

Public Safety Subcommittee
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 8:00 A.M.
Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream

Mr. Askham called the Regular Meeting of the Public Safety Subcommittee to order at 8:02 A.M. via Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream.

Present were: **James Baldis**, Chief, Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department; **Michael Berry**, Emergency Management Director; **Nicholas Boulter**, Chief of Police; **Maria Capriola**, Town Manager; **Chris Davis**, Deputy Chief of Police; **Tom Fitzgerald**, Management Specialist; **Mike Long**, Police Commissioner; **Mark Massaro**, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource; **Chris Peterson**, Selectman; **Tom Roy**, Director of Public Works; **Nancy Scheetz**, CEO, Visiting Nurses Association; **Karin Stewart**, Executive Director, Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association; **Neil Sullivan**, Director of Personnel, Simsbury Schools; **Jim Traficante**, Assistant Emergency Management Director; and **Gary Wilcox**, President, Simsbury Fire District.

Pledge of Allegiance
All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Audience
There was no public audience.

Mr. Capriola and Mr. Askham welcomed Mr. Traficante on board as the new assistant EMD.

Approval of Minutes
1) February 18, 2021 Minutes
The minutes were approved as presented.

Updates
1) *Farmington Valley Health District*
No update.

2) *Town Manager's Office*

Ms. Capriola provided virus statistics, noting the Town is currently dropped to Yellow Status which is more than five but less than 10 positive cases per 100,000 residents. For the two-week period ending March 6, Simsbury has 7.4. cases per 100,000 people, a positivity rate of 1.5% among those tested, with 26 cases during that period. Just over 25% or 6,500 Simsbury residence have received at least the first dose of the vaccine. 94% of residents over the age of 75 have received at least the first dose, and 88% of people between the ages of 65 – 74. Updated information regarding both testing and vaccination sites in the region has been posted to the website and Walgreens in Simsbury is a site for vaccinations. As of April 7th the FVHD will be holding a weekly vaccination clinic at the Library. In general, the workforce remains healthy. During the month of February, 5 staff members were quarantined due to contact with a person who tested positive, either in the work setting or in their personal life (through March 8th, 1 staff

member quarantined). No staff member tested positive during the month of February (through March 8th, 2 staff members tested positive). She said they are experiencing temporary staffing shortages and reminded people that response time for non-emergency situations may be delayed and asked residents and patrons for continued patience and understanding. She mentioned that all of their critical infrastructure and services are fully operational.

Town Hall and the Library continue to welcome walk-in visitors with limited hours. The Library is expanding to pre-COVID hours for walk-ins Tu/Th/Sa as of April 5th, and the Town Hall are working on expanding their hours for walk-ins M/W/F starting the week of April 5th. She reported all the other park facilities remain open and reminded people to continue to wear masks. Ms. Capriola said the Senior Center is remaining closed until further notice with limited services and reminded people that they are still not accepting cash payments until further notice.

3) Other Business:

Mr. Askham provided a brief update on the budget and said the town managers budget was approved by the BOS with some minor additions. He mentioned some of the Public Safety projects, in particular the Traffic Calming on Notch/West Mountain, are currently recommended. He mentioned they had a good meeting with the BOF and said the majority of the Public Safety and Public Works items should receive good support as they move forward. There is still a small amount of work to do and welcomed questions.

4) Emergency Management

Mr. Berry provided an update and said vaccinations are continuing through the Farmington Valley Health Department. They are looking to push several hundred people through a day at the Library. He said they continue to act under a State of Emergency for the town and put out an incident action plan every week which will help with funding requests. Emergency managers are receiving the latest information from the State and the Department of Public Health. They have also been monitoring the weather events and commended the communications with Eversource. He mentioned he's working with other services to increase their communications to ensure residents are back up and running timely. He said he will be holding tabletop drills and cyber security drills to go over their emergency operation plan and ensure everything is updated and up to date.

