

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

**Mr. Askham** called the Special Meeting of the Public Safety Subcommittee to order at 8:01 A.M. via Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream.

Mr. Askham left the meeting at 8:38 A.M. and Ms. Capriola led the meeting.

Present were: **Melissa Appleby**, Deputy Town Manager; **James Baldis**, Chief, Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department; **Nicholas Boulter**, Chief of Police; **Maria Capriola**, Town Manager; **Mark Critz**, Director of Safety & Security, BOE; **Chris Davis**, Deputy Chief of Police; **Kristen Formanek**, Director of Community & Social Services; **Mike Long**, Police Commissioner; **TJ Magnoli**, Eversource; **Mark Massaro**, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource; **Sarah Nielsen**, Simsbury Mainstreet Partnership; **Tom Roy**, Director of Public Works; **Nancy Scheetz**, Visiting Nurses Association; **Karin Stewart**, Executive Director, Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association; **Neil Sullivan**, Director of Personnel, Simsbury Schools; **Gary Wilcox**, President, Simsbury Fire District

Pledge of Allegiance  
All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes  
1) January 21, 2021 Minutes  
The minutes were approved as presented.

Public Audience  
There was no public audience.

Updates  
1) *Farmington Valley Health District*  
No one present with an update.

2) *Town Manager's Office*  
Ms. Capriola provided virus statistics, noting the Town is currently in Red Status. However, for the last two weeks she mentioned there is a noticeable steady decline in cases for the first time since late Summer early Fall. For the two-week period ending February 6, Simsbury has 20.6 cases per 100,000 people, a positivity rate of 3.2% among those tested, with 72 cases during that period. The Health District administrated 850 doses of the vaccine last week. The CVS in Avon has also started administrating COVID vaccines as of last week. The State reported as of February 11 that just under 3,100 of Simsbury residents (12.2%), and a little over 1,200 of 75+ (50%) residents have received the 1<sup>st</sup> dose of the vaccine.

In general, the workforce remains healthy. During the month of January, 9 staff members were quarantined due to contact with a person who tested positive, either in the work setting or in their personal life. One staff member tested positive during the month of January. She 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. A small number of staff members have received the vaccine, and they are awaiting clarification on the remainder of staff to see who falls under the frontline, essential worker definition.

Town Hall and the Library continue to welcome walk-in visitors with limited hours. Town Hall is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings and the Library is open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays, midday. Curb-side pick-up and technology appointments are still available on the days they are not open to visitors. A directive from the State was received again to implement the Tax Deferment program for tax bills that were due on January 1. 31 approved applications were received, and total of \$315,000 in deferred revenue. This was a reduced number in comparison to July's installment where there was triple the number of applications and deferred revenue.

Active unemployment claims as of January 9 was 654 which is down from a high of 1,418 during the pandemic right before Phase 1 re-opening. Typical average pre pandemic claims were around 125 during the Winter and around 150 - 160 in the Summer. Ms. Capriola mentioned that the numbers show that people are still being affected by the pandemic.

**MOTION:** Ms. Scheetz made a motion to amend the agenda to do a cyber update. The motion was seconded by Mr. Long. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

### *3) Other Business:*

Mr. Askham mentioned there was an executive session with the BOF and BOS surrounding cyber exposure, cyber coverage and cyber treats in general, including hacking, ransomware, social engineering fraud, etc. He said the town is doing well with this overall, but Mr. Bazzano suggested that the Public Safety committee should have discussions around ensuring there is a clear playbook in place to protect systems in the event of such an attack. Mr. Askham said it's a new thing for this committee as an insurance carrier, risk manager and the breach coach needs to be involved from the moment of discovery. He proposed that the committee hold a tabletop exercise to simulate a cyber event led by Ms. Capriola, Ms. Appleby, and Mr. Bazzano. He mentioned that it would be important to have Mr. Curtis included also as the insurance coverage covers both entities, the BOE and the Town of Simsbury. He said this is an important exercise to go through so that they are prepared in the event something does happen. He recommended Mr. Berry take the lead on this from an emergency management standpoint, with the assistance from Ms. Capriola, Ms. Appleby and Mr. Bazzano. Mr. Sullivan recommend the Director of Technology should be included. Mr. Askham agreed and extended an open invitation to anyone that the committee thinks is important to include.

