
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: January 25, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

We are currently in Phase 1b of Connecticut's COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Phase 1b is divided into three tiers:

- Vaccines for people over the age of 75 are being scheduled now.
- Scheduling is likely to begin early next month for people 65 – 74.
- Frontline essential workers and people with underlying medical conditions are likely to be scheduled in late February/early March. In the next couple weeks, we will be getting more clarity around who qualifies as a "Frontline Essential Worker" and a qualifying list of underlying medical conditions.

The latest information from the state of Connecticut on the vaccine rollout is [here](#).

- **Registration through VAMS:** for people with email addresses: ct.gov/covidvaccine.
- **Schedule through the Vaccine Access Assistance Line and Appointments-Plus platform:** For providers who are interested in participating, please complete [this form](#).
- **Schedule directly with a provider:** Some providers throughout the state are offering direct scheduling or they may be a vaccine administrator.
Note: Please do not call your medical provider if they have not reached out to you.
- Those without internet access can call Connecticut's COVID Vaccine Appointment Assistance Line at [877-918-2224](tel:877-918-2224)
- The Town of Wilton put together a nice [video](#) that shows step-by-step how to register online.

The Town has received calls and emails from numerous residents who have found the process for scheduling a vaccine confusing. Our Senior Center and Social Services Department is prepared to assist. **Please call 860-658-3273 if you or someone you know needs assistance with this process.**

Our Emergency Management Director with the assistance of several staff members are working with the Health District to identify suitable locations in Simsbury for future vaccination clinics.

For a more in-depth view of the Town's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Public Safety Subcommittee met last Thursday. You can watch that meeting on SCTV's website, SimsburtyTv.org.

Budget Update

The Town's annual budget process has begun. The Board of Finance has given both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education guidance of a 1.5% increase over last year's operating budget. This will no doubt be challenging with fixed costs in the range of 3% for both boards.

Important dates:

- Town Manager Maria Capriola will present her proposed budget to the Board of Selectmen on February 22.
- On March 6, the Board of Selectmen will hold its all-day budget workshop where we will review the budget department by department.

As always, I encourage our residents to be engaged in the budget process. You can reach out to myself or any member of the Board of Selectmen with your questions or priorities. You can also participate in public audience at the beginning of our meetings by submitting your emails to Ericka Butler:

ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov. Or you can join our meetings and share your comments live by registering with Tom Fitzgerald: tfitzgerald@simsbury-ct.gov.

Simsbury Loan Locker Celebrates 1 Year Anniversary

The Simsbury Medical Equipment Loan Locker, which lends durable medical equipment free of charge, is celebrating its first full year in business! Operating out of the Apple Barn at Simsbury Farms, the Loan Locker had 118 appointments in just the last three months for people borrowing or lending equipment. Anyone looking to borrow equipment or make a donation can call 860-658-3224 or send an email to SimsburyLoanLocker@gmail.com. You can learn more about the [Loan Locker here](#). If you're interested in getting involved as a volunteer, please reach out using the contact information above.

Discussion on Affordable Housing

Next in the SPIRIT Council's Let's Talk series is a roundtable discussion on affordable housing. I'll be joined by Deputy First Selectman Sean Askham, Bill Rice, Chair of the Planning Commission, Dr. Susan Eaton, Professor of Practice in Social Policy, and Anika Singh Lemar, Clinical Professor of Law at Yale. The discussion starts at 6:30pm. To receive the Zoom link, [please register on the library's website](#).

Discussion on Domestic Violence

Community for Care in partnership with the Library is hosting a panel discussion on Domestic Violence. Join us on February 10th at 6:30pm for a panel of experts as they discuss how to locate resources, the effects of COVID-19, and how to develop a safety plan. Please register in advance to receive the [Zoom link on the Library's website](#).

How to Watch Town Meetings

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most town meetings continue to occur virtually, including the Board of Selectmen. All public meetings can be watched live on SCTV and are also archived at SimsburyTV.org. Meetings can also be viewed on xfinity channels 96 and 1090 and Frontier channel 6071.

There are now two ways the public can participate in Board of Selectmen meetings. You can speak in public audience by joining the Zoom meeting. Please pre-register by sending an email to Tom Fitzgerald tfitzgerald@simsbury-ct.gov. You can continue to email your comments and they will be read out loud. Please send an email to Ericka Butler ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov.

