

# COLUMBIA



Mono Pond  
Photo Credit: Paul Ramsey

# UPDATE DECEMBER 2023





# TOWN OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN & TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

## ***Town Meeting and Referendum for the Horace W. Porter School HVAC - Indoor Air Quality Improvement Project.***

The Town of Columbia is working with the Columbia Board of Education to install a new HVAC system and certain indoor air quality improvements at Horace W. Porter School at an estimated cost of \$6,175,000.

The Board of Selectmen held a TOWN MEETING regarding this project for Thursday, November 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm, Yeoman's Hall, 323 Route 87, Columbia, CT. The Town Meeting featured a brief presentation as well as a question-and-answer session. At the close of the Town Meeting, the meeting adjourned to a vote on the project at **REFERENDUM which has been scheduled for Tuesday, December 12, 2023, 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm, Yeoman's Hall, 323 Route 87, Columbia, CT.** Absentee Ballots will be available at the Town Clerk Office during regular business hours.

Provided on the following pages is the explanatory text for the Horace Porter School HVAC Indoor Air Quality Improvement Project.





# TOWN OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN & TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

### Horace Porter School HVAC Indoor Air Quality Improvement Project Explanatory Text prepared pursuant to CGS Sec. 9-369b.

The Town of Columbia is working with the Columbia Board of Education to install a new HVAC system and certain indoor air quality improvements at Horace W. Porter School at an estimated cost of \$6,175,000.

The proposed project includes:

- New HVAC System for the following purposes:
  1. Ventilation improvements to meet indoor quality state standards,
  2. Humidity control improvements to mitigate the potential for mold growth in classrooms,
  3. Maintain consistent temperature for both heating and cooling, and
  4. Air filtration to meet the State of Connecticut indoor air quality standards.
- Full building electrical upgrade to ensure compliance with current code requirements as well as accommodate the new HVAC system.

Potential funding for this project involves:

- An appropriation to be approved by referendum of the voters,
- An application for the State of Connecticut Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Grant which has a 52.14% eligible cost reimbursement to the Town, if approved,
- Financing of appropriation through grant funds, fund balance and issuance of general obligation notes and bonds of the Town.

#### Connecticut Department of Administrative Services HVAC Grant Program

A 2<sup>nd</sup> round of State Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC) grants are available to municipalities to provide funding for school air improvements.

Total proposed project cost is estimated to be \$6.175 million. Columbia will be submitting an application for a grant in the amount of \$3,219,645 which would cover approximately 52.14% of eligible project expenses, leaving Columbia's local share of the costs estimated at \$2,955,355.

Appropriation for the project shall be funded from grants, undesignated fund balance and/or other sources of funds received by the Town for the project, including general obligation bonds and notes in an amount not to exceed \$3,396,250. In no event shall less than forty-five percent (45%) of the entire appropriation for the project be funded with grant monies received from the State of Connecticut and/or such other granting entity.

The appropriation and bond resolution for the project to be voted on at the referendum is available at the Town Clerk's office.

**The Board of Selectmen has scheduled a TOWN MEETING regarding this project for Thursday, November 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm, Yeomans Hall, 323 Route 87, Columbia, CT.** The Town Meeting will feature a brief informational presentation as well as a question-and-answer session. To send comments prior to the meeting, please email them to [PublicInput@columbiact.org](mailto:PublicInput@columbiact.org) within 24 hours prior to the meeting. At the close of the Town Meeting, the meeting will adjourn to a vote on the project at referendum.

Question: "Shall the Town appropriate \$6,175,000 for HVAC system and indoor air quality improvements at the Horace W. Porter School and authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds and notes up to \$3,396,250 to finance said appropriation?"

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_"

The foregoing question will be submitted to the qualified voters of the Town for a vote on Tuesday, December 12, 2023 during the hours between 12:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. Electors and voters who are entitled to vote by reason of Section 7-6 of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, may vote at Columbia Town Hall, Yeoman's Hall, 323 Route 87 Columbia, CT. Absentee Ballots will be available at the Office of the Town Clerk during business hours.

Additional information is now available online at [www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org) in the calendar section, or by contacting the Town Administrator at 860-228-0110.





# TOWN OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN & TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

### **Horace Porter School HVAC Indoor Air Quality Improvement Project Explanatory Text prepared pursuant to CGS Sec. 9-369b.**

The Town of Columbia hired Silver Petrucelli and Associates (SP&A) to perform initial investigations with respect to indoor air quality conditions at the Horace Porter School. Through indoor humidity testing performed by SP&A's Senior Mechanical Engineer, building pressurization testing performed by RPM Energy Solutions, and discussions with on-site staff, SP&A concluded that the building experiences indoor air quality issues, including excessive airborne particulate and poor control of temperature and humidity which may promote mold growth.

The existing HVAC systems for the classrooms consist of hot water radiation for heat, operable windows with central exhaust fans for ventilation and, in some cases, window air conditioners for cooling. Building pressurization tests have indicated that unconditioned, unfiltered outdoor air infiltrates the building regardless of whether windows are opened or closed. This unfiltered air contributes to elevated humidity and the presence of contaminants in the building. Such HVAC systems are no longer considered appropriate for schools due to their inability to maintain reasonable comfort levels and to control humidity and airborne contaminants.

Options for HVAC improvements have been evaluated and the proposed project is based on the system deemed most appropriate for the long-term use of the facility. That project consists of a Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) system with outdoor Condensing Units and indoor Fan Coil Units (ceiling cassettes or wall mounted units) which will provide cooling and primary heating. Refrigerant piping will be installed from the outdoor Condensing Units to the indoor Fan Coil Units and the refrigerant flow to the Fan Coil Units will be controlled such that heating may be provided to some areas while cooling is provided to others. The existing heating system is serviceable and will supplement the heating provided by the VRF systems during periods of extreme cold weather.

