

BOROUGH OF STONINGTON
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WARDEN

APRIL 2019 (4/22/19)

OVERVIEW--- The Borough's non-aggression pact with the weather gods continued to hold during the past year. Aside from unusually heavy rain in the fall, an early snowstorm in November, and a couple of cold snaps in January, the weather has been benign, with little snow since New Year's. Another factor contributing to quiet in the village was that I had to shut off the bell in the United Church, because the bell control system malfunctioned. That has now been repaired, and the 180 year old bell is striking again.

FIRE DEPARTMENT--- The volunteers of the Borough Fire Department continue to keep our residents and those of surrounding communities safe. In the past year they responded to 148 calls, slightly over half of which were located in the Borough. Incidents included everything from hazardous material spills to motor vehicle accidents to water emergencies to actual fires, demonstrating the wide range of issues our fire department trains for and handles with skill. Wearing his fire marshal hat, Chief Hoadley has again been very active with annual inspections and following up on discrepancies he found last year. He is required by law to inspect every year all places of assembly and buildings with three or more apartments.

ZONING --- Second only to fire protection, planning and zoning are very important functions of your government. Like the weather, zoning has been relatively quiet this past year, but busy nonetheless, with 40 permits issued and revisions to the regulations in the works.

ADMINISTRATIVE/REGULATORY ACTIVITY— The Borough maintained the 10 percent discount our residents receive on flood insurance policies through FEMA’s Community Rating System. Participation in the CRS program imposes a significant administrative burden, but I believe it is worth the effort, because over half of the Borough is within the 100-year flood zone and about 40% of the Borough’s structures carry flood insurance. In June of this year we will be subjected to our five-year “verification visit” – basically an audit -- by FEMA, and I have spent a lot of time preparing for it.

The joint Borough-Town storm water management plan is working well. The report for 2018 was recently submitted to DEEP. If you care to read it, you can find it on the Borough website.

We successfully completed our financial audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018. The Borough’s net position—or net worth -- as of that date was \$4,317,068, a decrease of 2.8 percent from the previous year. Also, we continue to receive queries from the US Census Bureau in preparation for the 2020 census. Incidentally, the Census Bureau’s latest estimate of the Borough’s population (July 2017) is 955 and the median age is

58 years. That's 20 fewer people and two years older than last year's figures.

INFRASTRUCTURE – Bayview Ave was repaved from Elm Street to Elihu Street, as was the section of Main Street along Wadawanuck Square. Also, almost all the street lights in the Borough and Town have been converted to LEDs by Eversource. Later this spring, a new standby generator will be installed behind Borough Hall, which will allow the hall to serve as a place of refuge in the event a major storm knocks out power to the Borough.

RECOGNITION – Keeping the Borough going as an independent municipality is a team effort involving a small paid staff and lots of volunteers. We don't have a big pool from which to draw volunteers for our boards and commissions, not to mention people willing to run for elective office. I want to give a big thankyou to the citizens who serve on Planning & Zoning, which is chaired by Julia Leeming; the Zoning Board of Appeals, chaired by Lissa van Dyke; and the Harbor Management Commission, a joint commission with the Town. Another very important group of volunteers are the fire fighters, who respond not only to fires but also to floods and other emergencies. Our paid staff includes Barbara Perry in the office; part-time zoning officer Tom Zanarini; fire chief/marshal Jeff Hoadley; and Sue Cordeiro and Roger Collelo, who keep the streets clear of leaves and snow, as well as maintaining our six parks and responding to fallen tree limbs, clogged storm drains,

and other situations of all sorts. By the way, Sue is now in her 38th year of service in the Borough Street Department; Roger and Barbara have worked for us for 16 years. And Jeff Hoadley has been a member of the fire department for 45 years. All together they are the corporate memory of this government. I want to thank my colleagues on the Board of Warden & Burgesses and our tax assessor and tax collector for their service to the community. Special mention goes to burgesses Bob Scala and Michael Adair and tax collector Tom Sanford, all of whom are retiring at the end of this term. I don't know how the Board will function without Bob to move the minutes and adjournment. Borough Attorney Nick Kepple continues to provide wise advice on a whole range of legal matters.

CHARTER REVISION--- By way of background, after several public discussions about the future of the Borough, it became clear that the overwhelming majority of residents who attended the meetings wanted to keep the Borough as an independent municipality. At the same time, they recognized that our governing structure needed some updating. Late in 2017, a charter revision commission was formed by the Board of Warden & Burgess, and last year the commission, led by Burgess Shaun Mastroianni, developed a draft revised charter. The revised charter was unanimously approved by the Board of Warden & Burgesses, but under State law, before the new charter can go into effect, it must be put before the electors of the Borough. That will happen in nine days, when the next bi-annual Borough elections take place. I urge you all to VOTE on

Monday May 6th at the fire house. The main changes in the new charter are: reducing the Board of Warden & Burgesses from 7 members to 5; establishing the position of senior burgess, who can fill in if the warden is away; eliminating the position of tax collector and making the positions of assessor and clerk-treasurer appointed rather than elected positions. You can read the proposed charter on the Borough website.

PASSINGS-- Each year I note the passing of some important members of the community, people who gave in various ways to make the Borough a better place to live for all.

Among those we have lost this year are Bob Abramson, Brian Barnard, Bill Bomster, Ellie Casey, Rob Casey, Ben Davol, Moira O'Malley, Joseph Marie, Marguerite Riordon, and Terry Weeks.

WILLIAM WILLIAMS FUND -- The Borough is very fortunate to have two charitable funds with which to assist residents who need a little financial help. The older fund is the Waldron Fund, which we will talk about later in the program. The "newer" fund is the William Williams Fund, established almost 100 years ago. Traditionally the warden and clerk-treasurer are the ones who administer the Williams Fund. So far this season we have assisted four residents and disbursed a total of \$5,400. The fund balance stands at \$77,400.

Over the past six months, the trustees of the Waldron Fund and the administrators of the Williams Fund have explored the possibility of merging the two funds in order to achieve more efficiency in their operations. We have been assisted in this

discussion by the generous efforts of attorney Beth Leamon, who specializes in wills and trusts. Having consulted with the state's attorney general office, Beth intends to petition the court of probate for permission to merge the two funds and create a combined Waldron-Williams Charitable Fund. Our intent is that the new fund would be governed by three trustees to be elected at the annual meeting, as is the case of the existing Waldron Fund.

OUTLOOK - Stonington Borough enters its 219th year in good shape both fiscally, physically, and socially. Our financial reserves are strong, our infrastructure is in relatively good shape, and the institutions that bind the community together are vibrant. Let's all work to keep things that way.