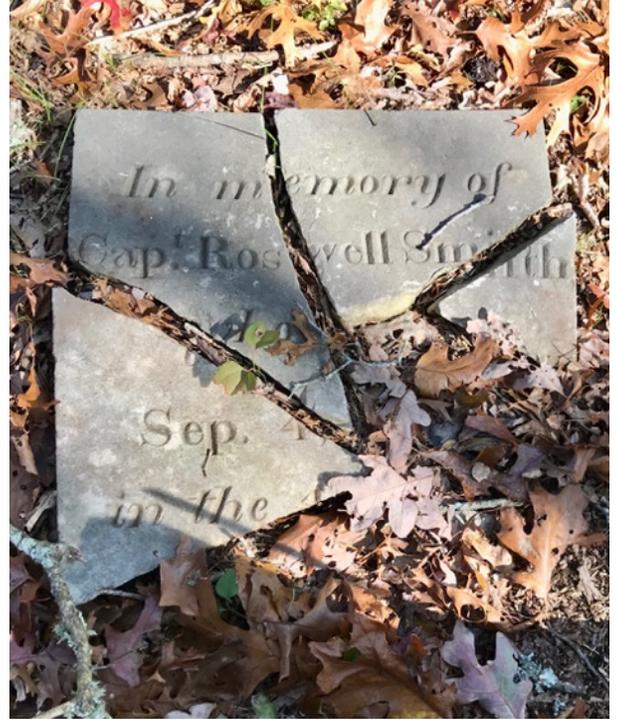
Once again the Commission would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who care for our many cemeteries. We know the task takes time and effort!

In November of this year, we were introduced to Michael Carroll who, along with other volunteers from outside of North Stonington, has expressed an interest in clearing and restoring one of our historic graveyards, the Brown-Randall Cemetery, Hale #70. This site was heavily damaged by vandals several years ago. Mr. Carroll will be attempting to restore this area in early spring, 2021. Our Commission members will also take part in this venture. We would like to extend an invitation to fellow residents to aid in the project. The date is to be determined, but notice will be given when we next schedule a meeting. This is a rare opportunity to receive valuable help with no cost to the Town. The Commission is very excited about the project!

Please feel free to contact either Diane Preston or David Fede in regards to this proposal or any other related matters. Happy New Year to all! 2021 has to be an improvement over the current year!

DIANE PRESTON, PRESIDENT (860-599-1832 or [djdpreston16@gmail.com](mailto:djdpreston16@gmail.com))

DAVID FEDE, TREASURER (860-535-0009)



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## **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Hello, Everyone!

I hope everyone is surviving all of the challenges that have been presented to us this past year. Things WILL get better, and we WILL get through this and return to some semblance of normalcy.

On a good note, we escaped the 2020 hurricane season relatively unscathed. THAT is very good news for us, for what was earlier projected to be a “very active” period.

Not surprisingly, much of my time has been focused upon addressing the many issues involving the COVID 19 pandemic. There have been many virtual meetings and webinars with various organizations (the Federal Emergency Management Agency; the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security; the Governor’s Office; the Department of Public Health; Ledge Light Health District and the North Stonington Municipality). These discussions involved: COVID infection rates, COVID case reporting, COVID testing, vaccine distribution/logistics, COVID enforcement regulations/criteria; COVID protection protocols, and the Governor’s Executive Orders.

And, we’ve “weathered” our first major snow storm of the season! Curiously, I got the feeling that most of us welcomed the storm as a respite from the constant barrage of COVID reporting and reminders.

Have a very Happy Holiday Season and a very Happy New Year!

Stay safe and healthy.

GARY BARON, DIRECTOR

860-912-0004

## **NORTH STONINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

This very unusual school year is going by so very quickly and we are proud to say that the North Stonington Elementary School students have been busy learning, whether in school or online. A big thank you to the teachers who are instructing students in school while at the same time, teaching students remotely, as well as a very sincere thank you to all of the parents for supporting their children when they are learning from home.

Though we have been unable to have the typical holiday events, our PBIS celebration of Movie and Popcorn was held due to the hybrid plan on Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, to recognize all students for their positive behavior throughout the year. We are proud to say that our students daily demonstrate the expectations of being respectful, responsible, honest, and safe.

I am grateful to the faculty and staff, the students and the families for making my last days as principal of North Stonington Elementary School so memorable. There have been so many cards and signs made by the students, balloons throughout the school, a fun book with ideas from the students on what to do when I retire, two parades, ice cream in the lunch room, a very special monetary collection from the parents that will be donated to the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center and so much more. It has been a true honor serving as the principal for the past 16 years. I am very proud of all that has been achieved and I will truly miss our students, their families, and the very finest, most dedicated faculty and staff in the world.



