



# Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

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## Public Safety Sub-Committee

March 17, 2022

8:00AM

### Virtual Meeting Only

## REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

### Call to Order

### Pledge of Allegiance

### Public Audience

- Email [townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov) by noon on Wednesday, March 16, 2022 to register to address the Public Safety Sub-Committee live through Zoom
- Written comments can be emailed to [townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov). Written comments will not be read into the record, but forwarded to all Sub-Committee members via email

### Housekeeping Items

- 1) Approval of December 16, 2021 Minutes
- 2) Approval of February 17, 2022 Minutes

### Updates

- 1) Farmington Valley Health District
- 2) Town Manager's Office
- 3) Emergency Management
- 4) Police
- 5) Ambulance
- 6) Fire
- 7) Board of Education
- 8) Public Works
- 9) Social Services
- 10) VNA
- 11) Main Street Partnership
  - a) Cell Phone Service Improvements Update
- 12) Eversource
- 13) Other

### Adjournment

Public Safety Subcommittee  
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 8:00 A.M.  
Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream

**Mr. Askham** 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:

**James Baldis**, Chief, Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department; **Michael Berry**, Emergency Management Director; **Maria Capriola**, Town Manager; **Chris Davis**, Deputy Chief of Police; **Heather Goetz**, incoming BOS; **Tom Fitzgerald**, Management Specialist; **Kristin Formanek**, Director of Community & Social Services; **Mike Long**, Police Commissioner; **Wendy Mackstutis** First Selectman; **Mark Massaro**, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource; **Sarah Nielsen**, Simsbury Mainstreet Partnership; **Chris Peterson**, Selectman; **Tom Roy**, Director of Public Works; **Nancy Scheetz**, CEO Visiting Nurses Association; **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 & **Eric Wellman**, Board of Selectman.

Pledge of Allegiance

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Audience

N/A

### **Approval of Minutes**

September 17, 2021, Minutes.

The minutes were approved as presented.

### **2022 Proposed Meeting Schedule**

Ms. Askham presented the 2022 proposed meeting dates.

**MOTION:** Mr. Peterson made a motion to accept the meeting schedule as presented. Mr. Askham seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Updates**

*1) Farmington Valley Health District*

No Update.

*2) Town Manager's Office*

Ms. Capriola provided COVID-19 statistics, noting that the town is seeing a significant uptick in positive cases and has reached red alert status (33.2 cases weekly). She reported the positivity rate amongst those tested for week ending December 4<sup>th</sup> was 7.2%. She provided statistics from the health district and said they are advising the public to wear masks indoors. Ms. Capriola said that within the workforce they are reporting an uptick of positive cases, many of whom have been vaccinated, which is having an impact on staffing. She mentioned vaccinations are

available for children ages 5-11 and as of December 8<sup>th</sup>. She said just under 50% of children in that age group have received their 1<sup>st</sup> dose and she commended the Health District and the volunteers for their work in running the clinics. She mentioned the Health District are advising anyone with flu-like symptoms to stay home and get tested.

### *3) Emergency Management*

Mr. Berry mentioned previous minor windstorms, but no major storms to report on so far. He thanked the Farmington Valley Health District, and everyone involved for doing a great job with the children's vaccine clinic. He mentioned the Simsbury Celebrates event was a great success and the large gathering policy worked well. He said the radio station WSIM has switched over to holiday program and safety messages, and encouraged everyone to tune in. Mr. Berry said he is now one of the moderators on their public safety sites so information can get immediately out to the public. He mentioned a recent increase in cyber-attacks and asked people to make sure their software is up to date, and Mr. Askham warned of the danger associated with clicking links, even if they look official.

### *4) Police*

Chief Davis spoke about the tragic incidence on Sunday night and said his thoughts and prayers go out to the family and everyone involved. He commended the officers who responded and thanked the Town and the community for the outpouring of support. He reported on police staffing, and said they are impacted with COVID with some officers being out. He said the raid system should be implemented by mid-January. He said their animal control office, Mark Ruiz, will be retiring effective Jan 31<sup>st</sup> and thanked him for his work and dedication and wished him well in his retirement. Mr. Askham expressed his sadness and shock at the tragedy over the weekend and commended the professionalism of the officers who handled the event, as well as all the other responders who assisted. Ms. Mackstutis added that they have their social services and mental health department available if anyone needs it. Commissioner Long provided an overview on the role and the mission of the police commissioner, and mentioned they have been reviewing the departments activities and the police force overall and have determined they are currently understaffed by approx. six officers. He said that due to budgetary restraints over the past few years they have not being able to fill vacancies. He mentioned the town's population has increased, and they will be submitting budgetary requests to increase the police force from 39 to 45 officers and provided an overview on the areas they would be assigned to.