5) Police

Chief Boulter provided an update on COVID-19 and has had one quarantine since the last meeting. He said his new hire Sean Crowley just completed his field training and evaluation program and has been released within the last couple of weeks. He also mentioned another new hire Eric Popielarczyk, who joined the first week of March and is currently completing his field training and evaluation program. He said that even with the two recent hires they are still short 3 officers and invited people to spread the word and enquire through policeapp.com. Chief Boulter acknowledged the Public Works Department and the Fire Department for assisting with a funeral procession earlier in the week. He said they both did a fantastic job with a noteworthy showing for someone who deserved it. He concluded with mentioned they just finished their 3-day National CALEA Accreditation assessment, which is a 4-year re-certification to show they are in compliance with best practices and standards. All went well and the assessors were very complementary of their involvement on the community, their training and with the manner in

which they handle mental health issues. A report will be provided in the coming weeks, and a full reaccreditation should happen in July. Chief Davis thanked everyone for their involvement and help in the process. Commissioner Long spoke about the staffing needs for the Department and how they are ensuring they are staffing correctly.

6) Ambulance

Ms. Stewart reported all is going well and they are very close to being 100% vaccinated with just a few members not currently vaccinated. She retracted her statement from last month which stated they were 100% vaccinated.

7) Fire

Chief Baldis reported their COVID situation remains pretty stable. They have no members in quarantine, and vaccinations are taking place for those who are up for it. He said they are opening up their larger group training programs within the Department and are still wearing masks and social distancing. He mentioned the upcoming Spring cleanups and raking of leaves and reminded residents of the No Open Burning policy in the town. Permits are required through the fire marshal's office for campfires. He said permits are not valid when the fire danger is high, and this information can be received through the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. He's said there's a link to it on the Fire Departments website. He reminded people that the potential for a brush fire due to a downed power line is greater when the winds are high, and to stay away from them if they come into contact with them. He said not to attempt to put out a fire if there are power lines involved as it's dangerous and the lines could be live. Mr. Wilcox mentioned they are coming to the end of the budget process and the mil rate could rise to 1.22% from 1.19%. More information will be available next month. He welcomed Jim Traficante on board.

8) Board of Education

Mr. Sullivan reported that any high school student who wishes to return to in person learning are now back. The elementary and middle schools have been back since earlier in the year and now the high schools are similar, and he hopes it remain this way for the remained of the school year. Henry James has been the site that has hosted the vaccinations clinics for the FVHD on Saturdays for the neighboring 10 towns. He said they distributed 650 shots on the first Saturday in March, and 750 last week with one more weekend to go. Over 2,000 educators, including everyone associated with the educations sector, will be vaccinated at HJ. He also said the quarantine period for school-based contact tracing will be reduced to 10 days which will help with staffing issues. He said Salters Express bus service are back to full force and do not anticipate further cancelled bus runs.

9) Public Works

Mr. Roy reported 2 of their staff tested positive and some staff were out due to quarantine. He said this, and other non-COVID reasons, has resulted in staffing challenges and said he is down significant staff in all divisions of public works. They are continuing to keep the building clean as additional hours are added for reopening. He said every area in every building is disinfected at least 4 times a day. They are still helping out with social services and food distribution. He thanked Chief Baldis for working closely on communications with Mr. Clemons during the

recent windstorms. Mr. Roy also mentioned their office is busy and they are working on collecting FEMA reimbursements from tropical storm Isaiah.

10) Social Services

No update.

11) VNA

Ms. Scheetz is now the CEO and reported everything at the VNA is good. They are approx. 90% vaccinated and are working with the FVHD. She reported as of a week ago they have reached over 13,000 vaccines. She cautioned that the pandemic is here to stay for the next several years and they are gearing up for the next phase. Ms. Scheetz asked was there a way to recognize Ms. Nielsen for her hard work in keeping everyone connected. Chief Berry mentioned how she was instrumental in reporting a break in a cellular tower and preventing people from calling 911.

12) Main Street Partnership

No update.

13) Other

Mr. Massaro reported on the communications during the latest wind-storms. He reminded residents about the special payment arrangements that are available to enable bills with Eversource to be spread out and the longer-term payment arrangements will be ending at the end of April. He also mentioned as a follow up to Chief Baldis' point that people should not try to determine what type of line is down when they come across them. He recommended leaving this to the professionals as it's dangerous and advised residents to stay back and stay safe.

Mr. Peterson asked about the travel ban and student quarantining. Mr. Sullivan said they are following the Governor's recommendation, which are not requirements. He said they are not perusing any quarantines related to travel at this point.

Mr. Askham confirmed the next meeting is Thursday, April 22, at 8:00 A.M.

The meeting ended at 8:48 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Lynott
Commission Clerk