
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Wendy Mackstutis – First Selectman
DATE: January 24, 2022

I want to start by saying Hi to my mom, Renee Germain, who is recovering at McLean, and now has access to our community station. I asked their staff to put us on for her tonight. She may have already had the channel changed to Jeopardy if we are now at the 7:00 PM mark.

We still find ourselves on Zoom, after almost escaping from virtual meetings – until Omicron crept into our lives. I am hopeful, that this will be our last Zoom call and that in February, we can resume meeting in the Main Meeting Room. It is much more conducive for a team meeting. I give Eric kudos for doing this for just about 2 years – it's hard being behind your screen.

After a little over a month on the job, I want to thank my fellow board members for looking at the items before us in a non-partisan lens, and to always be willing to work collaboratively. We are all here to do what's best for the town. One of my big priorities is communications and making sure everyone knows what's going on behind the curtain. I tend to be an over-sharer. If you out there in television land (or online!) feel like we aren't getting information to you, please let us know what you want to hear about.

These last 2 weeks have seen our emergency management team complete another test kit event, that from all those who attended, sounded like a great success. A big thank you to all involved.

Thank you to all who came tonight with your ideas for the ARPA funding.

The ARPA Workgroup will meet next week to have Amy, our Finance Director, provide us with the impact of the Final Rule, and how/if we will be able to re-look at some of the opportunities for funding that previously, may not have been covered. We'll be looking at the ideas presented tonight, COVID relief needs that have not been met, the original list of ideas that were generated by the BOS and the Town, our Capital needs for both the BOE and BOS and allowable business needs from our community. We are figuring out the best path forward on how to move these projects forward in the time frame that's been set.

I will again, let everyone know that the Board of Selectmen will be doing Part 2 of our Goal Setting Session this Thursday, on January 27th.

The Police Commission presentation that was scheduled for tonight is being moved at their request. I know members of our board did a lot of homework to prepare for tonight. What we plan to do, is get our questions to the Police Commission so when we do meet, they can provide us with the answers.

The SVAA also was scheduled to present to us tonight, but they have asked to move this to next month.

We also have in our communications section a letter for the BOS to discuss sending regarding the planned improvements/expansion to the State Police Gun Range that is literally, in our back yard, and sits in an area subject to continual flooding and is audible to a good number of our neighbors.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: January 24, 2022

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We are monitoring the state's municipal COVID alert system and are currently at "red" status for the period ending January 15th. Red status indicates that we have more than 15 COVID cases per 100,000 residents; we are currently at 119.5 cases per 100,000 people, a decrease from 140.9 for the week prior. Over the most recent two-week period we had a total of 425 cases. We also had a positivity rate of 21.7%, a slight decrease from the prior period's rate of 22.2%.

FVHD has noted that the above data "does not include positive test results from at-home test kits. Based on data from the school-reported cases, we estimate there are approximately five positive home tests for every one lab-confirmed positive test result. Overall, the case rates in the FVHD remain high and are approximately 2.5 times higher than they were at our highest point in January 2021."

FVHD has also shared information regarding COVID related hospitalizations in the state and Hartford County. "There are currently 1,733 individuals hospitalized with COVID-19 in Connecticut. Of those 58.7% are not fully vaccinated. In Hartford County, there are 545 individuals hospitalized with COVID-19. Last year at this time, there were 1,069 hospitalized in Connecticut and 314 in Hartford County. We have included information sourced from the CDC about hospitalizations in Hartford County from January 10, 2021 to January 15, 2022. Admissions, % of beds, and % of ICU beds have all increased from last year at this time. In the last 7 days, hospital admissions in Hartford County decreased 7%. It is important to note that most of the population was not fully vaccinated in January 2021. It is not documented if these individuals are infected with the Delta or Omicron variant."

We held a second general distribution event of masks and COVID at home test kits on Wednesday, January 19, 2022 at the Public Works Facility, 66 Town Forest Road, with approximately 560 kits in addition to N95 masks distributed to our residents. Based on guidance provided by the State and recommendations from the Farmington Valley Health District, a portion of our limited supply was also distributed to essential municipal services/public safety providers, daycares, and settings that support vulnerable populations. 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](#). Households are eligible to request four free at-home test kits from the federal government: [COVID Home Tests | USPS](#) Click [here](#) for a list of testing sites in our region.

