



Stonington Points



Third Issue | March 2023



In This Issue:

- Short-Term Rental Ordinance**
- Police Resource Officers in Schools**
- Republicans Force HUT Hearing**
- Protecting Parental Rights**
- Wild Bills in Hartford**
- CT Dems Won't Renounce Socialism**
- Hartford Legislative Round-Up**
- DC Roads Lead to CT**
- SRTC in the Community**
- Upcoming Town Referendum 3/13/23**
- 2023 Meeting Dates of Town Boards**

SRTC Meetings

Third Thursday of Every Month
7PM Start
Stonington Police Station

*Please join us
for the remaining 2023 Meetings:*

Mar 16	Aug 17
Apr 20	Sep 21
May 18	Oct 19
Jun 15	Nov 16
Jul 20	Dec 21

First Selectwoman Advances S-T Rental Ordinance

Back in 2017, Stonington’s Planning and Zoning Commission determined that the town’s zoning code would not regulate short-term rentals (STRs). Then Director of Planning, Jason Vincent, noted that if residents desired to have the Town oversee such rentals, they would have to propose a Municipal Ordinance. That Ordinance would have to be approved at a Town Meeting, the entity which the Town’s charter intends to be the legislative body for Stonington. Beginning in 2022, First Selectwoman, Danielle Chesebrough launched an effort to implement a Short-Term (S-T) Rental Ordinance on Stonington residents. At its Special Meeting on February 15, 2023, the Board of Selectmen voted to move the Town Meeting vote on this matter to a referendum to be held on March 13, 2023. Please see page 7 for details.

The S-T Rental Ordinance, if passed, would require owners to register their short-term rental property, defined as those rented for less than 30 days. Additionally, the ordinance would require an owner or the owner's agent (a

hired agent if the owner cannot be available) to be accessible in person, by phone, or text within 60 minutes of being contacted by police, fire, or town officials regarding a matter at the rental property. Non-compliance, as stipulated in the Ordinance, may result in written warnings, monetary fines, and ultimately, loss of a short-term rental permit. The full text of the Ordinance may be found here: [Short-Term Rental Ordinance](#).

Chesebrough explains that the reason for the Ordinance is to help address occasional noise concerns at some of these rentals. However, the Town already has an established noise ordinance in place to address those concerns. Many residents question the need to implement yet another regulatory body – the ordinance calls for a “citation officer” - at additional cost and burden to homeowners.

Additionally, Chesebrough suggests that the Ordinance would help to resolve the challenges Connecticut faces with respect *(continued on page 2)*

Local and Hartford News

Bumgardner and Hartford Democrats Question Role of Police Officers in Schools

Democrat legislators, including Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, who represents part of Stonington, unveiled a proposed bill that seeks “clarity on the use and duty of school resource officers in Connecticut schools.” (Click here for [Proposed Resource Officer Bill](#)) Many towns, including Stonington, welcome police as resource officers in schools. At a time when incidents of school violence are on the rise, that would seem a reasonable solution. The Democrat legislators advancing this bill seem to think differently.

During a February press conference, (Click here for [NBC CT article and press conference](#)) these legislators asserted that there are “people and other modes that should be used to address student behavior.” Their statements are backed-up by the bill’s contents, which assert that individuals who are “school counselors, social workers, psychologists, aides, or other staff members and have the appropriate training ... may

take on the duties of a school resource officer.”

On their surface, these recommendations may appear somewhat innocuous and a mere attempt to enhance the pool of potential resource officers. However, when taken in conjunction with a viewing of the press conference, one begins to question the intent. With Rep. Bumgardner nodding in affirmation and supporters holding signs “#Care Not Cops” and “Organize for Police Free Schools”, one wonders if the bill is not so much about clarifying the role of resource officers and potentially opening those positions to other types of staff as it is about removing police officers from schools. Where are the discussions and recognition of instances in which police resource officers have helped to diffuse tenuous situations with students?

While a complex issue, a blanket removal of

police resource officers from schools would not seem to be the only or right solution. Stonington’s other State Representative, Greg Howard, explains, “What works in our corner of the state may not work in others. Likewise, what doesn’t work there, may work here. Policymakers should be fostering more constructive ways to mentor our youth, not target effective ways that help.”