I look forward to returning to in-person meetings as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: January 25, 2021

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We are monitoring the state's municipal COVID alert system and are currently at "red" status, indicating that we have more than 15 COVID cases per 100,000 residents. Our positive cases for the 2-week period ending January 16th have decreased to 28.3 cases per 100,000 residents (down from 29.2 cases on January 9th) and our COVID positivity rate for those being tested was 4.3%, down for the second consecutive week, and from 4.6% on January 9th. We are currently at 99 positive cases over the most recent 2-week period ending January 16th, a small decrease from 102 cases over the 2-week period ending January 9th.

The Health District through recent contact tracing efforts is reporting the following trend in positive cases: ... "they did not isolate or seek testing initially because they just thought their symptoms were a cold. Early symptoms for many of our cases include runny nose, slight sore throat or congestion. Because people are falsely assuming they have a cold, they are much more likely to spread the virus to others." If you or a household member is experiencing any cold-like symptoms, please stay home and get tested for COVID. We are trying to assist the District in raising awareness on this issue and have shared information on social media. As a reminder, our Health District is urging our most vulnerable populations to stay home and stay safe and is recommending that they scale back to Phase 1 Activity levels.

FVHD held two clinics last week and vaccinated 350 individuals. Their focus remains on vaccinating people aged 75 years and older per state directives. Both the town and the Health District are fielding inquiries regarding eligibility for and distribution of the vaccine. The following link provides information and updates from the state regarding vaccine eligibility: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/covid-19%20vaccinations> At this time, a small number of our staff members that respond to medical calls for service have been offered the vaccine and have been vaccinated. Additional municipal employees may be offered the vaccine in Phase 1B; we expect to know more from the state regarding the definition of frontline essential worker within the next few weeks.

Like many businesses and organizations, the rise of COVID-19 is affecting our workforce. We are fortunate in that our workforce has largely remained healthy. However, since January 1st we have had 6 staff members that were quarantined due to coming into contact with a person that has tested positive for the virus (both at work and not at work) and 1 staff member that tested positive. As a result, we are experiencing temporary staffing shortages at times and our response time for non-emergency situations may be delayed. We ask our residents and patrons for kindness, understanding, and patience during this difficult time. I want to acknowledge and thank my staff for continuing to engage in safe practices at work, ensuring that our critical infrastructure and services remain operational during this period. To date to the best of my knowledge, no member of the public has been contact traced due to coming to a Town facility to receive municipal services.

We also continue to regularly update our website and social media accounts with information regarding the travel advisory: <https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/home/news/updated-guidelines-for-in-person-appointments-travel-advisory-for-patrons-residents-and>

Public health is our predominant priority. We continue to closely monitor the status of the virus in our community and reassess both Town Hall and the Library being open to walk-in visitors. At this time, both the Town Hall and Library remain open to walk-in visitors for limited hours and uses. In-person visits to Town Hall can be conducted from 8:30AM to 12:00PM on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with the first hour of the day reserved for seniors from 8:30AM-9:30AM.

The Library is open for in-person visits on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10AM-4PM, with the first hour reserved for seniors from 10:00AM-11:00AM. They are also welcoming in-person visitors on Saturdays from 9:30AM-3:30PM with no specific senior hours. Patrons may browse and check-out materials during their visit. One hour of computer use per person, per day and one hour of workspace use in the Business & Career Center per person, per day is permitted. During all other times the building will remain closed to walk-in visitors; services are available through [curbside pickup](#) for those uncomfortable coming into the building and reference librarians are available by phone Monday-Friday, from 10:00AM to 5:00PM to answer questions. Many libraries in the Farmington Valley are now closed to walk-in visitors and returned to curbside service only following Thanksgiving.

For more detailed information regarding Town Hall and the Library receiving in-person visitors, please use this link: <https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/home/news/town-hall-library-to-welcome-back-in-person-visitors-on-a-limited-basis-beginning-the-week> Town employees continue to report to duty at all locations, and are still available to schedule in-person appointments during normal business hours for services that cannot be completed by phone, mail, email, or virtually, please see a list of our [online services](#) for items and services that you can use from home.

The Transfer Station, ice rink, playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, skate park, parks, open space parcels and trails remain open. If you are utilizing these facilities please observe rules and public health guidelines regarding face coverings, gathering sizes, and social distancing.

