

Public Safety Subcommittee
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Friday, September 17, 2021 at 8:00 A.M.
Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream

Mr. Peterson 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:

Melissa Appleby, Deputy Town Manager; **James Baldis**, Chief, Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department; **Michael Berry**, Emergency Management Director; **Nicholas Boulter**, Chief of Police; **Maria Capriola**, Town Manager; **Kevin Clemens**, Highway Superintendent; **Kristen Formanek**, Director of Community & Social Services; **Melissa Hancock**, Eversource; **Mark Massaro**, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource; **Sarah Nielsen**, Simsbury Mainstreet Partnership; **Tom Roy**, Director of Public Works; **Karin Stewart**, Executive Director, Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association; **Neil Sullivan**, Director of Personnel, Simsbury Schools; **Patrick Tourville**, Fire Marshall; **Gary Wilcox**, President, Simsbury Fire District

Pledge of Allegiance

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Audience

N/A

Approval of Minutes

June 17, 2021 Minutes.

The minutes were approved as presented.

Updates

1) Farmington Valley Health District

No Update.

2) Town Manager's Office

Ms. Capriola provided COVID-19 statistics, noting that the town is at the orange status (10-15 cases weekly), for the 5th consecutive week, which is the second to highest level. She compared it to the late spring / early summer numbers, which were grey/clear status (<5 cases per week) for 11 consecutive weeks. This information is now shared weekly through the town's social media sites. She said following feedback from the health district and sectors of the community she made two modifications to the municipal executive order which is uploaded on the website. The 1st was changing the age limit of wearing a mask from 2 to 3 years old, and the 2nd was removing the word "partition" from the order when social distancing from others. The Farmington Valley Health District are working on metrics to determine when these executive orders can be updated. She said about 1/3 of the community in the capital region have issued municipal executive orders regarding masks. She added as of Sept 4th a little over 19K residents have at least received the 1st dose of the vaccine, and over 18K are fully vaccinated, which is about 75% of residents.

Public meetings are being held virtually due to the increase in cases, however some of the smaller boards and agencies are meeting in person.

3) Emergency Management

Mr. Roy provided an overview on the experience of the most recent storms, “Henri”, “Ida”, and “Fred”. There was considerable rain and flooding in town. He said “Fred” had the largest impact on their infrastructure which had more rain than forecasted, which led to a basement flooding. He said the smaller drainage systems were challenged with the sheer amount of rain that fell per hour. He said they were prepared for “Henri” and “Ida”. Mr. Clements reported that there were 21 different events of various levels during “Henri”, mostly tree related, with 8 wire events. He said overall everything went well. He added, for “Ida” there was a lot of rain and it was interesting to see some of the infrastructure that failed during the previous storm and held up during the following one. Mr. Baldis mentioned that the rain during the “Fred” storm overwhelmed the drainage systems and was different than in the past. He said they pumped water away from the outside of the houses and was grateful for the volunteers and extra pumps they had. He mentioned that Route 315 and Riverside Rd. were closed due to river flooding and one home basement was pumped out. He also said that during the month of August they experienced about 40% increase in call volume mostly related to the weather. He commended how quickly Eversource responded, and added more work need to be done on the telecommunications side when roads/areas are blocked or semi-blocked. Chief Boulter said everything was managed very well, and town services and public safety worked well together. He said they had additional officers on duty for the storm which helped with their responses. Mr. Roy mentioned that Lucy Brook had a lot of downed trees which got caught up against a small bridge and caused water to come up over the road. As a result, the new parking lot the Land Trust were building was washed out. He mentioned concerns on what the outcome would be if the small hiking bridge had let loose, which would result in a considerable loss to the town. He added that these kinds of larger events should be considered for future bridge approvals. Mr. Berry said everything was planned ahead and went well from their end, with “Ida” having most impact. He cautioned people driving around barricades, and Ms. Steward added everything went well from her perspective. Ms. Capriola impressed upon the public to not swim in the rivers when they are flooded and moving very fast. She said the town needed to put up barricades and “no swimming” signs at Hop Brook Landing at the Flower Bridge due to people swimming in unsafe conditions.

Ms. Capriola provided an overview of the Darius Rucker concert which was postponed from 2020 until August 2021. She mentioned the Health District did a great job putting together their recommendations and protocols which were communicated to the public, and the event went without incident. Chief Baldis said he is waiting on the final AAR but for the most part it went well and he thanked everyone involved in the extensive planning effort. Mr. Tourville said they will be working on the ability to have a life safety evaluation done in the future, and will look for possible funding which will help make things smoother for the venue with all their services. Ms. Capriola added they are working on a list of items to make improvements on which includes the life safety analysis and the larger gathering permit process.