On behalf of the faculty and staff, thank you to the entire North Stonington community for your continued support of our schools and allowing us the opportunity to reach each child. I wish you the happiest of New Years and most of all good health in the future. Thank YOU!

VERONICA WILKISON, PRINCIPAL

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## **THAMES VALLEY COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY ACTION, INC**

### **Help Make a Difference in your Community for the New Year!**

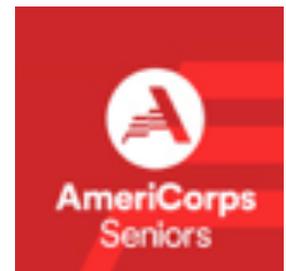
The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of TVCCA is looking for people ages 55+ to help meet the needs of seniors, children, and veterans in eastern CT.

#### **Opportunities to:**

- Provide phone reassurance
- Be a socially distant grocery shopper for homebound seniors and disabled veterans.
- Deliver for Meals on Wheels

#### **One hour a week makes a positive impact!**

For more information contact Georgia James, Program Coordinator (860-425-6608 or [gjames@tvcca.org](mailto:gjames@tvcca.org))



## **NORTH STONINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION**

As we are closing out 2020, I think we can all agree we are not sad to see it go. While it has been a difficult year for schools everywhere, we are thankful for our district and the hard work of our teachers, staff and administrators through COVID-19. Our custodial staff has worked overtime to ensure the safety of our students and staff. Our teachers and administrators have demonstrated great flexibility to make this as positive of an experience as possible. Our nursing staff is working endless hours to continue to contact trace and offer advice when needed; they have been remarkable. We remain in the Hybrid plan until after the holiday and the BOE continues to watch the numbers, recommendations from the CDC and the State Department of Education when making decisions on teaching models during the pandemic. We will be discussing this again in January and are ever hopeful we can get our students back to school full time in the near future.

We have had some changes at the Elementary School and are saying goodbye to Veronica Wilkison, our principal for the last 16 years. She has taken our elementary school to new heights and we have become one of the leading elementary schools in the State under her direction, not small shoes to fill for sure. Thank you doesn't say enough to express our gratitude.

We have gone through the hiring process for a new principal in December. There were over 25 initial applicants for the position and the hiring committee worked to narrow the search and conducted two rounds of interviews with some amazing candidates. We are excited to welcome our new Elementary Principal, Robert Cillino. Rob will be joining us in January 2021 and comes to us with 20 years of experience in the Waterford School District.

The BOE continues to work on our Strategic Plan and we are working to come up with more effective ways to communicate our work with the community. We will be reorganizing our website to make it more user-friendly and are working on putting a Social Media platform in place for information. We are always available by email and encourage you to reach out to us any time. We are recording our meetings and they can be found on our website. As budget season approaches, please feel free to join us on ZOOM or watch the meetings later as we work through the budget. Have a safe and happy New Year; see you in 2021!

CHRISTINE WAGNER, CHAIRMAN      [wagnerc@northstonington.k12.ct.us](mailto:wagnerc@northstonington.k12.ct.us)

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## **BOY SCOUTS TROOP 71**

Troop 71 continues with forward momentum, despite social distancing and the setbacks of the pandemic that we are all feeling. The Scouting for Food drive in November was a huge success. Thank you to everyone who donated; the generosity of our neighbors was truly felt this year.

The Scouts have moved to Zoom meetings. While there is no real replacement for "in person" learning, they have managed to continuously work on rank advancement and merit badges. The troop was able to hold an activity for the incoming Webelos with a hike on Wyassup Lake.

Magnus Smith is in the process of completing his Eagle Scout project at Hewitt Farm. He is replacing a foot bridge over a marshy area on a trail. Thank you to the scouts who were able to assist him on a very cold rainy day.

Boy Scout Troop 71 would like to send out very Happy Holidays to all, and a healthy, prosperous New Year!! Stay safe.

For more information on what Scouting has to offer, please contact Scout Master Doug Spracklin at [sprack1@comcast.net](mailto:sprack1@comcast.net)

KIYA LAMPHERE, TROOP 71      COMMITTEE MEMBER



## WHEELER HIGH SCHOOL/MIDDLE SCHOOL

We are so grateful at Wheeler to be able to remain open these past few months. Many schools around us have not been so fortunate, so we are appreciative of the in-person learning we have been able to consistently provide.

