

**Public Safety Subcommittee  
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT  
Thursday, July 23, 2020 at 8:00 A.M.  
Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream**

Chairman 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: James Baldis, Chief, Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department; Michael Berry, Emergency Management Director, Simsbury Fire District; Nicholas Boulter, Chief of Police; Maria Capriola, Town Manager; Kevin Clemens, Highway Superintendent, Public Works; Kristen Formanek, Director of Community and Social Services; Jennifer Kertanis, Health Director, FVHD; Sarah Nielsen, Simsbury Main Street Partnership; Chris Peterson, BOS; 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.

**Public Audience**

There was no public audience.

**Approval of Minutes**

1) June 18, 2020 Minutes

The minutes were approved as presented.

**Coronavirus Response**

1) Farmington Valley Health District

Ms. Kertanis reported the COVID-19 positivity rate remains fairly stable and below 5% for the Farmington Valley. She thanked communities for wearing masks and social distancing. She noted an increased delay for test results. She asked the general public, if they have been tested, to please self-quarantine after their test. The Governor issued an Executive Order issuing a travel advisory for 31 states. When returning to CT from any of those states, one should self-quarantine for 14 days. There is a penalty and registration forms need to be completed. They are on the FVHD website. Ms. Kertanis noted they have been supporting schools on reopening plans. They have also been working with the Farmington Valley VNA on flu clinics to be offered in late September and October, one in Simsbury and one in Avon. She cautioned against other public health threats, including mosquito and tick-borne illnesses, such as West Nile virus, and encouraged everyone to empty any standing water near their homes. Information on how to protect yourself from these illnesses is on their website. There was discussion about what the State is doing to improve testing.

2) Town Manager's Office

Ms. Capriola reported the majority of parks and recreation facilities are open to the public, including parks, open space parcels, trails, tennis courts, the skate park, playgrounds, basketball courts, and the golf course and restaurant, for outdoor dining. They are working on reopening the Golf Pro Shop component. Pools are open. Youth sports have started using the athletic fields. Summer camp is going well. The Transfer Station is now fully open with the exception of the Swap Shack. The Library implemented a curb-side pick-up program for materials. Library staff has been processing from 50-60 pick-ups per day and some days outgoing materials have reached 300 items. Buildings will remain closed to walk-ins through at least Labor Day. Appointments are being accepted. Patrons are being screened to ensure compliance with the Travel Advisory. Updated information on the Travel Advisory is being widely shared on social media. Cash payments are not being accepted through September 14. The drop box placed outside of Town Hall to accept tax payments has worked incredibly well, with over \$2M received that way. It was noted there is no cash in that drop box. Planning, Building and Police Departments continue to enforce various sector rules. Per Executive Orders, meetings remain closed to the public and are using Zoom, SCTV and [simsburytv.org](http://simsburytv.org) for broadcasting live. This includes regulatory and elected bodies and agencies that might need to take time-sensitive action on a matter. She noted some limitations with the virtual setup as only two meetings can be broadcast live at the same time. The Property Tax Deferral Program applications are now closed. A total of 93 approved applications were received, resulting in approximately \$851K in deferred revenue. The Town worked with the Fire District, the Health District and an urgent care provider to provide local COVID testing on four dates, all of which had filled time slots.

### 3) Emergency Management

Mr. Berry noted they have been helping with the COVID testing. The State PODs are now being done only once per week. They will continue to work with the State to get any equipment needed for the Town. They will be offering the flu clinics in the fall, which they will be advertising. WSIM continues to pump out information. They are advertising that the Food Bank needs donations. They will also be putting out information on bear safety. He noted the heat wave this week, adding that cooling centers were not opened due to safety reasons. He asked that people be kind to their neighbors as COVID continues. Lastly, he advised keeping an eye on the potential severe storms predicted.

### 4) Police

Chief Boulter thanked Ms. Kertanis and the Health Department for their continued support and guidance. He reported the crew is very healthy for the most part. Calls for service continue to increase. He noted very busy bear activity, notably on July 5. Very few calls have been received regarding sector rules or groups gathering. Calls have been received about the new Town Ordinance to Prohibit the Intentional Feeding of Wildlife, including types of bird seed allowed. They are addressing these calls and working on an education campaign.

Mr. Askham noted the Board of Selectmen passed the Ordinance. It was a year-long process. He welcomes feedback and noted the Board of Selectmen created the Ordinance, not the Police Department.

### 5) Ambulance

Ms. Stewart reported staff is healthy. They continue to pick up PPE from the State. She reported the third ambulance is back, bringing them back up to three ambulances. Call volume is steady.

