
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: February 25, 2019

Budget Update

On February 27th, Town Manager Maria Capriola presented her proposed fiscal year 2019/2020 budget to the Board of Selectmen. [You can review a copy of the presentation here](#). Saturday March 2nd is the Board of Selectmen's budget workshop where we will be spending most of the day reviewing the budget in detail with department heads. The public is welcome to attend. It will also be televised on SCTV.

Other key dates in the process:

- Tuesday March 19th – Board of Selectmen presents its proposed budget to the Board of Finance
- Tuesday April 2nd – Public budget hearing at the library
- Tuesday May 14th – Budget referendum at Henry James Middle School

Last week, Governor Lamont shared his proposed 2-year, \$43 billion budget with the General Assembly. Here is a good summary of the Governor's proposal from the [Connecticut Mirror](#). Approximately 6% Simsbury's budget comes from state sources and the Governor's budget leaves Simsbury mostly whole when comparing funding levels to past years. In this [Connecticut Mirror article](#), you can see what Simsbury and other towns in Connecticut would receive in the Governor's proposal. One area we are watching closely is a proposal that would require towns to pay for a portion of teacher pension costs. Our analysis shows that would cost Simsbury a little under \$250 thousand in the upcoming fiscal year with that cost increasing in future years.

It's important to recognize that the budget, when it's final, is likely to look different than the Governor's initial proposal. We are in close contact with Senator Witkos and Representative Hampton through this process.

Black Bears

I have heard from dozens of residents over the past year about the prevalence of Black Bears in our community. I have shared those concerns with both Senator Witkos and Representative Hampton. There are two bills that will be the subject of a public hearing on Friday March 1st.

1. [S.B. No. 586](#) (COMM) AN ACT AUTHORIZING BLACK BEAR HUNTING IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY.
2. [S.B. No. 894](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONLETHAL MANAGEMENT OF THE BLACK BEAR POPULATION IN CONNECTICUT.

Residents are welcome to provide testimony, either in person or in writing. Written testimony can be submitted to ENVtestimony@cga.ct.gov. I have spoken to the Chair of the Environment Committee and I've also shared the data that our town has collected around the increasing calls for service about our bear population.

Snow Removal

I wanted to give a shout out to our Department of Public Works, which has the tough task of keeping our 170 miles of roads clear of snow and ice. Although winter is (hopefully) winding down, I wanted to share a neat opportunity to see first-hand what it takes to clean up after a winter storm. Here is a link to

information about our [snowplow ride-along program](#), which allows residents 18 and over the opportunity to accompany one of our plow drivers. I've done it myself and I highly recommend you avail yourself of this opportunity if you're interested. I will share that the experience was a lot bumpier and hotter than I'd expected!

I have been getting some questions this time of year about what residents can do if their mailbox is damaged by a snowplow. While it's relatively uncommon, the Board of Selectmen has adopted [a policy](#) that allows for the reimbursement of \$25 for the post and \$25 for the mailbox if the mailbox is physically struck by the plow.

Sustainable CT

At our February 11th meeting, the Board of Selectmen adopted a resolution joining the Sustainable CT program. It's an environmental certification program that towns can join free of charge. The part of the program I'm most excited about is the structure it will provide our town in the creation of a roadmap of projects to make the town more environmentally friendly. You can see the presentation to the Board of Selectmen [here](#). Thank you to the members of the Clean Energy Task Force for taking the lead on this initiative!

New Park Construction

In June, the town is scheduled to begin work on a new park next to the Flower Bridge. It will include new landscaping, paver walkways, and a new pavilion. This project will also improve access to the river for the launching of kayaks. While this park will enhance an already amazing attraction, the town will unfortunately need to close the Flower Bridge for much of the 2019 season. It will remain open until June to allow for the annual Duck Race and Burgers on the Bridge Fundraisers.

If you have questions about the new park or the bridge closure, I encourage you to [review a presentation](#), which was recently delivered to the Board of Selectmen. The temporary closure of the bridge is not something we take lightly, but I'm very excited that we'll be able to unveil the new park in time for Simsbury's 350th celebration.

