
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: May 11, 2020

May 12th, 2020 marks the 350th birthday of the Town of Simsbury. The amazing volunteers on our Simsbury 350th Celebration Committee have been working on four signature events that will bring the community together around this special anniversary. With social distancing in place, the decision was made to shift those events beginning July 1st 2020 and going through July of 2021. Once details have been finalized, the new schedule of events will be posted at Simsbury350.com. I want to especially thank the [businesses and individuals](#) who have made generous donations that will allow these events to be accessible to all our residents.

The Town is developing plans to re-open our buildings, parks, and courts, and resume services that have been paused because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In her Town Manager Report, that follows this, Maria Capriola will share the plans that are in place so far. Through this difficult spring we have been committed to sharing information timely and widely and that will continue as we develop plans to re-open.

You can sign up to have Town news delivered to your email inbox [here](#). I also encourage you to follow the Town of Facebook: Facebook.com/TownofSimsbury/

Our Public Safety Subcommittee is meeting every Thursday morning at 8am to share updates and coordinate resources. Those meetings can be streamed at SimsburyTV.org. You can view the May 7th meeting [here](#).

Also on May 7th we recorded our latest public service announcement, which can be viewed [here](#). It contains updates from our Town Manager, Police and Fire Chiefs, and Social Services.

You can also sign up to receive updates from our elected officials in Hartford:
[State Representative John Hampton](#)
[State Senator Kevin Witkos](#)

Through all our planning to re-open, we are doing so responsibly, in close consultation with public health officials at the Farmington Valley Health District. In some cases we are coordinating with our neighboring towns. Your health and safety is our top priority and I have been impressed by the proactive planning and the collaboration taking place among our town staff and departments.

I remind our residents that we must remain vigilant. This is not the time to let down our guard. Hundreds of Connecticut residents continue to test positive each day for Covid-19 and social distancing remains in effect. Masks must continue to be worn in many public places and we need to continue to limit contact with people outside our immediate household.

Town Budget

In the month of May, we typically go to the polls to vote on the Town budget. Per the Governor's executive order, a referendum will not be possible this spring. The Board of Finance is anticipated to pass the Town budget at its meeting on May 19th. The budget, as it currently stands, would result in a small

mill rate decrease, amounting to a \$50 for the median valued home. We are aggregating [budget information here](#).

The state has given towns the ability to adopt two tax deferment programs for the taxes due July 1st. The Board of Selectmen has approved both programs. One, allows residents and businesses impacted financially by the pandemic to defer their taxes for 90 days. This program requires an application which is available on the Tax Department website. The other program lowers the interest charged on taxes not paid on July 1st from 18% to 3% for a 90-day period. The second program applies to all taxpayers regardless of need.

You can learn more about both programs and apply for a deferment on the [Tax Department website](#). Feel free to call the tax office with any questions: 860-658-3238.

Town Manager Contract

Town Manager Maria Capriola's 3-year contract expires at the end of January 2021. Ms. Capriola is Simsbury's first town manager since we transitioned to our new form of government. The personnel subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen has been tasked with making a recommendation on whether to extend her contract. At the subcommittee's June 11th meeting, we will be discussing our recommendation and we encourage public participation in this process. We welcome your thoughts, feedback, and any input you would like to provide.

You can email me before June 11th and I will share your feedback with the Personnel Subcommittee. Please indicate in your email if you would like it read aloud at the meeting. My email is ewellman@simsbury-ct.gov. Or you can call me (860) 658-3231. The other members of the personnel subcommittee are [Sean Askham](#) and [Wendy Mackstutis](#). Feel free to reach out to any of us.

Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge

I'm excited to share that the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge will be planted this year. There is an incredible group of volunteers who put in countless hours maintaining the flowers each summer. The committee has informed us they intend to plant the flowers around Memorial Day this year, while following all of the state's safety guidelines. The Flower Bridge Committee says the flowers will be a symbol of hope during these difficult times.

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. You can also respond to the census by phone or mail.

