



**Borough of Stonington**  
**LIVING IN STONINGTON BOROUGH**  
**A GUIDE**

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# Living in Stonington Borough

## A Guide

Written by the "Living in Stonington Borough, a guide" Committee, January 1998  
Revised in 2000, and 2017.

Chartered in 1801, the Borough of Stonington is the oldest Borough in Connecticut. It lies completely within the physical boundaries of the Town of Stonington yet has its own governing body, the Board of Warden & Burgesses, which is elected every two years in May. The Borough also has its own Planning & Zoning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals. The Stonington Borough Fire Department is funded through the Borough budget and officers are confirmed by the Board of Warden & Burgesses, yet it is an independent entity composed of volunteers from the community.

Borough residents are also residents of the Town of Stonington and are served by the Town police department, educational system, registrar of vital statistics, land records, and more. The Town does not maintain Borough streets but instead returns a portion of our town taxes to the Borough. The Harbor Management Commission is a joint commission, ½ the members appointed by the Town and ½ by the Borough.

The Borough maintains streets and parks and provides collection of household garbage and recycling.

The Borough Hall has a notice board where residents can find names and phone numbers of officials, office hours, and meeting notices. Contact the Borough Office for current copies of ordinances. Additional notice boards can be found at Tom's News Stand and at the corner of Cutler Street and Elm Street by the Foot Bridge.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

There was no known settlement on "Long Point", as Stonington Borough was first known, until after 1753, when Edward Denison bought land north and east of the "**town landing**" from Elihu Chesebrough to build a wharf in the harbor so the farming community could ship their goods to markets along the coast and to the Caribbean. Others came to settle - merchants, sailors, and tradesmen - building houses along what are now Main Street and Water Street. By 1762 the northernmost house in the Borough was near the water, at Church Street.

In 1770, Oliver Smith bought the land between Grand and High Streets, from Main Street west to the harbor, and began to sell house lots. At the same time, Thomas Robinson, mariner, bought the land north of High Street, from Main Street west to the harbor. This was mainly pasture with a graveyard (Robinson Burying Ground) and a lane leading to it (now Gold Street). He created house lots along High Street and built a wharf on the harbor.

The map of 1827 shows the land south of Diving Street as open space, known as "Windmill Pasture", and there are a few houses on the "road to Westerly" (now Elm Street). The community of 1827 supported a Baptist and a Congregational Church.

The coming of the railroad to Stonington in the 1830's changed the topography: houses north of High Street on the square were replaced by the Wadawanuck Hotel. Gold and Broad Streets were opened as streets with houses, as was land bought by the railroad on Railroad Avenue (now Denison Avenue) and along Elm Street.

More houses appeared on Trumbull Street, housing workers in the Trumbull Factory, which opened in 1851. The Ash Rope Walk was closed down and eventually became house lots. Zebulon Hancox began building his houses after 1867 on Hancox Street.

By 1905, the Sanborn fire maps show the Borough much as it is today.

The steamships and the railroad stopped coming here in 1904, and many of the African-American community went elsewhere to find work. The Portuguese fishermen, who first came to Stonington on whaling ships, came in numbers after 1860, bringing their families, and settled in the southern part of town. John F. Trumbull's factory and later the Atwood Machine Company and the American Velvet Company attracted skilled machinists, many of them German, just as the railroad had earlier brought the Irish to the community.

Early land records describe shared resources, especially wells on properties, which had been subdivided. Recycling was accomplished through pigs and chickens. There were no paved streets until 1924, but granite slabs were placed at the crosswalks to protect ladies' skirts from the mud. The "good rooms" of the early houses looked out on the street, and in the 1870's verandas were added. The backs of the house lots were reserved for the privy and, if space, the vegetable garden and orchard. Our social outlook has now changed. There is much less visiting on the front stoop, verandas have been removed and back yard privacy is the focus.

