
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: January 14, 2019

Happy New Year and thank you for reading the first First Selectman's Report of 2019! I'm going to continue to use this space to highlight key issues that the Board of Selectmen is working on, community events around town, and other things of local interest. I've gotten some helpful feedback that people would like more detail on some of the development happening around town. Even if there's nothing new to report each month, that detail is appreciated. So that's something I plan to phase in in the New Year.

Speaking of the New Year, we're approaching budget season and I wanted to share the process with you that the town follows each year and some important dates. When I speak with residents about the process, many don't realize that the Town and the Board of Education develop their budgets separately. The Town budget covers services such as plowing, paving, upkeep of our parks, police, library, for example. The Board of Ed budget covers our amazing school system and accounts for more than 2/3 of the taxes we pay. I know that local taxes are among the largest expenses households have. They also pay for things we use and value everyday. That's why I encourage you to be involved in the process.

The Town Manager will be presenting her proposed budget to the Board of Selectmen on **Monday February 25th**. **Saturday March 2nd** is the Board of Selectman's budget workshop where we will spend much of that day reviewing in detail each part of the proposed budget. On **Tuesday March 19th**, we will be presenting our proposed budget to the Board of Finance for discussion and feedback. On **Tuesday April 2nd** there will be a public budget hearing at the library and the budget referendum is scheduled for **Tuesday May 14th** at Henry James Middle School.

Christmas Tree Collection

- Paines customers can put their trees at the curb on the regular trash day this week (week of January 14th).
- Allwaste customers can put their trees at the curb on the regular trash day the week of January 28th.

Economic Development Commission Seeking New Member

Economic development has been and continues to be a major priority for me and this Board of Selectmen. I believe that sensible economic development can expand our tax base and take some of the pressure off of residential taxpayers. Due to the resignation of a member of the commission, we are seeking one new volunteer interested in serving the town. We are particularly looking for someone with expertise in architecture, land use, or communication. To apply, please [follow this link](#). Since this would be filling a spot previously held by a registered Democrat, per town charter, this spot must be filled by a person who's also a registered Democrat.

The new EDC will be focused on 4 areas in particular that were identified by the Board of Selectmen. They include identifying business incentive programs that make sense for our town, developing a

roadmap of economic development priorities, refreshing branding materials, and developing a business visitation program. You can read more about the priorities [here](#).

Teens & Vaping

In my time as First Selectman, I have come to learn about the prevalence of vaping among high school and even some middle school students. A study released last month by the [University of Michigan](#) surveyed more than 44-thousand teenagers. It found while many forms of substance abuse are steady or declining, vaping continues to increase. Earlier this month, the Community For Care held an excellent program that you can view [here on SCTV](#).

Cell Phone Service

The need to improve cell service in town came up as one of the Board of Selectmen's priorities. Verizon is in the process of installing 5 small towers to improve its local service, including one near Maple Tree Café, with the goal of improving service in our central business district. That tower is expected to be operating by the end of January. Similar small cell towers have been installed already across from Simsbury High School and off Winslow Place. I frequently hear from residents who are concerned about the quality of cell coverage. In 2019, I will continue to work on this issue, engaging with other cellular carriers as well.

Planning Update

- The Zoning Commission held a public hearing for the re-development of 1 Old Bridge (Betty Hudson property) as a park at their last meeting. The application was approved. The project now has secured all the local board/commission approvals in order for it to proceed.
- A text amendment was approved by the Zoning Commission to permit distilleries and breweries in the town center. After the text amendment approval, an application has been filed for a distillery for the Hixon Building (old train station building behind Bank of America). This application is set for a public hearing on February 4th.
- 690 Hopmeadow Street (Ensign Mansion) is proceeding along. 5 apartments are being built in the historic building and the restaurant, Metro Bis will be moving into the Annex on the south side of the property. Metro Bis is still on track to open in its new location by the end of February.
- 200 Hopmeadow Street (former Hartford property): The plan for the property consists of apartments, an assisted living facility and some commercial development. Work has begun on one of two commercial building. The Silverman Group has contacted the town concerning potential certificate of occupancies for 18 units. On the residential side, the Silverman Group will be requesting certificate of occupancy for the first batch of residential units in February. The assisted living portion of the development is scheduled to be open in late July/early August.

