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## FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

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**TO:** Board of Selectmen  
**FROM:** Eric Wellman – First Selectman  
**DATE:** May 10, 2021

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### **Budget Referendum**

I wanted to thank our residents for an incredible turnout at our May 4 budget referendum. More than 18% of registered voters cast a ballot (approximately 3,500 people), which is significantly higher than typical budget referendums. All six questions on the ballot passed overwhelmingly including a renovation and expansion of Latimer Lane Elementary School and the acquisition of the 288-acre Meadowood property. The full results can be found [here](#).

On Monday evening, the Board of Selectmen voted to authorize the Board of Education to apply for state grants that will cover more than 12-million dollars of project costs. The “renovate as new project” includes renovations to the core areas of the school, safety and security upgrades, ADA compliance, and improvements to the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection systems. Outdoor improvements include staff and visitor parking, parent and bus drop off, playgrounds, athletic fields, and outdoor classrooms.

Regarding the Meadowood acquisition, the Town will be working diligently with the Trust For Public Land (TPL) to secure the remaining grant funding, with an anticipated closing date to be set for this summer or fall.

### **COVID-19 Vaccine Information**

The state is currently scheduling vaccines for people who are 16+ and live or work in Connecticut. More information on vaccine eligibility is available [here](#).

Some clinics no longer require appointments. [Here is a link](#) to see a list of such clinics. There are clinics in Bloomfield, Farmington, and West Hartford on the list.

- **Registration through VAMS:** for people with email addresses: [ct.gov/covidvaccine](https://ct.gov/covidvaccine).
- Those without internet access can call Connecticut’s COVID Vaccine Appointment Assistance Line at [877-918-2224](tel:877-918-2224)

In an effort to assist residents who are currently eligible to sign up to receive the vaccine, sites within 20 minutes of Simsbury have been [compiled](#). You can find a list of places offering COVID testing [here](#).

### **Town Returning to Normal Operating Hours**

I’m pleased to share that starting on June 1, Town Hall, the Library, and Eno Memorial Hall will resume pre-COVID walk-in hours. In person programs, events, and gatherings will be phased in gradually throughout the summer. The Library will remain closed on Wednesdays to accommodate a weekly vaccination clinic.

For current hours, click [here](#). For the new hours starting June 1, click [here](#).

The department of Community and Social Services continues to provide its food programs, daily virtual programming, and is accepting applications for energy assistance. The department will begin taking applications for Renters’ Rebate on June 1. The Senior Center is currently offering tax assistance in partnership with AARP. Call 860-658-3283 for additional information.

## **Memorial Day Ceremony**

Our annual Memorial Day Ceremony will take place on May 31, but will look a bit different because of COVID-19 restrictions. There will be no parade, but a ceremony will be held at the Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center. Pre-registration is required through our [Parks and Rec website](#).

- Gates open at 11:30am. There will be food and beverages for purchase.
- At noon, there will be performances by Simsbury High School Band, Marquis of Granby, Windsor Fife and Drum, and the Talcott Mountain Highlanders Pipe Band.
- At 1pm the ceremony will begin.
- At 2pm there will be live classic rock by Codes and Keys followed by Organized Chaos.

Thank you to the Simsbury VFW and American Legion for their hard work making these Memorial Day events possible.

## **Simsbury SPIRIT Council**

I'd like to thank the Simsbury SPIRIT Council on another successful virtual program as part of its Let's Talk Series. Last week's program explored anti-Asian bias. The Hartford Courant featured an article you can find [here](#).

SPIRIT Council's Let's Talk series continues in June. On June 3, they will host a virtual panel discussion to give voice to community members who identify as LGBTQ+. On June 17, SPIRIT will celebrate Juneteenth. Registration will be on the Library's website under Virtual Programs. The links to register are not posted yet for these two programs.

At our April 26 Board of Selectmen meeting, the Board voted to add a Housing subcommittee to the work of the SPIRIT Council that will focus on issues of housing and housing equity. At our meeting on May 24, we anticipate a presentation of an Affordable Housing Plan that was developed by Simsbury's Planning Commission. That plan will include steps that the town can take to increase the share of houses deemed affordable under state statute 8-30g, which provides deed restricted housing and a specific definition of "affordable." It is my hope and expectation that the SPIRIT Council will use this plan as a starting place, and also look at issues of housing equity more broadly, to provide recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and our land use commissions.

## **Anticipated Paving Projects for 2021**

Each year the town re-paves approximately 10 miles of roadway. Based on the budget that was forwarded to referendum, the following roads are expected to be paved this year. Adjustments to the schedule may be made due to weather or other factors. Letters will be sent to the residents of the following streets, notifying them of the work:

- Bradley Road
- Camille Lane
- East Weatogue Street (Heather to Rt. 185)
- Fairview Lane
- Farmstead Lane (from Stratton Brook)
- Five Gates
- Heather Lane
- Laurie Joe Way
- Nod Road
- Old Farms (power lines to Farms Village)
- Quarry Road
- Simsbury Pines

- Simscroft Place
- Springbrook Lane
- Tanglewood Trail
- Wildflower Lane
- Wildwood Road

### **Sharing the Road**

As we swing into spring and walkers and bikers appear more frequently on our roads, safety and awareness becomes paramount. The Simsbury Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee is offering a virtual presentation on May 6th to assist drivers: “Pedestrians, Bicycles and Motor Vehicles: How Do We All Share the Road?” Sign up through the [Simsbury Senior Center](#).