## **GOVERNMENT**

The governing body of the Borough of Stonington is the Board of Warden and Burgesses, which is elected biennially in May and meets on the third Monday of every month at 7:30 PM at the Borough Hall. Commissioners are appointed by the Warden from among the Board members. Currently, we have commissioners of fire, parks, police, public buildings, sanitation, water, streets, street lighting, emergency management, communications, public affairs, and rights-of-way.

The Board of Warden & Burgesses has the power to pass ordinances, which it must advertise and which may then be appealed by the voters in accordance with procedures set forth in the Borough Charter. The voters can also initiate an ordinance by petition.

The annual budget of the Borough is drafted by the Board of Warden & Burgesses for public hearing late March or early April. It is then submitted for approval by the voters at the Annual Borough and Budget meeting the third week of April.

The Borough office is located in the Borough Hall, which also houses the Highway Department, on 26 Church Street. There, you may obtain copies of the charter and current ordinances, budgets and Zoning Regulations. There is a charge for Zoning Regulations, to offset the cost of printing.

Meeting agendas are posted on the notice boards outside the Borough Hall, at Tom's News Stand, and at the corner of Cutler Street and Elm Street by the Foot Bridge.

## ZONING

The Planning & Zoning Commission plays an important role in the life of Stonington Borough. Residents who have not yet done so should take the time to become familiar with all current regulations before beginning **any** modifications to their property.

This information can be found in the Planning & Zoning Regulations, which may be reviewed on the Borough's website, or purchased at the Borough Hall.

To further assist homeowners, architects, and contractors, as well as the general public, the Zoning Enforcement Officer is in the office during hours posted on the notice board at the Borough Hall. Regular meetings of the Planning & Zoning Commission are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM at the Borough Hall.

It is important to note that borough residences are frequently much closer together than they are in most other communities. Because of this, respect for

and adherence to all zoning regulations is imperative if we are to maintain the quality of life we all enjoy.

It is important to remain aware of the intimate nature of the Borough. This is a blessing, in that neighbors can enjoy frequent contact, however it imposes a responsibility in that any resident's action may affect his or her neighbor. Accordingly, please consider the effect on your neighbor when and if you install exterior lighting or heat pumps or play music outdoors (or loudly indoors). Please be considerate of your neighbors.

## **STREETS & SIDEWALKS**

Property owners are responsible for maintaining safe conditions on all sidewalks abutting their property. This responsibility includes repairs to the surface. Before any such work is begun, the Street Commissioner must be contacted. To ensure safe passage of pedestrians, sidewalks should also be swept clean of debris and kept free of obstructions. Homeowners must have snow and ice removed within twelve hours after cessation of a storm. A path of at least two feet is required to maintain a safe passage under these conditions.

Ball playing is not allowed on any street in the Borough. A playground is available on Northwest Street near the Town Docks, and ball fields are available at Trumbull Avenue. Use of these facilities is encouraged. An area called Wimpfheimer Park has been developed at the eastern end of Bayview Avenue. It is appropriate for picnicking and ball playing.

For more specific regulations, please consult the Borough of Stonington Ordinances.

## **PARKING**

Most homes in the Borough do not have garages. Consequently, Borough residents and visitors must rely on street parking. The rules for specific streets are indicated through signage, and it is important to know that no car may remain parked in the same spot on a public street longer than 72 hours.

Public parking is also provided at Wayland's Wharf, subject to the 72 hour limit. Nighttime parking at Wayland's Wharf requires a permit, which residents may obtain from the Borough Office.

More detailed parking information may be found in the Ordinances.

## **SNOWSTORM**

The ordinances define a "snowstorm" as a snowfall in excess of two inches. At such time, Water Street, Main Street, and Elm Street are designated snow emergency routes.

In the event of a snowstorm, move all cars off Water Street, and keep one side of Main Street and one side of Elm Street clear of cars. On even days of the month, cars may be parked only on the side with even numbered addresses, whereas on odd days of the month cars may be parked only on the side with odd numbered addresses. Once the snowstorm is over, move cars off side streets so that these streets may be plowed.