Deepwater Wind Solar Project

- Development and Management Plans have been filed for the Deepwater Wind solar project with the Connecticut Siting Council. The D&M plan is essentially a detailed overview of how the 26.4-megawatt solar array will be built. Staff evaluated the submission and provided the Board of Selectmen an update at our meeting this week. While that update occurred in executive session, this project has tremendous public interest, so it's our intent to do a public presentation at an upcoming Board of Selectmen meeting this spring. If you're interested in learning more about the project, we have aggregated information on the [First Selectman's Page](#) of the Town website.

Planning Update

- Earlier this month, the Zoning Commission approved a distillery for the Hixon Building (the Depot Building behind Bank of America). The operator is relocating from another location in Simsbury and expects to be open to the public this spring.
- Demolition permits have been filed for the removal of buildings on the "Big Y" property. There are no plans for re-development at this time, however staff will be contacting the property owner to discuss the status.
- 690 Hopmeadow Street (Ensign Mansion) is proceeding along. 5 apartments are being built in the historic building and the restaurant, Metro Bis moved into the annex on the south side of the property earlier this month.
- 200 Hopmeadow Street (former Hartford property): The plan for the property consists of apartments, an assisted living facility, and some commercial development. Work has begun on one of two

commercial buildings for the development. The assisted living portion of the development is scheduled to be open in late July/early August.

Discussion on Eating Disorders

The Community For Care is hosting a conversation on eating disorders, Wednesday March 13th, 6:30pm at the Simsbury Public Library. One of the panelists will be a local teenager and author of *Changing Ways*, a new book in which she shares her personal experience.

Save the Dates!

At our February 25th meeting, the Board of Selectmen approved Public Gathering permits for the following annual events:

- [The Simsbury Flea and Smorgasbord](#) features vendors and food trucks at Simsbury Meadows on Saturday April 27th.
- [The Simsbury River Run](#) is 5K and 10K road race that's taking place Sunday April 28th. There will be family activities at Simsbury Meadows where the race begins.
- [The Valley Collector Club Car Show](#) will take place Sunday July 21st in the parking lots along Iron Horse Blvd.
- The Simsbury Woman's Club's [50th Arts and Crafts Festival](#) will take place September 14th and 15th in the parking lots along Iron Horse Blvd.

Help with Taxes

AARP Tax-Aide Volunteers are providing free individual income tax filing assistance on Thursdays now through April 11th and Tuesdays March 5th – 26th at the Simsbury Public Library. Appointments are available from 10am – 3pm. Please book an appointment ahead of time by calling the Simsbury Senior Center at (860) 658-3273. Walk-ins will not be accepted.

The program is open to anyone who needs assistance, regardless of age, income, or town residence. The volunteers will be located in the Library's Program Room #2.

Bi-Annual Town of Simsbury Shred Event

Saturday April 6th is the Town's bi-annual shred event. It's free for residents of Simsbury who are invited to bring up to 3 grocery size bags per household. It will take place 9am – 1pm in front of Town Hall (933 Hopmeadow Street).

New Economic Development Commission

The Board of Selectmen formed the new EDC in late 2018. The commission will be focused on 4 areas in particular that were identified by the Board of Selectmen. They include identifying business incentive programs that make sense for our town, developing a roadmap of economic development priorities, refreshing branding materials, and developing a business visitation program. You can read more about the priorities [here](#).

Simsbury's 350th Celebration

I am excited about the planning that's going into Simsbury's 350th anniversary celebration, which will be comprised of numerous events throughout next year. I want to acknowledge the dozens of volunteers and organizations involved, and all of the people giving their time to plan this anniversary celebration. The 350th Committee gave a presentation to the Board of Selectmen at our January 14th meeting. You can see a tentative schedule of the signature events [here](#) (page 14). They include an antique show, a river day, a country fair, and many, many more! I also wanted to point you to a recent show on SCTV that gives a look into the planning going into next year's celebration. You can find that [here](#).

Board of Selectman Priorities

At our last meeting in November, the Board of Selectmen unanimously adopted its priorities for the coming year. The priorities include infrastructure improvements such as connecting Tariffville to Simsbury with a bike path, and improved cell phone service, especially in our downtown. Other goals center around financial management, improving transparency and identifying opportunities for the Town to work more closely with the Board of Education on shared services. Other goals speak to quality of life, including improving transportation options for seniors. You can find the full list of goals [here](#).

