To protect Woodbridge residents and others who work, visit, shop and enjoy many of our activities in town, I signed an Emergency Order in January, requiring everyone wear masks at all indoor establishments, workplaces and public meeting spaces. This order will remain in place until further notice. It is the right thing to do to keep the Town of Woodbridge safe. Masks, social distancing, vaccines and tests are the simple steps we need to continue to take to keep ourselves and our community safe. You may read the full order on the Town website.

I urge everyone to take advantage of FREE vaccines and boosters, especially given the quick spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant. You may find vaccines and tests by visiting ct.gov/coronavirus. Human Services (203-389-3429) can also help with testing and vaccine referrals. Masks continue to be required in Town buildings; Town meetings remain virtual, and in-person programming has been scaled back significantly to keep our community safe.

The Diversity & Inclusion Committee invites all residents to participate in a new initiative, Mosaic: Woodbridge Reading in Community. The first (remote) discussion will be on February 24 at 7 pm regarding The 1619 Project by Nikole Hannah-Jones. The discussion will be led by resident Rev. Antona Brent Smith. More details, including the link to participate in this virtual event, will be available on the Town website and Facebook page as the date nears.

Our ad hoc Housing Opportunity Study Committee is working diligently on the Town’s Affordable Housing Plan. Please keep your eye out for an upcoming Woodbridge-specific survey to supplement the regional survey published by SCRCOG. This survey is another tool to help us find ways to meet our state and federally mandated obligations regarding affordable housing.

Budget season continues and in late February the Board of Selectmen will make budget recommendations to the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance will begin its deliberation process in March followed by a public hearing on the preliminary budget on Monday, April 18. These meetings are televised, available to watch on YouTube, and links to join virtual meetings can be found in the meeting agenda; meeting minutes include links to the video.

As I have for the past several months, I encourage all residents to participate in the budget process, either by attending any meetings (which remain virtual due to COVID), asking questions of any board or commission members, and of course bringing your ideas and suggestions forward.

At the January Board of Selectmen meeting, following an executive session, the Board voted to pursue Arbor Haven’s proposal to purchase 100 acres of the former country Club of Woodbridge for $9 million to develop a range of housing and to deny and the Land Trust and Parks Association proposal to purchase a conservation easement on 140 of the 150 acres for $250,000.

The former Country Club is a beautiful parcel of land and I understand residents’ emotional attachment to keeping it as it is. I moved here almost thirty years ago for the schools and the open spaces, of which we have many. However, we must be realistic. Our costs to fund important services and education continue to increase without a corresponding increase in revenues. Selling a conservation easement for $250,000 and forever preventing development is irresponsible while we are entertaining a $9 million offer for the same parcel. We face serious budget issues in the coming year. The Board of Selectmen, at the very least, has an obligation to have the $9 million offer decided by voters at a referendum.

Additionally, we must recognize, and State law requires, that our housing stock needs to diversify. This will attract and retain young residents, and downsizing residents who want to remain in town but in smaller, less expensive homes, as well as encouraging lower-income residents to move here. The Arbor Haven proposal addresses all of these issues and still sets aside 50 acres for Town ownership and either recreational or passive use of one third of the property.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have questions or comments. You can reach me at bheller@woodbridgect.org or at 203-389-3401.
Board of Assessment Appeals Notice

The Board of Assessment Appeals of the Town of Woodbridge will be holding their annual appeal meetings on:
- Fri. March 25, 6-9 pm
- Sat., March 26, 9 am - 12 pm
- Wed., March 30, 6-9 pm

Meetings will be held to hear appeals relating to assessments for Real Property and Business Personal Property on the October 1, 2021 Grand List.

Written applications are mandatory, no appeal will be heard without one. Applications and instructions are located on the Board of Assessment Appeals page on the Town website at woodbridgect.org. Original applications must be filled out and returned to the Assessor’s office no later than 4:30 pm on February 18, 2022. All persons filing proper applications shall be notified by March 1 of the day, time, and information relating to their appeal hearing.

You or a duly preauthorized representative must appear. (Written authorization and the representative’s personal identification must be provided prior to the hearing.) If appealing the assessed value of your property, you must present documents with application as evidence in support of your claim or an appraiser’s analysis of your property value based on 2019 (the revaluation year) comparable sales. Comparable sales are those of similar style, size and location and must be from the year 2019.

Call the Assessor’s office at 203-389-3416 with Board of Assessment Appeals questions.

Tax Relief Programs

Woodbridge residents may file applications for the State and Town Elderly and Totally Disabled Tax Relief Programs by May 13, 2022 with the Town Assessor.