Stonington High School, which currently utilizes police resource officers.

S-T Rental Ordinance (Cont'd from page 1)

to affordable housing. Some maintain that the growth in short-term rentals has contributed to those challenges. It remains unclear if or how the Ordinance would solve the problem of affordable housing. At the Town Meeting on February 27th, one local homeowner in Pawcatuck explained that she rents on a short-term basis in order to cover her property costs and keep her home. There are numerous local homeowners like her who avail themselves of short-term rental opportunities to defray the rising costs of maintaining their homes, many of which have been in families for generations. As this homeowner asked, how does this Ordinance help to reduce her costs of home ownership and render her home more “affordable”? Another resident noted that responsibility for affordable housing lies with *practical* solutions from town

government, It should not fall upon the backs of homeowners who have consistently paid taxes on those properties for years and worked hard to maintain their homes at great expense.

Reportedly, some out-of-town investor-owned properties closer to Mystic that operate essentially as inns have given rise to the Ordinance. The question remains as to how a short-term rental registry would solve the issues related to those properties. Several residents at the Town Meeting discussed how they rent family homes with little to no issue. One resident noted how his rental has been a welcome addition to the neighborhood. He explained that short-term rentals have contributed to the fabric of our coastal community, attracting visitors from around the world, and have a tremendously positive impact

on local, small businesses. Many are left to wonder why responsible local homeowners should be burdened with more regulations and fees because of the acts of a few.

The consensus from many townspeople at the meeting is that the Ordinance would seem to create more regulations at increased cost to homeowners with little impact to the supposed challenges at hand.

S-T RENTAL REFERENDUM
MARCH 13, 2023
12PM - 8PM

VOTE NO!

Local and Hartford News

Hartford Republicans Force Hearing to Eliminate CT Highway Use Tax

Back in 2021, Democrats passed the Highway Use Tax (HUT) on heavyweight trucks. The tax is levied based on a truck's weight, classification, and number of miles traveled in Connecticut. Truck owners must also obtain a permit to remit payments to the state. There is little doubt that the trickle-down effect of HUT will result in inflation weary residents paying even more for basic goods. Despite strong opposition from Republicans and citizens already struggling from high prices, the tax went into effect on January 1, 2023. Businesses were scheduled to make their first payments on February 28th.

Using a parliamentary procedure, House Republicans overcame Democrat opposition to a bill that would eliminate HUT and would save already financially strapped residents money. Republicans secured the 51 petition signatures required to raise HB 5290, [An Act Eliminating the Highway Use Tax](#), after Democrat leadership on the Finance Committee rebuffed calls to even hear the bill and let it advance. Their successful maneuver forces a public hearing on the bill.

Holly Cheeseman, Republican State Representative for District 37, explained, "The committee's failure to raise the bill meant a large swath of Connecticut residents would be silenced. That's unacceptable given the far-reaching, negative impact this tax will have on the cost of living here, and I'm thrilled my caucus colleagues joined me in petitioning to deliver a public hearing that will give everyone an opportunity to be heard on the most important issue we face – affordability."

Republican State Representative Doug Dubitsky added, "The HUT is a regressive tax that directly raises the price of every product and service sold in this state. We fought hard against the Highway Use Tax when Democrats first imposed it on the people of this state, and we will do everything we can to get rid of it now. At least now, the people will have the opportunity to be heard."

Thank you, Republican legislators, for your efforts in tackling residents' struggles with rising inflation and shrinking savings.

A public hearing is scheduled for March 10th at the State Capitol. If you wish to weigh in on HUT and voice your concerns in the hearing, please visit www.cga.ct.gov.



Cartoon previously posted by Connecticut Senate Democrats.

Republicans Protect Parental Rights

Remember when Connecticut Senate Democrats posted the above cartoon, likening parents at a school board meeting to horror movie monsters? A backlash ensued. Many were stunned that a political party would directly attack parents. One might think the reaction would have prompted Democrats to adjust their policy approach. Not so.

