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## FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

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**TO:** Board of Selectmen  
**FROM:** Eric Wellman – First Selectman  
**DATE:** April 6, 2020

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To the Simsbury Community:

First and foremost my thoughts are with the members of this community and the thousands of people across the state of Connecticut and our country who have tested positive for Covid-19. As of Monday evening there are 10 confirmed cases in Simsbury, although the true number is likely higher. My thoughts are also with their caregivers, first responders, and medical professionals everywhere who are on the front lines of this crisis.

Here in Simsbury we are incredibly fortunate that our town has the highest caliber of professional leadership. Under the direction of Maria Capriola, our Town Manager, Simsbury is taking the steps needed to keep our residents safe while maintaining continuity of service. Department heads are implementing operational plans to ensure essential services will continue as we head toward, what is expected to be a peak in the next couple of weeks. I have full confidence that Simsbury is prepared.

The best way to ensure you are getting the most current information from the Town is to subscribe to News and Announcements, to have Town news delivered directly to your email. To subscribe, visit [Simsbury-ct.gov](http://Simsbury-ct.gov) and click on “Subscribe to News” on the homepage.

In partnership with SCTV, we have been recording a weekly press briefing that summarizes the steps police, fire, EMS, and Social Services are doing to ensure our community is prepared and safe. [The latest press conference can be viewed here.](#)

If you are looking for more depth on our local response, I encourage you to watch the latest meeting of our [Public Safety Subcommittee](#). The Committee continues to meet weekly on Thursday mornings at 8am to share information and ensure our agencies are acting in a coordinated fashion. These meetings can be watched live on SCTV and they are archived on SCTV's website, [SimsburyTV.org](http://SimsburyTV.org).

### **You can also follow the Town and various departments on Facebook:**

- Town: <https://www.facebook.com/TownofSimsbury/>
- Public Works: <https://www.facebook.com/Town-of-Simsbury-Connecticut-Public-Works-Department-366602746711626/>
- Simsbury Public Library: <https://www.facebook.com/SimsburyPublicLibrary/>
- Simsbury Culture Parks and Rec: <https://www.facebook.com/SimsburyParksandRec/>
- Simsbury Community and Social Services: <https://www.facebook.com/simscommunityandsocial/>

We will be using our Facebook pages to share information about closures and other news, but we'll also be using these pages to share ideas about staying connected, informed, and entertained.

## **How to watch public meetings**

For the coming month, we are only holding meetings of our boards and commissions that are deemed to be essential. These meetings are closed to the public, but will all be available to stream live online. They will also be archived on [SimsburyTV.org](http://SimsburyTV.org). For meetings that include public audience, you can send your comments to [ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov) and they will be read into the record.

There are several ways to watch public meetings:

- Comcast customers can watch live on channels 96 and 1090.
- Frontier customers can watch on 6071.
- Live stream on [SimsburyTV.org](http://SimsburyTV.org).

Closed captioning is available. Instructions on how to turn close captioning on can be found on SCTV's [Facebook page](#).

## **Thank you to the Ladies Auxiliary and the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Dept.**

I wanted to extend a huge thank you to the Ladies Auxiliary and the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department, which organized a tour of the town by the Easter Bunny aboard a fire truck. This was an incredibly creative solution to celebrating the season in a time of social distancing. My daughter loved following the fire truck online through the app and then sitting at the end of our driveway as the truck drove by. I heard from numerous residents how much this gesture was appreciated. Thank you!

## **Take Social Distancing Seriously**

I thank the vast majority of residents in this community who are taking social distancing measures seriously. However, there are still some, who haven't gotten the message. Town facilities are closed including basketball courts, tennis courts, playgrounds, and fields. I encourage residents to continue to reach out to us if they see activity in these places. Our police are taking notice and will take steps, if needed, to enforce these closures.

Finally, I am impressed on a daily basis seeing acts of kindness occurring throughout our community, from donations of facemasks to volunteer shoppers. Thank you to residents who have reached out looking for ways to assist. Our Social Services Department is continuously in need of donations of non-perishables and gift cards to gas stations, supermarkets, and Laundromats. They can be dropped off in a secure box outside Eno Hall.

## **Distance Learning**

We are in the midst of week three of a distance learning experiment never before attempted in the history of our country. I am deeply impressed by the work of our educators and our parents, many of whom are juggling fulltime jobs along with their child's education.

The week of April 13<sup>th</sup> is spring break and there will be no instruction that week. Our schools are taking a pause to evaluate what's working, regroup, and continue to deliver the best education possible with the remote tools we have. I ask our residents during this week that we continue to maintain strict social distancing and do not regress. I understand for some working parents this isn't possible. But please continue to avoid any optional shopping and play dates.

## **Town Budget**

With everything else going on, our process continues to adopt a budget for fiscal year 2020/2021. At our last meeting, the Board of Selectmen sent a budget to the Board of Finance that keeps taxes essentially flat in the coming year. We are aggregating [budget information here](#). The budget that the Board of Finance sends to referendum could include some changes, but there is consensus among our boards that taxes should not be raised this year.

### Important dates in the process:

- April 21 and May 7 – Board of Finance holds a public hearing that will be closed to the public per the Governor’s order, but public comment will be accepted in writing
- May 30 – budget referendum (if executive order is no longer in place)

## **Ensure You’re Counted in the U.S. Census**

The U.S. census continues through the spring and residents should have received a letter from the Census Bureau. It’s an easy thing to ignore with everything else going on, but it’s more important than ever that we are all counted. The census determines how much federal money communities receive for all kinds of things, including public health emergencies such as this.