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. For the month of January (to date), we had 13 staff members out of work due to testing positive. 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 recommending that all people, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks properly and consistently in indoor public settings.

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 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

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 19th reports that 22,128 Simsbury residents have received at least their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or 87.14% of the population, while 78.78% of our residents or 20,007 people are now fully vaccinated. Further vaccination data for Simsbury by age group:

- Ages 5-11, 60.83% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 53.14% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 12-17, 84.98% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 79.25% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 18-24, 100% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 98.52% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 25-44, 100% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 95.01% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 45-64, 89.18% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 82.69% are fully vaccinated;

- Ages 65+, 100% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 100% are fully vaccinated

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS

- **Board of Selectmen Goal-Setting Session:** We made very good progress at our goal setting session on December 11th for the Board of Selectmen's 2021-2023 term. As a reminder, we have a follow up session on Thursday, January, 27, 2022 starting at 4:00 PM to complete this work. That meeting will be held in the Main Meeting Room. If you are unable to attend in person please reach out to my office and we will provide you with an option to attend virtually.
- **Additions to the Agenda:**
 - i.* **Additional Appointments to Boards and Committees:** The Town Clerk's Office and Town Manager's Office received appointments and re-appointments from the Democratic Town Committee late last week. Two new appointments are being forwarded for tonight's meeting, with re-appointments expected at your February 14th meeting. This item can be added to tonight's meeting agenda with a 2/3 vote.
 - ii.* **Draft Communication Item:** Selectman Eric Wellman drafted a sample letter to be sent to the Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services regarding the State Police Firing Range renovation project. This letter has been marked draft in your packet and can be discussed at tonight's meeting. Should the Board wish to discuss the letter it will have to be added to the meeting agenda under communications, with a 2/3 vote.
- **Tabling an Item on the Agenda:** Some members of the Police Commission would prefer to have a separate special meeting to go over their budget priorities rather than present at tonight's meeting. Staff will work to identify a time for a special meeting for this presentation to take place. In the meantime, the item can be tabled from tonight's agenda with a 2/3 vote. Members of the Board of Selectmen are encouraged to forward questions or information requests planned for this evening to the Town Manager in preparation for the special meeting.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Police: On January 31, 2022, Mark Rudewicz will be retiring from the Simsbury Police Department after serving 17 years of service to our community as Animal Control Officer. Mark joined the Department after a full career with the Hartford Police Department, retiring as a lieutenant in 2004. In addition to his wealth of knowledge and experience as a police officer, Mark brought compassion, personality, energy and a love for life. He quickly became a well-known figure in Simsbury and the region; one with knowledge, resources and humor. His work with domesticated animals, livestock and wildlife made him more of a local "Game Warden", than a traditional ACO. Mark made connections with so many people and groups. He started the Heroes and Hounds program, collecting and shipping goods for military personnel and their K9 partners serving around the world. Mark Rudewicz served 17 years with pride and distinction. Please join us in wishing Mark well in his retirement!

Public Works/Engineering: Beginning in April, Eversource will conduct scheduled vegetation management and tree trimming in Simsbury. They will deploy trucks and equipment to trim and remove limbs and trees that can threaten the electric system to reduce power outages during storms. As part of a 2016 amendment to Connecticut General Statutes, Section 16-234, Eversource has provided the Town with a route map and estimated time schedule for vegetation management in Simsbury. There are currently fifty-five miles of routine maintenance trimming scheduled, primarily along residential routes. In addition, there are nineteen miles of backbone maintenance trimming scheduled. This backbone maintenance will largely take place along Route 10 North, and Route 309 West, starting at the intersection of Hopmeadow Street and Farms Village Road. DPW staff will work closely with Eversource and their contractors to ensure tree removals are appropriate and do not remove trees that are important to the Town's character and natural beauty. As the planned work evolves, we will continue to

provide residents with information and assistance regarding scheduled tree maintenance routes, road delays, and overall progress.