
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

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

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

The state is currently scheduling vaccines for people who are 55+. Vaccine eligibility is scheduled to expand to people 45+ starting on March 22, 35+ on April 12, and 16+ on May 3. Groups that are also currently eligible include healthcare personnel, medical first responders, residents of long-term care facilities, and many educators and childcare providers.

More information on vaccine eligibility is available [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)

Anyone who needs assistance scheduling a vaccine, please call the Simsbury Senior Center: 860-658-3273.

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.

Town Budget Update

The Town's annual budget process is underway. Our budget information is aggregated [here](#). On Saturday March 6, the Board of Selectmen held an all-day budget workshop. The slides for that workshop are [here](#), showing a department-by-department breakdown. For the second year in a row, Simsbury experienced significant growth in its grand list of 2.94%. This growth helps to offset increases in the mill rate. Still, this is shaping up to be a particularly challenging budget year. There is consensus among our budget-making boards that any tax increases need to be kept to a minimum, yet there are significant investments needed in equipment, buildings, and personnel, to maintain what we have today.

At tonight's meeting (Monday March 8), the discussion is focused on the Town's operating budget. At our special meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, March 10, the conversation will focus on the capital budget. This year, the capital budget contains a proposal to construct a new Latimer Lane Elementary School (referred to as "renovate as new"). If this project moves forward, it will mean making difficult choices in our Capital Improvement Plan, to ensure our debt service remains within the Board of Finance's guidance.

This process requires public participation, and you can do so without leaving your home. All of our Board of Selectmen meetings are streamed on SCTV's Youtube Channel and broadcast on SCTV's Government channel on Xfinity channels 96 and 1090 and Frontier channel 6071.

If you would like your comments read at an upcoming meeting, please send an email to Ericka Butler: ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov. Or you can join our virtual meetings and share your comments live by registering with Tom Fitzgerald: tfitzgerald@simsbury-ct.gov.

Important Dates:

- March 10 – Board of Selectmen Special Meeting at 5:30 pm (the discussion will focus on our capital needs). We may forward our budget to the Board of Finance that evening, or an additional meeting may be needed.
- March 16 – The Board of Selectmen will present its proposed budget to the Board of Finance at 5:45pm.
- April 6 – The Board of Finance has scheduled its annual budget hearing at 5:45 pm.

Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge Celebrates Milestone

In 2021 the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge will celebrate its 25th anniversary. This year the Flower Bridge Committee has added 20 additional boxes and border column baskets to reduce the long wait list. They now have 118 units for subscription. They planted, in conjunction with the Simsbury Garden Club and the CT Master Gardener Program, over 250 native trees, shrubs, flowers to turn the meadow's edge into a Pollinator Pathway. The Committee hopes to hold their annual Burgers on the Bridge fundraiser in September, but time will tell, as we monitor COVID-19 restrictions. If people wish to 1- Volunteer at the Flower Bridge 2- Donate to the Bridge (a not-for profit 501(3)(c) organization) 3- Get placed on the wait list to subscribe, please contact ODHFB P.O. Box 314, West Simsbury, CT 06092 or call Co- chair Sharene Wassell 860-658-5377 or Co- chair Deeg Mackay 860-658-2377.

We look forward to seeing you at the Bridge and the park Hopbrook Landing at the Flower Bridge!

What's Happening at the Library

The Library is currently open Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am – 4pm and Saturdays 9:30am – 3:30pm. Curbside service is available Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 5pm and Tuesdays from 4pm – 8pm.

The Library has a full calendar of virtual events nearly every weekday. The rundown includes cooking classes, children's programs, business programs, and resume writing workshops. The full calendar of virtual programs is [here](#).

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: March 8, 2021

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We are monitoring the state's municipal COVID alert system and are currently at "orange" status, indicating that we have more than 10 but less than 15 COVID cases per 100,000 residents. Our positive cases for the 2-week period ending February 27th have decreased to 10.3 cases per 100,000 residents (down from 11.4 cases on February 20th) and our COVID positivity rate for those being tested was 1.8%, down from 2.1% on February 13th. We are currently at 36 positive cases over the most recent 2-week period ending February 27th, a decrease from 40 cases over the 2-week period ending February 20th. The good news is that we are continuing to make positive strides and trend downwards for the fifth consecutive week. Through contact tracing, Farmington Valley Health District reports that social gatherings and household spread continue to be sources for spread of the virus.

