

**Public Safety Subcommittee
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - APPROVED
Thursday, November 19, 2020 at 8:00 A.M.
Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream**

Sean Askham called the Special 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, Simsbury Fire District; Nicholas Boulter, Chief of Police; Maria Capriola, Town Manager; Chris Davis, Deputy Chief of Police; Kristen Formanek, Director of Community & Social Services; Jennifer Kertanis, Health Director, FVHD; Mike Long, Police Commissioner; Mark Massaro, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource; Sarah Nielsen, Simsbury Main Street Partnership; Chris Peterson, Board of Selectmen; Tom Roy, Director of Public Works; Nancy Scheetz, Visiting Nurses Association; Neil Sullivan, Director of Personnel, Simsbury Schools; Gary Wilcox, President, Simsbury Fire District

Pledge of Allegiance

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Audience

There was no public audience.

Approval of Minutes

1) October 15, 2020 Minutes

The minutes were approved as presented.

2021 Regular Meeting Schedule

Ms. Capriola referenced the 2021 meeting schedule included in the meeting packet with meeting dates scheduled quarterly on the third Thursday of the month at 8:00 A.M. It was agreed that Special Meetings will be scheduled as needed.

Updates

1) Farmington Valley Health District

Ms. Kertanis reported the entire State is moving in the wrong direction with regard to COVID-19. The FVHD is averaging 90 new cases per week. Simsbury is averaging about 20 new cases per week. For the Farmington Valley that is a rate of 12.5 per 100,000. Simsbury's rate is 10.3 per 100,000. She noted the majority of cases now are community based, among the general public, whereas in the spring the majority of cases were in long-term care, assisted living facilities, or congregate-living settings. She reported the positivity rate for the week ending November 7 is at 5% and that is slowly increasing. She noted that contact tracing is done for every case and thanked the public for the good response rate. The vast majority of cases know where they acquired the illness. Many healthcare workers test positive, as well as family clusters where an adult traveled or was exposed at work and the entire family tests positive. She also

noted clusters associated with small gatherings. She stressed that people need to be reminded that this virus is still present and warned against COVID fatigue, not wearing masks and not social distancing. Ms. Kertanis provided a document with metrics for return to school. She noted it is a tool to help schools with remote learning versus in-person learning decisions. The FVHD has prioritized working with schools. She reported they are not seeing any secondary transmission associated with cases in schools. When they have a confirmed COVID case in a school, they work with the school immediately to identify anyone considered a close contact. Those people are immediately quarantined for the appropriate amount of time. They then track to determine if any of those close contacts subsequently develop the virus. She repeated that they have not identified any situations in which a secondary case has occurred in a school. She noted that cases occurring in school are occurring because of activities outside of school. She feels that school is probably one of the safest environments for our students and fully supports more in-person learning. Simsbury High School was closed for two days because of a party that was held over the weekend. She stresses that this was not about increased risk in the High School but external activities that have impacted the High School.

Mr. Sullivan thanked Ms. Kertanis and added that there has been no spread of a case within the school environment. He clarified that the High School is closed today and tomorrow while contact tracing is completed. He then spoke about the metrics, noting the High School's ability to go hybrid and reported that the process of contact tracing has gone extraordinarily well.

Mr. Askham inquired if the weekend party will be pursued from a criminal side.

Ms. Kertanis stressed the importance of communicating the impact of COVID on students' ability to have in-person learning, the impact on businesses and workplaces. She also noted the need for the public's cooperation with contact tracing. As a community, people need to step up and do the right thing. Discussion followed about negligence.

Mr. Peterson inquired about statistics and multiplication rates for planning considerations. Discussion followed about case numbers, what numbers require remote learning and also understanding the context of situations in order to make decisions. Mr. Peterson noted the value-add to the community to be able to open up daily distance learning for elementary school students.

Mr. O'Neil noted the Board of Education is in discussion about that now.