Ventilation for the facility will be provided by multiple Dedicated Outside Air Systems (DOAS). Such systems condition the required amount of outside air to a "neutral" temperature, provide dehumidification, and high-level filtration to remove airborne contaminants. A ducted air distribution system will deliver air from the DOAS units to the rooms, supplying conditioned outside air to each space. The DOAS systems are designed to provide a slight building pressurization, thus limiting the likelihood of moisture and contaminant infiltration.

The State of Connecticut recently enacted a statutory requirement to evaluate the indoor air quality in all schools. The State has also made grant funds available for construction projects that entail the making of indoor air quality improvements. This grant program is now in its second round with a filing due date of December 31, 2023. This grant funding was made possible through Federal funding and there is no guarantee or plan that it will continue indefinitely.





## TOWN OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN & TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

The Town honored our Veterans at the Columbia Veterans Day Celebration on November 11th. We would like to thank the Veterans, Sheron Smith and Maureen Allen of the Columbia Senior Organization for providing a wonderful luncheon after the ceremony, State Representative, Tim Ackert as our special speaker, the Columbia Scouts for their assistance, Reverend Mary Ann Purtil from the Columbia Congregational Church for the Invocation and Bill and Melissa Rood from November Sound who provided the music.



The November Municipal Elections ushered in some changes to several boards and committees. Congratulations to William O'Brien and Judy Ortiz for their re-appointments to the Board of Selectmen. We bid farewell to Ernie Sharpe, Chairman of the Financial Planning and Allocation Commission. We thank him for his years of service and dedication to the town.

The Town still has open vacancies in several Boards and Commissions. To learn more or fill out a volunteer application please click [here](#). You can also contact Jennifer LaVoie, Executive Administrative Assistant at 860.228.0110 for assistance. Please consider volunteering your time!





# TOWN OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN & TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Winter is here and we would like to share some Winter Hints, Tips and Policies to help ensure your safety while enjoying all that winter has to offer! The [Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security](#) has some great advice to follow during the cold winter months. Please click on the link above for tips on preparing yourself and your home.

To view the Town of Columbia's policies on snow removal, mailbox replacement, and free sand for residents, please go to the [Department of Public Works](#) page on the Town of Columbia's website for more information.

### **EASTERN HIGHLAND HEALTH DISTRICT:**

#### **[AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND IMMUNIZATION](#)**

Respiratory infections peak in the fall and winter months and prevention is key to slowing the spread and staying healthy. Prevention tools you can use this season:

- Stay up-to-date with vaccines: flu and COVID vaccines are updated for current strains and recommended for everyone; RSV is a new vaccine for special groups (very young and over 60)
- Stay home when sick (and the first 5 days after symptoms start for COVID)
- Wash your hands frequently
- Remember respiratory etiquette (cover your cough, preferably not with your hands)

[CDC Respiratory Illness: Protect Yourself](#)

[FDA resources for the Fall Respiratory Illness Season](#)

**EVERBRIDGE NOTIFICATIONS:** We will from time to time issue an Everbridge Notification with a message from the First Selectman, Steven M. Everett to help keep you informed. If you would like to sign up for [Everbridge Notifications](#) please go to the Town's website and on the Everbridge Notifications tab.





# TOWN OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN & TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

**EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS:** To receive Town news please go to the Town's website and click on the [Email Notifications](#) tab. If you need assistance please do not hesitate to call the Town Administrative Office or the First Selectman at 860-228-0110 or email us at [townadministrator@columbiact.org](mailto:townadministrator@columbiact.org).

**TOWN OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22ND AND MONDAY, DECEMBER 25TH. TOWN OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED FOR NEW YEARS EVE, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29TH AND NEW YEARS DAY, MONDAY, JANUARY 1ST.**



Happy Holidays and please be safe!

Steven M. Everett, First Selectman  
[severett@columbiact.org](mailto:severett@columbiact.org)  
860-228-0110

Mark B. Walter, Town Administrator  
[townadministrator@columbiact.org](mailto:townadministrator@columbiact.org)  
860-228-0110



# UPCOMING TOWN MEETINGS

**Many meetings will be held by utilizing remote access; however, some meetings are being held in-person or hybrid (both in-person and virtual). Please check the Town Calendar and the Agenda posted for directions on login information. Each board or committee will provide the information needed to join using an on-line conferencing platform. Please check the Town of Columbia's [website](#) for updates.**

12/04/23 Wed: Horace Porter School HVAC Building Committee, 6:00 PM

12/05/23 Tue: Board of Selectmen, 7:00 PM

12/06/23 Wed: Lake Management Advisory Committee, 7:00 PM

12/04/23 Mon: Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission, 7:00 PM

12/04/23 Mon: Board of Education, 7:30 PM

12/11/23 Mon: Planning & Zoning Commission, 7:00 PM

**12/12/23 Tue: REFERENDUM, 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Yeoman's Hall**

12/13/23 Wed: Fiscal Policy Board, 8:30 AM

12/13/23 Wed: Economic Development Commission, 7:00 PM

12/18/23 Mon: Horace Porter School HVAC Building Committee, 6:00 PM

12/19/23 Tue: Board of Selectmen, 7:00 PM

12/19/23 Tue: Hop River Preserve Committee, 5:30 PM

12/20/23 Wed: Financial Planning & Allocation Commission, 7:00 PM

12/21/23 Thur: Open Space Committee, 9:00 AM

12/21/23 Thur: Zoning Board of Appeals, 7:00 PM

12/26/23 Mon: Planning & Zoning Commission, 7:00 PM

Public Comment will be accepted by our dedicated email at [PublicInput@columbiact.org](mailto:PublicInput@columbiact.org) or by USPS mail to 323 Route 87, Columbia, CT 06237 and must be received prior to the meeting (public comment received after the meeting will be shared at the next meeting).