## **SANITATION**

### **TRASH COLLECTION**

The Town of Stonington provides for weekly collection of household garbage and trash. At present, the time for collection is Tuesday morning. Household garbage and trash must be placed in yellow bags specifically designated by the Town for this purpose. Such bags are sold at many local stores, and the cost goes to pay for collection and incineration of garbage at Preston.

In order to discourage vermin, garbage must be stored in such a manner that it is inaccessible to animals. Accordingly, yellow bags awaiting collection must be kept in closed containers, except on the day of collection, when bags can be placed at curbside after 6:00 A.M.

Together with garbage collection, the Borough gathers recyclables. A list of the materials designated as recyclables is available at the Borough Hall. Recyclables are sorted by type (cans, plastic bottles, paper and cardboard in another) and placed in any suitable container.

The Borough collects garden debris on a monthly basis, currently the first Monday of the month. In case of a holiday, pickup will be the following day. Leaves may be placed loose in containers or in bags, and branches must be tied in bundles light enough for one person to lift.

## SOLID WASTE FACILITY

Located on Greenhaven Road, the solid waste facility is available for use by residents of the Borough and Town of Stonington. You can get a sticker by showing proof that your motor vehicle is registered in the Town of Stonington. A temporary permit may be obtained at the facility by presenting a mortgage statement or a rental bill.

The solid Waste Facility accepts all materials which are collected curbside plus large bulky items, tires, appliances, and construction and demolition debris. There is also a "reusables" area at the Facility which accepts old books, clean rags and clothes and scrap metals. These deposited materials are available for use by other residents. For details please call the Solid Waste Office at the Town Hall **(860) 535-5099**.

## PETS

In addition to our human population, the Borough is home to wonderful companion animals. Owners should observe a few regulations to ensure their animals' safety and their welcome reception by other residents.

- a) Owners must clean up after their dogs, and
- b) dogs must be on leashes when not on their owners' property.

Dogs wandering unattended may be reported to animal control or to the police at 599-4411.

The Town of Stonington requires that all dogs be licensed. Licenses are available from the Town Clerk.

Finally, residents must realize that food for domestic animals, one's own pet, stray animals, or any other needy creature should not be left outside. Such placement serves as a magnet for attracting vermin. People should monitor bird feeders so as not to attract rodents or skunks.

## DUMPSTER POLICY

No dumpsters shall be permitted on Borough streets without a permit.

Applications for dumpster permits are obtained through the Borough office at 26 Church Street and require advance approval from the Street Commissioner.

The first seven days are permitted without charge. Thereafter, fees will increase \$100 per week up to a maximum of \$500 per week, and will remain at \$500 per week, or any part thereof, until the dumpster is removed.

## **POLICY ON MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC TREES**

**PURPOSE:** To establish criteria and procedures for performing near term and long term maintenance on public trees in the Borough of Stonington.

**BACKGROUND:** Trees contribute to the beauty and atmosphere of the Borough. Those located on public land, such as along streets and in parks, belong to all the citizens of the Borough. Therefore, there is a need for a defined process by which public trees are maintained, removed, and planted. The Commissioner of Borough Parks, Trees, and Rights-of-Way, who acts as the Borough Tree Warden, is responsible for implementation of this policy. Except in emergency situations, for example following a major storm, no public tree is to be removed or heavily pruned without following the steps below:

- PROCEDURES:**
- a. A Borough resident or elected official who believes a tree on public land needs pruning or removal should, in writing, bring the tree in question to the attention of the Borough Tree Commissioner.
  - b. The Tree Commissioner will inspect the tree and if necessary consult with an independent licensed arborist.
  - c. If the tree requires pruning, the Tree Commissioner will arrange to have the work performed.
  - d. If the Tree Commissioner concludes that the tree should be considered for removal for reasons of public safety or because of the type/condition of the tree, she/he will place at least two signs on the trunk of the tree advising that the tree will be considered for removal at the next regular meeting of the Board of Warden & Burgesses. The signs must be posted at least 14 days prior to the Board meeting at which removal is on the agenda.
  - e. If the Tree Commissioner does not agree that the tree should be considered for removal, he/she will notify the party who requested the removal and state his/her reasons for the decision. The individual

(resident or official) who requested removal has the right to appeal the Tree Commissioner's decision to the Board. If the resident/official decides to exercise that right, he/she must notify the Tree Commissioner and the Warden in writing. The tree will then be posted.

f. The potential removal will be placed on the agenda of the next Warden & Burgesses meeting that satisfies the 14-day posting requirement. After public comment is taken on the subject, the Board will vote on it.

g. If the Board of Warden & Burgesses vote to remove the tree, the Tree Commissioner will make the necessary arrangements. However, in cases where the tree is being removed at the request of and for the convenience of a nearby property owner or owners, that property owner or owners must agree in advance to fully underwrite the cost of removal (including stump grinding) and of planting a suitable replacement tree, either near the same location or at another location chosen by the Tree Commissioner. A "suitable" tree is one whose type is deemed appropriate to the location by the Tree Commissioner and whose diameter is at least 2 inches at chest height. The property owner or owners who requested the tree's removal may either reimburse the Borough for the costs of removing and replacing the tree or they may arrange and pay for the work to be done by a CT-licensed or certified arborist.

h. Within six months of removing a public tree the Board of Warden & Burgesses will publish in regular meeting minutes either a plan for replacing the tree or the reason(s) for not replacing it.

**EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:** Following a severe storm or other emergency, the Tree Commissioner and Borough Warden may take necessary actions regarding tree removal or heavy pruning without following the procedures listed above. If one or more public trees are removed during or immediately following an emergency, the Tree Commissioner will report on the losses at the next regular meeting of the Board of Warden & Burgesses, and those losses will be recorded in the meeting minutes.

**LONG TERM MAINTENANCE:** An inventory of all public trees will be performed approximately every ten years, beginning in 2008. The inventory will record the location, species, approximate height, and condition of all public trees six feet or greater in height. It will be used as the basis for developing, with the assistance of professional landscape designers, a comprehensive plan for improving and sustaining the Borough's public trees. The inventory is to be updated by the Tree Commissioner on an interim basis when trees are removed or planted.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

In case of EMERGENCY, dial 911

The Stonington Borough Fire Department consists of volunteer fire fighters. The Department is funded mainly through the Borough budget, but the Department also raises money independently for special projects. At present, the Borough owns a ladder truck, two pumpers, and a van. Fire fighters face a special challenge navigating the trucks through the narrow streets of the Borough. The aim of many of the parking restrictions is to guarantee access for the fire trucks, and side yards required in zoning regulations provide workspace for fire fighters.

The Fire Department recommends noting the alarm pull box nearest to your home.

The alarm horn, audible throughout the Borough, indicates the location of a fire call and is also sounded for general notification of conditions such as snow emergency or no school.

#### **OTHER EMERGENCIES**

In the event of an emergency which requires residents to leave the Borough, please follow the routes indicated by the evacuation signs located throughout the Borough. Residents are notified of such emergencies by an alarm sounding the signal "7".

### **BUDGET AND TAXES**

A property owner in the Borough of Stonington pays taxes to both the Town of Stonington and the Borough. Taxable property is divided into three categories. Real Estate & Land are assessed by the Town Assessor according to a formula; Motor Vehicle values are furnished by the State Department of Motor Vehicles; and Personal Property tax is based on the value of business machinery, shop, and office equipment.

The value of property owned on the assessment date, October 1, becomes the basis for calculating the tax due the following July. The Borough mill rate is determined by the Board of Warden & Burgesses, to fund the budget approved by Borough voters and taxpayers at the Annual Meeting in the third week of April.