The form takes 10 minutes to fill out online at [my2020census.gov](http://my2020census.gov). You can also respond to the census by phone or mail.

## **Simsbury 350<sup>th</sup> Celebration**

May 12<sup>th</sup> is Simsbury’s 350<sup>th</sup> birthday as a town, and an amazing group of volunteers have been planning events throughout the year to celebrate. The opening ceremony was set to take place on May 17<sup>th</sup> and due to current events has been indefinitely postponed. Other events include River Day (the last weekend in June), September Fest, and closing gala in November. For the time being these other events are still on, but will be reevaluated, if needed, as time gets closer. You can learn more at [Simsbury350.com](http://Simsbury350.com). I can’t say thank you enough to the volunteers of the 350<sup>th</sup> Celebration Committee and the numerous businesses and individuals who have made donations to support these events. I have no doubt that we will throw Simsbury the birthday party it deserves, even if that celebration is somewhat belated.

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## TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

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**TO:** Board of Selectmen  
**FROM:** Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager  
**DATE:** April 6, 2020

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**Coronavirus Update:** During this challenging time our municipal officials, leadership team and staff, the Farmington Valley Health District, emergency management officials, and public safety partners are doing everything in their power to ensure that our essential services remain in place. I can't emphasize enough what an incredibly remarkable group of people we have working for us. I'm very proud of them and the work they're doing.

To keep our residents and employees safe, our town buildings are now closed to the public. Staff is working in our closed facilities on a limited basis, and we are continuing to operate by phone, mail, email and virtually through our online services. Urgent matters may be addressed by appointment, at the discretion of staff. Our Public Works, Parks, and Golf crews have modified their schedules and work practices to ensure that our critical infrastructure such as our Wastewater Treatment Facility is maintained and fully operational.

At this time our skate park, playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, and paddle tennis courts are closed. Our parks, open space parcels, and trails remain open for passive recreation such as walking, hiking, and cycling. Our community's park and recreation professionals are working hard to maintain these spaces and keep them safe, accessible and benefiting our residents' physical and mental well-being during these challenging times. We respectfully request that people utilizing our parks apply social distancing practices and keep safe distances from other patrons.

The Town of Simsbury, in consultation with our Transfer Station operator, has temporarily closed the facility at 66 Wolcott Road. The Transfer Station will be closed for a period of at least two weeks. In order to meet the needs of our residents, both of our local trash haulers, Paine's Inc. and All Waste, have the ability to provide a second recycling bin and offer curbside bulky waste collection. Dumpsters may also be provided upon request. Please call your hauler if you are interested in any of these services; additional fees apply. For information on the disposal of paints and stains, visit the PaintCare website at [Paintcare.org](http://Paintcare.org). If you believe you have an urgent disposal matter that requires immediate attention, please contact the Simsbury Department of Public Works at (860) 658-3222.

Our public meetings and public hearings remain closed to the public pursuant to an Executive Order issued by the Governor. This Executive Order is in place through at least April 22<sup>nd</sup> and may be extended. During the public hearing process for the budget, residents are encouraged to submit their comments for the Board of Finance to [Ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:Ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov). Residents may watch meetings of town agencies live on Comcast, Frontier, and online at [www.simsburytv.org](http://www.simsburytv.org).

We are regularly updating the Town's website with information regarding changes to our municipal services, programs and facilities. We are also providing important information through our "news and announcements" emails and our Facebook and Twitter accounts. Residents are encouraged to sign up for our email alerts, like our Facebook page, and follow our Twitter account.

In closing, I have been touched by the kindness and generosity of our residents. Our community members are helping neighbors, donating food and toiletries, and volunteering their time to assist our fellow residents in need. Simsbury is truly a special community, and I am honored to serve as your Chief

Executive during this difficult time. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we move forward during these very difficult circumstances.

**Hometown Hero Program:** The 2020 Hometown Hero nomination form is currently available online. Nominations are being accepted through the end of April. More information can be found online here: <https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/home/news/nominations-sought-for-simsbury-hometown-heroes-2>

**Connecticut Main Street Center 2020 Awards of Excellence:** Eight initiatives from communities across Connecticut will be receiving this year's Awards of Excellence from the Connecticut Main Street Center, the state's leading downtown resource. The Ensign House located at 690 Hopmeadow Street was awarded the Connecticut Main Street Center's *Preservation & Adaptive Reuse award*. *Congratulations to the Ensign House on this award!*

Created in 2003 to recognize outstanding projects, individuals and partnerships in community efforts to bring traditional downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts back to life, socially and economically, the Awards of Excellence are presented annually. In 2020, CT Main Street Center will present each award locally in the community in which the project is located.

**Aquarion Water Main Replacement Project:** Aquarion Water Company is scheduled to begin construction of a water main replacement project on Simscroft Place and Fairview Street on April 6, 2020. The project is expected to be completed by the end of May. More information can be found online at the following link: [https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/sites/simsburyct/files/news/awc\\_press\\_release\\_-\\_simsbury\\_water\\_main\\_project\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/sites/simsburyct/files/news/awc_press_release_-_simsbury_water_main_project_-_final.pdf)