
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: January 27, 2020

Board of Selectmen Workgroups:

Short-Term Rental Ordinance: The Board of Selectmen has formed a work group to develop an ordinance to regulate the market for short-term rentals in Simsbury on sites such as Airbnb. Selectmen Jackie Battos and Chris Peterson are representing the Board of Selectmen on the workgroup. There will also be representation from the Economic Development Commission, The Tourism Committee, and the Zoning and Planning Commissions. The model we are looking at developing would permit short-term rentals in our zoning code (rentals less than 30 days), and we would develop an ordinance that describes how short-term rentals would be regulated. The next meeting of this workgroup has not been scheduled. I'll share more information when it becomes available.

Wildlife Feeding Ordinance: The Board of Selectmen has asked the Public Safety Subcommittee to work on an ordinance that would address the intentional feeding of certain kinds of wildlife. Selectmen Sean Askham and Chris Peterson are representing the Board of Selectmen on this workgroup. The group has reviewed a draft ordinance and will be reviewing feedback from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Town staff, trash haulers, and other stakeholders. The next meeting of this workgroup is scheduled for February 28 at 8am in Town Hall. We expect a proposed ordinance to come to the Board of Selectmen in early spring. For more context on this issue, [here's a link](#) to an article on the topic from the Hartford Courant.

Parks and Rec Special Revenue Fund: Staff recently completed an analysis of the Parks and Rec Special Revenue Fund, which has been operating at a deficit for 7 of the past 11 years. We have formed a workgroup with representation from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and Culture Parks and Rec Commission for the purpose of reviewing the analysis and making policy recommendations. Sean Askham and Chris Peterson are representing the Board of Selectmen on this workgroup. I commend staff for their thorough analysis, which can be found in our [meeting packet from January 13](#), starting on page 23.

Tax Abatement Ordinance for Volunteer Firefighter and Ambulance Personnel: The state recently passed legislation, raising to \$2 thousand the allowable tax abatement for volunteer firefighters and ambulance personnel. Currently, Simsbury grants a \$1 thousand abatement for volunteers with at least five years of experience. Between the Fire Department and Ambulance Association, we have more than 90 volunteers who serve our town, providing a high-level of service at an incredible value. The Fire District has asked that we consider increasing that abatement to the highest allowable amount. We have formed a workgroup to consider amending our ordinance that governs this abatement with Selectwomen Jackie Battos and Wendy Mackstutis.

Debt Management Policy Workgroup: The Board of Selectmen is working with the Board of Finance on developing a debt management policy. Their first meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, January 30, 2020 at 7am in the Main Meeting Room.

Case work on Your Corner

On January 29th, staff from Congresswoman Hayes' office will be at the Simsbury Public Library from 10am – 1pm. Case Work on Your Corner is a free, non-partisan service, open to all residents of

Connecticut's 5th District. If a constituent has a question for or problem with any federal agency (e.g IRS, SSA / Medicare, VA ...or needs help with immigration issues, passports, etc.), the Congresswoman's casework staff can inquire on behalf of the individual to get answers. Residents can drop in and do not need to make an appointment.

Legislative Breakfast

The Simsbury Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Partnership, and Economic Development Commission are hosting the annual Legislative Breakfast on Tuesday, February 11 from 8 – 10am at the Simsbury Housing Authority. It's an opportunity to share your priorities for the 2020 legislative session. The event starts with networking, followed by a panel discussion with Senator Kevin Witkos and Representative John Hampton. Coffee and light breakfast will be provided. [You can follow this link to RSVP.](#)

Gifts of Love Farm Lease Agreement

The Town has revised its lease agreement with Gifts of Love to operate a farm near the Simsbury Airport. Last spring, the nonprofit announced plans to change the scope of its educational programming at the farm to better align with its mission and to become more financially sustainable. The revised lease clarifies the scope of its educational offerings which will include incubator farming, internships, school programs, corporate team building events, among other programs. Gifts of Love Farm is located at 73 Walcott Road. Food harvested at the farm goes directly to Simsbury residents through Simsbury Social Services.

Farmington Valley Health District

The Farmington Valley Health District shared its strategic plan with the Board of Selectmen at our January 13th meeting. The Health District will be holding a public hearing on their budget March 3rd at noon at their offices at 95 River Road in Canton.

Christmas Tree Collection

Christmas trees are picked up by your contracted trash hauler. All Waste will pick up trees on your normal collection day the week of January 27.

Simsbury Loan Locker

I am excited to share that the Simsbury Loan Locker is open for business. The Loan Locker allows our residents to borrow certain kinds of durable medical equipment free of charge. It's currently being housed in the Apple Barn near Simsbury Farms. Anyone interested in donating or borrowing equipment can call (860) 658-3224 or email SimsburyLoanLocker@gmail.com. The kinds of equipment available include walkers, canes, knee scooters, wheel chairs, and bed rails. The Loan Locker is run by volunteers and coordinated by the Simsbury Aging and Disability Commission. My thanks to all involved!

School Facilities Master Plan

Our school district is in the process of completing a facilities study to develop a long-term plan for managing aging buildings and a growing school-age population. The next meeting of the Facilities and Enrollment Task Force is Thursday, January 30 at 6pm in the Tariffville Room at the Simsbury Public Library. This is the first of three meetings the task force will hold to discuss feedback from the public forum and further options to be presented by Tecton Architects on the Facilities Master Plan. The task force is a working group and there will not be public comment during their meetings. Future public forums will be held, and I will share those dates when they become available.