Preliminary data from the state ending March 1st reports that 5,070 Simsbury residents have received at least their first dose of the vaccine, or 19.96% of the population. 91% of people in town over the age of 75 have received their first dose, 76% of residents between ages of 65-74. To date FVHD has administered 5,295 vaccinations including 4,283 first doses and 1,012 second doses. They began vaccinating school staff on March 6th. FVHD has three weekly vaccination clinic sites in the region, and vaccinations are now also available at the CVS in Avon. Beginning April 7th, the Simsbury Public Library will be the host of a weekly vaccination clinic on Wednesdays for FVHD.

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, for the month of February we had 5 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. For the month of March we have had 1 staff member that is quarantined and 2 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. We are evaluating expanding walk-in hours for Town Hall beginning the week of April 5th.

The Library will expand Tuesday hours until 8 PM beginning March 23rd. The week of April 5th, hours will be extended again so that Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays the Library's pre-COVID hours will resume. Those hours are: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 9:30AM - 8:30PM and Saturdays, 9:30AM - 5:30PM. For now, 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. 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.

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.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS

Short Term Rental Work Group: Selectwoman Battos and Selectman Peterson will reconvene the short-term rental work group on April 8th and April 26th, both at 8am. The work of this group had been delayed due to the pandemic.

Aquarion Presentation: In your packet this evening is an excerpt from Aquarion's March newsletter regarding upcoming water restrictions for irrigation purposes. The restrictions will take effect in Simsbury on April 1st. Aquarion will be conducting a presentation at your March 22nd meeting on this topic.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Culture, Parks and Recreation:

- **Summer Camp** - The Simsbury Culture, Parks and Recreation Department is conducting summer camp program registration at this time. Summer Pool Passes are on currently on sale and summer swim lesson registration will begin on Saturday, March 13. Please go to www.SimsburyRec.com for additional information.
- **Golf Course** - The Simsbury Farms Golf Course will be opening soon. We are excited to have the Chez Hospitality Group with us as the new operator of the Golf Course Restaurant. They are busy planning their menu and are looking for help with naming the new restaurant. Please look out for email announcements very soon from the golf course and Culture, Parks and Recreation Department.

Engineering: We have just been informed that the Farmington River Trail in Stratton Brook State Park between Stratton Brook Road and Old Farms Road will be closed to the public from March 15, 2021 through March 19, 2021. This closure is required to allow for the contractor working on the Aquarion Water Company Simsbury Centralized Water Treatment Project to complete tree removal adjacent to their access road to the treatment plant. There will be periodic closures of the trail during 2021 in order to complete other aspects of the project. For more information, call Aquarion Water Company: 203-337-5906.

Planning: Director of Planning and Community and Development Mike Glidden has been selected by FEMA to serve on the FY20 BRIC Qualitative Reviews panel. This group is charged with reviewing BRIC grant applications from throughout the country.

Public Works: The Simsbury Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCA) was nominated and has been selected to compete in this year's ELGL Knope Awards! Congratulations to our WPCA team, led by Tony Piazza, Superintendent and Tom Roy, DPW Director.

The essence of the #ELGLKnope award is to showcase and celebrate essential local government services. **We are asking for your help to spread the word about our nomination, and to vote.** First round voting ends Monday, March 8th and the sweet sixteen bracket will be announced March 9th. Anyone can vote (one vote per email address) and you do not need to be an ELGL member to vote. **Click on the following link to vote for Simsbury WPCF:** <https://elgl.org/elglknope-simsbury-ct-vs-virginia-beach-va/> or here: <https://www.cognitofrms.com/ELGL1/ELGLKnopeRoundOf32>

Each year, Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) celebrates the people and places in local government. The #ELGLKnope award recognizes the amazing work that happens at the local level, and showcases the essential services provided by towns, cities, counties, and districts. This year's challenge gives us a chance to tell our story about the important water, sewer, and stormwater services that keep your community safe, healthy, clean, and active.

There was a record number of nominations this year (85!) and our inclusion in the Round of 32 reflects the quality of our application and the enthusiasm from ELGL's members about our work.