

Public Safety Subcommittee
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, April 22, 2021 at 8:00 A.M.- ADOPTED
Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream

Mr. Peterson called the Regular Meeting of the Public Safety Subcommittee to order at 8:03 A.M. via Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream.

Present were:

Melissa Appleby, Deputy Town Manager; **James Baldis**, Chief, Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department; **Nicholas Boulter**, Chief of Police; **Maria Capriola**, Town Manager; **Chris Davis**, Deputy Chief of Police; **Kristen Formanek**, Director of Community & Social Services; **Mark Massaro**, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource; **Sarah Nielsen**, Simsbury Mainstreet Partnership; **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; **Gary Wilcox**, Fire District President

Pledge of Allegiance

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Audience

There was no public audience.

Approval of Minutes

March 18, 2021 Minutes

Mr. Roy provided correct spelling of Mr. Clemens

The minutes were approved as amended.

Updates

1) Farmington Valley Health District

No update.

2) Town Manager's Office

Ms. Appleby provided virus statistics, noting the Town is currently at the Yellow Status for the 2-week period ending April 10th. They currently have 12.6 positive cases per 100,000 residents. The positivity rate was 3% among those tested, which is an increase from 1.5% last month, with 44 cases during that period. Around 61% of the population, or 15,593 Simsbury residents, have received at least the first dose of the vaccine. The health district is holding weekly vaccine clinics at the Library on Wednesdays and they are also helping to schedule appointments for the municipal staff at that clinic. In general, the workforce is remaining healthy and in April 5 staff members were quarantined due to contact with a person who tested positive, and this month so far there has been 2 staff member positive cases. She reminded everyone that they may experience temporary staffing shortages and response time for non-emergency situations may be delayed. She acknowledged and thanked staff for engaging in safe practices at work and for ensuring their essential services remain operational.

Town Hall and the Library continue to welcome walk-in visitors with limited hours. The Library returned to its pre-COVID hours for walk-ins Tu/Th/Sat, and the Town Hall is accepting walk-ins on Mondays and Wednesdays 8:30A.M. – 4P.M. and Fridays from 8:30A.M. - 1P.M. She said they do anticipate re-opening Town Hall, the Library, and Eno to pre-COVID normal business hours of operation on June 1st, with a formal announcement coming next week. They will be phasing in events and programming more gradually throughout the summer and staff with indoor work locations will cease the rotating A/B schedule as of May 23rd so staff will be returning back in the office together. Public meetings will remain to be held virtually through May 20th, but they are looking into options regarding technology for in-person and hybrid in-person/remote options. She said the social services Facebook page has a couple of recent posts on programs on broadband payments and funeral service assistance available to eligible residents. She said there is also a press release on the town website on the Governor's visit, and the good work supporting local restaurants during the recovery.

3) Emergency Management

Mr. Traficante reported that they have been assisting the Farmington Valley Health Department with vaccinations at the library. A discussion followed on who can attend the clinics and Ms. Appleby confirmed it's open to the public and residents can go online and make an appointment.

4) Police

Chief Boulter said their public safety radio system project is continuing to move forward and they are expecting a full revamp of the system by the end of May.

5) Ambulance

Ms. Stewart reported all is going well and they have full staff.

6) Fire

Chief Baldis reported their COVID situation remains stable. Vaccinations are taking place and they are doing more training with larger groups as permitted. He mentioned the storm that came through and provided an update on a tree falling on a house and a vehicle crash involving a tree. He said there were temporary road closures which resulted from downed lines. He said he was in constant contact with Mr. Massaro to ensure attention was allocated to the situation and he thanked everyone involved for their response and assistance. He reported an uptick in calls on open burning issues and reminded residents that there is a no open burning policy, including leaves or lawn debris. He reminded people that fire pits have to be well contained, be constantly monitored, and there needs to be an ability to put it out. He also said that when the fire danger alert is high firepits should not be used. He reminded hikers on trails to ensure their phone is fully charged and to enable the GPS locator and learn how to use it. He said the coordinates will be very helpful in assisting with a search and rescue if necessary.