### *4) Emergency Management*

Chief Baldis provided an update on behalf of Mr. Berry who had a meeting conflict. He reported that the vaccinations are continuing through the Farmington Valley Health Department but due to size and number of people they have moved from the main fire house location to East Granby

High School as their main site. They are also looking into other options in town. The weekly incident action report continues to put out which is also submitted to the State. Communications with Eversource has improved and contact has been made before, during and after the recent snowstorms. WSIM continues to put out information to the public on local issues from various town departments. They will be focusing on holding an exercise regard the Spring flooding situation along the Farmington rivers. He announced the appointment of the new Assistant Emergency Manager and welcomed Jim Traficante on board.

#### *5) Police*

Chief Boulter provided an update on the public safety radio system and confirmed most of the equipment has arrived or is on its way with an expected anticipated completion date in the Spring. Since the last meeting, 1 member is in quarantine due to a positive COVID testing in the household. He reported a sufficient amount of PPE supplies, and noted the high costs for a recent purchase of gloves. He thanked the Farmington Valley Health District and the VNA for their very efficient vaccination clinics both in town and East Granby. The new officer Mr. Crowley is expected to complete the “on the job” training in early March and will then be at a solo capacity. He invited everyone to introduce themselves to him. A new hire, Eric Popielarczyk, will be joining the department at the beginning of March and will be in the training program for two months. He mentioned that even with the two recent hires they are still short 3 officers and 1 dispatcher and said application and process information is available on [policeapp.com](http://policeapp.com). He invited everyone to spread the word. An annual review for CALEA, which is their national accreditation, was complete and went well. A report is due soon and will finalize the review. In March they are up for their 4-year annual re-accreditation which is a more comprehensive look at policies, procedures, practices, management and facilities and he will share the reports of this once complete.

#### *6) Ambulance*

Ms. Stewart reported all is going well and they are 100% vaccinated with both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> shots. No reported cases of sickness in staff or volunteers. They have seen an increase in call volume and will be ramping up their 2<sup>nd</sup> ambulance again. They have hired a full-time paramedic who is a town resident.

#### *7) Fire*

Chief Baldis reported 1 district staff member tested positive for COVID and went through the quarantine process and is back to work with no issues. Policies continue to remain in place and training has been restricted to smaller groups. With the upcoming snowstorm he reminded everyone to shovel out fire hydrants, at or near their home, as it saves time for the firefighters looking for them and working to clear them. He mentioned 2 recent fires and reported both cases had clear hydrants which saved a considerable amount of time. Both cases there were no injuries, but home damage was reported. New snow tracks have been received and put in place on their all-terrain vehicle, and they are now able to access remote places if an injury or accident was reported.

*8) Board of Education*

Mr. Sullivan reported they continue to have COVID cases and quarantines each week, but they are fewer in number. This information is put on their website for the public. Further employees in the 65+ category have been vaccinated. Staffing continues to do well, with the exception of Salters Express bus drivers. 3 different bus routes were cancelled for a couple of days each due to a driver shortage and finding people with a CDL. He apologized to the families that were impacted and thanked them for their understanding. He reported that given the positive trends on the lack of school-based spread, they will be inviting a larger population of high school students back, starting on Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Juniors and seniors who have expressed an interest in coming back 4 days a week, Tuesday through Friday, will be allowed to do so. This will be ramped up for a week, and on Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders whose families choose to come back will be allowed. He thanked the FVHD for supporting them and mentioned a number of area high schools are making similar plans for more in-person learning. He said they are continuing to wait for their teacher vaccinations.

Mr. Critz provided an overview on the new Visitor Management System called Raptor which the high school will be piloting beginning March 1<sup>st</sup>. This system is used across the Nation and the State at schools. All visitors to the school must stop at the security desk to provide the guard with an ID which will be ran through the system. A building administrator will be called if any flags are raised. The visitor can also call the superintendent's office for approval if required. All visitors cleared will be issued a photo badge, which will include their destination within the building, and must be worn on the premises. COVID screening questions will be asked upon entry. He also mentioned with juniors and seniors returning to school, parking will be a premium, and recommended residents who are coming to use the fields or courts to please arrive late morning after students have arrived. He reported that the Salters buses owned by the BOE and the maintenance vehicles have had their mobile radios installed and they are waiting on the portable radios for the rest of the staff.