How to watch public meetings

Per the Governor's executive order, 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. For meetings that include public audience, you can send your comments to 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.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: May 11, 2020

Coronavirus Update: To keep our residents and employees safe, our town buildings remain 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 is maintained and fully operational.

During this time, staff has developed additional virtual and online services to better serve our residents. Examples include online Library programming, virtual fitness classes, virtual building inspections, and remote notary services.

We have recently been able to re-open two Town facilities with modified practices. The Town of Simsbury, in consultation with our Transfer Station operator, has re-opened the facility at 66 Wolcott Road. We have also re-opened town and Board of Education tennis courts for recreational play amongst members of the same household.

Our playgrounds, skate park and basketball courts remain closed. Our parks, open space parcels, and trails remain open for walking, hiking, and cycling. Our parks and recreation team are working hard to maintain these spaces and keep them safe and accessible. People utilizing our parks should apply social distancing practices and keep safe distances from other patrons.

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, 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.732997960244104/1311948715682356/?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. We have received over 800 donated sewn face coverings. If you are a Simsbury resident or business, please don't hesitate to contact Social Services at 860-658-3283 if you need a free face covering.

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. Town staff, the Farmington Valley Health District, and the Fire District are diligently working on guidelines for temporary outdoor seating for restaurants. The Zoning Commission has granted staff the authority to issue permits for temporary outdoor dining to lessen the burden on food establishments and expedite the process.

We are making plans to phase in the re-opening of our municipal facilities, services and programs, tentatively, largely on or around June 1st. A tentative plan for the 2020 pool season will be presented to the Board of Selectmen this evening. Planning for summer camp is also underway. We are in the process of establishing a Long Term Recovery Committee to help assist businesses and residents with unmet

needs in the coming months. We will be identifying key participants and stakeholder groups for the Committee. EDC Chair and Vice Chair Bob Crowther and Tom Earl have agreed to serve as our Recovery Coordinators. Andrew Sherman, Business Resource Librarian will help staff the Committee.

Our dedicated team of elected officials, town and Health District staff, emergency management officials, and public safety partners remain committed to ensuring that essential services remain in place. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we move forward during these very difficult circumstances.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Culture, Parks and Recreation: On Friday tennis courts located at Town parks and school facilities reopened on a limited basis. Courts will be open for recreational play with some restrictions:

- Only individuals from the same household are permitted to play together
- Use of the courts is not permitted if:
 - You are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19, including: mild to severe respiratory illness with fever; cough and difficulty breathing; or other symptoms identified by the CDC
 - You have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days
 - You are a vulnerable individual, as defined by the [United States Tennis Association COVID-19 guidelines](#)

Library: We have a number of internal promotions at the Library to announce. Please join me in congratulating the following individuals on their promotions:

- Xaq Zukas has been promoted from full-time Library Services Assistant to Library Technical Assistant. Xaq began work at the Library in 2016 as a part-time Library Services Assistant in the Adult Department. He was promoted in 2018 to a full-time Library Services Assistant position, also in the Adult Department. Xaq holds a Library Technical Assistant certificate from Capitol Community College.
- Cathy Shanks has been promoted from part-time Library Services Assistant in the Adult Department to the full-time Library Services Assistant position formerly held by Xaq Zukas. She joined the Library team in 2018. Cathy has a BA in English from Skidmore College and a JD from New England Law. She worked as a conflict management professional for over two decades with the American Arbitration Association and was also an adjunct instructor with Wentworth Institute of Technology.
- Erica Hsia has been promoted from part-time Library Services Assistant in the Children's Department to full-time Library Services Assistant in Children's. Erica began her first position at the Library in 2018. She holds a BA from Central CT State University and is currently completing a Masters in Library and Information Sciences program at the University of Tennessee.

Police: We have received a favorable outcome for the Town regarding (combined) arbitration cases 2019-A-0300 (Corcoran) and 2019-A-0304 (Trombly). In a unanimous panel decision, the arbitration case was awarded in favor of the Town. These cases resulted from grievances filed by employees that had been issued written warnings for performance related issues. The arbitration award is not yet posted on the SBMA website; please let me know if you would like a copy.

