

New school, COVID remain top priorities



A groundbreaking ceremony was held June 24 for Mansfield's new net-zero energy elementary school. File photo

Town hopes for normalcy after a challenging, rewarding 2021

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MANSFIELD — Mansfield is looking to have a successful 2022 after a challenging, yet rewarding 2021.

One of the major highlights of 2021 was the beginning of construction for the new Mansfield Elementary School.

Mansfield Mayor Antonia Moran said she believes one of the past year's top accomplishments was how the town handled the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the schools.

"Our public schools have functioned beautifully through the pandemic," she said.

The mayor was also impressed by the town's social services.

"We've been providing food and services to members of our community through the most difficult circumstances," Moran said.

Last month's unveiling of the Martin Luther King Jr. mural at the Mansfield



Community Center was also a huge step forward.

Creating the mural engaged the community, as many volunteers painted its panels.

Moran underscored the importance of the mural to the town back in November, prior to the unveiling of the design.

"It is a demonstration of our commitment to diversity, to justice, to equality and to remembering the heroism of one of the 20th century's great leaders in this country," she said at the time.

In 2021, the town also had a series of organizations do significant work on racial issues both in and out of the schools.

NEW SCHOOL, Page 4

New school, COVID remain top priorities in Mansfield

Continued from Page 1

One of Mansfield's priorities in the new year is to obtain gold certification from Sustainable CT.

Sustainable CT is a voluntary certification program to recognize thriving Connecticut towns.

It offers a list of best practices to make towns more sustainable.

Towns choose Sustainable CT actions, implement them and earn points toward certification.

The program is in the process of creating a gold certification, which the Town of Mansfield hopes to earn in the new year.

The town is looking to build a number of projects to help them obtain the honor.

"We're looking at a whole range of environmental proposals from solar power at the new school to solid waste management," Moran said.

Next year, the town will continue to work with the University of Connecticut and the surrounding towns to attract businesses.

Mansfield hopes to gain businesses from a variety of different sectors including agrotourism and high-tech manufacturing.

Another priority for the town in 2022 is allocating funds it received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Over the summer, the town received half of its \$7.5 million allocation from the grant.

It expects to receive the second half of funding next summer.

Mansfield Town Manager Ryan Aylesworth said he expects the funding to be used for a variety of projects and services.

"I suspect we'll run the gamut," he said. "Everything from investment in social services to facility upgrades to make them safer and more pandemic proof."

Aylesworth added that ARPA funding also might go toward investments in water and sewer infrastructure.

One of next year's most exciting events in town is the opening of Mansfield



Last month's unveiling of the Martin Luther King Jr. mural at the Mansfield Community Center was also a huge step forward for the town, Mayor Antonia Moran said. File photo



Moran said she believes one of the past year's top accomplishments was how the town handled the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the schools. Here, masked Mansfield Middle School students wait to be picked up after the last day of school in June. File photo

Elementary School.

Construction is expected to be completed in time for the new school year.

The new elementary school will replace the school district's three existing elemen-

tary schools: Dorothy C. Goodwin Elementary School, Southeast Elementary School and Annie E. Vinton Elementary School.

Aylesworth said he is excited for the new school to be complete.

"We look forward to seeing it through and certainly not just realizing the net-zero environmental sustainability goals but really just offering a topflight educational facility," he said.

"We believe it'll be just a phenomenal public school in terms of its physical layout and its ability to help educate the next generation of youth that are going through those doors."

Folks can even watch the progress of the school construction on the Town of Mansfield website at www.mansfieldct.gov.

Like every municipality, Mansfield officials hope the COVID-19 pandemic will fade in 2022, so life in town can return to a semblance of normalcy.

The mayor also hopes for a happy and healthy community in the new year.

"(I hope) to return to a more normal kind of life," Moran said.