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**ASSESSORS OFFICE: HOMEOWNERS:** Connecticut law provides for Annual Tax Relief for persons who are 65 years or older or totally disabled who meet necessary qualifications. To be eligible you must file an application with proof of income and proof of total disability (if applicable). Must own a home within the town of Columbia as of the prior October 1st.

**RENTERS:** Connecticut law provides for an Annual Rental Relief for persons who are 65 and older or totally disabled who meet necessary qualifications. To be eligible you must be currently residing in the town you file your application in, provide proof of income and monthly expenses for the prior year.

**HOMEOWNERS:** Feb. 1 through May 15 ~ **RENTERS:** April 1 through Oct. 1

Board of Assessment Appeals - Applications must be submitted no later than February 20, 2024. They will meet in March.

**FIRE MARSHAL: GENERATORS** - With the need for power to operate our homes, owning a home generator is almost a modern-day necessity. It is extremely important for a safety operating generator to follow the manufactures instructions for the installation, operation, and maintenance of the generator. Typically, generators are run outside in open air away from the dwelling. This will ensure that the generator runs at the proper temperature and the exhaust does not enter the building. Never refuel the generator while it is running or if the exhaust or engine is hot. Also, do not leave the generator running while no one is available to monitor its operation.



Having smoke and CO alarms are a good practice when operating a generator. The manufacture date on the alarms should be checked, to ensure that they are less than 10 years old. If older replace the alarms, as the sensitivity dimensions in these alarms over time.

Mike Lester, Fire Marshal



# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**RECREATION DEPARTMENT:** Season's greetings from the Parks and Recreation Department. As December brings us the wintry cold and crazy holiday rush, allow Columbia Parks and Recreation to bring you 'light' and stress release options in exercise, community gathering and holiday fun.

**WINTER WONDERLAND AT REC PARK ~ DECEMBER 15TH FROM 5:30 TO 8:00 P.M.** Imagine toasting marshmallows by an open fire, visiting with Santa and receiving cocoa and cookies from Mrs. Claus, listening to holiday music, and perhaps playing a game or doing a craft or two all while taking in the lights at Rec Park. Come feel Jack Frost nipping at your nose, while enjoying the warmth of the holiday spirit-- A fun outing for the whole family! Take a drive through Rec Park to see the festive lights and scenery then stop by the upper pavilion to join in the festivities. Santa arrives at 6:00 p.m. The event is FREE. Please consider bringing a non-perishable food item to benefit Columbia's food pantry.



Youth Rec Basketball is underway! 3rd – 8th grade teams have been practicing and the first games begin December 2nd. The K-2nd grade divisions get going on December 2nd too. Participants will be on the hardwood through the end of February. Go Columbia Hoops!

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED)

### SAVE THE DATE! POLAR PLUNGE ~ JANUARY 21 FROM 11:30 – 1:00 PLUNGE AT NOON!

Mark your calendar for our Polar Plunge ~ a great opportunity to bring community, fun and generosity together. We might get cold, but oh the warmth we will feel in our hearts! Bonfire for warmth and marshmallow toasting, cocoa, small games, and raffle baskets will all be part of the festivities. All proceeds will be donated to the TIDE Cancer Foundation. Sign-up today on Rec Desk or scan the QR code on the flyer to direct you. Don't want to take the plunge but still be a part of the fun? Not a problem! Stop by to support our 'polar bears' and take in the atmosphere.



**COMMIT** ~ Will resume in the new year. Stay tuned for more details.

**ZUMBA** ~ Tuesdays, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**FIT FUSION** ~ Monday/Wednesday/Friday: 4:30- 5:30 p.m.

**YOGA** ~ Taking a hiatus for the holidays but will begin again January 23rd. Join instructor Laura Jacques for an invigorating yet calming yoga that will help ease your stress and increase your flexibility.

**MEN'S BASKETBALL** ~ Open Gym style play, Mondays, \*8:15 – 10:00 at Horace Porter School through February. \*Time will change to 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. in March.





# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED)

**AROUND TOWN:** Paint and Sip night was a success! Painting, nibbling, and sipping treats combined with fellow comrade made for a fun night of community gathering. Not all of us were experienced painters, but Ann Marie Drury guided us to a finished product we could be proud to show off. Stay tuned for more Paint and Sip events this winter—both kid and adult. Recreation Business:



**RETURN THOSE GATE KEYS!** Please drop keys off at the Rec Department, Murphy House, Beach Road.



**LIFEGUARDS** needed for the summer at Columbia Lake. Yes, it is December, but summer will be here before you know it. Start planning for your summer job now. Not certified? We will provide training and certification. Call the Rec office for more details.

**SPONSORS:** Looking to partner with Columbia Parks & Recreation? Being a sponsor is a great way to not only promote your business but provide financial support to enhance programming and positively impact the community. **HUGE THANK YOU to our current Platinum Sponsors: Titan Energy, Discovery Learning Zone, Columbia Cross Fit and Oliva Evans, Realtor/Broker.** Call the Rec Department for partnership opportunities: 860.228.8513

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## **RECREATION DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED): In the planning stages: 2nd Annual Girls in Sports Day ~ Sunday, February 5th**

**A free event hosted by the Town of Columbia Parks and Recreation at E.O. Smith High School for Girls ages 8 – 13.** A Day that promises to be one of fun, movement, and empowering girls through sport!

Columbia's Girls in Sports Day will be in conjunction with National Girls and Women in Sports Day (NGWSD), an annual day of observance held during the first week of February to acknowledge the accomplishments of female athletes, recognize the influence of sports participation for women and girls and honor the progress and continuing struggle of equality for women in sports. Look for more details in January.

