
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Wendy Mackstutis – First Selectman
DATE: January 10, 2022

According to Larry David on this season's Curb, I am no longer allowed to say Happy New Year after January 7th. So, I missed wishing everyone a HNY by 3 days. I do wish everyone a healthy January, and a hope that we get through this month unscathed. Please do your best to keep yourself, your family and everyone around you safe.

Regarding our Test Kit pick up on 1/5 at 6:30 PM – A big thank-you to our residents and all teams involved in the planning and execution of the event. This effort was given by the State of CT to the Emergency Management Director, Mike Berry. Mike and his team, Tom Roy and our DPW team, the Deputy Chief Chris Davis and Simsbury Police Department, Jim Baldis and the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department, and Maria Capriola and Town staff all worked together to make this happen. The Board of Selectmen received many calls leading up to the event and we provided the best guidance we could. It turned out that the line of cars was processed by 7:15, so we tried to spread the word that there was no line to get more people to attend the drive-thru that ended at 8:00PM. We were successful as we saw many people in the pajama pants!

Our ARPA funding allows us to use these funds for COVID relief. If the opportunity arises for the town to purchase additional tests, either in conjunction with the FVHD or on our own, we have this as an option in our back pockets. Given the speed that this variant may pass thru, we will see how our next drive-thru even on 1/15 plays out. This is an ongoing TBD.

We are announcing a public hearing to get input from all of you on how we should use the ARPA funding. The caveat is that the Final Rule came out right before this meeting, and contains many changes, so we are planning to regroup and look at potential new strategies. Sean Askham and I, my partner on this project and work group co-chair, are looking forward to hearing from everyone. This is a huge task with wide implications for our community.

I'd like to acknowledge the award presented to the Simsbury Garden Club from the Federated Garden Clubs of America that they received. This is the Lucille Schavoir Award that is presented annually to a club for outstanding garden club work. It was given to them because of all the work done at the Flower Bridge to create a self-sustaining pollinator pathway that links to our community.

The Board of Selectmen will be doing Part 2 of our Goal Setting Session on January 27th.

Our Town Planner, Mike Glidden has taken a new position with the Town of Cheshire. We with Mike well and know that he was well liked in our business community and leaves big shoes to fill. The process is just beginning and there are postings out there for anyone interested in applying.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: January 10, 2022

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We are monitoring the state's municipal COVID alert system and are currently at "red" status for the period ending January 1st. Red status indicates that we have more than 15 COVID cases per 100,000 residents; we are currently at 104.4 cases per 100,000 people, an increase from 61.9 for the week prior. Over the most recent two-week period we had a total of 371 cases. We also had a positivity rate of 16.2%, the highest positivity rate for Simsbury since recording began.

FVHD has reported that hospitalizations in Hartford County have increased by 56% in the last 7 days with 401 new hospital admissions. FVHD believes this is likely being driven by the significant number of cases as opposed to the severity of this variant. As of January 5, there were 1,784 individuals hospitalized in the State of CT. 68% of those 1,784 people were not fully vaccinated. Of the 129 specimens sequenced, Omicron variant was found in 91.5% of the cases. Omicron became the dominant variant in CT in only 4 weeks.

The state announcement on December 27th of its planned distribution of at-home test kits to towns and schools created a challenging situation, with information from the state changing frequently and rapidly over approximately 8-10 days. The Unified Command team¹ needed to shift gears multiple times regarding logistics and prioritization of kit distribution, as both the number of kits and method of distribution from the state fluctuated a number of times. Based on guidance provided by the State and recommendations from the Farmington Valley Health District, a portion of this limited supply has been distributed to essential municipal services/public safety providers, daycares, and settings that support vulnerable populations. We held a safe and efficient general distribution event on January 5th, and gave out approximately 700 kits to our residents.

We are holding a second general distribution event on **Saturday, January 15, 2022 starting at 9:00am** at the Public Works Facility, 66 Town Forest Road (weather permitting), with approximately 850 kits available for our residents. This will be a drive-through operation. Residents will be eligible to receive one test kit per household (each kit contains two tests). Kits will be distributed on a first come, first served basis while supplies last. Proof of residency is required. Samples of acceptable proof of residency include: driver's license; utility bill; etc. Post Office boxes do not qualify as proof of residency. N95 masks will also be available for distribution with the test kit pick-up, while supplies last. Vehicles should enter Town Forest Road via Tootin Hill Road (off West Mountain Road). Vehicles will not be permitted to enter Town Forest Road via Stratton Brook Road. Home test kits are most effective for testing symptomatic individuals. The Farmington Valley Health District has provided the following guidance for using home tests: a positive test should be treated as a positive test and the individual should isolate, and conduct contact tracing. A symptomatic individual with a negative home test should use precaution to reduce the risk of spreading illness and seek a PCR test. For additional isolation and quarantine guidance, click [here](#). Click [here](#) for a list of testing sites in our region.