Police: James Annino and Kimberly Rathbun have been hired to fill two public safety dispatcher vacancies. They will begin work during the second week of May 2020.

James has been a paraprofessional with the Cromwell Board of Education for the last 18 years and a volunteer Firefighter/EMT with the Cromwell Fire District for the past 4 years. He has obtained over 100 college credits through Central Connecticut State University, University of Connecticut and Elmhurst College. His years of working with school aged children and in the emergency services field has provided him with a wealth of education and allowed him to develop skills to handle a variety of tasks and challenges that will be beneficial as a public safety dispatcher.

Kimberly has spent much of her life in the healthcare profession and emergency services. She has been an EMT for the Windsor Locks Lions Club Ambulance for the last 4 years, as well as a part-time Commission Clerk for the Towns of Simsbury and East Granby. Prior to that she provided care at many different levels in healthcare facilities. Kimberly studied health sciences and social work at Syracuse University, Goodwin College and Capital Community College. Kimberly's experiences in the service field provide her with a great deal of education and skills that will help her perform in the position of public safety dispatcher.

James and Kimberly fill two vacancies in Communications, replacing Dispatchers Jessica Paszkowski and Mariann Zebedeo.

Jessica Paszkowski joined the Simsbury Police Department in 2014 as a public safety dispatcher. She served this community for almost 6 years before resigning to spend more time at home with her son.

Mariann Zebedeo retired at the end of March 2020, after serving this community as a public safety dispatcher for almost 24 years. Mariann discharged her duties with care, compassion, dedication and intellect. She had many ancillary responsibilities. She was an administrator for the local 911 and computer aided dispatch systems. She provided quality assurance reviews and assisted with implementations of services. She was involved in the hiring and selection process and trained new employees for much of her career. She served many years as president for the dispatch union. Mariann played a key role in the level of professionalism and service provided through the communications function of the department.

Public Works: In the upcoming weeks, the Department of Public Works / Highway Department will be working on a number of projects on Firetown Road between West Street and Kelly Farm Road. The construction work includes catch basin replacement and rehabilitations, curb repairs, replacement of the existing sidewalks and installation of ADA compliant ramps, and repaving the roadway. In addition, Aquarion Water is working on replacing several water mains on side streets in this area and the work on Henry James is continuing. As such, this is an active area for construction.

All of the construction crews are working together and this busy area will be returned to normal in late May to early June. The catch basin and curb work in preparation for paving is tentatively schedule for the week of May 18th. The sidewalk and ADA ramp project will be completed in the first week or two of June. Simscroft Echo Farms is completing the water main project for Aquarion. They will be done with the work on Simscroft Place this week and will be back to working on Fairview Street at the end of June. We appreciate the understanding of the residents in this area that have been impacted by so much construction in the last two years. We are confident that this area will look great with the new sidewalks and paving and we are excited to complete this multi-year project.

Any questions should be directed to Thomas J. Roy, PE, Director of Public Works, at 860-658-3222 or troy@simsbury-ct.gov.

Engineering: The Engineering Department will initiate a project for the rehabilitation of the Drake Hill Road Bridge and resurfacing a portion of Riverside Road in the vicinity of the bridge starting the week of May 10, 2020. The work is being performed by B & W Paving and Landscaping LLC of Waterford, CT.

The Drake Hill Road Bridge work will include removal and replacement of the bituminous concrete wearing surface, waterproof membrane replacement, expansion joint replacement and concrete bridge deck repairs. The bridge work will be completed in phases to maintain alternating one-way traffic on the bridge during the daytime hours. Two-way traffic will be restored during nights and weekends. Temporary stop signs will be installed at the intersection of Riverside Road and Drake Hill Road during the project to assist with the control of traffic. Riverside Road work will include removal and resurfacing of the pavement, curb repairs and existing catch basins will be replaced with new frames and grates.

The project is expected to be completed by August 6, 2020. Motorists should expect delays or seek alternate routes. Motorists are advised to maintain a safe speed when driving in the vicinity.