
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: December 14, 2020

Economic Development

- 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.
- Welcome to Freedom Finds Junk Removal, located on Hopmeadow Street on the Simsbury/Granby line.
- Burn Body Camp is slated for a soft opening this month, and expects to have their grand opening in January. They are located in the Andy's Plaza.
- The Posture Bar Pilates & Chiropractic Studio has officially opened in the Welden Building.
- Northwest Community Bank is targeting early December to open their downtown Simsbury branch where the former Santander branch.
- Roux Market & Cajun Eatery has signed a lease in Fiddlers Green to take over the former Sakimura space and they are working on revitalizing the space to open soon, with the Market targeting to open this upcoming month and the restaurant in March 2021.
- Congratulations to Bryan and Sandy DeVoe of Fitzgerald's who are celebrating 10 years as owners of this local institution.

One of the great things about our town is our locally owned and small business community. I want to extend my gratitude to the Simsbury Main Street Partnership and the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce who are doing incredible work during this unprecedented time. There is no doubt that our business community is struggling and I am grateful to the work of both of these organizations.

Previously Announced

- The Zoning Commission has 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](#).

Wreaths Across America

Each year the Daughters of the American Revolution – Abigail Phelps Chapter conducts its annual wreath sale and lays wreaths on the graves of local veterans. This year is no exception, and a ceremony is scheduled for noon on Saturday December 19 at the cemetery on Plank Hill Road.

Meadowood Conservation Purchase

I wanted to provide an update on the potential acquisition of a nearly 300-acre parcel known as Meadowood. Earlier this fall, [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.

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: December 14, 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 "red" status, indicating that we have more than 15 COVID cases per 100,000 residents. For the 2-week period ending December 5th we have 23.7 cases per 100,000 residents and our COVID positivity rate for those being tested was 4.2%. Since my last Town Manager's Report, we have gone from 33 cases over the 2-week period ending November 12th to 83 cases over the most recent 2-week period ending December 5th. Since November 12th, the largest increase of cases on a percentage basis week over week occurred between the weeks ending November 14th and November 21st.

Unlike the spring, community spread of COVID-19 is on the rise in our area, while congregate settings remain more stable. Contact tracing done by the Farmington Valley Health District has identified recent source exposure in the majority of cases to be due to the following:

- Social gatherings/parties
- Occupational exposures
- Sports outside of school
- Travel related

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](#). 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.

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, during the month of November we had 19 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). From mid-November to December 1st we have had four staff member positive cases. 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-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, 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. 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, household and toiletry items, and gift cards. Distributions are curbside with minimal contact. At our last distribution, we served 131 households, gave out 34 bags of kid friendly food, provided 100 boxes of food provided by the Salvation Army, and delivered to 34 homebound individuals and families. We also received a generous donation from Metro Bis of 350 meals to help feed our residents in need.

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 3,300 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 to help reduce the risk of spreading COVID and will be discussing extending this suspension of cash payments later tonight. 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.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Police: At their regular meeting on December 7, 2020, the Simsbury Police Commission approved Chief Nick Boulter's recommendation to hire Sean Crowley to fill one of four police officer vacancies. Sean is currently a police officer in Torrington, where he has served since 2017. He has been assigned to the Patrol Division since completion of the police academy and field training program. In addition, he participated in the Special Olympics Torch Run, a week-long problem solving detail in one of the city parks and he has been recognized several times by his supervisors and the command staff for commendable work. Prior to becoming a police officer in Torrington, Sean held a number of positions in the private sector such as a public safety officer and loss prevention officer. He earned an Associate's degree in Criminal Justice from Tunxis Community College. Sean will begin his career with the Simsbury Police Department during the first week of January 2021, where he will enter a training and evaluation program within the Patrol Division. Congratulations and welcome Sean!

Town Manager's Office: Eversource has notified the Town that their contractor, ARE-Air Shark, will be flying drones over Simsbury during the next few weeks to conduct aerial inspections of Eversource's rights-of-way. By utilizing drones, they're able to find and keep a record of the health of their system, as well as address any potential concerns in the rights-of-way that aren't easily visible otherwise.

You can find more information on how these drone inspections are conducted on Eversource's website: <https://www.eversource.com/.../avoiding-an-outage/drones>