

WELCOME TO ISSUE 3, FIRST OF 2024

We hope you find this newsletter a convenient way to stay informed about our community.

The Durham Democratic Town Committee's (DDTC) longstanding mission statement is as follows:

The Durham Democratic Town Committee is committed to selecting and promoting strong candidates to fill town offices, boards and commissions and to working on behalf of state and national candidates who will serve with fairness and integrity.

In service of this mission, we will continue to be an active, engaged political party in town. Our campaign activities in support of the experienced and knowledgeable democratic candidates during the 2023 municipal election demonstrated our commitment to advancing qualified candidates able to serve our community, right from day one. I'm sure many of you noticed our candidate signs and billboard as well as our campaign literature and post cards. Maybe you even had a conversation with one of our candidates or our door knocking volunteers. No matter the outcome, the DDTC brings the energy and resources to provide and promote candidates dedicated to representing you!

Town government is intended to best serve our residents with strong representation from both parties, Republican and Democratic. Durham has historically been a Republican town and often, Democrats who serve on our many town boards and commissions have been

seated according to the dictates of minority representation. The DDTC wants to change that. We're working to get more Democrats seated in Durham. In the past few years, we've noticed some concerning trends arising from Republican leadership...serious staffing problems in Town Hall, lack of long-term planning and community engagement from the Republican-dominated Board of Education, a shift away from a bikeable community, and lack of investment in our town and Main Street. Greater Democratic representation throughout our town government will provide differing, highly qualified viewpoints and an exciting vision for a dynamic, inclusive community, leading to better choices and better solutions to the challenges facing Durham.

I'll leave you with something to think about. In our 2023 municipal election, 653 registered Democrats did not vote. Only 195 more votes for Ds on the ballot would have placed a majority of our candidates in office. A majority. If you are one of those 653 Democrats, the DDTC is going to work hard to connect with you, inspire you to come out and vote for the highly qualified candidates we endorse, and help us increase the number of elected Democrats representing us in town, in Hartford, and in Washington DC. I'll ask you now (and again and again)...join with us, and BE A VOTER!

Thanks for your attention. Reach out to us anytime at durhamdte@gmail.com.

Warm regards,
Kristina Talbert-Slagle
DTC Chairperson

GREETINGS FROM THE DURHAM DEMOCRATIC TOWN COMMITTEE!

Congratulations to all the newly elected & appointed Democratic officials on our local boards and commissions. This year, we plan to mail out several newsletters to update residents on local news. In a presidential

election year, local issues often get obscured by national events, especially when there is no local news outlet. It is our goal to keep you informed. We can't issue newsletters as often as we would like. You can follow us on social media

to learn about specific events, meetings or issues. The town website, townofdurhamct.org, has all the board and commission members listed. Feel free to contact our members about their board or commission activities.

BOARD OF EDUCATION - REGIONAL DISTRICT 13

The Board of Education has considered several options to a reconfiguration of its schools. At the January 2024 meeting, members decided on three options for final consideration and set up two review forums for the public to participate in evaluation of the options. The options include:

A. Keep all 5 schools open and “renovate as new” Brewster School (grades PK-1), John Lyman (2-3), and Memorial School (4-5).

B. Keep 4 schools open and close John Lyman School & “renovate as new” Brewster School (grades PK-2) and Memorial School (3-5).

C. Keep 3 schools open and close John Lyman School and Brewster School and rebuild Memorial School to accommodate grades PK-5.

Those who participated in the review sessions at Memorial School had a chance to discuss within small groups the educational value and financial impact of the three options, then review the comments of all the groups, and individually choose the option they felt worked best.

At its February meeting, the Board decided to pursue Option C; the 3-school option, based on the majority of support for this option coming out of the public work sessions. The architect was directed to develop the final proposal including the cost comparison of renovate as new or rebuild a new school.

The BOE must submit an application to the State by the end of June, 2024 for consideration for funding for next year. It will require a referendum on the entire capital cost before November for approval, and a referendum for the adoption of amendment to the School District 13 Regional Plan, authorizing the closure of the schools.

The Superintendent’s proposed Budget of \$41,193,501 (gross) and \$39,612,120 (net), a 4.48% and 3.82% increase, respectively, was presented at the Board’s February meeting. Several meeting dates were scheduled for budget review throughout February and March for adoption at referendum in May.

Several improvements were made to the facilities at the Coginchaug campus this past fall, including the construction of a field house building adjacent to the athletic field

and track and paving of Picket Lane, which included speed tables.

The School District is awaiting release of \$430,000 from the State for the construction of restroom facilities in the field house and lighting for the football and soccer field, with plans to complete them this year. RSD 13 will also be replacing the turf field early this summer.

Only one of our BOE candidates, Bob Moore, was elected to the Board at the last election (BOE is not subject to minority representation requirements, leaving Bob as the only democrat from Durham.). We thank Mariah Roy for her service on the Board and her efforts in supporting our entire ticket and to Patrick Holden for his willingness to serve and for his outstanding campaigning.