Among the bills that Democrats have put forth this session is HB 6192, [Non-disclosure of Certain Communications between Teachers and Students](#), that would forbid parents' access to any communications between a teacher and a student regarding "sensitive" subjects, such as "sexual orientation, gender identity and race" that take place during school. Another bill, HB 6396 [Protecting Educators in Teaching Certain Subjects and Topics in Schools](#), seeks to "protect" teachers from "harassment" or "intimidation" stemming from differences of opinion on "certain" subjects. Concerns over parental rights grow greater with the emergence of symposium's like the one to be held at UCONN Law later this month. Its ad boldly states that legal experts will discuss-"Are Parental Rights Always in the Best Interest of Children?".

Connecticut Republicans want to work with parents, the same citizens whose taxes fund schools. They have proposed bills, including [Concerning Parental Involvement in Education](#) and a [Scope of Review for New Curriculum](#), that promote and foster parental input. State Republican Chairman Ben Proto sums up the situation best, "Republicans fully support the rights of parents to know what is going on and to have input and control of their children's education. This should be something that both parties believe fundamentally - but it's not." He adds, "Our leaders should empower parents and should challenge school districts to do better by our children."

Reflecting on the Options

Wild Bills in Hartford

The start of Hartford's 2023 legislative session has left no question as to Democrats' priorities at the State Capitol and has left little doubt as to the contrast between Republicans and Democrats. With the recent announcement of yet another exit of a major Connecticut employer, Lego, we might have expected to see a wave of legislation with practical remedies to the everyday challenges Connecticut residents face: economic stagnation, skyrocketing costs of living, high taxes, and crime.

Instead, Democrats have used their majority in Hartford to propose bills that are disconnected to residents' struggles and fail to address these real problems. While Democrats have thrust forward with bills that expand the size of government, offer little relief for escalating living costs, undermine elections, and limit parental rights, Republicans have delivered on campaign promises and introduced legislation to combat and alleviate soaring taxes and living costs, limit the state's ever-growing reach, restore election integrity, and put control back in the hands of parents.

Democrats have gone so far as to propose a costly and impractical Replacement of Gas Stoves bill, co-sponsored by Stonington's Rep. Aundre Bumgardner. This may seem inconceivable, but Oregon's towns have already begun to ban gas stoves in new buildings. Recent reports out of DC reveal that the Biden administration has proposed efficiency standards that would block half of current gas cooking appliances from the U.S. market.

Tax relief does not appear to be on Democrats' "to do" list either. Despite cries to eliminate it, Democrats moved forward with the Highway Use Tax (HUT), guaranteeing higher costs for goods in Connecticut. (See related story, *Republicans Force Hearing to Eliminate Highway Use Tax*). As if HUT was not enough, Democrats also proposed a bill to fund a new army of tax agents to ensure the maximization of tax collections.

Connecticut's elections also face growing challenges under Democrat majority rule. Democrats have introduced bills to open voting to undocumented immigrants and felons, lower the voting age to 16, and allow 2 weeks of early voting. When considered in conjunction with Democrat proposed bills that would block parental rights, the takeaway is that "Democrats want to give more rights to non-citizens while taking away the rights of citizens and parents," as State Chairman Ben Proto states. Seeking to maintain election integrity, Republicans, in contrast, have introduced legislation to require photo ID. Republican Senator Heather Somers has also proposed a bill that would bring

transparency to the use of absentee ballots.

The *Hartford Round Up* on the following page illustrates further the Democrats' shift to out-of-touch policies as compared to Republicans' focus on common sense solutions and preservation of our country's constitutional principles. It captures just a small sampling of the wild bills that Democrats have piled onto this legislative session - there are hundreds more like them. Proto vows that the "Connecticut Republican Party and our membership will fight these proposals tooth and nail in the State House first, and if necessary, in Court...It is time for all Connecticut citizens, who still value the rights of citizenship, regardless of party, to speak up and tell their legislators to "Vote No!" on these dangerous proposals."

**For information on your CT
State Rep and Senator, to track bills,
or to sign up to testify at a public hearing
(in person, in writing or via Zoom),
visit www.cga.ct.gov.**

*use your
voices*

CT Dems in DC Won't Condemn Socialism

In February, the US House of Representatives approved a resolution denouncing socialism. It passed the House but not without first splitting Democrats. All Republicans voted in favor of the resolution along with 109 Democrats. 86 Democrats, however, voted against it, including Joe Courtney (D-CT) and the remaining representatives from CT - DeLauro, Hayes, Himes and Larson, all Democrats.

