
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: November 23, 2020

Dear friends and neighbors,

Thanksgiving week has arrived. Our community and country face extraordinary challenges. In recent days I've been feeling a range of emotions from sad, to angry, to hopeful.

Sad as more than a quarter of a million Americans have died from this horrendous disease. And angry because the wealthiest country in the history of the world was unable to stop it.

But I am also hopeful we know how to keep keep the economy going – how to keep the doors on Main Street open. We know what it takes to safely educate our children in school. And we know this because we've done it. What our educators, staff, administrators, and Board of Education have pulled off is nothing short of extraordinary and it worked better than my wildest expectations. Schools are proving to *not* be a source of secondary spread of the virus.

We know what works and we know how to do this. But this only works if we take personal responsibility. Avoid socializing with people outside of your immediate family or pod – especially indoors and especially without a mask. That's where this virus is spreading by and large. Not in businesses that are following the rules and not in schools.

My family will not be taking our annual trip to New York this year to see our relatives. It breaks my heart, but it's the right thing to do. Instead, we've ordered our Thanksgiving meal from one of our great local businesses and we're going to enjoy it just the three of us. If you need help putting that Thanksgiving meal on the table, I beg you, call Simsbury Social Services. I know it's not easy asking for help, but please make that phone call.

Getting this right requires sacrifice and personal responsibility. If you care about keeping the economy open and our children in school, let's be smart about this. If you love your country, let's make this our patriotic responsibility. If you love your fellow humans, let's be sure we get this right.

Stay home on Thursday. Avoid indoor gatherings with anyone outside of your family or pod. And wear a mask. Our country is depending on all of us to do the right thing.

What gives me hope is that we have shown that we can co-exist with this disease. We can safely open our schools and much of the economy if we can follow health and safety guidelines. There are also some incredibly promising vaccines on the horizon that will hopefully bring us back together again soon. I'm can't wait for that day to come.

Update from the Planning Department

- An application has been filed for the renovation of the former Gibbs Mobile station. The site has been vacant for several years and the new operator is looking to reestablish a gas station at this location.

Shop Simsbury

The annual Shop Simsbury event is happening this Friday and Saturday, November 27 and 28. Get a great deal for yourself or a gift for someone else - for every \$50 gift card/certificate bought at participating businesses over those 2 days, you get a \$10 bonus. And, you can collect 8 stickers with no purchase necessary to win one of four great prizes. Details can be found here: <http://www.ShopSimsbury.com>. Shop Simsbury is a collaboration of the Simsbury Main Street Partnership, the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce, and the 350th Committee.

Due to requests, the Main Street Partnership is extending their Simsbury Art Contest for school-aged kids k-12. The new deadline is January 11, 2021, as many families wanted the winter break to be able to participate. Winners receive \$500 savings bond from Liberty Bank, pizza, and their winning design on a t-shirt. Art departments will receive \$500 towards their program! Details here: <http://shopsimsbury.com/simsburyartcontest/>

Simsbury Celebrates

Simsbury Celebrates is still ON! This Saturday, November 28th, there will be a reverse fire-truck parade on Iron Horse (the firetrucks will be parked and vehicles will drive by for viewing), as well as fireworks and a variety show on SCTV. Details and schedule can be found here: <https://www.simsburycelebrates.com/>

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: November 23, 2020

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Our COVID cases numbers continue to rise in town. We are monitoring the state's municipal COVID alert system and are currently at "orange" status, indicating that we have between 10-14 COVID cases per 100,000 residents. For the 2-week period ending November 14th we have 11.7 cases per 100,000 residents. We went from 33 cases over the previous 2-week period to 41 cases over the most recent 2-week period. We are one of 24 towns the state that are not currently in the "red" alert status, indicating that they are experiencing cases of 15+ per day per 100,000 residents.

