
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: February 10, 2020

Budget Season

We are approaching the time of the year when the Town and Board of Education develop their respective budgets. In the months to come I will use this space to provide updates and key dates in the process. All inclusive, Simsbury's budget is a little over \$100 million. More than 75% of our budget is dedicated to our schools. The school budget is developed by the Superintendent, in collaboration with the Board of Education. It's approved by the Boards of Education and Finance before it ultimately comes to the voters for referendum. Our Town budget funds services such as police, public works, parks, and our library. Our Town budget is developed by our Town Manager in collaboration with the Board of Selectmen. It's approved by the Boards of Selectmen and Finance before coming to the ballot for referendum.

Important Dates

- February 24th at 6pm, the Town Manager will be presenting her proposed budget to the Board of Selectmen
- March 7th from 9am – 4pm, the Board of Selectmen will be conducting its budget workshop, where we will be reviewing and discussing the budget in greater detail
- March 10th the Board of Education presents its budget to the Board of Finance
- March 17th the Board of Selectmen presents its budget to the Board of Finance
- March 24th the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education share our capital priorities with the Board of Finance
- April 7th the Board of Finance holds a public hearing
- The budget referendum is tentatively scheduled for May 19th at Henry James

I know I join my colleagues on the Board of Selectmen in welcoming and encouraging your feedback throughout this process. I hope you will share with us your priorities by [email](#), speaking in public audience (at the beginning of every Board of Selectmen meeting), or attending the Board of Finance's budget hearing (date to be determined). I am always glad to meet with any resident by appointment.

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 is also 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 will take place February 21 at 8am. Staff plans to share a draft ordinance at that time to gather feedback.

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.

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 Board of Education is in the process of conducting a survey to better understand the priorities of our residents. I encourage you to take the survey [here](#).

The next public forum is scheduled for **March 4th at 7pm in the High School auditorium**. The Board of Education is also hosting a series of neighborhood meetings, which are an opportunity to learn more about the options and provide feedback in a more intimate setting.

- Squadron Line School – February 14th at 9am
- Central School – February 19th at 6pm
- Tariffville School – February 20th at 6pm
- Forums have already taken place at Tootin' Hills and Latimer.

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

Legislative Breakfast

The Simsbury Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Partnership, and Economic Development Commission are hosting the annual Legislative Breakfast on Tuesday February 11th 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.

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!

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](https://www.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
- Historic District 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: February 10, 2020

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS:

Bond Sale: The recent Bond Sale by the Town was conducted on January 30th and resulted in a winning rate of 1.56% for the 15 year issue for part of the Henry James renovation project. This rate is lower than the 10 year rate from last year's bond issuance. This rate is a result of S&P confirming that Simsbury retained its AAA bond rating as well as assigning the Town with a stable outlook. This was a very competitive sale with 9 firms submitting bids. In the sale the town received a bond premium of \$1,021,940.

Small Cities Certifying Resolution: A minor typo (incorrect date) was noted in the certifying resolution for the Small Cities grant application, which is included as an attachment for agenda item (d). This document has been updated, and hard copies have been provided to you.

Legislative Breakfast: This is a reminder about the Legislative Breakfast being held tomorrow, February 11th, from 8:00AM to 10:00AM at the Simsbury Housing Authority. It is being put on by the Chamber of Commerce and will have our Simsbury Legislative Representatives present.

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS & NOTES:

Community and Social Services: The Department of Community and Social Services is pleased to announce that it has been awarded \$5,000 in grant funding through Amplify, for which it recently applied. This funding is part of the Connecticut State Opioid Response Initiative and will help us to provide additional education, programs, and services in collaboration with our identified partners. Fourteen awards have been made and we are excited to be one of them.

Town Clerk's Office: Each member of the Board of Selectmen has been provided a copy this evening of the ED-626 form that Town Clerk Ericka Butler recently completed. This form will be filed with the Secretary of the State's office. This form shows that the Town has a sufficient number of voting machines for the four voting districts in Town.

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.