Residents eligible for State and Town tax relief programs include individuals who:
1. turned age 65 on or before Dec. 31, 2021; individuals on Social Security Disability are exempt from this age requirement.
2. hold full time residence in Woodbridge.
3. meet the State program income limits of $38,100 maximum for singles and $46,400 maximum for married couples.
4. meet the Town program income limits (for single or married) of $46,400 maximum to qualify for a $1,400 Tier 1 credit and $78,880 maximum for a $1,120 Tier 2 credit.

Proof of 2021 income and Social Security earnings is required.

Tax relief is also available for veterans through a local veteran exemption offered through the Town. There is no age requirement and applications must be filed by May 13, 2022.

To qualify, honorable discharge papers (DD-214) must have been filed with the Town Clerk’s office by Sept. 30, 2021. The maximum income for this program is $63,100 for a single person or $71,400 for a married couple.

Applications for all programs will be mailed to residents who are presently on a program and need to refile.

Tax relief program details and applications are available on the Assessor’s page of the Town website at WoodbridgeCT.org or by calling 203-389-3416.

Applications may be filed with the office of the Assessor at Town Hall (11 Meetinghouse Lane), Mon. through Fri. between 8:30 am - 4:30 pm.
Important Winter Fire Safety Tips

Last month, two devastating fires in Bronx and Philadelphia have caused the deaths of 32 people—17 of those children, and left several others with life threatening injuries. Sadly, the investigations into these fires are beginning to reveal causes that could be largely prevented.

Home fires occur more in winter than in any other season. Be fire smart! Half of all home heating fires occur in the months of December, January, and February. Heating equipment is involved in one in every six reported home fires and one in every five home fire deaths. Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from any heat source like fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators, or space heaters.

The Woodbridge Volunteer Fire Association offers residents fire safety tips to keep safe during the winter months:

- Keep portable generators outside, away from windows, and as far away as possible from your house.
- Install and test carbon monoxide alarms and smoke detectors at least once a month.
- Have a qualified professional clean and inspect your chimney and vents every year.
- Store cooled ashes in a tightly covered metal container and keep it outside at least 10 feet from your home and any nearby buildings.
- If you must use space heaters, make sure they have plenty of clearance away from any other combustible material.

What to Do When You’re Back at the Library...

Pre-pandemic Hours Return!

Get a library card! Or renew your account!
We understand it may have been awhile since you’ve last been in, or have been meaning to visit since you moved to town, but…pandemic...our hours... Hopefully our schedules align now and you can finally plan a trip here.

Take in the art!
Stop by the meeting room to see the reinstated art exhibits! Every month, we’ll be featuring a different artist. See our website for more information and to learn about the artists.

Visit Bookstore Alley!
Run by our Friends of the Library, this bookstore has many hidden gems (along with puzzles, DVDs, and more). Stop by whenever the library is open and find books to take home forever. Your purchases support the Friends, which in turn helps support the library!

Join the Adult Winter Reading Program!
Did you resolve to read more in 2022? Adult Winter Reading is back and can help you get started on your resolution! Read books and complete challenges to win prizes through February. For more information, contact the Reference Desk.

Write a book review for our patron picks display!
Supplies are at the front table in the lobby. Think of a book or audiobook that you enjoyed. Fill out the provided slips with a brief review and place in the box. Keep an eye out to see if your book is on display with your review!

Use Ancestry Library Edition!
Now that Ancestry at Home use has ended, finish your research (or get started!) at the library. Use our PCs or bring your Wi-Fi-capable device and explore the database from anywhere in the building.

Learn about all of our digital services!
Movies, audiobooks, ebooks, and more—available from anywhere with the internet and your Woodbridge library card. Even when you’re stuck at home or away from Woodbridge, you’ll never be stuck without anything to read, listen to, or watch!

Contact Us & Socialize with Us

You're invited to participate in All CT Reads, a year-long initiative to promote lifelong reading, learning, and connection. Similar to our One Book, One Town events in the past, three books have been chosen for Connecticut residents to read, one each for children, teens, and adults.

Both the main and secondary book selections are available from the library, and we are planning on events that tie into the books during 2022. Learn more about the program and related titles by visiting: sites.google.com/view/
Woodbridge Happenings

Registration may be required & space may be limited. For event details go to: woodbridgect.org

*** Please check the website for all in-person events. Events may be rescheduled or held virtually based on Covid-19 positivity rates.***

2/1 Free February Aerobics Class, 10-11 am for 55+, Tue. & Thu., Center Building gym
2/4 New Resident Welcome Meet-up, 9-10 am virtual - link available on Town website calendar
2/5 Evening Lantern/Flashlight Walk, 5:30 pm meet at Fitzgerald Tract, family event
2/8 Evidence Based Lifestyle Change, 1-2 pm for 60+, Center Building-Room 16
2/13 Spring Festival & Lantern Gala, 2-4 pm via Zoom, must register
2/17 Souper Sweet New Year’s Party, 12-1 pm for 55+, drive-thru lunch at The Center
2/22 Disaster Preparedness Webinar, 12-3 pm
- registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Kits will be held for one week for pick up in the Children's Department.

