
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: October 26, 2020

Encouraging Low-Risk Halloween Activities

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Town is discouraging residents from participating in traditional Halloween activities this year, including door-to-door trick-or-treating. This recommendation comes as a result of guidance received from the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD), the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As the father of an 8-year-old daughter, I understand how disappointing it is for families not to be celebrating Halloween in the traditional way. Instead, residents are encouraged to focus on lower risk celebrations that maintain social distancing and follow face covering rules, such as virtual celebrations, drive-through events, or events held outdoors.

2020 General Election

I wanted to remind our residents that the deadline to register to vote in the upcoming General Election is Tuesday October 27, 2020. There is a seven-day registration blackout period before the election. If you miss the October 27 deadline, you may register and vote by personally appearing at your town's designated Election Day Voter Registration station (Simsbury Public Library). Proof of identity and residence is required.

You can find many answers to your questions about the upcoming election on the [Registrar of Voters page](#) on the Town website. From that page you can confirm you're registered to vote, confirm your polling location, download and print an absentee ballot application, and more.

- For questions related to absentee voting, you can call our town clerk: 860-658-3243
- For any other election-related questions, you can call our one of our registrars:
 - Karen Cortes 860-658-3267
 - Susan Salina 860-658-3269

Updates from the Planning Department

- I'd like to officially welcome Big Y to Simsbury! Construction on the supermarket on the north side of town is complete and the store is open for business.
- At their last meeting, the Zoning Commission approved the application for an electric car dealership on a vacant parcel just west of the Hoffman dealership.
- The Zoning Commission also approved a remodel of the Andy's Plaza, along with a small addition. According to the property owner, work is anticipated to be completed next spring. A rendering can be found on the [Design Review Board's webpage](#).
- A preliminary plan was shared with the Design Review Board for the re-development of the Simscroft Echo Farms property off Iron Horse Boulevard. The plans call for the construction of a multi-family housing development consistent with the Center Code and Charrette. Copies of the preliminary plans along with supporting documentation are available on the [Design Review Board's page](#).
- The Planning Commission will be holding a public work shop concerning the development of an affordable housing plan for Simsbury pursuant to CGS 8-30j for 10/27 at 7:00pm. Details are posted with the [Commission agenda](#) on how anyone interested can participate in the virtual workshop.

- The Historic District Commission is planning to hold a public work shop on November 12th at 7:00pm. The intent of the workshop is discuss updating the district's handbook. Anyone interested is encouraged to attend. Information will be provided with the meeting's agenda on how to participate.

Simsbury SPIRIT Council

I hope you'll join the SPIRIT Council for their next monthly Let's Talk conversation on Thursday November 5 at 6:30pm. November's topic is National Indigenous People Month. Each month the SPIRIT Council organizes a panel discussion and community conversation focused on diversity and inclusion. They're all virtual and you must pre-register to get the link. You can sign up on the [Library's website](#).

Meadowood Conservation Purchase

I wanted to provide an update on the potential acquisition of a nearly 300-acre parcel known as Meadowood. In September, [the Board of Finance](#) heard a presentation from the Trust for Public Land, a nonprofit organization that the Town has engaged to assist with the purchase. To learn more about the history of the property and the potential acquisition, you can [view a presentation](#) on the Town website that's posted on the Open Space Committee's page.

The proposal calls for the preservation of more than 100-acres of farm land, nearly 140-acres that would contain recreational trails, the construction of athletic fields on a 24-acre parcel, and the preservation of historic barns and a Martin Luther King interpretive display. The Trust for Public Land continues to work to secure grant funding of approximately \$4 million. The Town's share would be approximately \$2.2 million. The project would ultimately need to be approved by the voters at referendum, which would most likely occur in spring 2021.

350th Anniversary History Walk

The History Walk: 350 Years of Simsbury in 350 Steps, will remain in place through the end of October. Located along the Greenway next to the Performing Arts Center, the History Walk tells the story of Simsbury with pictures, dates, and fun facts. The installation is a collaboration with the Simsbury Historical Society, The Simsbury Free Library, and the Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center. Thank you to Big Y Foods, Liberty Bank, Mitchell Auto Group, and Elkinson + Sloves, who conceived and designed the history walk.

Because of Covid, the 350th Committee has had to reschedule and reimagine many of the planned celebrations. You can find the latest at [Simsbury350.com](#). There is also an online store where you can purchase 350 merchandise including a copper plated commemorative medallion that features Simsbury's most iconic landmarks.

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: October 26, 2020

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

DPH has launched a weekly municipal level COVID-19 alert system. If a community is experiencing cases of 15+ per day per 100,000 residents they will be placed on a red alert status. We are monitoring the alert system. The Governor has also recently issued an executive order that allows municipal CEOs to roll back to Phase II guidelines if a community reaches red alert status; in the event that Simsbury is placed on red alert status, I will be in consultation with our public health officials and other key stakeholders in regards to making a determination about reverting back to Phase II guidelines. 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>

Town Hall has been welcoming back in-person visitors since Monday, October 5th. In-person visits to Town Hall can be conducted from 8:30AM to 12:00 PM on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with the first hour of the day reserved for seniors from 8:30AM-9:30AM. The vault in the Town Clerk's Office will not be available for walk-in visitors until further notice. Absentee ballot applications and ballots may be dropped off at the secure ballot box at Town Hall, 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury. **Please be advised that walk-in hours will not be available at Town Hall on November 2 and November 4 due to increased staff and activity in the building related to the election.**

The Library has also been welcoming back in-person visitors on a limited basis since Tuesday, October 6th. 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-1:30PM 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

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.

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 has gradually re-opened a variety of medical services for seniors. Public health is our predominant priority. Staff continues to reevaluate reopening plans in connection with the latest public health data and guidance from the Farmington Valley Health District and the State of Connecticut.