Unlike the spring, community spread of COVID-19 is on the rise, while congregate settings remain stable. In our area, small gatherings and household contact are the leading sources of spreading the virus. As a reminder, gathering sizes have been limited to no more than 10 people at private residences, 25 people indoors, and 50 people at outdoor events at commercial venues; more info from the State of Connecticut can be found at this [link](#). Adult members of households are contracting the virus from travel and work, then spreading it to members of their households; the Health District has reported that there has been no secondary transmission of the virus in our school setting. At this time 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. I encourage everyone to take the time to watch the first thirty minutes of our most recent [Public Safety Sub-Committee meeting](#) in which our Health District Executive Director shared critical and important information regarding the virus in our area.

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 November 3rd, we have 18 staff members that have been quarantined due to coming into contact with a person that has tested positive for the virus (both at work and not at work). 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 vault in the Town Clerk's Office will not be available for walk-in visitors until further notice.

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 (tentatively until 3:30PM beginning 12/5) 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.

The Transfer Station, ice rink, playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, skate park, golf course, 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, energy assistance, and holiday help. 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. Effective 11/18, foot care, hearing clinics, and blood pressure/blood sugar screenings 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, household and toiletry items, and gift cards. Distributions are curbside with minimal contact. At our last distribution, we served 143 families, gave out 42 bags of kid friendly food, provided 109 boxes of food provided by the Salvation Army, and delivered to 30 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 5,600 hand sewn masks have been received with 3,300 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 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.

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. Our Economic Development Commission continues to conduct business outreach visits to determine what, if any, unmet needs our business community is experiencing during the pandemic.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS

Affordable Housing Survey: As noted in an email to all Board members earlier today, COST is gathering feedback regarding affordable housing via a survey and has requested feedback by December 2nd. If the Board would like to discuss this topic at tonight's meeting I would suggest adding it as an agenda item with a 2/3rds vote. Another option is for Board members to send their survey responses to me directly, and I can then respond on behalf of the Board based on those responses. I can provide a summary of the responses at a future meeting.

Public Comment: As a reminder, members of the public have two ways to participate in public comment during your meetings: submitting written comment in advance of the meeting to our Town Clerk or requesting through our Management Specialist to participate live in a virtual format. We do not have a legal obligation to project photographs or other visuals and generally will not do so.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Public Works: The 2020 Leaf Collection program will conclude 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 working to fulfill wishes for the upcoming Holiday season. We are currently enrolling our families who need assistance and are actively seeking donors to fulfill these wishes. Due to COVID-19 precautions, this year we will only be working with gift cards. If you would like to participate as a donor please contact Kristen Formanek at 860-658-3283 or by email at kformanek@simsbury-ct.gov. If you would like to be a recipient please contact Rachael Loveland at 860-658-3283 or by email at rloveland@simsbury-ct.gov.
- **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

Town Clerk's Office: Anita Schwager will be retiring from the Town of Simsbury on November 30th after 30 years of working for the Town. This is an incredible achievement and I know all who have worked or interacted with Anita during her tenure with the Town wish her well in retirement.

Janet Brady has been promoted to Assistant Town Clerk II starting December 1, 2020. Janet has been with the Town of Simsbury for 20 years and has a wide range of knowledge of the Town Clerk's Office from her time as Assistant Town Clerk I. Congratulations to Janet on this promotion!

SPECIAL EVENTS

2020 Shop Local Campaign: The Simsbury Main Street Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce are joining forces for Black Friday/Small Business Saturday 2020, on November 27th and 28th. This is an important effort to keep local dollars in Simsbury and highlight our amazing business community. For every \$50 gift card/certificate bought at participating businesses over those 2 days, you get a \$10 bonus. And, you can collect 8 stickers with no purchase necessary to win one of four great prizes. Details can be found here: <http://www.ShopSimsbury.com>

Simsbury Celebrates: This Saturday, November 28th, from 5:00-7:00PM there will be a reverse fire-truck parade on Iron Horse Boulevard (the holiday decorated firetrucks will be parked and vehicles will drive by for viewing), as well as fireworks and a variety show on SCTV. To view the parade, please enter Iron Horse Boulevard from Owens Brook Boulevard. To view the fireworks at 8:00PM, please do so from your home or in your vehicle at one of these three recommended parking lots: Simsbury High School, Henry James Middle School, or the Simsbury Farms Recreation Complex. Details and schedule can be found here: <https://www.simsburycelebrates.com/>