Although we are unable to celebrate the holiday season in our usual fashion with concerts and events, the spirit remains strong at Wheeler. Our student government hosted a fantastic spirit week and continues to keep our morale up.

Our seniors celebrated their annual bonfire, with Ledge Light approval, and we will continue to work hard to provide our students with as much normalcy as possible.

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Wheeler celebrated our annual *Give Back Day* by hosting a Shoe Box Drive for those less fortunate. Students and staff collected toiletry items, toys, clothes and several gift items to donate to various shelters and community centers in the local area.

We want to wish Mrs. Wilkison a happy retirement and we are thrilled to welcome Mr. Robert Cillino onto our administrative team in North Stonington. We are excited about the collaboration and look forward to working together in the years to come!

Happy Holidays to all!

KRISTEN ST. GERMAIN, PRINCIPAL



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## ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

As we all enter this New Year, new assessment notices on all parcels of real estate have been sent out. The revaluation company eQuality, due to the pandemic, was forced to conduct hearings by phone and mail. The results of individual appeals should have been received by the time this newsletter is published.

The next step is to complete the Grand List, which is made up of motor vehicle assessments, personal property assessments, and the new real estate assessments. This process of completing the Grand List should be finished by the end of January 2021.

Beginning on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, property owners who wish to appeal their new assessments can file an application with the Board of Assessment Appeals, for an appointment to be heard. **All applications must be received by the Board of Assessment Appeals before February 20<sup>th</sup>.** Depending on the number of appeals that will govern the time and date, an appointment for a hearing will be sent to everyone who wishes to be heard by the Board. Appointments will begin in March 2021.

The Connecticut Homeowners Program has released the income guidelines for 2020. To qualify you must be 65 years old on January 1, 2021 or on social security disability and have a maximum income for a married couple of \$45,800 and for a single person \$37,600. The program begins on February 1, 2021.

Wishing everyone a very Happy New Year!

DARRYL L. DEL GROSSO, CCMA II, ASSESSOR 860-535-2877 ext. 23 or 24

## BOARD OF FINANCE

As this quarter came to a close, the Board of Finance was presented with the audit for fiscal year 2019-2020. The report continued to demonstrate the Town's budget being well executed, data management and reserves at commendable levels. The Town's auditing service described the audit of the past year as "solid".

Since late spring, the Town has been going through the process of a mandatory revaluation of properties. This particular assessment happens every ten years and has a direct impact on the Town's Grand List. Our preliminary numbers have indicated that real estate evaluations increased by 6-8%. As a comparative, other towns in the State of Connecticut valuated in this cycle are demonstrating a 1-3% increase in real estate values. In all, this is good news for our Town by increasing the Grand List. Final consequences of the revaluation will be available in January.

Other activities that the BOF members have been involved in are reviews of policies relevant to the responsibilities of the Board of Finance, with amendments being applied.

The Board has also been collaborating with General Government and Board of Education as to the budget process and scheduling for fiscal year 2021-2022. Submissions and presentations will begin as we enter the new calendar year.

The public is invited to the Board of Finance meetings which are held on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. Please check the calendar dates for these meetings on the Town's website <https://www.northstoningtonct.gov/board-finance>. As we continue functioning in the pandemic environment, the Board of Finance meetings will be via ZOOM teleconferencing.

DANIEL SPRING, CHAIRMAN

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## NORTH STONINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Society's programs are still in hiatus because of the COVID threat, and sadly that includes access to our genealogical library. We are busy with plans and with preserving the record of North Stonington.

Do you have World War II information that you would like to share? We have enlistment records for some of the 135 men and women from North Stonington who served in WWII, but we would like to get more detailed and personal information... and pictures! Sadly, our WWII veterans have been overlooked in the past and most of them are no longer here. We would like to gather and share information before their children (the baby boomers) are also gone. If you have anything to share, please get in touch with Cindy Anderson at [yellowcat1057@gmail.com](mailto:yellowcat1057@gmail.com).



*What a lovely place to  
enjoy all seasons!*

## TAX COLLECTOR

A friendly reminder: the second half installment of tax bills are due January 2021. The last day to pay without interest is February 1, 2021. You may also find out how much you owe and make payments online by going to [www.northstoungtonct.gov/payonline](http://www.northstoungtonct.gov/payonline). Service fees for on-line payments are as follows: E-check \$2.00; Visa Debit \$3.95; all other debit or credit transactions 2.5% of payment amount. Credit card payments are NOT accepted over the phone.