As a reminder, the Board of Selectmen has extended the temporary suspension of cash payments through January 1, 2021 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.

The Transfer Station, playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, skate park, golf course, parks, open space parcels and trails remain open. Social distancing is still strongly encouraged at these locations.

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.

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. If you are a Simsbury resident or business, please don't hesitate to contact Social Services at 860-658-3283 if you need a free face covering.

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. Our Economic Development Commission has conducted outreach with many stakeholders to determine what, if any, unmet needs our community is experiencing during the pandemic.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS

Body Camera Grant: We have been notified by the state Office of Policy and Management that funds in the body-worn recording equipment reimbursement grant are beginning to run low. Funds in this program were available to communities on a first come first served basis. If awarded, it is estimated that the Town would receive approximately \$40,000 in funds that can be used towards the purchase of body cameras for the Police Department. As a result, I am respectfully requesting that "body-worn recording equipment reimbursement grant" be added to the agenda this evening following the DOT Distracted Driving grant.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Finance:

- **Excellence in Financial Reporting:** We received notice that Simsbury's Comprehensive Annual Finance Report (CAFR) for the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2019 qualified for the Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. This is GFOA's highest form of recognition. This is a great achievement and I want to thank Amy Meriwether and her staff for all their hard work that went into the preparation of the CAFR.

- **Shared Financial Management Services:** Our shared services agreement between the Town and Board of Education for Finance Director Amy Meriwether to provide temporary financial management services to the BOE has been extended for another 90-day period through December 28th based on mutual agreement of the Town Manager and Superintendent. This shared service arrangement has been beneficial to both the Town and BOE and I am excited that it has been extended. We are amenable to sharing financial management services on a more permanent basis, and I will bring a draft agreement to the Personnel Sub-Committee for review, and then ultimately to the full Board of Selectmen for consideration.

Police: Deputy Chief Chris Davis took the oath of office and commenced his position as second in command of the Simsbury Police Department on Monday October 26, 2020.

Deputy Chief Davis earned a bachelor's degree from Eastern Connecticut State University and a master's degree from Boston University. He has been an adjunct professor since 2010, teaching various classes at Eastern Connecticut State University and Manchester Community College. He spent his first 25 years in law enforcement with the Manchester, CT Police Department, retiring as Captain in 2018. While in Manchester, he served as a Field Training Officer, Patrol and Detective Sergeant, Detective Lieutenant and Captain for the last 7-8 years of his tenure. He was the Public Information Officer for 14 years. As a Captain, he served as Police Chief in the Chief's absence, prepared and managed the department budget, wrote grants and provided oversight of Patrol, Investigative Services, Youth Services, Community Policing, Domestic Violence Outreach Team and the East Central Narcotics Task Force.

He joined the East Hartford Police Department in 2018, serving as one of the Deputy Chiefs. His oversight was the Professional Standards Bureau which included Accreditation, Training, Internal Affairs, Recruitment and Hiring, Planning and Special Projects.

There will be a formal ceremony welcoming Deputy Chief Davis to the Department and the Town in the near future.

Public Works:

- **Household Hazardous Waste Collection:** The Household Hazardous Waste Collection that was conducted on Saturday October 17th. There was a record turnout of over 1,000 cars. Many thanks to our Public Works Department staff who organized and assisted in this event to make it so successful.
- **Leaf Collection:** The 2020 Leaf Collection program by Public Works will start on November 16th and run through November 27th with weather permitting. Leaves must be in biodegradable bags, not plastic ones. Residents can also bring bagged leaves to the landfill during their normal hours. To find out when the DPW crews will be in your neighborhood click [here](#) and enter in your address.

Social Services:

- **2020 Holiday Program:** Simsbury Community and Social Services is now enrolling families in the 2020 Holiday Program. Due to COVID-19, we will not be accepting donations of physical gifts this year. We will be offering gift cards to our participants. If you would like to adopt a family or be a recipient, please contact Community and Social Services at 860-658-3283.
- **Medicare Open Enrollment:** Open Medicare enrollment is Oct. 15, 2020 – Dec. 7, 2020. Medicare recipients are able to change their Medical Healthcare Plans for the year 2021 without penalty. Social Services' staff Carolyn Krystiniak is a certified Choices Counselor. She is available to give confidential assistance to whoever needs it. Please call 860-658-3283 with

questions or to schedule a telephone or Zoom appointment. Our Senior Center will be presenting a Medicare Sign-up presentation via Zoom on Thursday-10/06/2020 at 1:00 pm. To register please call (860-658-3273) or email: kmarschall@simsbury-ct.gov

- **Energy Assistance:** The Simsbury Social Services Department is accepting applications for the Energy Assistance 2020-2021 Heating Program. Due to COVID-19, applications this year will be completed by phone and mail. Please call Social Services at 860-658-3283 to set up an electronic appointment. Please see this [flyer](#) posted to social media for more detailed information.
- **Blood Pressure Clinics:** The Farmington Valley Visiting Nurse Association will perform blood pressure and blood sugar screenings, each Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the back parking lot of Eno Memorial Hall, at 754 Hopmeadow Street in Simsbury. Appointments are not required. For those that are unable to attend the screenings, nurses will be available to contact residents via phone for wellness checks to assess the need for a home visit. For more information, contact the Simsbury Senior Center at 860-658-3273.

Town Manager's Office: Earlier this month members of our Emergency Management team, Eric and I met with Eversource officials to relay our concerns regarding their response to Storm Isaias. We emphasized our concerns with the length of time it took to “make safe” neighborhoods. We also conveyed our frustration with the lack of information provided and level of coordination with the Town regarding make safe and restoration work throughout the storm event. We have also relayed our concerns to COST; COST is working on this issue on behalf of its member towns.