### **May is Bike Month**

May is National Bike Month! Simsbury will join communities around the country in hosting activities designed to promote biking and bike safety. Simsbury's Bike Month calendar includes bike/walk to school and bike to work events, a bicycle maintenance class, virtual presentations on overnight bike touring and sharing the road, and a Bike Month happy hour. The popular Simsbury Bike Challenge begins May 1, and local cycling clubs will offer rides throughout the month. Learn more about the Bike Month calendar and other bicycling resources at [Simsbury.bike](#).

### **How to Watch Town Meetings**

All Town meetings are broadcast live on Simsbury Community Television Xfinity channels 96 and 1090; Frontier channel 6071. If you've cut the cord, all of our meetings are streamed live on Youtube and also archived on Simsbury [Community TV's Youtube Channel](#).

I encourage you to participate in our Board of Selectmen Meetings. You can share your written comments to be read to Ericka Butler: [ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov). You can also receive a link to join our virtual meetings. Send at email to Tom Fitzgerald: [tfitzgerald@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:tfitzgerald@simsbury-ct.gov).

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## TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

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**TO:** Board of Selectmen  
**FROM:** Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager  
**DATE:** May 10, 2021

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### 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 May 1st was 10 cases per 100,000 residents (a decrease from 10.6 on April 24th) and our COVID positivity rate for those being tested was 2.5%, (a slight decrease from 2.6% on April 24th). We are currently at 35 positive cases over the most recent 2-week period ending May 1st, which is a slight decrease from 37 cases the prior 2-week period ending April 24th. We went from 20 cases to 15 cases in the most recent week.

FVHD is reporting that "Cases among individuals age 0-19 now make up 27% of all new cases compared to January when they made up only 19% of our cases. Likewise, new cases in individuals 60+ now make up only 12% of our new cases compared to January when they represented 25% of our cases. These shifts are largely due to the age distribution of those that have been immunized."

Preliminary data from the state ending May 5th reports that 15,845 Simsbury residents have received at least their first dose of the vaccine, or 62.4% of the population, while 48.8% of our residents are now fully vaccinated.

FVHD is reporting that "We anticipate approval of the Pfizer vaccine for children 12 and older May 12<sup>th</sup>. FVHD will be offering two first dose and corresponding second dose clinics for the population 12 and older. Our first clinic will be May 18<sup>th</sup>. We will work with the schools to promote the clinics and will share additional details once they are confirmed. If you know ANY medical volunteers willing to vaccinate, please have them contact Anna Larson in our office at [alarson@fvhd.org](mailto:alarson@fvhd.org)."

Like many businesses and organizations, COVID-19 is affecting our workforce. We are fortunate that our workforce has largely remained healthy. However, for the month of April we have had 6 staff members quarantined and 2 positive cases and as of today we have had no staff quarantines in the month of May. As a result, we are experiencing temporary staffing shortages at times and our response time for non-emergency situations may be delayed. 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.

Public health and safety is our predominant priority. We continue to closely monitor the status of the virus in our community and reassess Town Hall, the Library, and Eno being open to walk-in visitors. Tentatively, Town Hall, the Library, and Eno will resume pre-COVID walk-in hours on June 1<sup>st</sup>. However, in-person programs, events, and gatherings will be phased in more gradually throughout the summer.

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 4:30PM on Mondays, Wednesdays and 8:30AM to 1:00PM on Fridays. The Library has resumed their pre-COVID hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for walk-in visitors. Those hours are: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 9:30AM - 8:30PM and Saturdays, 9:30AM - 5:30PM. Patrons may browse and check-out materials during their

visit. Appointments for computer use Monday-Friday 10AM - 5PM may be made by contacting the Information Desk, 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.

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.

Eno Memorial Hall/Senior Center remains closed for walk-ins at this time, and will tentatively resume normal business hours for walk-ins on June 1<sup>st</sup>. However, the Department continues to provide services such as our food program and energy assistance. We will continue to provide a weekly hot lunch for seniors (pick-up only), daily zoom opportunities, limited Dial-A-Ride services, and our bi-monthly newsletter.

The Transfer Station, 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.

Meetings of town agencies will continue to be held virtually through at least May 20<sup>th</sup>. Staff is researching in-person and remote technology options for meetings post-May 20<sup>th</sup>. Meetings are currently 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](http://www.shopsimsbury.com).

## **DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES**

### ***Engineering:***

- We have recently been informed that the Farmington River Trail in Stratton Brook State Park between Stratton Brook Road and Stratton Brook Park will be closed to the public from Monday, April 26th to Friday, June 4th. This section of trail will, however, be open on weekends and on Memorial Day. This closure is required to allow for the contractor working on the Aquarion Water Company Simsbury Centralized Water Treatment Project to install a new electrical and telecommunication duct bank adjacent to their access road to the treatment plant. There will also be other 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.

### ***Social Services:***

- **Renters Rebate** - The Department of Community and Social Services will begin taking applications for the Renters' Rebate program starting June 1<sup>st</sup>. This application is for the rental year of 2020. Individuals and couples aged 65 & older and those legally disabled as of December 31, 2020 may apply. You must have lived in Connecticut for at least one full year. Annual gross

income limits are \$37,600 for individuals and \$45,800 for couples. Applications will be done virtually, by phone and mail. Please call Social Services for more information or to apply at 860-658-3283.

- **Blood Pressure and Blood Sugar Screenings & Hearing Clinics** - The Senior Center will resume offering free Blood Pressure and Blood Sugar screenings provided by the Farmington Valley VNA. Clinics will be held outdoors on Thursdays from 11:00AM to 1:00PM, beginning June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Our Hearing Clinic will resume on Monday June 21<sup>st</sup> and will be held monthly. Please call the Senior Center at 860-658-3273 for more information or to sign-up for a clinic.