
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: November 9, 2020

2020 General Election

I wanted to acknowledge the General Election that took place last week and recognize our registrars, Karen Cortes and Susan Salina, for their work in ensuring an incredibly smooth vote count under very challenging circumstances. In Simsbury, we counted an unprecedented number of absentee ballots – more than 7-thousand!. I also wanted to acknowledge the work of our Town Clerk's office, which did the heavy lifting in processing the absentee ballot requests. I also want to thank the approximately 100 people who stepped up to work the polls and count absentee ballots. We're very fortunate in this community to have such an engaged electorate! 85% of registered voters cast a ballot, which is a good thing for democracy.

Updates from the Planning Department

This week:

- Tomorrow evening the Planning Commission is holding a public listening session to gather feedback on an Affordable Housing Plan the Commission is developing. State statute requires towns develop such plans to increase the availability of affordable housing options as defined by Connecticut General State Statute 8-30 g. Information on how to submit written and oral comments can be found on the [Planning Commission's November 10 agenda](#).
- The Historic District Commission is planning to hold a public workshop on Thursday November 12th at 7:00pm. The intent of the workshop is to 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.

Previously announced:

- 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](#).

Veterans Day

Veterans Day is this Wednesday November 11th. Due to the weather, a ceremony that was scheduled for 3:30pm that day has been cancelled. However, a planned moment of silence at the Veterans Memorial scheduled for 11am that day is still expected to take place. I'm pleased to share that students at the high school and middle school will participate in virtual sessions with veterans in their history classes. Also, the annual clothing drive for the Veterans Home and Veterans in the Housing Authority is still taking

place. Collections are taking place in many local churches instead of town buildings this year because of Covid restrictions. In Simsbury, we have an active veterans community that has organized these events. Thanks to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1926 and American Legion Post 84.

Simsbury SPIRIT Council

The SPIRIT Council – our Town’s diversity & inclusion champions – have scheduled their next virtual gathering next week, Monday November 16 from 6 – 7pm. It will feature Manju Soni, author of *When Lions Roared: How Brave Young People Defied Apartheid*. The author will give an brief overview growing up in South Africa under the system of racial Apartheid, and draw parallels with America’s own past and present experiences with racism. You can register for this free talk 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 November (weather permitting). 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: November 9, 2020

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

The Governor has recently rolled back the state to Phase 2.1 guidelines, which is close to Phase 2 parameters with some modifications. Those include the indoor capacity of restaurants from 75% to 50% with a maximum amount of 8 people at a table. Certain industries are now also subject to closing at 10:00PM as well. Gathering sizes have been limited to 25 people indoors and 50 people at outdoor events at commercial venues and a cap of 10 people at private residences. More info from the State of Connecticut can be found at this [link](#).

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 and are currently at yellow status. We went from 16 cases over a two week period, to 22 cases over the most recent two week period. We currently have 6.3 cases per 100,000 people; to be in the clear/grey we would need to be at less than 5 cases per 100,000 people. 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>

We continue to rely on the Farmington Valley Health District for contact tracing in the event that we have a member of our workforce that has tested positive for COVID. Through contact tracing logs we maintain and other information, the Health District is able to determine if any staff members or members of the public need to be contact traced following a positive COVID case at our worksite(s). In the event that contact is needed, the Health District will reach out to the affected individual(s) directly. Additionally, in the event of a positive case at our worksite, our Human Resources staff makes direct contact with our staff and communication is sent to the employees at the affected worksite. We continue to ask staff to remain home if they are ill, wear face coverings, social distance, and take other safety precautions to help minimize the risk of spread of the virus. Our Facilities team has done an outstanding job increasing the frequency and level of intensity to our cleaning procedures. 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.

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.

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

Appointment to Community for Care: We have received a request for an appointment to the Community for Care to be added to the agenda for tonight's meeting. As a result, I am respectfully requesting that

“Appointment of Deb Schwager to the Community for Care” be added to the agenda this evening following the “Appointment of Lori Wagner to the Economic Development Commission.” Since this is a regular Board meeting, this item can be added to the agenda with a 2/3 vote of the body.

STEAP Grant: I am pleased to report that we have been awarded a \$128,000 STEAP grant by the state of Connecticut to assist with accessibility improvements to the parking lot, walkway, and seating areas at Simsbury Meadows. This project also has funding available for lightning protection at the PAC.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Public Works:

- **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:

- **Senior Center Assistant:** It is my pleasure to announce that Karen Haberlin has been selected as our new Senior Center Assistant. Karen has worked for the Town as a Commission Clerk since May of 2017. I have had the opportunity to work with Karen and have observed her commitment to professionalism and dedication to serving our town. Karen has a Bachelor’s Degree in International Relations/Political Science with a Minor in French and a Master’s Degree in Communications Management. Past work experiences include marketing and events management and being a substitute teacher in Avon. I am confident she will excel in this position. Karen will begin in her new capacity on November 23, 2020. Congratulations Karen!
- **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
- **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 Clerk's Office

- **November General Election Statistics:** I want to extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to our Registrar of Voters, Town Clerk's Office, absentee ballot workers, and poll workers during the recent election. Simsbury had 16,435 votes cast in the recent election with 7,233 votes by absentee ballot and 9,202 in person votes. This is a voter turnout of 85%!