**WINTER STORY TIME WALK THROUGH REC PARK** ~ Looking for a way to exercise both your mind and body at the same time? Visit Rec Park and take in the walking trail. Prepping for the Winter season, our story is Frosty the Snowman. As you walk the path, take time to stop at each post along the way to read a 'page' of the story. Before you know it, you will have a loop completed and a story enjoyed. Share with a child, enjoy yourself ~ just right for everyone. The stories will change as the seasons change and 'brain teasers' will be implemented over time as well. Stay tuned for our programming along the walking trail at Rec Park!



**Storytime  
In the Park**

**This Month's Book:**



**Come to Columbia Rec Park and walk the path to read a book! With each step you take you'll have to find the next page! A fun activity for the whole family.**

Town of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department  
Follow us on Facebook: @Col Rec and Instagram: @Columbia\_Parks\_Rec  
for more updates on future events or DM us to give suggestions!

Follow Us!



For more dates and offerings, please visit our [Website](#), follow us on [Instagram](#) and/or [Facebook](#). Scan!

Happy Holidays to you and yours!



# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED):



**COMMIT<sup>®</sup>**  
DANCE FITNESS

**KAREN RICARDO**

Wednesday's from 7PM-8PM

Located at Yoemans Hall

\$6 Walk-in

\$50 Pre-Paid (10 Class Punch Card)

\$90 Pre-Paid (20 Class Punch Card)

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED):



**ZUMBA**  
With Martín.

**TUESDAY 7:00 PM**

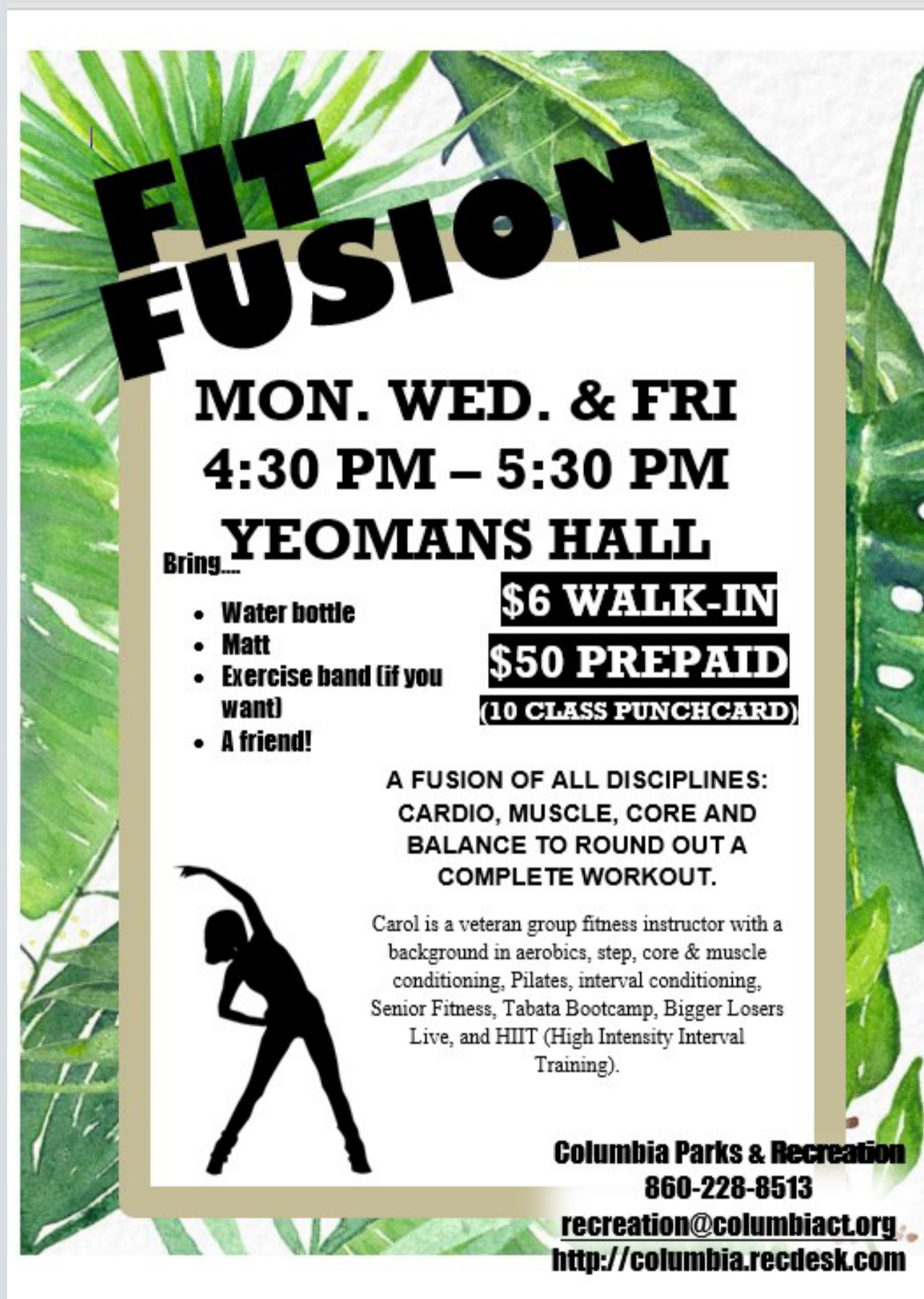
**\$6 Per Class.**  
**\$50 Ten Class Punch Card.**  
**\$90 Twenty Class Punch Card.**

Dance away with Zumba® and experience the exhilaration of Latin-inspired and globally-inspired beats while getting fit and staying active! All skill levels are invited and encouraged to join in the fun!



# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED):



# **FIT FUSION**

**MON. WED. & FRI**  
**4:30 PM – 5:30 PM**  
**YEOMANS HALL**

Bring...

- Water bottle
- Matt
- Exercise band (if you want)
- A friend!

**\$6 WALK-IN**  
**\$50 PREPAID**  
**(10 CLASS PUNCHCARD)**

**A FUSION OF ALL DISCIPLINES:  
CARDIO, MUSCLE, CORE AND  
BALANCE TO ROUND OUT A  
COMPLETE WORKOUT.**

Carol is a veteran group fitness instructor with a background in aerobics, step, core & muscle conditioning, Pilates, interval conditioning, Senior Fitness, Tabata Bootcamp, Bigger Losers Live, and HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training).

**Columbia Parks & Recreation**  
**860-228-8513**  
**[recreation@columbiact.org](mailto:recreation@columbiact.org)**  
**<http://columbia.recdesk.com>**

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## RECREATION DEPARTMENT (CONTINUED):

### **Yoga** **At Yeomans Hall**



**Mondays**

**6:30-7:30 pm**

**September 11<sup>th</sup> – November 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Walk-in \$ 10**

**Pre-pay: \$85 for the entire session**



# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## **SOCIAL SERVICES:**

**NEW: CT ELECTRIC DISCOUNT RATE:** With the winter season approaching, a reminder that there are resources for heating assistance:

A bill discount will be available for residential electric customers who qualify starting in December 2023.

You must have financial hardship status on your electric account. To apply visit [Eversource](#)

There are two tiers of discount (10% or 50%) depending on your annual household income or receipt of a public assistance benefit.

### **HOW TO GET THE CONNECTICUT 10% DISCOUNT RATE**

#### **Step 1: Apply for or Verify Your Financial Hardship Status on Your Electric Account**

There are two ways you can apply for or verify your hardship status. You can either provide Eversource with receipt of eligible public assistance benefits, or submit proof of income documents that verify you meet the income eligibility requirements.

#### *Public Assistance Benefit Qualifiers for the 10% Discount*

You must have at least one person in the household that can show receipt of a public assistance benefit from one of the following programs.

- Medicaid or Access Health; HUSKY B
- State HUSKY B
- Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)
- Section 8 Housing, Rental Assistance Program
- Medicare Savings Programs (MSP)
  - o Additional Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary (ALMB)
  - o Special Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB)

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## **SOCIAL SERVICES (CONTINUED):** Income Eligibility Requirements

If you don't receive one of the public assistance benefits listed above, the following guidelines determine how much all household members over 18 can make to be at or below **60% of the state median income** and qualify for a 10% discount on your electric bill.

FAMILY SIZE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INCOME LEVEL	UP TO \$41,533	UP TO \$54,338	UP TO \$67,124	UP TO \$79,910	UP TO \$92,695	UP TO \$105,481	UP TO \$107,878	UP TO \$110,275

If you meet these income requirements, you must submit one of the following verification documents for all household members over 18.

- Unemployment benefit letter or most recent bank statement
- Employment (last four weekly pay stubs, last two bi-weekly paystubs, last monthly paystub)
- Self-employment (most recent year 1099 Tax Form)
- Social Security benefit letter
- Child support, pension, retirement, or other benefit letter or most recent bank statement showing direct deposit

### **Step 2: Submit Documentation to Eversource**

After confirming you receive one of the eligible public assistance benefits or meet the income eligibility requirements, you may submit your documents securely in several ways.

- Log in to your account to [upload your documents](#).
- Send them via U.S.P.S. mail at Eversource, Attn: Credit Dept., P.O. Box 270, Hartford, CT 06141.
- Submit documents via fax at 866-438-6476.
- Call us at 800-286-2828.
- Contact your local [Community Action Agency](#).
- Eversource will review and verify your information within 10 business days. If you are eligible, you will start to see a discount on your bill in December 2023.

### **How to Get the Connecticut 50% Discount Rate**

Starting in December 2023, you may be eligible for a 50% discount on your monthly electric bill if you have a financial hardship status on your electric account. For example, if you have a \$100 monthly bill, it would be \$50 less.



# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## **SOCIAL SERVICES (CONTINUED):**

### **Step 1: Apply for or Verify Your Financial Hardship Status on Your Electric Account**

There are two ways you can apply for or verify your hardship status. You can either provide Eversource with receipt of eligible public assistance benefits, or submit proof of income documents that verify you meet the income eligibility requirements.

#### Public Assistance Benefit Qualifiers for the 50% Discount

You must have at least one person in the household that can show receipt of a public assistance benefit from one of the following programs.

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Temporary Family Assistance (TFA)
- State Administered General Assistance (SAGA)
- Department of Social Services State Cash Assistance, State Supplement
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid or Access Health; HUSKY A, C, D
- State HUSKY A
- Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance
- Connecticut free or reduced lunch program
- Head Start
- Medicare Savings Programs (MSP)
  - o Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Program (QMB)

#### *Income Eligibility Requirements*

If you don't receive one of the public assistance benefits listed above, the following guidelines determine how much all household members over 18 can make to be at or below **160% of the federal poverty guidelines** and qualify for a 50% discount on your **electric bill**.

FAMILY SIZE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INCOME LEVEL	UP TO \$423,325	UP TO \$31,552	UP TO \$39,776	UP TO \$48,000	UP TO \$56,224	UP TO \$64,448	UP TO \$72,672	UP TO \$180,896

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## **SOCIAL SERVICES (CONTINUED):**

If you meet these income requirements, you must submit one of the following verification documents for all household members over 18.