Further reading:

- [The website](#) where information is being stored on the master planning process
- [The presentation](#) shared by Tecton Architects at the November 20 forum
- [The follow-up communication](#) from the Board of Education

Simsbury's 350th Anniversary

In the coming year, Simsbury will be celebrating its 350th anniversary since it was incorporated in 1670. Work is well underway to plan a series of events throughout the year to celebrate this milestone. You can learn more about opportunities to get involved at Simsbury350.com. You can also follow the committee's Facebook page at Facebook.com/Simsbury350.

Sustainable CT Certification

Earlier this year, Simsbury became a member of Sustainable Connecticut, which provides a voluntary certification program for communities across the state. We recently learned that we have received Sustainable CT's Silver certification, the highest award currently offered by the organization. In receiving Silver status, Simsbury is recognized for implementing a broad range of sustainability initiatives. I want to thank the Clean Energy Task Force and the Sustainability Team, which headed up this effort. Also thank you to the Board of Selectmen for their support of this work.

Going forward, the Clean Energy Task Force is working on developing an Energy Plan for the Town, and will be soliciting broad community input as part of the process. It will ultimately give the Town a roadmap of projects so we're approaching our Clean Energy work in a strategic manner. Going forward, I'll provide information on how to lend your voice to this process for anyone interested.

Opportunities to Serve the Town

There are numerous opportunities to serve the Town on boards and commissions whose members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Some of the openings include:

- Board of Assessment Appeals (we are looking to fill two alternate positions)
- Aging and Disability Commission
- Clean Energy Task Force
- Community for Care
- Economic Development Commission
- Recycling Committee
- Tourism Committee
- The Hartford Area Cable Television Advisory Council (HACTAC) has openings for two Simsbury residents to serve on this volunteer board

You can find a complete list of current vacancies [here](#). You can find more information [here](#) on how to apply for one of those vacancies.

If you have questions about any of these opportunities, I'm happy to speak with any resident. Please reach out to me by email: ewellman@simsbury-ct.gov

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: January 27, 2020

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS:

Budget Workshop: We have finalized March 7th as our annual budget workshop date, from approximately 9am-4pm. This will be similar to previous years; each department will have a representative to present and answer any questions the Board of Selectmen may have about their department's proposed operating and capital budgets. We will also provide light refreshments for breakfast and a lunch.

Bond Rating: S&P has confirmed that Simsbury has retained its AAA bond rating and has assigned the Town with a stable outlook; this is the highest possible rating. S&P was impressed with Simsbury's "very strong management" team, "very strong economy", "very strong debt" and our "rapid debt amortization" among other factors. Having a AAA rating allows the Town to receive strong interest from investors in bond sales. The Town has an upcoming bond sale on January 30th and this high rating will allow us to secure a lower interest rate on our bond.

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS & NOTES:

Culture, Parks and Recreation: Summer program registration for the Simsbury Culture, Parks and Recreation Department will begin Friday, January 31st. These programs include summer camps, swimming lessons, tennis programs and pool passes. Residents are reminded that many summer programs fill quickly so we urge families to browse the list of available programs at www.simsburyrec.com and sign up before spaces are filled.

Police: Please join us tomorrow, Tuesday, January 28th at 3pm in the Main Meeting Room of Town Hall as we conduct a more formal swearing in ceremony for Police Officer PJ Gronski. Officer Gronski began work December 27, 2018 and began the police academy on December 31, 2018. He completed the academy on June 26th, 2019, completed his field training on October 25th, 2019, and is now working independently as an officer for the town.

Planning and Community Development: Thomas Hazel will be joining the Planning Department as the new Code Compliance Officer starting February 10th. Tom will be joining us from Windsor where he is the Inland Wetlands Agent/Environmental Planner. Tom has previously served as the Code Enforcement Officer for the Town of Windham. Tom has a bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Management from UCONN. Tom is a certified (DEEP) wetlands agent. Congratulations and welcome Tom!

Assessor's Office: Jen Espinal will be joining the Assessor's Office as the Assessor's Aide starting February 10th. Jen has been working in the insurance industry for approximately 15 years, which will help serve as a great foundation for her future with Simsbury. Congratulations and welcome Jen!

SPECIAL EVENTS:

AARP Tax Assistance: AARP Tax-Aide Volunteers will provide free individual income tax filing assistance for Connecticut and Federal taxes on Thursdays from February 6th - April 9th, as well as Tuesdays from March 10th-31st. The program is open to anyone who needs assistance, regardless of age, income or town of residence. Ninety-minute appointments run from 10am until the last appointment ends at 4:30pm.

Please make an appointment by calling the Simsbury Senior Center at (860) 658-3273. The Tax-Aide volunteers will be located in the Simsbury Public Library's new Tariffville Room on the lower level.

AARP Smart Driver Course: The Senior Center and Public Library are co-sponsoring an AARP Smart Driver course from 1:30-5:30pm on Tuesday, February 25th at the Library. The course will teach current rules of the road, defensive driving techniques, and how to accommodate age-related changes in vision, hearing and reaction time. The course costs \$15 for AARP members and \$20 for nonmembers. Payment can be made by check on the day of the course. Please register at the Library or the Senior Center.