### *5) Ambulance*

Ms. Stewart reported statistics on call volume, time to dispatch, mutual aid partners assists, transports, scheduling hours and staffing. Mr. Askham asked about reporting statistics for arriving on scene and Ms. Stewart said she would look into this and report for the next quarter. Chief Baldis added that other emergency services arrive on calls also to provide care and assistance and Ms. Capriola agreed that the town does receive a high level of service from all their partners. Mr. Askham reviewed data on the number of calls received v's the number of transports, outlining that the transports are less, which is good, however there is no corresponding revenue stream for the call outs that did not result in transport. He encouraged people to continue to call 911 but mentioned this is one of the challenges of running a public service organization. Ms. Stewart talked about the mutual aid agreement with adjoining towns

saying it's very beneficial and will be talking about it at the chiefs meeting so other towns can learn more about it.

#### *6) Fire*

Fire marshal Tourville reported the Thanksgiving cooking safety messages worked well and they only had a few callouts over the Holiday period. He reported current messages are on heating, holiday decorations, winter storms and candles, which all contribute to an increased risk of fire during this period. He mentioned feedback from various concerts reported people walking home in the dark, and next year they will put a safety message out about being visible on the streets. He said they provided input on the application for public gathering permit, and mentioned COVID-19 is limiting their inspections as they are not entering homes where people are in quarantine. He mentioned they will be presenting to the Chamber of Commerce members on January 18, 2022, on "The Importance of Running a Safe and Compliant Business Within our Community" in conjunction with the CT fire code and fire prevention code. Chief Baldis reported a quiet Thanksgiving period and was pleased with the Simsbury Celebrates concert where they had a formalized command post in the Senior Center. He said the replacement of one of their engines and ladder truck (quint) is expected to be delivered in 1Q 2022. It was expected to be delivered last March but was delayed due to COVID-19 and supply chain issues. Another replacement engine is due to arrive around March 2022.

#### *7) Board of Education*

Mr. Sullivan reported the number of COVID cases have increased for both staff and students. He said they have implemented the State's Screen and Stay policy for the unvaccinated who wear masked but have had an exposure, where they can stay in school through a certain protocol. He said the biggest strains on the school is staffing and mental health concerns. Mr. Peterson asked if the school has a contingency plan to move back to virtual learning if need be and Mr. Sullivan said it shouldn't take more than a couple of days to make that pivot.

#### *8) Public Works*

Mr. Roy reported on their role in the Simsbury Celebrates concert and said it was very successful. He mentioned they will be meeting with some of their FEMA certified on-call contractors that handle their disaster preparedness for debris and help clean up the town after large storms to get a jump start on the season ahead. He said the highway department handled their first snowfall well. He mentioned they are facing challenges with staffing, and they have some plans for replacement fill-in's with other town staff.

#### *9) Social Services*

Ms. Formanek reported this is their busy season, and they are currently taking applications for the CT Energy Program. She encouraged anyone who needs assistance with their home heating to get in touch. They are also distributing toys and other items to about 103 children and thanked the generous donators for their support. She reported they will be receiving another grant through the CT Department of Transportation to replace their second oldest Dial a Ride vehicle. She mentioned the vehicle delivery has been delayed but is on it's way. She said the relocation of the food pantry will be happening soon, which has also been delayed because of the supply chain issues, and further details will follow in January. She mentioned the Youth Therapy

Program where they can connect youths in the town with local therapists and said they have services for adults also.

*10) VNA*

Ms. Scheetz reported that many people cannot find testing and booster shots availability and advised that they are assisting anyone who are struggling to get appointments. Due to funding restraints, they will be ending their homebound vaccine visits but will be able to help with this into the new year. She asked anyone who needs help with this to reach out to her.