The resolution explains that "socialist ideology necessitates a concentration of power that has time and time again collapsed into Communist regimes, totalitarian rule, and brutal dictatorships." Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar (R-Fla), the daughter of Cuban exiles, said in a statement that "it would also ensure the United States commits to never begin or normalize the implementation of socialist policies that inevitably lead to economic ruin and political authoritarianism."

Several Republicans decried the results of the vote. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) said the number of Democrats who wouldn't denounce socialism is "a real concern," and Greg Murphy (R-NC) called it "unbelievable."

Reflecting on the Options

Hartford Round Up

Democrat Proposed Bills 2023

Expand Government & Regulations

HB 6491 Pushes replacement of gas stoves, a growing trend among Democrats. Stonington Rep. Bumgardner co-sponsored the bill.

HB 5323 Expands HUSKY health benefits to all income-eligible persons regardless of immigration status. Stonington Rep. Bumgardner co-sponsored the bill.

HB 5520 Calls for hiring of more tax enforcement agents to “ensure proper enforcement of tax laws” and to “maximize revenue”.

SB 818 Establishes a reparations task force to study slavery, its effects, and make reparations recommendations.

Undermine Election Integrity

HJ 12 Gives undocumented immigrants the right to vote.

HB 5704 Institutes mandatory voting and establishes penalties/fines for not voting.

HB 5703 Allows for 2 weeks of early voting prior to election. Stonington Rep. Bumgardner introduced the bill with several Democrat legislators.

Limit Parental Rights

HB 6396 Ensures “educators can provide instruction...free from harassment, intimidation, physical violence.....stemming from ideological differences.” Translation – parents may not question or disagree with topics taught in schools.

HB 6192 Denies parents access to discussions between teachers and students on “sensitive” topics.

HB 5480 Allows children 12 and over to receive vaccination without consent of parent/guardian.

Increase State Control Over Private Property

SB 909 Gives “Right to Housing” to all state residents, including undocumented immigrants.

HB 6109 Limits landlords’ use of tenant screening resources (e.g., background checks). Stonington Rep. Bumgardner introduced the bill with several Democrat legislators.

HB 6593 Allows housing authority (i.e., state authority) to expand its jurisdiction to other municipalities. Removes local control of zoning.

SB 138 Establishes statewide rent control. Stonington Rep. Bumgardner introduced the bill with several Democrat legislators.

Republican Proposed Bills 2023

Limit Government & Regulations

HB 5290 Eliminates the Highway Use Tax (HUT), which directly results in higher prices for goods and services in CT.

HB 6385 Protects free speech of individuals and groups. Prohibits any state official, agency or employee from contacting social media platform to complain about or censure individual/group without public hearing.

SB 376 Requires legislative review of executive orders issued during emergency declaration when legislature is in regular session.

Preserve Election Integrity

SB 713 Ensures transparency of absentee ballot applications in town clerks’ offices. Sen. Somers co-sponsored the bill.

SB 721 Prohibits unsolicited mailing of absentee ballots and requires that absentee ballots be mailed only upon voter’s request.

HB 5425 Requires photo ID to vote and mandates reporting of voter fraud to Secretary of State.

Strengthen Parental Rights

HB 5274 Promotes transparency in education and creates new review process, including public hearing and comment, for State Board of Education to follow before adopting any new curriculum.

HB 5270 Guarantees parents’ input on and access to curriculums by requiring boards of education to put curriculum materials on board websites and allowing public comment at regular and special meetings.

SB 536 Requires notification to parents prior to a minor terminating a pregnancy; CT currently does not require parent consent or notice when minor terminates pregnancy.

Protect Medical Freedom

SB 166 Reinstates religious exemption for school vaccination requirements.

SB 537 Prohibits State of CT from mandating Covid-19 vaccination, restoring employment security.



All DC Roads May Not Lead to CT, But Major Ones Do

Blumenthal, Murphy, Courtney Must Act to Address Exploitation of Branford Manor Tenants

The following piece appeared in The CT Mirror on March 6, 2023. Robert Boris, the author, is a member of The Connecticut Mirror Community Editorial Board and was the Republican candidate against State Rep. Aundre Bumgardner for the 41st District.

