
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: March 11, 2019

Budget Update

On February 27th, Town Manager Maria Capriola presented her proposed fiscal year 2019/2020 budget to the Board of Selectmen. You will find her budget presentation as well as the full budget, as proposed, [here](#). The Board of Selectmen reviewed the proposed budget in detail and formally adopted it at the March 11th meeting. We are working on a citizens' guide to the budget which will be available on the Town website shortly. The goal is to provide a concise, digestible document, which improves public transparency of a complex document.

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

I welcome your comments and feedback throughout this process. You can email me or any member of the Board of Selectmen through the [Contact All link](#) on the Board of Selectman page.

Last month, 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.

State Legislation

Betsy Gara from COST and Amy Paterson with the Connecticut Land Conservation Council will be coming to our March 25th Board of Selectman meeting to discuss issues that are the subject of state legislation that may be of interest to Simsbury. I am also inviting Senator Witkos and Representative Hampton. The purpose of the conversation is to determine if the Board of Selectman wants to take a position to advocate for or against any of these proposals. Statewide issues with possible local interest include, but are not limited to proposals that would:

- Require towns to pay for a portion of teacher pension costs
- Compel the merger of smaller school districts
- Allow towns to impose a tax of up to 1% on property to pay for the acquisition or stewardship of open space
- Re-introduce tolls in Connecticut
- Allow for active management of our state's bear population

Planning Update

- A new restaurant will be moving into the 1820 House (former Metro Bis location). The new operator has filed for a special exception with the Zoning Commission to change the type of liquor license for the facility. This is scheduled for a public hearing on 4/1/2019.
- Landworks will be breaking ground on 48 townhouses associated with the Highcroft Development off Powder Forest Drive.
- I'd like to welcome LightHouse Design as a new business at 10 Jim Gallagher Way.
- 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.

Old Growth Forest Network

Earlier this year, the Board of Selectmen voted unanimously for Belden Forest to join the Old Growth Forest Network. In doing so, Simsbury became the first community in Connecticut to apply for this designation. The mission of the Network is to designate at least one publically accessible forest in each county to become a future Old Growth Forest. The designation is not legally binding. It's a statement of intent to let the forest evolve naturally. Belden Forest will continue to have hiking trails that are maintained to provide for safety, and a formal dedication will be planned at Belden this fall.

On Thursday March 28th there will be the Connecticut Premier of "The Lost Forests of New England" at 7:30 pm at Cinestudio, 300 Summit St., Hartford. This 2018 film features stunning footage of rare Ancient Forests. The filmmaker will be participating in a discussion after the showing.

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.

Alzheimer's Program

The Alzheimer's Association presents *10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's*, a program at the Simsbury Public Library, March 26th from 5:30 – 7:30. A light dinner will be served from 5:30 – 6. RSVP: 800-272-3900.

Safe Cities

Each year [Safewise](#) shares its list of America's 100 safest cities. This year, Simsbury ranked 30th on the list. Connecticut had 14 towns make the list; the second most towns of any state in the country. I am grateful for the work of the Simsbury Police Department in all they do around crime prevention in our community.

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.

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!

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.

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 Simsbury Triathlon](#) will take place May 5th. It includes a run, bike ride, and kayak portion. A duathlon (no kayaking) is also being offered this year.
- [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).

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](#).

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: March 11, 2019

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS:

FY 19/20 Budget: The Board of Selectmen budget is being presented to the Board of Finance on Tuesday, March 19th at 5:45pm in the Main Meeting Room of Town Hall. In the event that additional budget discussion is needed after tonight's Board of Selectmen meeting, we will need to schedule a special meeting later this week to complete your deliberations on the FY 19/20 budget.

The Board of Education budget is being presented to the Board of Finance tomorrow evening, March 12th at 5:45pm in the Board of Education conference room in Town Hall. Amy and I will also be reviewing our Health Insurance Fund and Debt Service/Capital analyses with them on Tuesday.

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS & NOTES

Culture, Parks and Recreation: The Simsbury Farms Ice Rink closed for the season yesterday, Sunday, March 10th. Staff would like to thank all of our patrons for their support this season. Residents are asked to provide any feedback about the rink or ideas for next winter's ice rink programming to the Culture, Parks and Recreation Department staff at 860-658-3836.

Now is the time to sign up for summer swim lessons and day camps. Check out all the programs that the Simsbury Culture, Parks and Recreation Department has for your family this summer at www.SimsburyRec.com

SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMS:

HFPG Greater Together Listening Tour: The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) Greater Together Listening Tour event will be held this Thursday, March 14, at 5:30 pm at the Simsbury Public Library. The event is part of an information gathering program which will be used in the organization's strategic planning process. HFPG has held similar events throughout their service area over the past few months. HFPG President Jay Williams will speak. They wish to hear from community members what makes Simsbury great, some of the challenges facing the community, and how HFPG can work together with the town to make Simsbury an even better place to live. Results of the event will be shared on the HFPG website and we've requested they be sent to me directly as well. A new initiative of HFPG is the Greater Together Community Fund. \$100,000 has been set aside for each community in the HFPG area, \$50,000 to be used in the near future with the remaining \$50,000 held in perpetuity in an endowment for future projects. The towns will appoint a Community Advisory Group which will determine projects on which to allocate the \$50,000.