Simsbury's 350th Celebration

I am excited about the planning that's going into Simsbury's 350th anniversary celebration, which will be comprised of numerous events throughout next year. I want to acknowledge the dozens of volunteers and organizations involved, and all of the people giving their time to plan this anniversary celebration. The 350th Committee gave a presentation to the Board of Selectmen at our January 14th meeting. You can see a tentative schedule of the signature events [here](#) (page 14). They include an antique show, a river day, a country fair, and many, many more! I also wanted to point you to a recent show on SCTV that gives a look into the planning going into next year's celebration. You can find that [here](#).

Martin Luther King Junior Celebration

I invite you to join us for a celebration of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. scheduled for **2pm January 21st at First Church**. We will be remembering MLK's life and legacy, including his time spent in Simsbury. The keynote speaker this year will be Uconn professor Joelle Murchison. The theme of her speech will be Living the Dream in Times of Trouble.

Board of Selectman Priorities

At our last meeting in November, the Board of Selectmen unanimously adopted its priorities for the coming year. The priorities include infrastructure improvements such as connecting Tariffville to Simsbury with a bike path, and improved cell phone service, especially in our downtown. Other goals center around financial management, improving transparency and identifying opportunities for the Town to work more closely with the Board of Education on shared services. Other goals speak to quality of life, including improving transportation options for seniors. You can find the full list of goals [here](#).

Simsbury Trail News

The next meeting of the Bike Pedestrian Advisory Committee is **Thursday January 17th at 10am** in Program Room 2 at the Library.

Please note that the Farmington River Trail (near the high school) is flooded and iced over about 200 yards west of Bushy Hill Rd. I've been informed the trail is impassable in this area.

I'd like to offer my thanks and congratulations to all who were involved in our Bicycle Friendly Community application. We got word from League of American Bicyclists that Simsbury will maintain its Silver status for another 4 years! Across Connecticut there are 9 Bike Friendly Communities and only Simsbury and New Haven have achieved silver status. Out of the state's 11 Bike Friendly Businesses, 3 are here in Simsbury. This application fills a three ring binder. I am so appreciative to Bike-Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the volunteers, and town staff who worked cooperatively to make this possible. It's a testament to the work that's been put in to encourage cycling, improve infrastructure, and improve cycling safety in our community.

See Simsbury.bike for a regional listing of upcoming events, rides, and meetings.

Stay Connected

You can sign up for email updates from the town so you always know what's happening in our community. On the homepage of the Town website, click "[subscribe to news,](#)" and you'll be able to specify exactly what kind of news you want to receive.

Opportunities to Serve Your Town

There are more than a dozen boards and commissions that serve our town whose members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. We're always looking for volunteers willing to serve and I'm pleased to share that the Town has made the process easier and more transparent. You can learn more about all of our boards and commissions, current vacancies, and how to apply [here](#).

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: January 14, 2019

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS:

Addition to the Agenda: Late last week I received a request to have multiple appointments and reappointments to Boards and Committees added to the agenda. I am respectfully requesting that “Proposed Appointments and Reappointments to Various Appointed Committees and Boards” be added to the agenda under Appointments and Resignations. This item can be added to your agenda tonight with a 2/3 vote of the body. Supporting documentation regarding these appointments was emailed to you today and hard copies have been provided.

Budget Update: Review and analysis of FY 19/20 operating and capital budgets and service improvements is currently underway. The Town Manager’s proposed budget presentation is scheduled for February 25th and the budget workshop for March 2nd.

Financial Management: The Board of Finance is reviewing our quarterly budget status report at their meeting tomorrow night. They are also reviewing the FY 17/18 comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) results. Both items will be on your January 28th agenda.

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS & NOTES:

Community and Social Services: The Farmington Valley VNA will be providing training on CPR/AED to the staff of the Community and Social Services Department on Tuesday, January 15th.

SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMS:

Community and Social Services: Suicide Prevention Training, “QPR” (Question, Persuade, Respond), is being held on Wednesday, January 16th from 1:00-2:30 PM at Eno Memorial Hall in the Old Court Room, lower level. This important training helps you to know when and how to help someone who may be experiencing suicidal feelings. The training is sponsored by the Farmington Valley Health District. This is free and open to the public.

Library: On Sunday, January 20th from 2-3 PM, the Library will host soprano Elizabeth Lyra Ross and pianist Doris Lang Kosloff as they present "Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Life." Ms. Ross will select speeches and match them with some of King's favorite music.

Library: The Library is excited to welcome back Phoenix Performing Arts to ring in the Chinese New Year on Saturday, February 9th from 2-3:30 PM. They will perform a variety of Chinese classical and traditional dances and share information about Chinese arts and culture.