
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: February 8, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

We are currently in Phase 1b of Connecticut's COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Phase 1b is divided into three tiers:

- Vaccines for people 75+ are being scheduled now.
- Individuals between the ages of 65 and 74 are being scheduled starting February 11
- Frontline essential workers and people with underlying medical conditions are likely to be scheduled in March.

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 locations in Windsor Locks, Waterford, Colchester, and Putnam. Starting this week the list is expected to grow to include a location in Avon. Residents 75 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**

The Town has received calls and emails from numerous 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.

Our Emergency Management Director is working with the Health District to identify suitable locations in Simsbury for future vaccination clinics. Our hope is to be able to host larger-scale clinics in town when the vaccine is more widely available.

Budget Update

The Town's annual budget process has begun. The Board of Finance has given both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education guidance of a 1.5% increase over last year's operating budget. This will no doubt be challenging with fixed costs in the range of 3% for both boards.

Important dates:

- Feb 22 – Board of Selectmen meeting at 6pm: Town Manager Maria Capriola will present her proposed budget to the Board of Selectmen.
- 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.

All of these meetings will be streamed live on SCTV’s Youtube channel and broadcast of SCTV’s government channel. As always, I encourage our residents to be engaged in the budget process. You can reach out to myself or any member of the Board of Selectmen with your questions or priorities. 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](#).

Discussion on Domestic Violence

Community for Care in partnership with the Library is hosting a panel discussion on Domestic Violence this Wednesday evening at 6:30. Panelists will include Simsbury’s Deputy Police Chief, Chris Davis, Director of Interval House, Mary Jane Foster, Assistant State Attorney Danielle O’Connor, and Family Relations Supervisor Maryann Reid-Gill. They will discuss how to locate resources, the effects of COVID-19, and how to develop a safety plan. Please register in advance to receive the [Zoom link on the Library’s website](#).

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 8, 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 January 30th have decreased to 26.6 cases per 100,000 residents (down from 30.9 cases on January 23rd) and our COVID positivity rate for those being tested was 3.9%, down from 4.6% on January 23rd. We are currently at 93 positive cases over the most recent 2-week period ending January 30th, a decrease from 105 cases over the 2-week period ending January 23rd. We had a 31% decrease in positive cases for the week ending January 30th compared to the week ending January 23rd.

FVHD administered 400 doses of the vaccine last week, including second doses for our first responders and nurses and those age 75 years and older. They were able to reschedule appointments for the Monday clinic that was cancelled last week due to inclement weather. FVHD has learned that CVS in Avon will begin administering COVID vaccines on February 11th. Booking of appointments for those eligible to receive the vaccine at this time will begin as early as February 9th. Appointments can be scheduled via the CVS webpage: <https://www.cvs.com/immunizations/covid-19-vaccine?icid=cvs-home-hero1-banner-1-link2-coronavirus-vaccine>

Preliminary data from the state ending January 26th reports that 2,451 Simsbury residents have received their first dose of the vaccine, or 9.7% of the population. 790 Simsbury residents age 75 and older have received their first dose of the vaccine, or 47.1% of that population of residents. People age 75 and older represent 6.6% of Simsbury's population and reflect 32.2% of Simsbury residents that have been vaccinated as of that date.

We have 31 approved tax deferment applications for the tax bills that were due 1/1, resulting in \$315,943 in deferred revenue for the second installment. One commercial entity reflected 32.7% of the total deferred revenue, or \$103,267. In comparison, we had approximately 88 approved applications for the first installment due 7/1, resulting in \$845,600 in deferred revenue. As a reminder, the Board of Selectmen has extended the temporary suspension of cash payments until further notice to help reduce the risk of spreading COVID. 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.

As of January 9th there are 654 active unemployment claims in Simsbury. This is down from a high of 1,418 claims on May 2nd. The average of claims prior to the pandemic from January 5, 2019 to March 14, 2020 was 125 claims.

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, since January 1st we have had 9 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) and 1 staff member that tested 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 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. 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, 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.

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.

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>

SELECTMEN BUSINESS

Additions to the Agenda:

- **Discussion Regarding Senate Bill 171: An Act Establishing a State-Wide Tax on Real Property:** Selectman Mike Paine has asked to add a discussion on Senate Bill 171 to this evening's agenda. Staff has drafted a sample statement for your review and consideration. Staff has also provided the text of the Bill, along with a recent CT Mirror article on the topic. This item can be added to tonight's meeting agenda with a 2/3 vote.
- **Simsbury Farms Golf Course Restaurant Lease:** Staff is happy to report we have finalized the RFP process and have a tentatively agreed upon lease with the selected vendor, Chez Hospitality Group. Staff views completion of this project as a great step forward. The selected vendor has a good reputation for being a quality operation, and our rent payments will increase after the first year. The vendor is anxious to begin their work in the space, so we are hopeful that the lease can be added this evening prior to or after the fee schedule agenda items; if however, more time is needed, we understand. This item can be added to tonight's meeting agenda with a 2/3 vote.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Finance/Town Manager's Office: Following a recent rating review, S&P has confirmed that Simsbury has retained its AAA bond rating and has assigned the Town with a stable outlook; this is the highest possible rating. S&P was impressed with Simsbury's "very strong management" team, "very strong economy", "very strong debt and contingent liability position," "very strong liquidity" and our "rapid debt amortization" among other factors. Having a AAA rating allows the Town to receive strong interest from investors in bond sales and helps to ensure a competitive interest rate. The Town is scheduled to have a bond sale this month to fund the second half of the Henry James Middle School renovation work that has been completed, along with some additional capital projects such as paving.

Police: Lt. Fred Sifodaskalakis has recently resigned from service with the Town. He joined the Simsbury Police Department in 1997. He was the Town's first school resource officer in the early to mid-2000's. He was instrumental in building relationships and breaking down barriers between the police and the public, not only in those early years, but throughout his career. As a field training officer, he had the opportunity to train and shape new officers. Through his promotions from corporal to sergeant to lieutenant, his attainment of bachelor and master degrees and his vast professional development, his significant impact on the department personnel and the community broadened and helped to shape the type of department that we have today. After 24 years of service, Lt. Fred Sifodaskalakis decided to take

an opportunity as a Captain with the Cromwell Police Department. I want extend my gratitude to Lt. Sifodaskalakis for his 24 years of service to Simsbury. He has been an invaluable member of the Police Department and will surely be missed. Best of luck in your future endeavors Fred!

Library:

- The Friends of the Library have resumed the Books to Your Door home material delivery service on a bi-weekly basis. The service is planned to resume its weekly service in March.
- The Library has recently installed the Everbrite interactive panel in the Children's Room. This purchase was made possible through a PEGPETIA grant.