Stay Connected

You can sign up for email updates from the town so you always know what's happening in our community. On the homepage of the Town website, click "[subscribe to news.](#)" and you'll be able to specify exactly what kind of news you want to receive.

Opportunities to Serve Your Town

There are more than a dozen boards and commissions that serve our town whose members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. We're always looking for volunteers willing to serve and I'm pleased to share that the Town has made the process easier and more transparent. You can learn more about all of our boards and commissions, current vacancies, and how to apply [here](#).

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: February 25, 2019

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS:

Addition to the Agenda: Late last week I received a request to have a resignation and an appointment to the Recycling Committee added to the agenda. I am respectfully requesting that “Resignation from and Appointment to Recycling Committee” be added to the agenda under Appointments and Resignations. This item can be added to your agenda tonight with a 2/3 vote of the body. Supporting documentation regarding the resignation and appointment was emailed to you on Friday and hard copies have been provided.

Sustainability Team Agenda Item: Over the weekend we received additional feedback from the Clean Energy Task Force regarding the membership composition for the Sustainability Team. They have suggested expanding the membership of the Team by one member, for a total of 8, with the additional representative being from the Culture, Parks, and Recreation Commission. This can be discussed during your agenda item regarding the Sustainability Team.

FY 19/20 Budget: As a reminder, the budget workshop will be this Saturday, March 2nd beginning at 8:30am. Further budget discussion, and tentative budget adoption is planned for your March 11th Board of Selectmen meeting. In the event additional discussion time is needed, I recommend that we find a back-up date, preferably March 13th. We will poll Board members regarding a possible meeting date and time.

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS & NOTES:

Culture, Parks & Recreation: The Culture, Parks and Recreation staff will say goodbye and thank you to Stephen Gingras on February 28th after 34 years of service to the Town of Simsbury. Stephen is a well known fixture at Memorial Park, as he has skillfully prepared the baseball and softball fields there for play for many seasons. We will miss Stephen and wish him all the best in his retirement. The Culture, Parks and Recreation Staff will be holding a retirement reception for Stephen on February 28 at 12pm at the Parks Maintenance garage.

Library: Simsbury Public Library is Raising Readers! In late December, the Children’s Department of the Simsbury Public Library launched Raising Readers, a new book recommendation email subscription for patrons with children. Two Raising Reader emails have been distributed so far, and with a recent open rate of 73% and an over 57% increase in subscriptions, Simsbury families are demonstrating their interest in the exclusive themed book lists, librarian book reviews, app recommendations, and helpful tips for making reading a supported, encouraged, and enjoyable part of growing up in Simsbury. Visit www.simsburylibrary.info/raising-readers to become a part of our community of readers.

Police: Purses, money, credit cards and a laptop are among the items stolen from a number of vehicles during the overnight hours on 2/19/2019 - 2/20/2019. Some vehicles were left unlocked, while other vehicles were damaged in order to gain access to steal items. The Police Department is reminding people to keep your vehicles locked and do not leave valuables inside. The recent thefts occurred at the Simsbury Inn, McLean Home, Gillette Court, Hoskins Crossing, Belden Forest Court and Meadowview Apartments. If you have any information about these thefts, please call detectives at (860) 658-3145.

Town Manager's Office: Eversource will be having their contractor fly over transmission lines for a complete infrared survey over the next few days. Flights will be taking place throughout the state through February 26, weather permitting. Flight times will take place between 8 AM and 4 PM.

SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMS:

Passport Event: The United States Postal Service will be at the Simsbury Public Library facilitating passport applications on Saturday, March 2, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm. Passport applications will be taken on a first come, first served basis. For more information and details of what is required to apply for your passport, visit the Library's website, www.simsburylibrary.info. Please note typical processing time for passports is 4-6 weeks.

Veterans Coffee Hour: The Department of Community and Social Services, in collaboration with Resilience Grows Here, will be offering a new monthly coffee hour for our veterans. It will be held on the first Monday of every month at 10:00am at Eno Memorial Hall beginning April 1st. Resilience Grows Here is a community based initiative of the Farmington Valley Health District focused on the mental health of veterans and their families.