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## FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

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**TO:** Board of Selectmen  
**FROM:** Eric Wellman – First Selectman  
**DATE:** February 24, 2020

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### **Budget Season**

On February 24, the Town Manager presented her proposed budget to the Board of Selectmen. The presentation can be viewed [here](#). In the weeks to come, we will use this site to aggregate information specific to the Town budget. The Board of Education is aggregating its budget material [here](#). The Town Manager's proposed budget seeks to maintain current programs and services while advancing Board of Selectmen priorities. Based on revenue projections, it would keep taxes relatively flat in the coming fiscal year.

All inclusive, Simsbury's budget is just 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**

- March 7 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 10, the Board of Education presents its budget to the Board of Finance
- March 17, the Board of Selectmen presents its budget to the Board of Finance
- March 24, the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education share our capital priorities with the Board of Finance
- April 7, the Board of Finance holds a public hearing
- The budget referendum is tentatively scheduled for May 19 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.

### **The U.S. Census is Coming This Spring**

In Mid-March, homes across the country will begin receiving invitations to complete the 2020 Census. Once the invitation arrives, surveys can be completed in three ways: online, by phone, or by mail. I encourage all households to complete the census, which determines our representation in Congress and how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding will be distributed. [Learn more about the 2020 Census here](#).

There have been some scams reported in our community that have targeted seniors where people claimed to have been calling from the census. Please remember that no one from the census will ever ask for your social security number, a credit card or bank account number, or money of any kind.

### **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 is scheduled for March 9 at 8am at Town Hall.

**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.

**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. Meetings are scheduled for March 18 and April 1 – both at 8am at Town Hall. They are open to the public.

### **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 next public forum is scheduled for **March 4<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the High School auditorium**. For the most up to date information, I recommend visiting [the Board of Education's website](#) where information is being stored on the master planning process

### **Simsbury's 350th Anniversary**

This year Simsbury is 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](http://Simsbury350.com). You can also follow the committee's Facebook page at [Facebook.com/Simsbury350](https://Facebook.com/Simsbury350).

**The [Opening Ceremony](#) will take place at 2pm on Sunday May 17 at First Church.** The event will tell Simsbury's story and feature performing arts, history, and music. It will be followed by a giant [birthday party](#) at Hopbrook Landing, the new park next to the Flower Bridge. The event is free, but tickets

are needed to attend the ceremony. They will be available starting on April 15. No ticket is necessary to attend the birthday party.

The Opening Ceremony will be followed by [River Day](#), which will take place **June 27 from 10am to 2pm**. This is an all-ages event with no admission fee that will encompass activities at the Pinchot Sycamore, Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge and Curtiss Park. Food trucks, ice cream, face painting and a DJ will provide entertainment on Old Bridge Road throughout the day. There will also be a limited number of kayaks and canoes that can be borrowed to paddle from the Pinchot Sycamore to the Simsbury Crew Boathouse.

### **Community for Care**

Community for Care and the Simsbury Spirit Council invite you to join them for a panel discussion about implicit bias, how our unconscious beliefs shape our experiences. It will take place March 11 at 6:30pm at the Simsbury Public Library.

### **Welcome to New Businesses**

- A ribbon cutting ceremony for Infused, A CBD Marketplace will be held on Thursday, February 27 at 5:00 pm at 1406 Hopmeadow Street Simsbury (Holloway's Plaza)
- A ribbon cutting for Your CBD Store, located at 1243 Hopmeadow Street will take place March 19 at 5:00pm.

### **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](mailto: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!

### **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.

### **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](mailto:ewellman@simsbury-ct.gov)

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## TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

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**TO:** Board of Selectmen  
**FROM:** Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager  
**DATE:** February 24, 2020

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### **FY 2020/2021 BUDGET NEWS & NOTES:**

An in-depth budget workshop has been scheduled for Saturday, March 7th. By Charter the Board of Selectmen must forward a recommended budget to the Board of Finance no later than March 31st. The Board of Selectmen is scheduled to take up the matter of budget adoption on March 9th. If an additional meeting is needed for budget consideration, I would recommend a special meeting be held on March 11th. The Board of Selectmen is scheduled to present its adopted budget to the Board of Finance on March 17th.

### **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 6<sup>th</sup> - April 9<sup>th</sup>, as well as Tuesdays from March 10<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>. 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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.