¹ Our Unified Command Team, or Emergency Management Team, consists of the Town Manager, Deputy Town Manager, Emergency Management Director, Assistant Emergency Management Director, Fire Chief, Police Chief, and Public Works Director

We are experiencing, in aggregate, the most significant amount of COVID cases amongst our workforce since the pandemic began. Largely, transmission has occurred from outside of our workplace setting. As of today we have 4 staff members out of work due to testing positive, and another two staff members out of work due to close contact/quarantining. During the month of December 2021 we had the highest number of positive staff cases during the pandemic (12 cases). We have updated our isolation/quarantining and return to work procedures for staff based on the recently revised CDC and FVHD recommendations.

Due to our current COVID conditions, both in the community and in our workplace setting, we are once again encouraging our residents and patrons to utilize our online services to the extent practicable: [to view on overview of our online services click here](#). As a result of COVID related staffing shortages, non-emergency responses may be delayed or slowed at times. Continued mask wearing in our municipal buildings helps to protect our staff to ensure that essential services (such as snow plowing) and infrastructure (such as our sewer treatment facility) remain open and operational for the public. Therefore, we are continuing to require masks indoors at our municipal buildings at this time.

The ten towns comprising the Farmington Valley Health District constitute “high” risk for levels of community transmission based on CDC definitions (305 per 100,000), while the state of Connecticut and Hartford County are also at “high” risk. In areas with substantial transmission or higher, the CDC recommends that everyone (including fully vaccinated individuals) wear a mask in public indoor settings to help prevent spread of the virus and to protect others. FVHD is in support of everyone masking in all indoor settings. FVHD shared a very good CDC article on the effectiveness of the use of cloth masks to slow the spread of the virus: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html>

The following state-wide order still remains in place for indoor settings:

- Unvaccinated individuals must wear masks;
- Vaccinated individuals not required to wear masks except for below:
 - Masks are required to be worn by everyone in certain settings such as healthcare facilities, facilities housing vulnerable populations, public and private transit, correctional facilities, schools, and childcare
 - Private businesses and local governments have the ability to require mask wearing indoors at their facilities

FVHD encourages individuals to get their COVID-19 vaccine as well as COVID-19 booster. Individuals seeking boosters may go to <https://portal.ct.gov/vaccine-portal/COVID-19-Vaccination-Scheduling-Options>

Data from the state ending January 5th reports that 21,887 Simsbury residents have received at least their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or 86.19% of the population, while 78.16% of our residents or 19,848 people are now fully vaccinated. Further vaccination data for Simsbury by age group:

- Ages 5-11, 57.58% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 48.61% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 12-17, 83.88% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 78.57% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 18-24, 100% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 98.09% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 25-44, 100% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 94.86% are fully vaccinated;

- Ages 45-64, 88.85% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 82.51% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 65+, 100% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 100% are fully vaccinated

FVHD is urging everyone to remind their employees, community members and others to do the following regardless of vaccination status:

- Stay HOME and isolate if you are exhibiting ANY cold like symptoms OR have been with others who are exhibiting symptoms
- Seek a test and isolate until test results are available
- Report positive results to employers and schools as appropriate
- If you are positive, seek guidance regarding isolation and quarantine from FVHD

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Public Works:

- The last few weeks have been very busy in the Department of Public Works. Highway Department staff were called upon to plow on both Christmas Eve and Christmas morning. Decisions to call in staff to plow are made as needed, and are therefore difficult to plan for. Staff never knows when they'll be called in and, when the call goes out, all must respond. This makes holidays, in particular, difficult for Highway Department staff. Fortunately, most of the work on Christmas Day was done by 7:00 AM and staff with young children were able to be dismissed early while the remainder of the crew completed the clean-up. I am very thankful for our Public Works crew who work hard every snowstorm to make sure our residents have safe and clean roads to travel on.
- During the first full week of January, Public Works staff was called upon to assist in the COVID-19 Home Test Kit distribution. Members of the Public Works/Highway Department, under the direction of Director of Public Works Tom Roy, Highway Superintendent Kevin Clemens, and Facilities Manager Matthew Hopkins staffed this event and handed out roughly 700 test kits, free of charge, to Simsbury residents. I am appreciative to our staff members for making this event a success.