- Unemployment benefit letter or most recent bank statement
- Employment (last four weekly pay stubs, last two bi-weekly paystubs, last monthly paystub)
- Self-employment (most recent year 1099 Tax Form)
- Social Security benefit letter
- Child support, pension, retirement, or other benefit letter or most recent bank statement showing direct deposit

### **Step 2: Submit Documentation to Us**

After confirming you receive one of the public assistance benefits or meet the income eligibility requirements, you may submit your documents securely in several ways.

- Log in to your account to [upload your documents](#).
- Send them via U.S.P.S. mail at Eversource, Attn: Credit Dept., P.O. Box 270, Hartford, CT 06141.
- Submit documents via fax at 866-438-6476.
- Call us at 800-286-2828.
- Contact your local [Community Action Agency](#).

Eversource will review and verify your information within 10 business days. If you are eligible, you could start to see a discount on your bill in December 2023.

To make suggestions, share ideas or get involved in future prevention work for the Town of Columbia please contact Katie Wilt at 860-228-1008 or [kwilt@Columbiact.org](mailto:kwilt@Columbiact.org).



# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**TAX OFFICE:** Don't forget!! The second installment of the Real Estate, Personal Property and the Supplemental Motor Vehicle taxes will become due on January 1, 2024. The last day to pay without a penalty is February 1, 2024. **Bills are not sent for the second installment, please put a reminder on your calendar!** Please feel free to leave payments or correspondence in the drop box at the right side of the entrance of the Town Hall or in the drop box in front of Yeoman's Hall. The drop boxes are emptied at 8:00AM each weekday; weekend tax payments are processed on Monday. Please be aware that tax payments put in the drop box **after** 8:00AM will be processed the next day the Tax Office is open (see hours below).

**Regular office hours for the TAX OFFICE: Monday through Wednesday 8:00-2:00, Thursday 10:00-6:00 and closed on Friday. The office will be closed December 22, 25, 29 and January 1, 2024.** The Tax Office has extended hours in the month of January and February 1, 2024: Monday through Wednesday 8:00-4:00, Thursday 10:00-6:00 and Friday 8:00-12:00.

Mailing address for tax payments:

Town of Columbia

Dept # 347

PO Box 150512

Hartford, CT 06115-0512

Columbia residents can view and pay taxes online, service fees for tax payments apply, .95 cents to use a bank account and 2.99% for credit and debit cards.

- Go to [www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org)
- On the home page click on the pay taxes online tab.
- On the next page click on to view/pay tax bills.
- The search criteria will need to be entered exactly how the tax bill is written. Enter the last name, a space, and then the first initial of the first name.

You can also utilize this site during income tax time to look up your payment history. Locate your bill using the instructions above, then hover over the icons in the option column and click on the one that says tax payment history. You will also find written instructions on the pay taxes online page. If you have any problems using the online system, please contact the Tax Office at 860-228-0230 or [taxcollector@columbiact.org](mailto:taxcollector@columbiact.org) and we will gladly assist you.

For those seeking an immediate clearance for DMV due to delinquent taxes please contact the Tax Office at 860-228-0230 or [taxcollector@columbiact.org](mailto:taxcollector@columbiact.org) for information on the process.

# TOWN DEPARTMENT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**TOWN CLERKS OFFICE:** It is business as usual in the Clerk's office for all those services that you might need – Recording and Searching of Land Records, Marriage licenses, Certified copies of Vital Records, **Fishing and Hunting licenses**, Dog Licenses, Transfer Station stickers, etc.

## **FISHING AND HUNTING**

Sports licenses (fishing and hunting) for the 2024 season become available for purchase in December 2023. A perfect Holiday gift for the sports-person in your family!

For your convenience, there is a large white drop box outside the doors to Yeoman's Hall. This box can be used to drop off items for the Town Clerk and is shared with other offices in Town Hall.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call us or reach out to us by email – Robin ([townclerk@columbiact.org](mailto:townclerk@columbiact.org)) or Gail ([atownclerk@columbiact.org](mailto:atownclerk@columbiact.org)).

Have a happy and healthy holiday season!

# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## **FRIENDS OF MONO POND STATE PARK:**

THE BEGINNING: Over the past few years, the State of Connecticut, with the help of the Towns of Columbia and Lebanon and the Trust for Public Land, has acquired several large parcels of land. These acquisitions have expanded the Mono Pond State Park from its pre-existing 200 acres to well over 600.



The property provides opportunities for hiking, biking, running, and horseback riding; skiing, snowshoeing, and skating; and bow hunting, fishing, and kayaking, to name but a few! The property is also steeped in history, with foundations in the Mint Brook parcel dating back to the 18th century.

ENTER, FRIENDS...

As Mono Pond State Park acreage expanded beyond Columbia's town boundaries, the potential benefit of having a similarly expansive alliance of individuals sharing an appreciation of this resource was recognized. In an effort to build such an alliance, in 2022, the Friends of Mono Pond State Park (FOMPSP) was formed. We are an all volunteer non-profit 501(c)(3) organization created to enhance and support conservation, recreation and educational activities within Mono Pond State Park, while preserving the integrity of the park's natural resources and historical artifacts.

JOIN US! Our organization is now inviting people from all communities to support our projects and participate in accomplishing our goals.

Please [Click Here](#) for the full Friends of Mono Pond State Park Pamphlet.

Find us on Face Book! [www.facebook.com/friendsofmonopond](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofmonopond)

Questions? Comments? Ideas? Email us at: [FriendsOfMonoPond@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfMonoPond@gmail.com)



# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY:** Welcome to December at your local library!

**Saxton B. Little Free Library is proud to announce that we have gone fine-free!** The library will no longer charge overdue fines on most library materials. Ending the practice of charging punitive fines will allow us to reduce barriers to library services and provide equitable services to all residents of Columbia. In addition, the Library is removing all existing overdue fines for all library accounts, so everyone has a fresh start. Please [visit our website](#) for more detailed information.