4) Police

Chief Boulter reported two departmental promotions and added they have filled their last remaining vacancy. The new officer is already certified, and currently in the field training program with the expectations of being out in the field in a solo capacity within the next 4-6 weeks. He mentioned that car break-ins and motor vehicle thefts are down from last year. He said the numbers report 9 stolen cars this calendar year in comparison to 27 the same time last year. He said the reminders they have been given people to keep their cars locked, keep valuables out of sight, and keep key fobs away from cars, have been working. For car break-ins, he reported 138 last year from Jan to August, and this year for the same time period the number is 34.

5) Ambulance

Ms. Stewart reported staff are healthy with only a handful of positive COVID-19 patient cases being transported in the past few months. She mentioned there is a significant shortage of paramedic EMT's in the area and the state, which is impacting all ambulance services. She added that in the Hartford area there are almost 2,100 - 2,500 calls made to 911 per day, which is an increase and impacts the town on Simsbury. As a result, they have staffed their 2nd ambulance for a minimum of 12 hours per day M-F and will continue to do so with the goal being 7 days a week. She said they are still looking to hire EMT's and paramedics, and said COVID has affected their efforts as people do not want to work so close to it.

6) Fire

Chief Baldis reported all is good. He said they provided support for the Darius Rucker concert which all went well and is looking forward to the AAR meeting. He mentioned they are prepared for the upcoming fly-in and are providing fire staff and support for that event. He said while they are waiting for the delivery of their new fire truck and the repair of their tower ladder, the CT Fire Academy have leant them a truck to use in for the next 6-8 weeks. No interruption to service is expected. Mr. Tourville said that Fire Prevention Week is starting in October and will be focused on educating people on the various sounds the fire alarms and carbon monoxide make, and knowing what to do when the alarm sounds. This will help reduce false alarm and help with the reported nuisance alarm issue reported last month. They will be holding an Open House, Oct 3rd to the 9th and will be also be visiting schools to pass the fire safety message on. He mentioned the bowling alley is being demolished to make way for a Tractor Supply and there will be activity there for a few months. He added Dyno Nobel will be included in the Incident Command training being held in October. Mr. Peterson asked about the status of the old fire truck that is being replaced and Chief Baldis said it did not make sense financially to repair the engine and it was sold to a private owner as an antique.

7) Board of Education

Mr. Sullivan reported schools have reopened with all students in attendance. He said it was a smooth opening and attention was made to ensure social distancing in public areas. He reported a few cases since school opening and with some modifications to the quarantine rules it has resulted in less numbers and shorter durations. He said a high % of 12-18 year old's are vaccinated so this also helps to reduce the number of those needing to be quarantined. They are working on administrating the Governor's vaccine mandate for preK-through-12 educators,

which included everyone who works in the school. There's approx. 1,000 people they are tracking and currently 3-4% are not vaccinated. He said they are working their attorneys and other state partners to administer the program which is effective Sept. 27th. He reported that over the Summer Tootin Hills received its secure and locked vestibule which is the 5th school out of 7 to be complete in the overall project.

8) Public Works

Mr. Roy reported on the FEMA reimbursement process for tropical storm "Isaiah" stating they submitted \$144,000 of eligible expenses which included overtime, equipment, and vehicles used for both the emergency proactive measures as well as the debris removal. He said the number was high because FEMA paid for their debris removal straight time costs for the 1st time. He said they get paid 75% on that value, so they should receive a little over \$100,000. He reported they already received \$9,400, and anticipate their next payment soon. He said they have submitted the preliminary damage assessment for "Henri" and is hesitant that it will qualify at the FEMA level. He said they have been working with the Police and Fire Department on a traffic calming study on the south end of town with the goal to see if they have a solution to make that area safer.

9) Social Services

Ms. Formanek said the senior center and social services still has cloth fabric masks available for anyone from the public.

10) VNA

No report

11) Main Street Partnership

Ms. Nielsen reported that Farmington Valley Health District received an equity grant which is to be used to get COVID-19 vaccinations to diverse populations with the focus on restaurants and food health services. Main Street Partnership is the only organization the VMA have partnered with in the valley. She reported a lot of restaurants have fully vaccinated staff and she is working with those who don't. She said the DEEP are doing emergency work at the Benny's parking lot and she has met with the businesses to discuss the details. In relation to the concert, Ms. Nielsen said she submitted her report to the BOS on ways to improve working with the businesses and safety overall, and mentioned one of the issues was the lack of communication and cell phone/internet service which is a safety concern. She clarified that the Simsbury mask mandate did not end on Wednesday night as one of the businesses had heard, and added that any changes will come from the town and will also be communicated through the group. She added they are still handing out masks to the businesses and their staff and have handed out around 30,000 free masks since the beginning.

12) Eversource

Mr. Massaro introduced their new manager for community relations in the central region, Ms. Hancock. They will be scheduling an in-person meeting in the near future. Ms. Hancock added that she is also one of the liaison officers during storms, and is looking forward to getting to know everyone. Mr. Massaro added that the moratorium on the residential collection of bills has

expired and asked if anyone has a financial hardship, they should contact Eversource to set up a payment arrangement.

13) Other

The next meeting is scheduled for December 16th at 8:00 A.M

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Lynott
Commission Clerk