

**Public Safety Subcommittee
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - ADOPTED
Thursday, September 17, 2020 at 8:00 A.M.
Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream**

Chris Peterson 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; Tom Fitzgerald, Management Specialist; Kristen Formanek, Director of Community & Social Services; Jennifer Kertanis, Health Director, FVHD; Mark Massaro, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource; Sarah Nielsen, Simsbury Main Street 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.

Public Audience

There was no public audience.

Approval of Minutes

1) August 20, 2020 Minutes

The minutes were approved as presented.

Updates

1) Farmington Valley Health District

Ms. Kertanis reported that COVID-10 data continues to track positively with less than ten new cases throughout the Farmington Valley in a week. Positivity rates are less than one percent. Data is being posted weekly on FVHD.org and that includes the new school metrics they are calculating for the FVHD. Currently, their school metrics for in-person school is at 1.4 new cases per 100,000, which continues to support in-person instruction. She noted they have been working exceedingly closely with schools systems including Simsbury schools. They support ten school districts. She thanked school administrators for their work. They are working with the FVVNA to offer flu clinics on September 30 and October 7. Pre-registration is required and can be done online at the VNA or FVHD websites. Further, she thanked emergency management and first responders for their support. She noted these clinics will be a test for their ability to offer vaccinations in a socially-distanced way in preparation for offering COVID vaccinations. Lastly, she encouraged individuals getting a COVID test to stay home until they receive test results.

Mr. Peterson inquired about school attendance plans and who governs that guidance.

Ms. Kertanis noted the State Department of Health and Department of Education established metrics to calculate full in-person, hybrid and remote learning. The FVHD calculates those metrics for the Farmington Valley and makes those available to the school districts weekly.

Mr. Peterson then clarified that Simsbury schools can make the determination on when to change models based on those metrics.

Ms. Kertanis added that decisions can be made for a single school if necessary.

2) Town Manager's Office

Ms. Capriola gave an overview of the continued work from Storm Isaisas, noting she, Chief Baldis, Chief Boulter, Mike Berry and Tom Roy recently met to conduct their after-action review, noting they were pleased with the local and internal response to the storm. They did find some recommended areas for improvement in the future. They are working on a request for a meeting with Eversource to discuss frustration about the storm response. She noted multiple local government organizations have been granted intervener status in the PURA proceedings regarding Eversource. Staff is currently working on processing potential FEMA reimbursements related to the storm. Regarding a Coronavirus update, she noted there will be soft re-openings of Town Hall and the Library for walk-in visitors. Details will be announced tomorrow. Staff that primarily works indoors is currently working at 50% capacity, in-person and remotely. She thanked Tom Roy, Mark Rustic and their team who have been working hard to prepare buildings for welcoming in-person visitors. The Senior Center will remain closed until further notice. They will be providing medical services again. She reported the Parks and Recreation Department had a successful summer season and thanked John Thibeault, Tom Tyburski, Orlando Casiano and staff for their hard work this summer. Travel advisory information is being posted weekly on social media and on the Town website. Patrons for municipal services are being screened based on that travel advisory. The no-cash payments has been extended through January 1 and that has been very successful. She spoke about the large number of absentee ballots, noting the Town would normally process 1500-1800 absentee ballots during a Presidential election. This year they estimate processing in excess of 10,000 absentee ballots. Temporary staff has been brought on to help process those ballots. The ballots will be available starting October 2 and there will be two secure drop boxes at Town Hall for them. Next, she noted open facilities and programs, including parks, open space trails, tennis courts, basketball courts, playgrounds and the golf course. She added the golf course restaurant is open for outdoor dining and the golf pro shop is open. She noted athletic programs are using facilities. The transfer station is operational. The Library continues to offer curbside pick-up, now with evening hours on Tuesdays. Appointments may be made for access to computers and printers. Public meetings are being held virtually until further notice. Lastly, she encouraged donations to the Town's food program, noting the tremendous need at this time.

3) Emergency Management

a) Internal Review of Storm Isaias

Mr. Berry reported a post-incident analysis was done among unified command. The conclusion was that everyone did a fantastic job in making the situation safe and in starting the recovery as fast as possible.

b) Storm Isaias Response

They continue to work with Eversource on the response. Check lists are being worked on as part of the Emergency Operations Plan for procedures, severe weather watches or warnings. They will be working with Eversource on priority lists. Contact lists are being reviewed for other utility organizations, such as cable and phone companies.

c) Coronavirus Response

He noted they will be helping out with the flu clinic on October 7, which will help prepare them for a mass vaccination clinic for the future.

Mr. Peterson asked if children will be eligible to participate in the flu clinics.

Ms. Kertanis responded that children age nine and above can participate. She added that some pediatricians are doubling up their efforts to get their patients vaccinated.

Mr. Peterson asked about flu shots for town employees.

Ms. Capriola noted that about six flu clinics are offered to the workforce and family members throughout the fall.

Mr. Peterson asked by what date should employees and residents get the flu shot.

Ms. Kertanis noted the message is, "Get your flu shot whenever you can and it's never too late."

4) Police

Chief Boulter spoke about sector rules, noting Governor Lamont issued a new fine schedule for violations of wearing masks and hosting or attending parties that are in violation of the sector rules. Simsbury set up a Town Ordinance a few months ago that allowed the Town to do that. He noted the number one objective is compliance and the number one method of gaining compliance is through education. They will continue to support Social Services' collection and distribution of masks throughout the week at Eno Hall. Chief Boulter then shared a graph on motor vehicle theft numbers by calendar year. He noted a large jump in 2017 that continues to go up. He advised the number one way to stop this from happening is to lock cars and to keep keys inaccessible. Cars are being recovered with bullet holes and are being used for violent crimes. Referring to the chart, he noted there have been 26 thefts as of yesterday and 34 thefts are projected for this year.