7) Board of Education

Mr. Sullivan reported that they completed their second dose of the vaccine last week for adults in the school system, with over 2,000 recipients. The Farmington Valley Health District has asked to keep the clinic going at Henry James and will be available on Saturdays in May for 16, 17 and 18-year-olds in the 10 Farmington Valley Health District towns. It will be a Pfizer clinic starting

on May 1st and information will be shared with the high school list serve. He said some of the staffing challenges will be reduced now that it's 2 weeks past receipt of the second shot. He added that cases and quarantines are being updated on their website and the levels are down and they are seeing fewer case. They are adapting to their end of year events and will have a better idea of what they will look like as more information is received from the Governor. He said they are hoping to have a Covid safe prom and graduation. They have given the green light to add secure vestibules to all 7 schools and by this Summer Tootin Hills school will have a secure vestibule which directs visitors to the main office.

8) Public Works

Mr. Roy reported that their buildings and ground staff are continuing to prepare the building for a full opening on June 1st. They are also supporting the vaccine clinic at the library. Their admin staff are currently working on their FEMA application and they are hoping to have it submitted this week for a reimbursement on tropical storm Isaias. He is expecting a decent payment from FEMA. He also reminded everyone that May is bike month and tomorrow there will be a section closed by Dyno Nobel due to construction.

9) Social Services

Ms. Formanek said everything is good in Social Services and their staff are healthy. They are continuing to run their services and programs and will be working on a plan to return to the building full time.

10) VNA

Ms. Scheetz reported all is good and they are taking care of the Covid positive patients in their community. She said the clinics are open but fill up quickly so appointments may not always be visible in the VAMS system. Clinics will be available on Saturdays starting in May for all age groups. A conversation followed on the demographics of people testing positive and Ms. Stewart said they are seeing an increase in cases people aged 40-50's. Mr. Peterson spoke about what happens after people get vaccinated in terms of continuing to wear masks and Mr. Stewart & Ms. Scheetz said that their groups are continuing as they were before the shot, with wearing masks and protective gear, and will likely continue this for a while.

11) Main Street Partnership

Ms. Neilson said the Governor came to Simsbury last week and Simsbury was ahead of others in the State in terms of supporting outdoor dining. She said they have done about 12 outdoor dining permits within a couple of days, including renewals and 3 new permits. She went over some of the new restrictions being lifted in May. She thanked the Chief of Police for getting updates out to her so quickly so she can share it with the businesses and to give them a head up to be cautious. She said the businesses have been very appreciative of these reports and quick communication. She said Sunshine Wheels, who provides reliable transportation for seniors and mobility-challenged people and their caretakers, celebrated a ribbon cutting at Memorial Hall as they opened a second location in Simsbury.

12) Other

Mr. Wilcox added that the proposed budget is complete and is posted on the website. He said that last year they had a 0% increase and this year they are feeling the benefits of an increased grand list and said the proposed mill rate is increasing to 1.22 which is a 2.5% increase in the tax rate. He spoke about the idea of an appreciation event and provided details on the thoughts behind it and what it would look like. He concluded with saying the timing may not be right for this year and they are looking to have this event in 2022.

Mr. Massaro reported that they are seeing an uptick in the number of scammer calls and said they even show up on the phone caller ID as Eversource. He said more than likely it's not Eversource and provided information on ways to protect against these scammers. He listed a few questions to ask including, the name on the account, the address, and the exact past due amount on an account, and if the caller cannot answer then it's a scam. He advised people to never immediately pay for anything, never wire money to anyone and never accept offers from anyone to pay your bill and provide other services for a fee. He said to call their customer service center to verify anything at 1-800- 286-2000 and a representative will clarify any information or questions.

Mr. Peterson confirmed the next meeting is Thursday, May 20, at 8:00 A.M.

He concluded by recognizing all the hours of work and service put into running a town like Simsbury, and thanked staff members and volunteers for all the services and assistance they provide.

The meeting ended at 8:52 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Lynott
Commission Clerk