Taxes are due and payable without interest from July 1 through July 31. Taxes unpaid after July 31 are subject to a 1½% per month interest rate - minimum \$2.00.

State regulations require that the tax collector file liens in the Land Records for any Real Estate taxes unpaid at the end of the tax year (June 30). The State Department of Motor Vehicles mandates payment of delinquent taxes before renewal of registration or issuance of a new registration.

Currently, the Town of Stonington collects taxes for the Borough.

The address for the Town Tax Collector is:

152 Elm Street  
Stonington CT 06378

## **LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY**

One of the delights of living in Stonington Borough is enjoying the numerous parades and festivals held throughout the year. The schedule is as follows: Our Lady of Fatima parade (last weekend in May); the 4th of July Parade; the Blessing of the Fleet (last weekend in July); the Village Fair (first weekend in August); the Feast of Isabella (first weekend in September); the Fire Department Halloween Party; the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service (Thanksgiving Eve); Lighting of the Christmas Tree and Christmas Walk (Friday evening in early December).

Another unique aspect of living in the Borough is the direct and immediate influence residents can exercise over local government. Regular meetings of the Board of Warden & Burgesses are held the third Monday of every month and provide an opportunity for public comment - please come, please air your views. Budget deliberations culminate in April with the Annual Borough & Budget Meeting. At that time, the upcoming budget is reviewed and acted upon by the residents in attendance.

Beyond attending meetings, residents are encouraged to join local government by running for election as Burgesses or as Warden or by serving on governmental agencies such as the Planning & Zoning Commission or the Zoning Board of Appeals. Please also consider involvement in the numerous civic groups active in the Borough: the Historical Society, the Village Improvement Association, the Stonington Free Library Association, the Visiting Nurse Association, the Fire Department, the Stonington Ambulance Corps, and the Stonington Community Center.

Please support local business. The Borough merchants offer a wide variety of products and services such as gift stores with a wide variety of merchandise, clothing stores, a jewelry store, a gourmet store, an interior decorating and furnishings store, antiques shops, numerous restaurants, a newsstand, architectural services, and landscape design services. What a treat to shop without the need of cars!

We trust this guide has introduced you to both the benefits derived from and the responsibilities inherent in living in Stonington Borough. Please make note of these amenities, which make our community the pleasant place it is.

**BOROUGH OF STONINGTON**  
**P.O. BOX 328, 26 Church Street**  
**STONINGTON, CT 06378**  
**PHONE (860) 535-1298**  
**FAX (860) 535-2351**

**Website: [www.borough.stonington.ct.us](http://www.borough.stonington.ct.us)**

**E-mail: [boroughstonington@snet.net](mailto:boroughstonington@snet.net)**

Office hours are by appointment and:

Administrative Asst.	Tues: 2:30- 4:30 PM; Wed, Thur, & Fri.. 8–2 PM
Zoning Officer	Tuesday 4:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Tax Collector	Weekdays 8:30 AM – 4 PM Town Hall

Regular meetings

Board of Warden & Burgesses	Third Monday 7:30 PM
Planning & Zoning Commission	Second Tuesday 7:00 PM
Zoning Board of Appeals	Third Thursday 7:30 PM



**BOARD OF WARDEN & BURGESSES**

Warden:	Jeffrey Callahan	908-6530	Street Commissioner <a href="mailto:borowarden@att.net">borowarden@att.net</a>
Burgesses:	Michael H. Adair	535-9099	Fire Commissioner
	Karen von Ruffer Hills	914-907-0200	Sanitation & Utilities
	Amanda Barnes	460-2452	Parks, Trees & Rights-of-way
	Amy Nicholas	535-9345	Police & Public Affairs
	Shaun Mastroianni	334-8713	Public Buildings
	Robert Scala	535-3700	Sidewalks