Supplemental motor vehicle tax bills for vehicles registered between October 2, 2019 and July 31, 2020 are in the mail and available online. Said taxes will be due in full on January 1, 2021. This list is provided to the Tax Assessor by the Department of Motor Vehicles. The assessed value of the “Supplemental” vehicle is prorated based on the month of registration. If you traded in a vehicle for a new vehicle and transferred the plates all taxes must be paid on the original vehicle and a credit is given on the supplemental motor vehicle bill for the new vehicle. If you obtained new license plates or have questions on your bill, please contact the assessor at 860-535-2877 x124.

**Failure to receive a tax bill does not invalidate the tax, interest, liens, and collection fees per Connecticut General Statutes 12-130 and 12-146. It is the taxpayer’s responsibility to call the tax office if you did not receive a bill or go online for your payment amount.**

Tax Collection office hours will be Monday - Friday 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. A secure drop box is also available outside of Town Hall where payments can be left. If payments are left after 2:00 P.M. they will be processed next business day.

**Late payments are determined by official U.S. postmark. Payments postmarked or dropped off before 4pm on the due date do not accrue interest. Connecticut General Statutes do not allow us to go by the check date – postmark only!**

**Governors Executive Order 9R, which was just announced, will allow a deferment for your 2<sup>nd</sup> installment on Motor Vehicle Supplemental bills. If you have been impacted by COVID this will defer your payment till April 1, 2021. If payment is not made by April 1, 2021 the interest will revert back to the due date of January 1, 2021 which is equal to 6%. This program must be APPLIED for. It is NOT automatic. An application must be received to me by January 25, 2021 in order to be considered.**

KAREN JOYAL, TAX COLLECTOR 860-535-2877 EXT 20 [taxcollector@northstoungtonct.gov](mailto:taxcollector@northstoungtonct.gov)

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## NORTH STONINGTON GARDEN CLUB

Traditionally every December, Club members decorate and donate evergreen wreaths to adorn public buildings, churches and other locations in North Stonington. Normally, this happens at a festive group gathering at Hewitt Hall. This year, COVID-19 restrictions obliged us to modify our usual arrangements so instead, volunteers took their wreaths home to decorate before installing them at their designated locations. Nonetheless, a total of 30 creatively-garnished wreaths were distributed to 22 locations. How many can you spot around town?



In October, we held our annual meeting and election of officers by Zoom, rather than in person. In 2021, Mary Ann Buckley will serve as President, Nancy Hughes as Vice-President, Catherine Wade as Treasurer, Barbara Duncan as Assistant Treasurer, Karen Askins as Recording Secretary, and Pat Turner as Corresponding Secretary.

Something new: in the spring of 2020, we prepared a couple of dozen decorated 4” pots, planning to sell them as a feature at our Plant Sale. Each is an individually-crafted, one-of-a-kind item. Wheeler Library kindly agreed to offer these for sale at their merchandise table. These gift-worthy items are modestly priced, and some may still be available at the time this reaches your mailbox.

JANICE PARKER, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR

## PAWCATUCK NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

### PNC PROVIDING FOOD, HEAT AND TRANSPORTATION FOR NORTH STONINGTON

The Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center's food pantry is open, with curbside assistance, from 10:00 to 3:00, Monday through Friday.

COVID-19 has created many situations where people are unemployed and in need of our services. Visit us at 27 Chase Street, Pawcatuck if you could use extra food, diapers, personal hygiene items or pet food.

If you are homebound, the PNC coordinates volunteer drivers who will deliver food. If you are age 55 and over, the Center's bus will provide **no-cost, door-to-door transportation** from your home to the PNC food pantry, medical appointments and shopping. To encourage social distancing, only two riders are in the 12-passenger bus at one time.

If you are in need of heat, call us at (860) 599-3285 ext. 103 for assistance with heating costs. We are here to help you, without judgement.

SUSAN SEDENSKY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
<http://www.pawcatuckneighborhoodcenter.org>



Long line for Thanksgiving food pick-up

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## KEEPING NORTH STONINGTON AFFORDABLE, INC.

KNSA has been supported by many in the community, not only with their dollars, but also with help in our efforts to save an important historical schoolhouse in North Stonington. The North Stonington Historical Society has deemed that the schoolhouse building at 119 Clarks Falls is a clear example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century public use building built in Greek Revival style. As they state in their description, "The dominant Greek Revival characteristic that the schoolhouse exhibits is its simple and beautifully proportioned form".