Connecticut's elected officials in Washington continue to ignore intolerable living conditions at Branford Manor, Groton's federally funded affordable housing complex.

Despite decades of complaints about hazardous and unsanitary living conditions, the property's corporate owner, The Related Companies Inc., profits from taxpayer funds while neglecting urgently needed repairs and mold remediation.

Without oversight and enforcement, the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract between The Related Companies Inc. and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) enables an insidious symbiotic relationship that prioritizes profits for private companies over the well-being and dignity of residents.

As a federal agency, HUD is accountable to our Sens. Richard Blumenthal, Chris Murphy, and District 2 U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, who, despite receiving multiple written requests, have refused to call for the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to audit HUD's operations. As a result of their dereliction of duty, the only option left for the families at Branford Manor to improve their living conditions was to file a class action lawsuit and fight for their rights.

HUD spends federal tax dollars to subsidize rent payments to landlords for tenants who qualify for public housing. While HUD's rent payments on behalf of Branford Manor tenants appear to be in keeping with liberal ideas, in practice the agency sets in motion the ongoing exploitation of vulnerable individuals who rely on public housing. The Related Companies Inc. has a portfolio of real estate assets valued at over \$60 billion. They also own other government-guaranteed housing projects throughout the United States, with over 50,000 similar units as of 2022.

The HAP contract between HUD and Branford Manor's owner outlines the terms of the taxpayer subsidy, specifying the monthly rent payment the tenant is responsible for and the amount of the HAP payment that HUD will directly pay to the property owner on the tenant's behalf (typically up to 70%). The contract also includes the provision that government subsidy payments will only be made as long as the landlord is providing "safe and sanitary units... in accordance with HUD regulations and other requirements."

The primary tool for overseeing the administration of the contract is

the biennial Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) inspection administered by HUD. The inspector assesses various aspects of the property, including the structure, electrical and plumbing systems, heating and cooling systems, appearance, cleanliness, and management practices. The inspection outcome establishes if the property complies with HUD standards and is used to calculate the amount of annual housing assistance payment.

It is explicitly written in the HAP contract with The Related Companies Inc. that if the living conditions at Branford Manor do not meet HUD standards, the agency has the right to withhold rent subsidy payments until the conditions are remediated. So why has Branford Manor experienced squalor and mold for decades, as generations of residents have attested? Why is there no audit of HUD's handling of these systemic issues, and why is there not more pressure on Blumenthal, Murphy, and Courtney to act?

HUD's power to withhold rent subsidy payments to the landlords of Branford Manor is written in the contract. They can continue to do so until The Related Companies Inc. fixes any deficiencies at the residence. Unsubsidized renters do it. The tenants at Branford Manor should be afforded the same rights and dignity.

Our congressional delegation is asleep at the wheel of oversight. All too often this is the case when the victims are children and families with few options and little financial clout. An OIG audit will show us exactly how and what we need to do to fix the system.

Senator Blumenthal has called for a federal investigation into M&T Bank after customer complaints, but even after a visit to Branford Manor back in May, has caused no apparent improvement in the tenants' situation. If a bank is worthy of such scrutiny, don't the residents of Branford Manor, who have filed a class action lawsuit, deserve the same level of consideration with a federal audit?

The ongoing exploitation of the families at Branford Manor and other government-subsidized housing across the country is cruel and inhumane. Our congressional delegation must use its powers of oversight to provide accountability over how our tax dollars are spent and to protect children and families from systemic exploitation.

The HUD model of providing public housing is a disgrace, segregating neighborhoods and failing to provide adequate living conditions. Blumenthal, Murphy, and Courtney's refusal to demand an Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit of HUD's inaction at Branford Manor perpetuates a system of exploiting the poor for the profit of the privileged.

SRTC In the Community

SRTC EXTENDS WARM, HELPING HANDS

Members of the SRTC dedicate their time to the local community and beyond. We are committed to giving back and recently launched an effort to help our friends at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center (PNC) stay warm during the winter months with donations of gloves, hats, and socks. Organizers were so grateful for the outpouring of support from fellow members of the RTC.