Ms. Kertanis reported she has been working with the Governor's Office to increase testing throughout the Farmington Valley. There is a standing test site at Tunxis Community College on Thursdays from 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. Bradley Airport is offering testing to the general public seven days a week and she is working to identify a site in the northwestern part of the Farmington Valley. She added that she is working on rapid testing for school systems for symptomatic faculty and staff. She noted vaccine availability is getting closer. They have been practicing and developing mass vaccination plans for many years. She noted the first phase will likely be in a closed environment and will be for first responders and critical infrastructure. Locations for that vaccination are being identified through a survey sent to emergency managers.

Mr. Long added that Hartford Healthcare is running the site at Bradley Airport, which will open on Monday and will be drive-through.

Mr. Askham noted the timing around testing and the frustration from needing to keep children out of school for multiple days while awaiting results.

Chief Baldis inquired about the PCR test versus rapid testing.

Ms. Kertanis advised if someone is symptomatic, they are encouraged to get a rapid test. If they test positive it will give them more timely information to take action for quarantine. If they are symptomatic and test negative on a rapid test, they should get the PCR test and isolate until test results are received.

Mr. Askham summarized that schools continue to be a safe place and contact tracing is being done well.

2) Town Manager's Office

Ms. Capriola reported that the Department of Public Health launched a municipal COVID alert system, which is being monitored and tracked. She noted the status will most likely change from yellow to orange in terms of cases per 100,000. They regularly monitor the travel advisory and push that information out weekly. She noted an uptick in enforcement of sector rules in the last two weeks or so, which include complaints about mask wearing and other potential violations. She thanked Ms. Kertanis and her team for their work and noted the Town Planning staff has been investigating those concerns. Together, they have done a really good job of balancing education and compliance with enforcement. In general, the workforce is largely remaining healthy. She did note an uptick in the number of staff being quarantined due to contact tracing. In the last few weeks there have been about 20 staff members who have been recommended to be quarantined by various health districts. Ms. Capriola noted Town Hall and the Library are open very limited hours for walk-in visitors. If the situation continues to worsen, they may need to roll back some of those hours. The ice rink is now open for the season with modified practices. The opening was delayed due to a large number of staff members needing to be quarantined. The Senior Center will remain closed until further notice. They continue to have very limited services there. A large number of absentee ballots were processed as anticipated. In a normal presidential election, they would process about 1500-1800 absentee ballots. In this election 44% of votes were made by absentee ballot, a little over 7,200. No cash payments has been extended through January 1. They are accepting payment by check, credit and debit cards and are encouraging people to do transactions online when possible. Given the current state of the pandemic meetings will continue to be held virtually until further notice.

3) Emergency Management

Mr. Berry reported they have been very busy but are also standing by. They have been on weekly meetings with the Department of Public Health and bi-weekly meetings with the Governor. Locations for vaccinations have been identified. He noted the flu clinic in September worked very well and was a dry-run for when the vaccine is available. They continue to issue weekly incident action plans for COVID, including best practices for municipal employees. He reported a low amount of cases in the central Connecticut region but noted a large uptick in

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Simsbury. Contract tracing and quarantining are being done. He noted they are encouraging everyone to follow best practices, keep vigilant, wear masks and wash hands. Next, he spoke about the recent wind storms and noted they have had good contact with Eversource. He encouraged everyone to listen to WSIM, 103.5 FM and streaming online. If agencies would like to put information on the station, let them know.

4) Police

Chief Boulter introduced Chris Davis, the new Deputy Police Chief for the Department. His ceremony can be viewed on SCTV or through a link on their facebook page. He reported staffing is good overall at the Police Department. Several officers have been quarantined based on contact tracing, not symptoms.

Mr. Askham welcomed Deputy Chief Davis, as well.