Mr. Berry noted he can put messaging on this campaign on WSIM.

Chief Boulter gave a reminder that if anyone sees non-domesticated animals acting "out of the norm" or strangely, do not hesitate to call the Police. He cited an incident in which a woodchuck attacked a homeowner and the animal control officer.

Mr. Peterson encouraged listeners to view Chief Boulter's presentation on police accountability given at the Board of Selectmen meeting last Monday.

5) Ambulance

Ms. Stewart reported crews are healthy. Call volume is very flat. She reminded people not to hesitate to call them. She noted the State is no longer distributing PPE, however the Association still has a good stock including non-medical grade masks, which are available if anyone needs them.

6) Fire

Chief Baldis reported no infections and no exposures. Volunteers are doing a great job responding with the methods put in place to make sure all are protected. He noted the region is experiencing a significant dry spell, a lot of outdoor activity is going on and is expected to continue. He stressed that the fire danger remains high and therefore, there is no open burning. Any burning permits for open campfires that have been distributed are no longer able to be utilized because of the high fire danger. The Town does not have an open burning policy. No leaves or brush can be burned. October is the fire prevention period. This year's theme is Safety in the Kitchen. He recommended changing batteries in smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms and noted those units should be replaced every seven to ten years. He added that hardware stores now sell 10-year batteries.

Ms. Nielsen inquired if there will be a requirement to reduce water usage due to the drought.

Chief Baldis noted there is no requirement as of now.

Ms. Capriola confirmed that.

Ms. Kertanis added that individuals with private wells are encouraged to conserve water as the draught continues.

7) Public Works

Mr. Roy noted the draught is now listed as being severe. He reported they have been working with Amy Meriwether and Mike Berry on FEMA reimbursement regarding the storm cleanup. They are also working with Tetrach, the Town's on-call FEMA consultant on FEMA reimbursement and on putting out a bid for a debris collection vendor for the future. He noted the Facilities department is very actively working on the soft reopening of town buildings.

8) Social Services

Ms. Formanek reported they continue to manage food programs, adding that capacity has almost doubled since the start of the pandemic. The ninth distribution was this week and 137 households were served. She noted they are now partnering with the Salvation Army, which is delivering 30-pound food boxes for each family and they were able to receive bread this week. She thanked Gifts of Love for produce deliveries throughout the summer. She also thanked the Granby and Simsbury Rotary Clubs which have provided funding for additional food for families with children. She pointed out that they are completely dependent on donations, adding that they

are seeking donations of non-perishable food items, (see list of items needed on their website), and financial donations, as well. They continue to coordinate the hand-sewn mask collection and distribution. To date, 4,000 masks have been donated and 2,500 have been given out. Bags of masks were also sent to the schools. The energy assistance program begins October 5. It will be fully virtual, by phone appointments, email and mail. The Senior Center will stay closed to the public. All services are being provided remotely. They continue to provide lunch on Wednesdays. Blood pressure and blood sugar screening clinics are being offered with the VNA. Foot care and hearing clinics will be added back in. Two flu clinics for seniors will be offered through the FVVNA on October 8 and 22 at Eno Hall. Sign up for those on the FVVNA website and forms will be available for those who cannot print them. Lastly, she reported staff is doing well and is healthy.

9) VNA

Ms. Scheetz reported they will be offering two drive-through flu clinics with the FVHD. For the traditional clinics offered they are preparing for social distancing using tents. She noted they have vaccines at the office. People can call and come by anytime. She encouraged everyone to get a flu shot, noting it is safe, smart and preventative. She added that now is a good time to get the flu vaccine and it takes two weeks to be effective. The VNA is going to a lot of businesses in town to give flu shots and noted funding is available for those without insurance.

Mr. Peterson suggested a flyer about the VNA flu shot availability be distributed.

10) Main Street Partnership

Ms. Nielsen thanked Mike Berry, Senator Witkos and Representative Hampton for their efforts regarding the storm. She noted the VNA has been amazing regarding COVID and reminded people that the VNA provides flu shots for businesses. She added most of the larger companies are working remotely through the end of the year. She gave a reminder about the Simsbury Small Business Roundtable being held today from 3:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. It will be with the Lieutenant Governor and State Representative John Hampton and businesses will be able to discuss COVID-related issues and learn about business assistance. Lastly, she noted the Volunteer Ambulance is doing a fund drive and information on that can be found at simsburyems.com.

11) Board of Education

Mr. Sullivan reported after three weeks of students being back in school and four weeks of educators being back, the phased-on reopening plan has gotten very good feedback. As of this Monday all Kindergarten students through second grade have fully reentered. He noted all elementary students will be back in school as of September 29. That is also the target date of when a decision will be made regarding fully bringing back seventh through twelfth grade. He gave credit to students, noting mask compliance has been a non-issue. The roughly 20% of students choosing remote learning has helped with social distancing. He reported there have been two positive cases, (one student at Squadron Line and one staff member at Simsbury High School), and thanked Ms. Kertanis for her partnership in dealing with those cases. He reported the student is doing very well and the staff member is doing pretty well.

12) Other

The group will meet again on Thursday, October 15, at 8:00 A.M.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Haberlin
Commission Clerk