*9) Public Works*

Mr. Roy reported their custodial staff are continuing to clean and disinfect the buildings 4 times a day. They are supporting social services with the food distribution. He mentioned the upcoming long, but not intense snowstorm and with 2 staff members down for non COVID related reasons he asked the public's help with a couple of items; 1) do not push snow into the roadway and 2) to place their trashcan in their driveway. This will help the plow teams to clear the roads more efficiently and faster. He also mentioned if people need to be out on the roads to give the plows a lot of room, especially if they are reversing.

*10) Social Services*

Ms. Formanek reminded everyone that they do not have a warming center open and to contact social services or 211 if anyone has a need and they will assist. The police department is also available to take calls after hours or in an emergency but ideally, they would like to arrange assistance for those in need ahead of time. She also noted that applications for energy assistance are still being accepted and urge people not to wait until their tank is empty as it's more difficult to help people when they are already cold.

Cheese Day is going well, and they are doing a hybrid outdoor, walk-up method. The numbers were lower this month, likely because it followed a snowstorm, where they served 123 households. She thanked public works for their support. She noted Community for Care offered a virtual program on Domestic Violence which is available for viewing on SCTV and invited people to check it out. The Youth Service Bureau in conjunction with the schools and some local community partners will be offering virtual programs on the mental health and wellbeing of the youth and also on opioid and substance use prevention. Special programs will be available for both parents and the youth. The senior center has been busy partnering with the FVHD and other local senior centers to help register for the vaccine, and she encourage anyone experiencing difficulties in registering to contact the senior center at 860-658-3273. She asked that people be patient as they are experiencing a high call volume daily. She mentioned the Dial-A-Ride busses are up and running and social services are available to help with arrangements if anyone needs assistance with transportation to get the vaccine. She concluded with mentioning there currently is not a process in place to vaccinate homebound seniors, but they are aware and are working with their partners on this. The senior center is keeping a list of residents that may need this service and asked anyone to reach out if they wish to be included. Ms. Capriola recognized Ms. Formanek, her staff and the volunteers for their hard work and additional responsibilities over this pandemic period

#### *11) VNA*

Ms. Scheetz reported they are busy working with the health district at 3 vaccination clinics a week. They have moved over to East Granby high school as this location can accommodate upwards of 500 people a day. They are still in Avon, Farmington, and the senior center and are vaccinating close to 700 people a week. They can accommodate the volume of people and are able to reschedule in the event of a day being cancelled due to snow. The process to get vaccines to homebound people is not in place yet, but they have completed a survey with the Department of Public Health and will be able to assist in meeting the needs of these people when the state designs a puts a process in place. Ms. Scheetz confirmed her staff is 100% vaccinated and are following all the recommendations of the CDC including ensuring masks are fitted properly. She offered her resources and services if anyone needs them.

#### *12) Main Street Partnership*

Ms. Nielsen confirmed they are working with the FVHD on business complaints and issues reported through 211 as well as directly from the businesses. She reminded everyone that all of the Simsbury businesses are offering safety options like curbside pick-up, delivery, shipping options, etc. so people can continue to shop and dine safely.

#### *13) Other*

Mr. Massaro, Eversource, introduce his new colleague Mr. Magnoli who's being on board for 3 days. He reminded everyone about some of the special payment programs being offered and encouraged residents to reach out. He noted a couple of webinars that can be signed up for through their website and mentioned one next Wednesday at 11 A.M. and 6 P.M. which will give an overview of all the programs available. He said that energy efficiency is important with the increase use of home lighting and energy and encouraged people to go to energizect.com to get information on rates and other available nationally recognized, energy efficacy programs.

Public Safety Subcommittee  
February 18, 2021 Special Meeting Minutes

Mr. Roy added that their clean energy task force has been pushing the free home audits program and he had an audit done at his home to see how it works. He recommended what their offering is fantastic, low cost, and will save money.

The next meeting is Thursday, March 18, at 8:00 A.M. The calendar invite will be amended, and it will be a virtual meeting.

Chief Baldis added to his report that he wanted to thank the FVHD for their help and effort with the clinics, and for leaving the facility in an excellent condition after they finished.

**MOTION:** Mr. Roy made a motion to adjourn at 8:48 A.M. Ms. Scheetz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Lynott  
Commission Clerk