5) Ambulance

No report

6) Fire

Chief Baldis reported they continue to remain COVID free. They are going back to more remote training via zoom and are limiting contact with members. He noted Simsbury Celebrates is alive and well and the Fire Company will be doing its traditional Torch Light Parade. Iron Horse Boulevard on the northern side will be closed. All fire apparatus will be in a stationary mode, lined up and decorated for citizens to watch the parade from their own vehicles as they drive by. They will use the southbound lane entering by the intersection of Hopmeadow Street and Owensbrook, driving south to exit at Drake Hill Road. The event will take place from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. Other Simsbury Celebrates events are taking place virtually and can be found on the Town's website. He reminded people about fire safety at home with regard to candles, fireplaces and holiday decorations. Continue to check smoke detectors, don't overload circuits with holiday lights and make sure chimneys are inspected and cleaned.

7) Board of Education

Mr. Sullivan noted that a dashboard has been added to the Simsbury schools website and will be updated every Friday with COVID-related information including case numbers and quarantine numbers by school.

8) Public Works

Mr. Roy reported that a few staff members are on quarantine with no direct cases at this point. They continue to maintain social distancing and use PPE. He noted Eversource's clean-up and restoration response to the wind events was excellent. He thanked the FVHD for their work in approving a quarantine procedure for the department. In the event of a significant snow event while asymptomatic staff is quarantined, they have a plan that will allow them to keep roads clear. They have also coordinated with surrounding towns to confirm mutual aid agreements. Other Public Works staff may be called upon to assist if needed. On-call agreements are in place with local contractors if needed. In an emergency situation they will bring in some of the Fire Department staff if necessary.

9) Social Services

Ms. Formanek encouraged people to remember we are not stuck at home, we're safe at home. She reported changes to programming as of yesterday, which include stopping in-person activities per the Health District. Health services, such as foot care, hearing clinics, blood pressure and blood sugar screening will be cancelled effective today. She noted a Thanksgiving meal was provided yesterday. They have stopped producing face masks as they have an excess. If anyone needs them, let her know. The drive-through distribution for Cheese Day will change to a walk-up-to-the-door distribution for the winter months. This will be an all-day event rather than two hours and they have some great partners for volunteers. The first distribution went well and they will continue with that. She noted it is energy assistance season. If people need help with heating costs, they can contact the office. They are taking applications now remotely. They are actively seeking sponsors for the holiday program. She noted they are looking forward to welcoming their new Social Services Assistant on Monday. Lastly, she reported staff is healthy and none are in quarantine.

10) VNA

Ms. Scheetz reported they are taking care of COVID patients and her staff is safe and not in quarantine. They are getting mandated weekly testing. She noted if there is exposure, the Connecticut Department of Public Health requires them to quarantine for fourteen days. She noted they still have flu vaccine and will have it for one more month if anyone needs it. She emphasized that they are available and have a number of nurses and extra staff that can help out if anyone needs assistance.

11) Main Street Partnership

Ms. Nielsen reported that businesses are very worried, restaurants in particular. She reminded people that all of the restaurants offer takeout options, and delivery and curbside pick-up are offered by many. They have been handing out KN-95 masks to businesses. She reported a huge uptick in verbal assault against business owners and employees.

Mr. Askham noted that violations should be reported by phone.

Ms. Nielsen added that the FVHD has been very helpful in fielding these complaints.

Ms. Scheetz gave a shout out to and thanked the Simsbury Fire Department for their help with fit testing for masks.

Ms. Nielsen noted the Simsbury Celebrates events, including fireworks, which can be viewed from people's vehicles. Three recommended parking lots for viewing are at Henry James Middle School, Simsbury High School and Simsbury Farms.

12) Other

Mr. Massaro spoke about the two wind events, noting they were ready to respond. He noted information on energy assistance is available on their website and on the energizect.com website. The extended payment terms program has been extended to February. Anyone needing help in this area can call their customer service center.

The group will meet again on Thursday, December 17, at 8:00 A.M.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Haberlin
Commission Clerk