NEW! Eager Readers K-2 at home book discussion group. Our popular reading program moves home. Pick up the book, discussion questions, and a simple craft to do together at home with parents or caregivers. This program is for students in K-2 only. Register online monthly.

Lunar New Year crafts will be available in person at the Children's Desk through the first week of February. Stop by the desk and ask for a craft to take and make at home!

Valentine STEAM kits and craft kits will be available for pick up in the Children's Dept. beginning Feb. 7 through Feb. 14. Online registration is required for each take home activity.

Sat., Feb. 5 is Take Your Child to the Library Day! Check out a book at the Children’s Desk and receive a take-home story time kit, complete with hot cocoa, snacks, and a fun craft! Supplies are limited, one kit per child. Check our website for more information.

Town Calendar events will be highlighted here. Woodbridge businesses and organizations are encouraged to add events to: woodbridgect.org/calendar.

Interested in placing an ad in this newsletter? Call 203-389-3489 or email tbelenskiwoodbridgect.org.
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance:
In partnership with the IRS and the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), the Woodbridge Senior Center offers free tax preparation through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. In this third tax season of the pandemic, taxpayers with low to moderate income, senior citizens, and people with disabilities or limited English now have four options to safely and accurately complete 2021 tax returns. If you have access to a computer and Internet, you can complete your own tax return through MyFreeTaxes.com, supported by United Way in partnership with the IRS. If doing your own taxes seems daunting, preparers can complete your return either virtually or in person. If you have a camera phone, you can virtually access Woodbridge VITA tax preparers through GetYourRefund.org/WBSC-CT without leaving home. If you don’t have access to technology, call Woodbridge Human Services, 203-389-3429, for a drive-through or in-person appointment. For details on Woodbridge VITA services go to: www.woodbridgect.org/223/Human-Services-Department. If Woodbridge VITA offerings are not a good fit for you this year, dial 211 to learn about other VITA sites in the area.

Energy Assistance Program:
Human Services is accepting appointments for residents applying for the 2021-2022 CT Energy Assistance Program administered by TEAM, INC. Income eligibility requirements must be met. For information or to schedule an appointment, call Judi Young at 203-389-3429.

Emergency Preparedness:
In the event of a weather emergency or power outage, elderly residents and those with disabilities are encouraged to register for the Emergency Call List by calling the Human Services Department.
The Center is for everyone 55+. Preregistration is required for all programs and masks are required inside all Town buildings. Call 203-389-3430 or email kmoriarty@woodbridgect.org to register or for more details.

Upcoming Activities

All in-person programming at The Center is suspended due to the elevated COVID positivity rate. We will reassess throughout February when in-person programming can resume. Please note that below are the corrected dates and times since submitted to Woodbridge Town News Jan. edition.

Painting for Pleasure with Carole Abbate: Mondays, beginning Feb. 7, 10 am - 12 pm, in The Center café. You will find joy in creating your own paintings as Carole helps inspire beginners to intermediates to paint with acrylics or watercolors. Paint the subject of your choice—bring in a postcard or photo for inspiration. Call to sign-up for this 6-week, $36 class.

Disaster Preparedness 2 Day Workshop: Tues., Feb. 22 and Wed., Feb. 23, from 12-3 pm. This webinar, presented by FEMA, will include information on important prevention, safety, and risk-mitigation strategies. National and state resources that are available for the older population will be identified. Call The Center for more information.

Movie Viewing: Selma, Feb. 25, 1 pm, in the Center Building gym: Some describe Selma as the tumultuous three-month period in 1965, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a dangerous campaign to secure equal voting rights in the face of violent opposition culminating in President Johnson signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, one of the most significant victories for the civil rights movement. Enjoy a snack during the movie provided by Hamden Rehabilitation and Health Care Center.

Evidence-Based Lifestyle Change (& Diabetes Prevention) Program

New start date! Come to an information session on Feb. 8, from 1-2 pm in the Center Building, Room 16, to learn about this Evidence-Based Lifestyle Change Program in detail and receive answers to questions. This program, a $1,200 annual value, will be provided AT NO COST to everyone 60+ years of age as it is sponsored by Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut (AOASCC) and non-profit Monitor My Health (MMH) in an effort to promote good health.