Additionally, please be on the look-out for our **Annual Giving campaign** to hit your mailboxes this month. SBL is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so your donation is tax-deductible. 100% of your donation directly supports the library and our mission. [Visit our website](#) for more info.

**Adults** – We have two holiday-themed programs on offer this month. First, on Monday, December 11th at 2:30 pm, join us for our second annual **Holiday Cookie Exchange!** Bring two dozen of your favorite home-made cookies or bars, plus the recipe to share, and you'll go home with a wide variety of baked goods. SBL will provide hot cocoa and cookie boxes. Please call the Library to save your seat.

Then, we've brought back our **Wrap & Yap** program, an opportunity to get some gift-wrapping done out of the house (and away from prying eyes!). We have two chances for you to finish your holiday wrapping: Thursday, December 14th from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm, and Monday, December 18th from 2:00 pm -4:00 pm. We'll play holiday music or movies while you wrap. Let us know you're coming by calling SBL today.

**Kids** – Megan has a wealth of kids' activities planned this month!

Our ever-popular **Little Hands Art Workshop** takes place this quarter on Wednesday, December 20th at 10:30am – we're making cardboard gingerbread houses! This open-ended process art class is for ages 18 months to four years old and fills up quickly, so call the Library at 860-228-0350 to save your little one's seat. Registration opens on 12/1.

We're making **DIY Holiday Cards** on Thursday, December 14th! Ideas and craft supplies provided. Registration is required for this drop-in program from 4:00 pm -7:00 pm.

# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY (CONTINUED):** December 21st is the first day of winter, and it's also an opportunity to make a **Winter Solstice Craft: A Star Candle Holder** from 4:00 pm-7:00 pm. Please call the Library to sign up for this drop-in program.

This month's **Drawing Club** for kids aged five and up meets on Tuesday, December 26th at 4:00pm. Join us to practice your drawing skills through fun prompts and projects. Registration for our December session opens on 12/1.

**Did you know that SBL has three public access computers and free Wifi?** Come to the Library for a quiet place to study, get some work done, or just browse the Internet. We have comfy places to sit with your laptop – feel free to bring headphones and covered drinks while you work. Additionally, you can print both black-and-white and color copies while you're here for a minimal fee.

We hope to see you at SBL soon!

Saxton B. Little Free Library

319 Route 87

Columbia, CT 06237

860-228-0350

[columbiactlibrary.org](http://columbiactlibrary.org)

# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY (CONTINUED):**

*Winter Solstice Craft:  
Star Candle Holder*

**Saxton B. Little Library  
Thurs. December 21st  
Drop in 4-7**

ALL AGES. REGISTRATION REQUIRED, DROP IN FROM 4-7.  
STOP BY THE LIBRARY OR CALL 860-228-0350 TO REGISTER.



# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## **SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY (CONTINUED):**



SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY  
KID'S CRAFT NIGHT:

## **DIY HOLIDAY CARDS**



THURS. DECEMBER 14TH  
DROP IN FROM 4:00 -7:00

IDEAS & CRAFT SUPPLIES PROVIDED.  
REGISTRATION REQUIRED, DROP IN FROM 4-7.  
STOP BY OR CALL 860-228-0350 TO REGISTER.

# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## **SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY (CONTINUED):**



SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY'S  
**2ND ANNUAL**  
**HOLIDAY COOKIE  
EXCHANGE**


Bring two dozen of your favorite  
home-made cookies or bars  
& the recipe to share!  
SBL will provide cocoa & cookie boxes!

**MONDAY | DEC. 11 @ 2:00PM**  
**Sign-up required by calling 860-228-0350**

Cookies served are provided by home cooks; by consumption or use of these items you agree that you are doing so at your own risk. Please be advised that food here may contain milk, eggs, wheat, soybean, peanuts, and/or tree nuts.

# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**SAXTON B. LITTLE LIBRARY (CONTINUED):**



**WRAP & YAP**

FINISH YOUR HOLIDAY WRAPPING AT THE LIBRARY  
YOU BRING THE GIFTS, WE SUPPLY THE PAPER

**Thurs. 12/14 from 11am-1pm**  
**Mon. 12/18 from 2-4pm**

**We'll play holiday music or movies  
while you wrap!**

Please R.S.V.P. at the Library today!



# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## COLUMBIA CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



### Bell Choir Christmas Concert

**Sunday December 17th** 2:00 PM

Columbia Congregational Church, 325 Rt 87

Followed by Crafts Cocoa & Candy Canes

Holiday food & fun for all Ages!



Join us for one or both of these free events!



### 2nd Saturday Community Breakfast Saturday December 9th

Share Food and Joy with  
Family and Friends

**7:30 – 10 AM**

All you can eat \$12; Special Rates for  
Families with Children

Buffet includes design-your-own omelets, Belgian waffles, corned beef hash and two other meats, hash browns, scrambled eggs, fruit and home baked goods. Lots of choices!





# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**COLUMBIA CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (CONTINUED):**



You are Invited to  
**Christmas Services**  
at Columbia Congregational  
Church  
325 Rt 87

Sunday morning  
Dec. 24th 10 AM

Candlelight Service  
Sunday Dec. 24th 10:00 PM



Join us for our  
**Christmas  
Pageant  
for ALL Ages**



Sunday December 17th  
during the 10:00 AM service

# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

**COLUMBIA CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (CONTINUED):**



**Columbia**  
Congregational UCC  
Small Church Big Heart ♥

**Simple Sustenance**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Sunday, Dec 17<sup>th</sup>**

Order **Chicken Rice Vegetable Soup & Egg Nog Bread** to go!  
ORDER and PAY BY **Dec. 10th** & PICK UP **Dec. 17th**

Order online at <https://columbiacongregationalchurch.org/>

Or

Pick Up An Order Form At Church

Any questions? **Email us at [CCChurchFair@gmail.com](mailto:CCChurchFair@gmail.com)**




The profits from Simple Sustenance support both the church and local charities.



# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

## HORACE PORTER SCHOOL:




**HORACE W. PORTER SCHOOL  
KINDERGARTEN  
REGISTRATION**

Horace W. Porter School will be accepting registration for students entering Kindergarten for the upcoming 2024/2025 School year, beginning on January 8, 2024

Children who will be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2024\*, are eligible for registration. Parents are asked to register by completing the online [Kindergarten Registration Form](#) on our website at [hwporter.org](http://hwporter.org)

\*EFFECTIVE FOR THE 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR, CONNECTICUT HAS CHANGED ITS KINDERGARTEN AGE CUT-OFF DATE TO SEPTEMBER 1ST (PREVIOUSLY, IT WAS DECEMBER 31ST). IF YOUR CHILD'S BIRTHDAY FALLS BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 2, 2024-JANUARY 1, 2025, AND YOU WISH TO SEND YOUR CHILD TO KINDERGARTEN, PLEASE SUBMIT A WRITTEN REQUEST TO PRINCIPAL KARA LEVENDUSKI. A DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT WILL THEN BE SCHEDULED FOR YOUR CHILD.



# NON-MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT NEWS AND INFORMATION

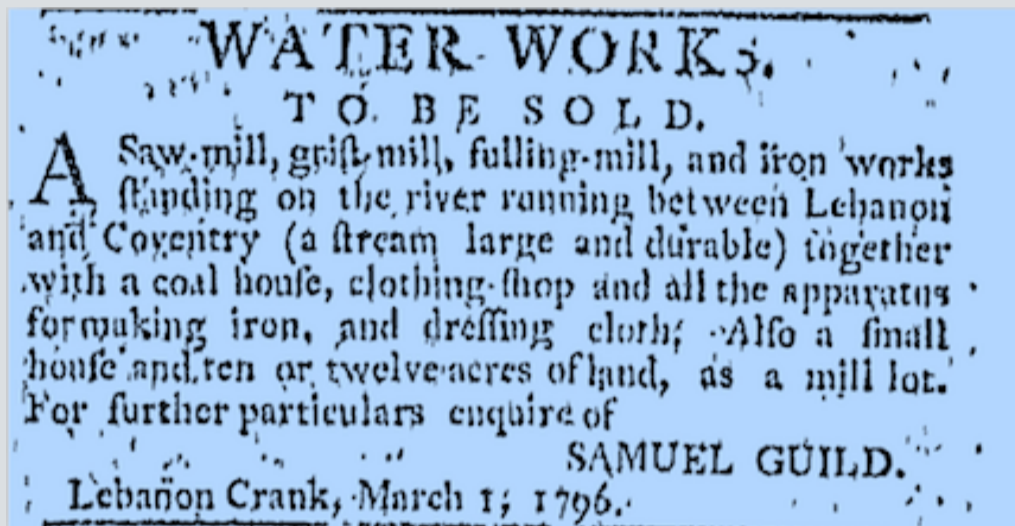
## **THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEAM OF HORACE W. PORTER SCHOOL:**

The Early Childhood Team of Horace W. Porter School is pleased to announce that we will conduct Preschool Screenings for Columbia 2-year and 9-month-old (turning 3 by December 31, 2023) and any 4-year-old not previously screened (and not turning 5 by December 31, 2023). Please call Deborah Dupuis at (860) 228-0585 if you would like your child to be screened. All public-school systems in Connecticut are responsible for the identification of children who may be eligible to receive special education services. The early childhood team in Columbia offers preschool developmental screenings for current resident children. The purpose of this screening is to collect information about each preschooler's early development in the areas of cognition, communication, motor functioning, and social interaction. This will help us to determine whether your child needs any special services in order to prepare for school success. If you have concerns about a child that has not yet turned 3, please contact the CT Birth-to-Three program at (800) 505-7000.

# SPECIAL INTEREST STORY

## HOP RIVER MILLS PRESERVE:

It has been a year since the Town acquired the 3.6 acre parcel on Hop River Road, now known as the Hop River Mills Preserve. With two hundred years of water-powered industrial use beginning in 1715, the site has many stories to tell. This ad from the Windham Herald of 1796 describes many of the activities present there in the 18th century.



This insurance map of 1888 shows many of the changes that occurred there in the next one hundred years.





# SPECIAL INTEREST STORY

## **HOP RIVER MILLS PRESERVE:**

When the Town got the property, it was so overgrown that its remaining features were all but invisible. This stone headwall was one of the few items still showing above ground.

After a year of work by a number of volunteers, most of the vegetation has been removed revealing more above ground features, and readying the site for a GPR (Ground-Penetrating Radar) survey to show what remains below the surface.#5

When the Town receives the GPR Survey report, the Hop River Mills Committee will begin to lay out plans for the next year - some archaeological work to reveal the footprint of the old mills, a start on a trail with interpretive signage to guide visitors through the site, and preparation of areas for passive recreation activities such as fishing and picnicking.



Volunteers to help with this work are gladly welcomed. No prior experience needed. To find out more, contact Ann Dunnack (860 228-3992 or [anndunnack@gmail.com](mailto:anndunnack@gmail.com) ) or Joan Hill (860 228-2849 or [jmhill003@gmail.com](mailto:jmhill003@gmail.com)) And keep an eye out for future updates in the Views as this site is readied for the public to enjoy.