The town, current owner of the building, accepted KNSA's bid for the building after reviewing its plans to rehabilitate this historical property into a home affordable to a working family. Unfortunately at closing, the title could not be cleared and the sale could not go through. KNSA, working with our lawyer, is taking the case to the CT Attorney General to try to get the title cleared. With the approval by the town of the sale to us, we can then proceed to access state and federal funds to preserve and rehabilitate this historical gem. As Dick Seager, historian of the North Stonington Historical Society states, "the desire of the Society to see this building preserved, and KNSA's mission to provide affordable homes to income qualified working families, come together in trying to save and repurpose this building".

Thanks to those of you who dug through old records so we could provide answers for the AG and to those of you who contribute dollars; we can pursue saving and repurposing this building which has served the public so well as a school and, in the future, as a home for an income qualified working family of North Stonington.

MARY ANN RICKER, PRESIDENT

## WHEELER LIBRARY

Wheeler Library is maintaining a schedule of contactless curbside pickup, home delivery and limited open hours. Please call us (860-535-0383) or see our website ([wheelerlibrary.org](http://wheelerlibrary.org)) for our current hours.

Our storywalks down Main Street are a big hit; this month we are featuring the children's book *Owl Babies*. Start at the clock by Town Hall and follow the framed laminated pages down Main Street. When you reach the library, come inside for a take and make craft.

A new collection of Playaways for children has just arrived, and we continue to purchase the best new books and DVDs for you to enjoy. The library also has a large lending collection of puzzles for all ages.

Check out the Wise Lion Bookshop in the lower level of the library for a curated collection of gently used books for all ages and interests. Our retail "store" continues to showcase locally produced items and greeting cards.

Happy 2021 from Wheeler Library.

AMY KENNEDY

860-535-0383



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## NORTH STONINGTON CITIZENS LAND ALLIANCE

The Land Alliance is happy to report that the streamflow on Pendleton Hill Brook, where it crosses Grindstone Hill Road, has been restored. The U.S. Geological Survey operates a water flow station there with data collection overseen by CT DEEP.

Last March we were informed by Eric Thomas of DEEP that the water flow data at that location was abnormal. Upon inspection it was revealed unknown persons had constructed four rock dams along that section, causing water to pool and not flow freely. Additionally, there was extensive clear-cutting of brush and trees along both streambanks, signs were attached to trees and a rickety bridge was built across the brook. The Land Alliance taped off the area as a hazard until it could be returned to its normal condition.



Illegal rock dam on Pendleton Hill Brook



Volunteers removed the bridge & dam

Now, with the drought over, water again flows freely along that section of brook.

We welcome the public to hike the Fowler Grindstone Preserve. The Trail heads are on Fowler Road

**Please join our BRAND NEW Zoom Coffee Club**, every Monday morning in January at 11:00 am: a virtual visual/auditory get-together to help us smile and keep in touch. No agenda. No minutes! Register your email ASAP to: North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance at [landallianceinc@gmail.com](mailto:landallianceinc@gmail.com) and receive the entry information.

Visit us on our website at [www.nslandalliance.org](http://www.nslandalliance.org). Hope to see you!

BETTY PERKOWSKI 860-599-5517

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Even with our inability to meet in person, we've been able to accomplish quite a bit. The Wintechog Hill Preserve Trail is complete. With the help from Public Works, a small parking lot was created, the map and sign planted at the trail head and additional blue circle trail markers mounted. It is a lovely addition to all who enjoy our municipal trails. Dogs are welcome under your immediate control.

We anticipated lighter sales of the 2021 Community Calendar given the pandemic, and purchased less than usual, but sorry to say, we should have maintained our normal production. They're sold out. We're already working on the 2022 calendar; highlighting the farms, farmers and their animals.



Committee members with a new sign

The North Stonington Trail Map brochure continues to be a big hit, free for the asking at Wheeler Library and Chelsea-Groton Bank. All state, municipal and private land Conservation Organization trails in town are identified.

Back in 2013 we sent letters to 26 landowners identified in the Plan of Conservation and Development as owning property we felt would add to the protection of greenway corridors in town. This fall we repeated a similar mailing as Congress has since passed new powerful tax incentive measures for conservation easement donations. Should any of you reading this want to protect any of your property for the future, this is a powerful tool for you. You may contact us for this information to consider.

Our commission planned and hosted a tri-town meeting with officials and conservation representatives in Westerly, Stonington and North Stonington as we slowly work toward adding our town to a kayak-canoe trail down the Pawcatuck River.

WILLIAM RICKER, CHAIRMAN

WILLIAMRICKER@COMCAST.NET

860-535-2426

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## NORTH STONINGTON RECREATION COMMISSION

The State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) has implemented a "PAUSE" in team sports (practices/games) from November 23<sup>rd</sup> until January 19<sup>th</sup>, which affects High School/Middle Schools, AAU programs, and Recreational sports. Unfortunately, this means that the popular Youth Basketball program will not happen during this period. An abbreviated Youth Basketball program is a possibility in early spring. Some indoor activities (i.e. small group training), which involve four people or less, are still permissible.