To provide the greatest level of protection to the health and safety of our patrons, Eno Memorial Hall/Senior Center will remain closed for walk-ins until further notice. However, the Department continues to provide services such as our food program and energy assistance. The Senior Center has received guidance from the Health District to cease all in person activities due to the rise in COVID cases and community spread. Medical services have been cancelled until further notice. We will continue to provide a weekly hot lunch for seniors (pick-up only), daily zoom opportunities, and our bi-monthly newsletter. Dial-A-Ride has also been scaled back, providing rides for essential services such as: non-sick medical, groceries, pharmacy, and banking.

The Department of Community and Social Services continues to respond to the growing needs of our community during the pandemic. Our food program distributes non-perishable food, fresh produce, and household and toiletry items. Distributions are curbside with minimal contact. At our last distribution, we served 134 households, gave out 41 bags of kid friendly food, provided 96 boxes of food from the Salvation Army, and delivered to 26 homebound individuals and families.

We have received many inquiries from residents asking how they can help our fellow community members in need. Our Social Services Department is accepting donations of non-perishable food items, toiletries, laundry and dish detergent, baby items (wipes, diapers, baby food), kid friendly snacks, gift cards to grocery stores, gas stations, and laundromats, and financial donations for residents in need. For information on how to donate, please follow this link: <https://www.facebook.com/simscommunityandsocial/photos/a.732997960244104/1365939280283299/?type=3&theater> .

Our Social Services staff is helping to coordinate local efforts to both make and distribute sewn face masks to staff and members of our community. To date over 5,600 hand sewn masks have been received with 3,400 of those being distributed to the community. If you are a Simsbury resident or business, please don't hesitate to contact Social Services at 860-658-3283 if you need free face coverings.

As a reminder, the Board of Selectmen has extended the temporary suspension of cash payments until further notice to help reduce the risk of spreading COVID. Payments can be made by check, debit card, or credit card. Checks may be mailed to the Town at 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070 or left at our secure drop box at Town Hall. We are accepting applications until January 31, 2021 for the January installment of taxes due for the property tax deferral for those taxpayers impacted by COVID. The application can be obtained at this link: <https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf1216/f/news/covid-19-deferral-form-revision-fillablejanuary.pdf>. The interest rate reduction program does not require an application to be filed by the taxpayer.

Meetings of town agencies will continue to be held virtually until further notice. Meetings are held utilizing Zoom and are broadcast on SCTV's television channels and SCTV's You Tube channel. Agenda items that are being discussed at a meeting will be posted online for the public to view.

Our Simsbury Main Street Partnership, Simsbury Chamber of Commerce, and our Business Resource Librarian Andrew Sherman have been doing a phenomenal job supporting our business community during this difficult time. For information regarding local businesses that remain open please visit www.shopsimsbury.com.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Police: Lt. Tom Sheehan's last day with the Simsbury Police Department will be January 31st. Tom Sheehan joined the Simsbury Police Department in 1994. During the first half of his career, he was a patrol officer and a detective. He trained new officers, was a mountain bike officer, firearms instructor and a member of the regional emergency services team (EST) for many years. He was an EST team leader and has served as commander of the team for the last 6 years. Tom was promoted to sergeant in 2007 and assigned to both patrol and detective divisions for the next 11 years. Tom was promoted to lieutenant in 2018 and assigned patrol commander. He is a graduate of the 79th Session of the Southern Police Institute Command Officer Development Course through the University of Louisville. Tom has served this community and his co-workers with great distinction and pride. After 26 years of service, Tom has taken an opportunity with the Rocky Hill Police Department. I want extend my gratitude to Lt. Sheehan for his 26 years of service to Simsbury. He has been an invaluable member of the Police Department and will surely be missed. Best of luck in your future endeavors Tom!

Public Works: Reid Beyers was promoted from Senior Mechanic to Fleet Maintenance Supervisor. Reid has been working with the Town since January of 2013 and has a long history of providing excellent service on all of our equipment and vehicles. In addition to his work on Highway Department trucks, Reid has been managing all of the maintenance needs for the Police Department vehicles for a number of years. He has shown strengths in recordkeeping and making good decisions on vehicle repairs and replacements. In addition to his skills as a mechanic, he has welding and metal fabricating skills that allow us to make in-house repairs to our equipment that would otherwise need to be sent out for service. We are excited to see Reid move up within the Department and are confident that he will bring a new level of professionalism and enthusiasm to this important position. Congratulations Reid!