
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: February 22, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

We are currently in Phase 1b of Connecticut's COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Vaccines for people 65+ are being scheduled now.

On Monday, Governor Lamont announced an [age-based vaccine rollout strategy](#).

- March 1, 2021: Expands to age group 55+
- March 22, 2021: Expands to age group 45+
- April 12, 2021: Expands to age group 35+
- May 3, 2021: Expands to age group 16+

In addition to the age-based eligibility, preK-12 school staff and teachers and professional childcare providers will be eligible to receive the vaccine in March at dedicated clinics that are set up specifically to serve those sectors.

The latest information from the state of Connecticut on the vaccine rollout is [here](#).

- **Registration through VAMS:** for people with email addresses: ct.gov/covidvaccine.
- **CVS Health:** There are a handful of CVS pharmacies that are administering the vaccine, including a location in Avon. Residents 65 and older can make an appointment [directly with CVS](#).
- **Schedule through the Vaccine Access Assistance Line and Appointments-Plus platform:** For providers who are interested in participating, please complete [this form](#).
- **Schedule directly with a provider:** Some providers throughout the state are offering direct scheduling or they may be a vaccine administrator.

Note: Please do not call your medical provider if they have not reached out to you.

- Those without internet access can call Connecticut's COVID Vaccine Appointment Assistance Line at [877-918-2224](tel:877-918-2224)

The Town is receiving 50 – 100 calls per day from residents who have found the process for scheduling a vaccine confusing. Our Senior Center and Social Services Department is prepared to assist. **Please call 860-658-3273 if you or someone you know needs assistance with this process.**

The Senior Center and Simsbury Social Services are in regular contact with individuals who have transportation needs (not just during the pandemic), and are overseeing that process. If a senior or disabled individual needs assistance and has not been in contact with either, the numbers to call are as follows: Simsbury Senior Center: (860) 658-3273; Simsbury Social Services: (860) 658-3283.

Dial-A-Ride will be providing transportation to the clinics in our service area. If you currently have a Dial-A-Ride pass please call Dial-A-Ride directly to book transportation at 860-693-6876. If you are not a current pass holder and would like to sign up, please call Simsbury Social Services.

Budget Update

Town Manager Maria Capriola presented her proposed 2021/2022 budget to the Board of Selectmen on Monday evening. You can view the presentation [here](#). The Town and the Board of Education budgets combined, as presented, come to just over \$105.4 million dollars, an increase of 2.9%. For the second year in a row, Simsbury has experienced significant grand list growth of 2.94% (taxable property). The proposed budget, as it stands, amounts to an increase of 0.17 mills or \$36/year for the median value home. It's important to emphasize that this is a proposed budget that is subject to change based on input from the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Education, the Board of Finance, and the taxpayers of our community. I

hope that you will be engaged in this process. Please reach out to me or any member of the Board of Selectmen with your feedback and priorities.

Important dates:

- March 2 – Board of Selectmen meeting at 5pm: A discussion about the Board of Education’s capital needs.
- March 6 – Board of Selectmen meeting starting at 9am: The Board of Selectmen will hold its all-day budget workshop where we will review the budget department by department.
- March 16 – Board of Selectmen will present its proposed budget to the Board of Finance at 5:45pm.

All of these meetings will be streamed live on SCTV’s YouTube channel and broadcast of SCTV’s government channel. You can also participate in public audience at the beginning of our meetings by submitting your emails to Ericka Butler: ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov. Or you can join our meetings and share your comments live by registering with Tom Fitzgerald: tfitzgerald@simsbury-ct.gov.

What’s Happening at the Library

The Library is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am – 4pm and Saturdays 9:30am – 3:30pm. Curbside service is also available for Hold pickup on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10am – 5pm and Tuesdays 4 – 8pm. The Library has a full schedule of virtual programs. You’ll find the schedule [here](#).