Many outdoor recreational activities are allowed during this pause such as tennis, pickleball, running, hiking, and mountain biking. We encourage people to utilize the facilities at Rocky Hollow recreation area, including the walking track. And don't forget the sledding area for kids when there is snow on the ground. The Hewitt Farm offers multiple hiking trails, as do the many nearby State Parks and Forests.

The Recreation Commission has worked hard to be creative and come up with some fun alternative activities, contests and challenges (i.e. "Holiday Bingo Challenge") which have been posted on the Recreation Facebook page. Two "NoSto Ice Skating" events have been scheduled at the Outdoor Skating Rink in Westerly for January 3<sup>rd</sup> (5:30 – 7:30pm) and February 16<sup>th</sup> (1:00 – 3:00pm) **for those that pre-register via the Rec website**. It is anticipated that there will soon be several recreational programs/activities (i.e. Mountain Biking Clinic, Virtual Art Classes, Chess Lessons, and early-bird discounted registration for the Summer Playground Camp) offered via the Rec website [northstoningtonrec.com](http://northstoningtonrec.com) in January, February and March.

The Recreation Commission, which meets the first Thursday of every month, is always interested in offering new and interesting activities to the community. Please forward any suggestions to the Recreation Director, Thomas Fabian, via phone (860) 535-2162 or Email [nsrecplay@northstoningtonct.gov](mailto:nsrecplay@northstoningtonct.gov).

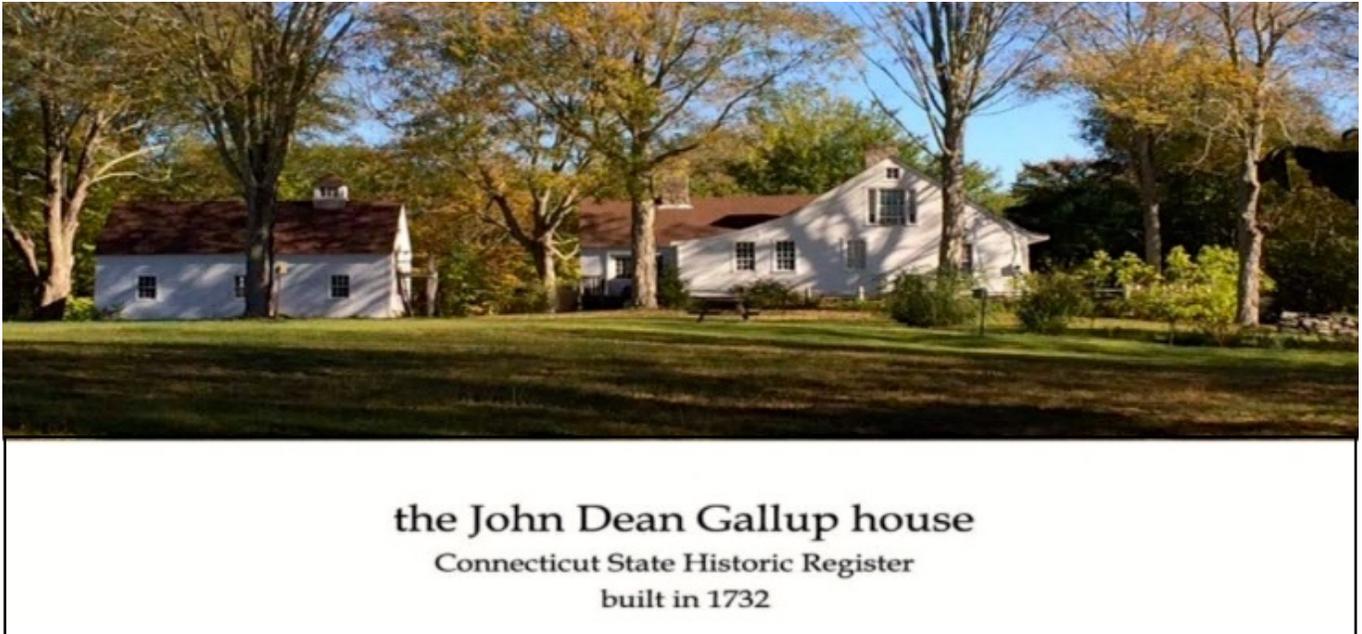
## HEWITT FARM

The pandemic still surrounds us, but the Hewitt Farm with its open space seems to draw folks. The clean air and the many trails are very popular. We are very glad to see visitors of all ages!