*11) Main Street Partnership*

Ms. Nielsen reported they finished and closed out the Equity grant that they were working on with the Farmington Valley Health District which got some of the business community's and local churches vaccinated. She thanked the fire district for their help with the Simsbury Supports concert. Ms. Nielsen reported they have been working with the major carriers and the Town Managers office on the cell phone issues, and people have started to see some improvements. She reported that they have handed out over 30,000 masks to the business, and they have more available if the group requires them. Ms. Nielsen mentioned the smash and grabs at the local gyms and said she has been sending out information to the gym owners so that they can keep their clients informed.

*12) Eversource*

Mr. Massaro said they are seeing an increase in the level of scams and asked the public to be vigilant. He said they do offer payment arrangements and asked the public to call the customer service number if they have questions. He said they partnered with public works to get a gate replaced following a break in.

*13) Other*

The next meeting is scheduled for March 17<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 A.M.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Lynott  
Commission Clerk

Public Safety Subcommittee  
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, February 17, 2022 at 8:00 A.M.  
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.

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; **Jenna Caufield**, Police Commission Chair; **Chris Davis**, Deputy Chief of Police; **Kristen Formanek**, Director of Community & Social Services; **Tom Fitzgerald**, Management Specialist; **Mike Long**, Police Commissioner; **Sarah Nielsen**, Simsbury Mainstreet Partnership; **Chris Peterson**, Selectman; **Tom Roy**, Director of Public Works; **Nancy Scheetz**, CEO Visiting Nurses Association; **Karin Stewart**, Executive Director, Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association; **Neil Sullivan**, Assistant Superintendent, Simsbury Schools; **Patrick Tourville**, Fire Marshal, **Gary Wilcox**, President, Simsbury Fire District, and **James Fleming**.

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **1) Presentation and Discussion of Police Commission FY 22/23 Budget Priorities**

Mr. Long opened the presentation by outlining how the Police Commission operates and the role they play in the community. He said their goal is to provide the citizens of Simsbury public safety at a reasonable cost. He mentioned the town has a balanced program with the three Simsbury public safety organizations consisting of the Commission and the Police department, the Fire department, and EMS. He said that new laws and regulations have added extra tasks and accountability on the police department that has resulted in hours of extra training and record keeping requirements. More police officers and cruisers from neighboring towns are visibly present on the streets of Simsbury performing private duty jobs and the town also loses a share in revenue from this type of work. He provided recognized countrywide metrics on the ratio between number of police officers to 1,000 residents for a town Simsbury's size, and reported nationally it's 1.9, but Simsbury comes in at 1.57 (39 officers divided by 20K residents.) He stated Simsbury is somewhere between 6 and 11 officers short of the average. Mr. Long spoke to the length of time require to train and certify a newly hired officer. He stated that hiring does not take place immediately and takes time. He mentioned that as housing construction continues to be approved and with the possibility of officers retiring, the deficit for police officers continues. He said timing is critical and they need to act now before the need is larger as the town continues to grow. He read a statement from another commission member where he talked about the downside of overtime and the stress that this places on the officers, and that Simsbury needs to be proactive in meeting the challenges of the future. Mr. Long concluded by saying the "the ask is a big one, but the need is even bigger."

Ms. Caulfield reiterated what Mr. Long said to support their request to hire 6 additional officers. Chief Boulter added that they have supporting information if anyone has any questions. He mentioned that there will be 5-6 people eligible for retirement by 2024 and they have experienced difficulties in filling vacancies in the past because the recruitment process can be difficult. He also expressed it can be difficult getting an available slot(s) to enter the police academy training program, which the State is currently working on.

Chief Baldis asked about the accreditation process and Chief Boulter spoke about the possibility of hiring a civilian to perform that role as opposed to a sworn officer performing those duties. Mr. Long defined what the accreditation process means which is to bring their practices and procedures up to the highest level possible.

Mr. Fleming raised his concerns around the Police department being short staffed and spoke about the potential ramifications. He strongly urged the BOS and the BOF to address the issue and come up with funding this year and not put it off another year.

Ms. Neilson asked if there is a way to work together with public works to achieve our public safety staffing goals.

Mr. Wilcox said the Fire District fully supports a well-staffed police force and understands the demands on them. He encouraged being proactive in recruiting.

Mr. Askham provided closing remarks and supported an increase in officers, their training, and equipment. He said this will be discussed further during the budget process. Mr. Long raised a point on ensuring there is a commitment beyond this year to ensure the right number of hires are achieved long-term, as opposed to having a discussing every year to rehash the same request.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Lynott  
Commission Clerk