Let’s Talk – Women’s History Month

The first Thursday of each month, the SPIRIT Council hosts a panel discussion and Q&A on topics of diversity and inclusion in our town. On March 4, the conversation will focus on Women’s History Month. It’s scheduled from 6:30pm – 8pm. The event is free. To receive the Zoom link, please register in advance on the [Library’s website under virtual programs](#).

Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge Celebrates Milestone

2021 marks 25 years since the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge became the Flower Bridge! The bridge dates back to the late 1800’s, and in the early 1990’s was closed to vehicle traffic. In 1995 it was restored as a pedestrian bridge and for the past quarter century has been adorned by boxes of flowers each summer thanks to the dedicated volunteers on the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge Committee, a nonprofit organization.

This year, the plantings will be bigger and better than ever. The group will be adding 20 additional boxes and border column baskets that are planted in conjunction with the Simsbury Garden Club and CT Master Gardener Program. If it’s safe to do so, the committee hopes to hold its annual Burgers on the Bridge fundraiser in September.

If people wish to get involved (volunteer, donate, join the waiting list to sponsor a basket), please reach out to Sharene Wassell 860-658-5377 or Deeg Mackay 860-658-2377.

How to Watch Town Meetings

All Town meetings can be watched on Xfinity channels 96 and 1090 and Frontier channel 6071. Board of Ed meetings are on Xfinity 95 and 1070, and Frontier channel 6070. All meetings are streamed live at SimsburyTv.org. They can also be watched on demand on SCTV’s website.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: February 22, 2021

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

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. Our positive cases for the 2-week period ending February 13th have decreased to 15.4 cases per 100,000 residents (down from 20.6 cases on February 6th) and our COVID positivity rate for those being tested was 2.6%, down from 3.2% on February 6th. We are currently at 54 positive cases over the most recent 2-week period ending February 13th, a decrease from 72 cases over the 2-week period ending February 6th. We had a 25% decrease in positive cases for the week ending February 13th compared to the week ending February 6th. The good news is that we are continuing to trend downwards – significant strides for the third consecutive week.

Preliminary data from the state ending February 16th reports that 3,756 Simsbury residents have received at least their first dose of the vaccine, or 14.79% of the population. The Farmington Valley Health District has three weekly vaccination clinic sites in the region, and vaccinations are now also available at the CVS in Avon. We are seeing a significant call volume of 50-100 calls daily at the Senior Center from seniors needing help navigating the vaccine registration system. This has been a significant use of staff resources with half of our Social Services staff members primarily diverted to this effort. A very big thank you to Selectwoman Wendy Mackstutis for volunteering her time and helping return calls to seniors to help get them registered!

Like many businesses and organizations, the rise of COVID-19 is affecting our workforce. We are fortunate that our workforce has largely remained healthy. However, since February 1st we have had 7 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) with no staff members testing positive. 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.

Public health and safety 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 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. We are currently evaluating the feasibility in expanding the Library's walk-in hours to include one evening per week. 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. Libraries in the Farmington Valley are all offering limited open hours at this time.

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, 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 and energy assistance. 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.

At their most recent monthly food distribution for residents experiencing food insecurity, our Social Services team served 123 households, provided 38 additional bags to families with children, and delivered to 28 homebound individuals. 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 3,400 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.

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.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Public Works: The Town has re-financed the Sewer Department's Clean Water Fund Loan Bond. The recent bond sale re-financing allowed us to save an estimated \$392,406 (net of bond issuance costs). The new bond is for a 7 year term.

Town Clerk's Office: Our Town Clerk, Ericka Butler, has been elected vice president of the Hartford County Town Clerks Association. Her term will start in April and will be for two years. Congratulations to Ericka on this well-deserved appointment!

Planning: Planning Director Mike Glidden will be presenting a development update to the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce membership this Friday, February 26th at 8am. Due to the pandemic, this virtual event is replacing their annual legislative breakfast typically held in February. The informative presentation will be similar to development updates provided to the Economic Development Commission several times per year and currently available online.