#### 6) Fire

Chief Baldis reported volunteers and their families remain COVID free. They are continuing to social distance and wear masks. They have been conducting station-only training with no more than 25 people. There have been no significant calls since the last meeting. They are keeping a close eye on the swimming incidents in the State. He noted Simsbury has two new rescue boats and membership has been well trained. He advised people to be very safe when participating in activities on the river. He mentioned that fire hydrants should be maintained and clear of vegetation or other obstacles. Effective today, Patrick Tourville will be the new Fire Marshall as Kevin Kowalski has retired after 36 years of service. Mr. Kowalski will remain as Deputy in the Fire Marshall's office and for the Fire Department, on the volunteer side. He thanked Mr. Kowalski for his service. Ron Castelitis will be celebrating his 42nd year of service for the Fire District on July 27, and that will be his last day as he is retiring. He congratulated Mr. Castelitis for an outstanding career in supporting the Fire District and the Fire Company in the Town.

Mr. Askham noted the large number of cars parked along the river recently, noting concern about access for emergency vehicles. Chief Baldis noted he will check signage and work with Chief Boulter on surveying that. Chief Baldis added that one of the rescue boats can be hand carried to the river's edge.

#### 7) Board of Education

Mr. Sullivan reported a tremendous amount of planning toward the effort of reopening Simsbury Public Schools. A presentation was made to the Board of Education on Tuesday and the Powerpoint slide deck of that presentation will be sent out today. They continue to plan for three scenarios, a full return, a hybrid model (half at home, half at school), and a full distance learning mode. Direction from the Governor is expected by early August. They are procuring all items and supplies needed to make this work. Families were surveyed in July about return to school, with 76% saying they would return to school, 4% saying they would not return to school, and 20% was unsure. For planning purposes, they will need to resurvey the week of August 3-7. The "unsure" option on the survey will need to be taken away in order to staff and prepare buildings appropriately.

#### 8) Public Works

Mr. Clemens reported staff is healthy. They are at full staff and are practicing social distancing and wearing masks. He noted highway crews are focusing on sight lines with regard to vegetation overgrowth. Crews may be seen on State roads addressing this important issue. He noted large trees have come down throughout the summer, some of them healthy. He referenced a road closure on Blue Ridge Road due to a fallen tree. He commended the Building and Grounds crew for their work sanitizing and cleaning buildings. In addition, they have been working on the ballot box.

#### 9) Social Services

Ms. Formanek noted summer is typically a time they struggle to receive donations of food and nonperishable items and that has been a focus. They are working hard to make sure that neighbors are fed and getting quality nutrition during the pandemic. Many are struggling. They are continuing with the food distributions every three weeks until children return to school, after which they will return to every four weeks. They are actively seeking donations of nonperishable food items, household items, toiletries and cleaning products. There is a cart outside of Eno Hall for these items Monday through Friday from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Large donations from organizations may be arranged by calling ahead. Financial donations are also welcome and can be sent to Eno Hall at 754 Hopmeadow Street. The Wednesday lunch distribution and blood pressure checks with the Farmington Valley VNA continue. The Zoom calendar is full and offers classes and events daily. Eno Hall will remain closed until after Labor Day for walk-in appointments. Staff is available by phone and email.

#### 10) VNA

Ms. Scheetz noted staff is healthy and is being tested weekly. Patients are doing well. All of the facilities that they support, senior living centers and assisted living facilities, are doing well. She noted Anthology in Simsbury is COVID free. They are excited about the flu drive-through clinics with the FVHD and all of emergency response. Update information on them will be posted on their website by mid-August. She noted they can come to a business or group to provide flu shots.

#### 11) Main Street Partnership

Ms. Nielsen reported the business community is doing very well regarding using safety protocols and access to PPE. She noted the 1820 House and the Simsbury Inn will reopen in August. Main Street Partnership and the FVHD are working with the Riverview on reopening.

#### 12) Ordinance to Prohibit the Intentional Feeding of Wildlife

Ms. Capriola noted this topic was covered earlier in the meeting. She added that they are looking at a tentative effective date of around August 11 for the Ordinance. An information release was sent out last week to raise awareness. In addition, they are working on an educational piece. She stated the purpose is education and compliance, noting they do not want to be punitive.

### **Communications**

- 1) Hartford Courant Article "Connecticut reports 'unprecedented numbers' of black bear complaints; cases of bears entering homes on track to triple," dated July 14, 2020
- 2) Letter from Board of Selectmen to Rep. Demicco, Chair of Environment Committee, dated July 13, 2020

Ms. Capriola referenced a letter written by the Board of Selectmen to the Chair of the Environment Committee regarding wildlife concerns and advocating for State-wide legislation that can assist with that. Additionally, she referenced an article from the *Hartford Courant* about the growing bear population and related issues.

The group will meet again on Thursday, August 20, at 8:00 A.M.

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION:** Ms. Scheetz made a motion to adjourn at 8:55 A.M. Chief Boulter seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Haberlin  
Commission Clerk