As was mentioned in the Fall NS Quarterly issue, we have been improving the John Dean Gallup House and were very lucky to have received a grant for \$20,000 from the Connecticut Historic Preservation Office. This allowed us to choose and work with very knowledgeable architects and historians.

In early December, residents of our Town joined us to participate in a “Zoom” Focus Group Session. This was performed by Lothrop Associates Preservation Architects, who have been working with us to assess the condition of the John Dean Gallup House and the Carriage House. Also important for us to determine is the feasibility of how the two buildings would best be used.

The group of our residents consisted of 18 townspeople who were interested in sharing thoughts and learning more about this 1732 historical structure. In this one hour session there were many ideas put forth by the attendees. We will soon receive a report from Lothrop Associates that will allow us to move forward with next steps.



Please remember that Hewitt Farm is open daily from dawn to dusk. It's free, easy to get to, right near the village and Holly Green. Park just inside the Hewitt Road entrance off Route 2 or at the parking area down Hewitt Road from Ryder Road. Download the Hewitt Farm Trail Map from the town website ([www.northstoningtonct.gov](http://www.northstoningtonct.gov)) or pick one up at the trailheads.

ED HARASIMOWITZ, CHAIRMAN

860-245-5305

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### FUN THINGS TO DO

Two “NOSTO” Ice Skating events are scheduled for January 3<sup>rd</sup> (5:30-7:30 pm) and February 16<sup>th</sup> (1:00-3:00 pm) at the outdoor Washington Trust Community Skating Rink, 61 Main Street. Pre-register on the Rec website. (page 12).

Join the Citizens Land Alliance for its new **Zoom Coffee Club** on Monday mornings in January at 11:00 am. (page 11)

The North Stonington Trivia Contest will be held on February 5<sup>th</sup> and it will be completely virtual via Zoom! A teacher in the DC area will run this event! Make sure to sign up early on the North Stonington Education Foundation's website ([nsedfoundation.org/events/](http://nsedfoundation.org/events/)). (page 3)

## TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

Happy 2021! The year 2020 was an unforgettable year with a global pandemic that impacted all aspects of our daily lives. As we enter this New Year, there is the hope that we can slowly get back to having many activities return to “in person” events. During the previous year, the Town Clerk's Office continued to operate with “business as usual” incorporating safety protocols and socially distancing requirements. The use of the Town Hall drop box and the Tax Office window greatly helped to get documents processed without the need to physically come into the office, and they will remain in use for the convenience of the public.

Birth, marriage, and death certificates are filed in the office. If you plan on being married in North Stonington, a marriage license must be obtained from the Town Clerk's Office.

The recording and indexing of land records are an important part of the Town Clerk's job. If you need to access the land records, you may come to the office or go to the Town website ([www.northstoningtonct.gov](http://www.northstoningtonct.gov)). On the homepage page look for “Quick Access” and then click on “Town Land Records”.

The Town Clerk issues hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses which can also be purchased online at [www.ct.gov/deep/hunting](http://www.ct.gov/deep/hunting). Dog licenses are issued in the office and renewals occur during June.

The office handles absentee ballots for all elections, primaries, and referendums. Please contact the office with any questions regarding absentee ballots and elections.

The Town Clerk's Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM until 4:00 PM, except on legal holidays. Please call (860) 535-2877 Ext. 121 or e-mail [townclerk@northstoningtonct.gov](mailto:townclerk@northstoningtonct.gov).

ANTOINETTE PANCARO, CMC, CCTC

TOWN CLERK

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## NORTH STONINGTON COMMUNITY GRANGE #138

When North Stonington Community Grange #138 meets (on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays with some exceptions), we discuss and act upon, not only our Grange needs, but also the needs of our community. Covid-19 has changed those meetings. We met briefly in the fall when it seemed Covid was stable, with face masks, social distancing, no refreshments, and a shortened program as the norm, in order to keep up with our usual business needs. However, with Covid's escalation, we are again on hold.

We last met for Halloween, revamping all the games for social distancing and no touching, and still had a nice time. Being unable to meet, but not wanting to disappoint the children, we contacted Santa and he was able to “videotape” a message for all the children, and presents magically arrived. We all enjoyed his message, which you can see here by clicking on this link: <https://youtu.be/frjZMKXaw-g>. We have managed to give out Dictionaries to 3<sup>rd</sup> graders again, help families with Thanksgiving meals, adopt Christmas families, and in lieu of our usual caroling, send fruit baskets to our shut-ins.