The program includes 22 coach-led weekly sessions on healthy eating, physical activity, weight loss, stress management, diabetes prevention, and more. Actively learn with in-person programming at The Center is suspended due to the elevated COVID positivity rate. We will reassess throughout February when in-person programming can resume.

Hobbies/Social:

Card playing and mahjong are on hold due to the elevated COVID positivity rate.

Computer lab is open Mon.-Fri., 10 am - 2 pm. Two-person limit in computer lab. Printing is available (first 5 pages free). Preregistration is required.

Craft Group: Tue. and Thu., 10 am - 12 pm, in The Center café. Bring your current knitting, crocheting, or needlepoint project to work on while enjoying a lovely time socializing.

Exercise: Not sure if an exercise class is a good fit? Try a complimentary class first.

Pickleball: Mon. through Fri., 12:30-3:30 pm, in the Center Building gym. New players please call to register. All levels are welcome. Call for more information.

Targeted Strength Training with Michele Tenney: Mon., 9-10 am, in the Center Building gym. This exercise class uses exercise bands to focus on strengthening specific muscle groups to help increase balance, stability, and flexibility. Bands are available for purchase through the instructor. The class fee is $40 for an 8-week session and will be prorated as needed.

Zumba Gold with Amanda Aranzullo: Fri., 9:45 am, in the Center Building gym. Who says exercise can’t be fun? This fun “dance party” focuses on all elements of cardiovascular health, muscular conditioning, flexibility and balance. No prior Zumba experience required. Next session begins Feb. 18. The fee is $30 for a 6-week session.
**Snow Art Competition**

Families looking for outdoor fun this winter can share their talents by entering the Youth Services Snow Art Competition. Email a photo as an attachment of you and your family with your creation to Youth Services at: youthone@woodbridgect.org.

Prizes will be awarded for skill and creativity. Check the Town of Woodbridge website at woodbridgect.org/160/Youth-Services or search Woodbridge Youth Services, Woodbridge, CT on Facebook for updates and prize winners. Due date for photos is March 1. The competition is sponsored by Woodbridge Youth Services and the Town of Bethany.

**Valentine Wishes**

Bring some smiles to the faces of our senior citizens by making a few valentines to show you care. Get creative and send a message of love and hope. Youth Services will distribute your special wishes to local seniors who may be lonely due to the pandemic or may lack the technology to stay in touch with family and friends.

Please drop off your cards by Feb. 14 in the valentine collection box located at school, or at Youth Services, 4 Meetinghouse Lane.

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**Winter Calls for Snow Shoveling and Job Bank Needs Teens**

Teens may call for an interview. Earn some cash shoveling or doing odd jobs for residents and build your work experience.

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**Recreation News**

Call Recreation at 203-389-3446 or email Recreation@woodbridgect.org. Register at woodbridgect.org. Select Recreation Registration at the homepage on the Town website to register and view the lineup of program options.

**Ice Rink for the Season**

The Town’s new ice skating rink is located at the Center Road tennis courts at 149 Center Rd. The rink is managed by the Recreation Dept., and is open for daily use throughout the season, weather permitting. The Recreation Dept. will provide lighting on selected Friday and Saturday evenings from dusk until 8:30 pm. Dates will be listed on the Town’s website when they become available. “The Recreation Department would like to thank the Fire Department for providing the water for the ice skating rink,” said Recreation Director John Adamovich.

**Spring Registration**

Registration for Woodbridge Rec. Spring Programs will begin Wed., Feb. 23—most programs begin the week of March 28. Programs include: bowling, basketball, Build with Ricky—a Lego program, ultimate team sports, Clay Date, cooking, gymnastics, Kids Dig Farms—Massaro Farms program, Hip Hop Dance, Kumon, Little Scientists—science and coding class offered, running club, swim lessons, tennis and taekwondo.

Adult spring programs include: badminton, yoga, T’ai Chi and ping pong. For registration information, call 203-389-3446 or register online at woodbridgect.org beginning Feb. 23. Visit the website for a complete listing of the programs’ schedules.

**Summer Concert Sponsors**

Each year, the Town seeks corporate sponsors to help defray the costs of the concerts. If you would like to help by making a donation, contact the Recreation Dept. Sponsors will be recognized at the concerts and listed on the Town website.

**Register for Adult Programs**

- **T’ai-Chi**: with Bill Banick, Thu. evenings
- **Yoga-Gentle**: with Diane King, Mon. & Wed. mornings
- **Yoga**: with Bill Banick, daily mornings & Tue. evenings
- **Badminton**: Wed. evenings

*registration for adult classes are ongoing*