WHAT WE DO

First and foremost, SRTC members support our community. We serve on various organizations and volunteer our time to initiatives, such as:

- Recruit and support Republican candidates for political office
- Recruit and recommend members for town boards/commissions
- Promote common sense solutions to challenges facing Stonington
- Organize service projects

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Don't wish to become a member at this time? There are still numerous ways you can help. We always look for new people to join our team. Please reach out to us, come to a meeting, or one of our more informal gatherings, and we will be happy to discuss how you can contribute to our efforts. If you would like to make a contribution to the Stonington RTC, you may do so securely using our online Winred link, [Donate to SRTC](#).

Stonington Town News

Remember Your Stonington Polling Locations

- District 1 Stonington Fire House
- District 2 Board of Education Bldg (former Pawcatuck Middle School)
- District 3 St Michael Church (Pawcatuck)
- District 4 Stonington Middle School
- District 5 Former School Admin Offices (Old Mystic)

Note: Voting locations may change for referenda as indicated in the notice of referendum on page 7.



Stonington Town News

STONINGTON TOWN REFERENDUM

Monday, March 13, 2023
12:00pm - 8:00pm

Only 2 Voting Locations:

1st, 4th, & 5th Voting Districts: Vote Stonington Fire Station, 100 Main Street, Stonington

2nd & 3rd Voting Districts: Vote Former Pawcatuck Middle School, 40 Field Street, Pawcatuck

To verify where you should vote, call the Town Clerk's office at 860-535-5054 or consult the Town website at www.stonington-ct.gov/registrars-of-voters/pages/polling-places.

Your voice counts. Vote to make an impact.

Vote is on an Ordinance to implement Short-Term Rental Regulations

REFERENDUM QUESTION:

"Shall the town of Stonington adopt an Ordinance of the Town of Stonington, Connecticut, providing for regulating the operation of short-term rentals in town as proposed?" Click here for [S-T Rental Ordinance](#).

What Will the Ordinance Do?

- Require owners to register short-term rental property, those rented for less than 30 days. Registration fee (not yet defined) will apply.
- Mandate owners or owner's agent (a hired agent if the owner cannot be available) be accessible in person, by phone or text within 60 minutes of being contacted by police, fire, or town officials regarding a matter at the rental property.
- Establish penalties for non-compliance, including written warnings, monetary fines, and loss of a Short-Term Rental permit.
- Infringe on private property rights!

Remember to *Vote*

Stonington Town News



Regular Meetings of the Town of Stonington Boards

Stonington Board of Selectmen

2nd & 4th Wednesday of Every Month
Stonington Police Station Community Rm
5:30 PM

Wed, Mar 8, 2023
Wed, Mar 22, 2023
Wed, Apr 12, 2023
Wed, Apr 26, 2023
Wed, May 10, 2023
Wed, May 24, 2023
Wed, Jun 14, 2023
Wed, Jun 28, 2023
Wed, Jul 12, 2023
Wed Jul 26, 2023
Wed, Aug 9, 2023
Wed, Aug 23, 2023
Wed, Sep 13, 2023
Wed, Sep 27, 2023
Wed, Oct 11, 2023
Wed, Oct 25, 2023
Wed, Nov 8, 2023
Wed, Nov 22, 2023
Wed, Dec 13, 2023
Wed, Dec 27, 2023

Stonington Board of Education

Bd of Education District Office
40 Field St., Pawcatuck
6:30 PM

Thu, Mar 9, 2023
Thu, Apr 20, 2023
Thu, May 11, 2023
Thu, Jun 8, 2023
Thu, Jul 13, 2023
Thu, Aug 10, 2023
Thu, Sep 14, 2023
Thu, Oct 12, 2023
Thu, Nov 16, 2023
Thu, Dec 14, 2023

Stonington Board of Finance

1st Wednesday of Every Month
Stonington Police Station Community Rm
7:15 PM

Wed, Apr 5, 2023
Wed, May 3, 2023
Wed, Jun 7, 2023
Wed, Jul 5, 2023
Wed, Aug 2, 2023
Wed, Sep 6, 2023
Wed, Oct 4, 2023
Wed, Nov 1, 2023
Wed, Dec 6, 2023



YOU'RE INVITED!

For inquiries and/or to subscribe to our newsletter, please email info@stoningtongop.org

Please also visit our website, www.stoningtongop.org or our Facebook @StoningtonRTC.