Winter is always a bit slower, but we do have programs scheduled. Jan 8<sup>th</sup> is “Take time to Unwind”; Feb 12<sup>th</sup> is “Hold hands firmly, hearts gently”; March returns to two meetings a month, with the 12<sup>th</sup> being a great day for you to come see what we are all about with our “Ritual Program”; and the 26<sup>th</sup> will be (we hope!) our award-winning Lecturer's contest entry! **However, Meetings Are On Hold Until We See What Covid Is Trending.**

**You are welcome to join us at any time.** Please contact Lecturer Sue Pianka at 860-599-4528 or Secretary Nancy Weissmuller at 860-535-2703 for the latest on meeting status. **We look forward to meeting you when things return to some semblance of normalcy. In the mean time, wear your masks, limit your gatherings, maintain your distance when you do go out, and get a vaccination just as soon as you are able to.**

SUE PIANKA, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

## **NORTH STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The winter brings a flurry (no pun intended!) of very busy activity for the school department. Despite COVID, teachers and students will be working through the various curricula as well as preparing for the state testing which we believe will be administered in the spring. Due to COVID, winter athletic events are scheduled to begin in January. We are assuming that all athletic events will be closed to the public as they were for the fall sports.

After 16 years as principal of North Stonington Elementary School, Mrs. Veronica Wilkison has retired. It is not easy to replace a principal that gave so much to the school and, along with her faculty, produced incredible results. After an exhaustive interview process that saw 25 candidates place a letter of intent, some as far away as Colorado and Florida, we reduced the candidate pool down to 12, then down to 5 before deciding on 3 finalists.

We are pleased to introduce to the North Stonington community Mr. Robert “Rob” Cillino as the new Elementary School Principal. A lifelong resident of Westerly and a graduate of the town’s high school, he graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 1991. Rob comes to us after a successful career at Waterford Public Schools. His references are impeccable. We are all looking forward to the day that we can have a public meet-and-greet with Rob.

The 2021-2022 Board of Education (BOE) budget will be a focus in the winter months. Central Office staff is already busy working with the building administrators and department heads developing the Superintendent’s budget. That budget will be presented to the BOE in January. The BOE will then work with the district administrators and department heads as they will go through every line-item request and make adjustments accordingly. Once approved, the BOE budget will be presented to the Board of Finance.

The weather always makes for difficult decisions in terms of delaying, canceling or dismissing students early from school. Families have received my annual letter addressing inclement weather which also addresses the fact that snow days will be handled as they have been in the past while we are in the hybrid plan and need to be made-up, unless they happen on a virtual day. If we should move to a full-in, we will follow the traditional snow days as well. In addition to an automated message regarding school cancellations, delays, or early dismissals, this information is also posted on local television and radio stations.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy school year!

PETER NERO, SUPERINTENDENT

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## **NORTH STONINGTON AGRICULTURAL FAIR**

Happy New Year!! It’s been nice to see some fun activities happening in town over the past several months despite the pandemic. The Fair participated in the Halloween Light Parade and there have been a few events that took place at the fairgrounds.

Although there is still a lot of uncertainty as to where the next few months may take us, we are hopeful in opening our gates on July 8<sup>th</sup>. The Board of Directors continues to monitor the state’s guidelines and corresponds with the Association of CT Fairs for updates. Our vendors, participants, entertainers, exhibitors and spectators are eager to get back to enjoying the fair season. We will update our website with any news and events that are planned. Stay well....stay safe!



JODY WHIPPLE    PINENEEDLHOMESTEAD@SBCGLOBAL.NET    860-599-8498

**Town of North Stonington  
40 Main Street  
North Stonington, CT 06359**

**PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM-Retail**

**Local  
Postal Customer  
North Stonington, CT 06359**

2020

will certainly be recorded as a significant time in history. This past year our lives have been dominated by COVID-19 and the struggles and hardships thrust upon us. Living in unprecedented times, we have put one foot in front of the other and moved forward despite the challenges and obstacles placed before us. Unable to meet in person, Town meetings are being held via Zoom and have had more residents attending and participating than ever before. Our schools have remained open in the Hybrid plan with teachers, parents and students finding success in their collaboration. Wheeler Library has gone above and beyond, offering curbside service and “take and make” crafts for kids, providing an invaluable service to our community. Almost all events were canceled in 2020. Remarkably, although physically distant, our community is closer than before. We take care of each other and our neighbors. We are in this together. Wishing you all the very best in 2021.

**Happy New Year  
Lisa Mazzella & Nita Kincaid**