Submitted by Robert Moore

PLANNING & ZONING

As we enter the new year, the P & Z Commission continues to work on updating our residential zoning regulations. The goal is to offer more opportunity for affordable housing &, potentially, more building opportunities. P & Z started this task early in 2023 and has continued drafting language into 2024. A public hearing was held regarding these proposed updates on February 21, 2024. The public hearing will continue and allow another opportunity to comment at the meeting on April 17, 2024.

In 2023 P & Z approved regulations in March to allow short term rentals in and adopted regulations to allow farms to operate farm stores. This was an update to the existing farm stand regulation and will allow farmers to sell products that are complimentary to their primary agricultural operation. Additionally, there were a few applications for building and subdivision of property that were granted.

All members of the P & Z Commission were recognized for successfully completing the required training by the State of Connecticut at an August Board of Selectmen meeting.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

First, let me say how honored I am that you have selected me to represent you on the Board of Selectmen. After 10 years on the Region 13 Board of Education (2002-2012) and two years on the Board of Selectmen (2017-2019), I'm eager to lend my expertise to the newest iteration of the Board of Selectmen.

I'm thrilled to report that First Selectman Brendan Rea, Selectman Rob Chadd and I are working together in a true collaborative, bipartisan way, which, I'm told, may be in contrast to the immediate past. Although I am the minority representative on the board, I am being treated as an equal, meaning that our point of view will be heard.

We are a new board, so we are feeling our way a bit, digging into 2024-2025 budget preparations, examining proper use and care of the Durham Community Center and trying to move the town forward in so many areas. We intend to listen to all our constituents and are

BOS MEET ON THE 1ST AND 3RD MONDAY EACH MONTH

planning to have some open discussion sessions; the first of which was held on Saturday, February 24, 2024 at the Durham Community Center. I encourage all who read this to get involved in town activities and to reach out if you have any thoughts or concerns.

Submitted by Tom Hennick
Selectman

BOARD OF FINANCE

We are in the middle of budget meetings, and the Board of Selectmen presentation was held on February 22, 2024. The annual budget presentation is scheduled for Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 7 pm. Individual meetings take place at our scheduled finance board meetings so if you are interested in explanations as to how the town departments are requesting funding for next year, tune in via zoom or attend in person.

The audit and closing of last fiscal year's budget have also been challenging without a Finance Director. Several qualified candidates were interviewed for the position, but, unfortunately, Durham was unable to meet their salary requirements. Fortunately, we were able to welcome back Beth Moncata, our former Finance Director, who has agreed to return to her prior position.

The Town is still working to spend ARPA funds which will allow us to take on projects we otherwise would not have. Although much of the funding has been allocated, we have to follow the projects closely to make sure they are moving ahead, otherwise we should consider other projects that are likely to spend the funds down. Some funding may have to be moved around in order to accomplish this. As always, we encourage people to pay attention and attend meetings. Many with strong opinions attend each one and if you want your voice heard, the only way is to follow along and send letters or speak during public comment.

EARLY VOTING HAS ARRIVED!

Our first election event in 2024 is the Presidential Preference Primary, April 2nd. Early voting is available for the first time at Town Hall beginning on March 26th. Absentee ballots will be available beginning March 12th.

Upcoming referendums include the annual expected referendum on the RSD13 budget in the first week of May, review of BOE proposals, and possibly a town referendum.

FOLLOW US!

On the web:
[https://
durhamctdemocrats.org/](https://durhamctdemocrats.org/)

Facebook:
[https://www.facebook.
com/durhamctdemocrats](https://www.facebook.com/durhamctdemocrats)

Instagram:
[https://www.instagram.
com/durhamctdemocrats/](https://www.instagram.com/durhamctdemocrats/)

Twitter:
[https://twitter.com/
DurhamCtDems](https://twitter.com/DurhamCtDems)

To receive this newsletter
via e-mail:



P.O. Box 531
Durham, CT 06422



PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DURHAM DEMOCRATIC
TOWN COMMITTEE
PERMIT NO. 64

UPDATE FROM OUR LOCALLY ELECTED STATE REPRESENTATIVES

The 2024 legislative session opened on February 7, 2024, and we're thrilled to continue serving Durham in the State House and State Senate. Our priorities this year include ensuring Connecticut maintains its fiscal strength and resilience—by extending tax relief, expanding debt payments, and continuing responsible budgeting and management of state finances.

We'll be working on legislation to protect our environment and public health, and will partner with local leaders to ensure state policy on everything from education to economic development is aligned with the challenges and opportunities here in Durham. And having secured nearly half a million dollars in bond funding to improve facilities at CRHS, we will continue advocating for more financial support for our community.

As always, we'd love to hear from you about your priorities and ideas! You can reach us at johnmichael.parker@cga.ct.gov and christine.cohen@cga.ct.gov. Thank you!



ELECTION DAY 2023

Paid for by the DDTC, Martin Anderson, Treasurer