
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: May 24, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

The state is currently scheduling vaccines for people who are 12+ 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.
- 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.

We are also anticipating being able to return to in-person meetings early this summer. The Governor's executive order permitting fully virtual meetings of public agencies has been extended through June 30th. The Governor has indicated a desire to require all public agencies to hold hybrid meetings at all times when they meet going forward. The Town is researching technology, such as Owl Labs and Zoom Room that will allow for these hybrid meetings to take place. Over the past year+ when our meetings have been virtual, we have seen public participation at our meetings increase. I look forward to returning to in-person meetings as soon as it is safe and practical, but I am also in favor of extending the option to participate remotely to members of boards and commissions and the public.

American Rescue Plan

Simsbury is anticipating receiving more than \$3 million under the [American Rescue Plan](#), which is distributing billions of dollars to state and local governments. This money can be used for a range of purposes including supporting public health programs, assisting small businesses and impacted employees, and certain infrastructure improvements. At our June 14 Board of Selectmen meeting, we will be discussing possible ways to invest this money in our community. It will mark the very beginning of an important conversation, and we will seek and welcome input from our community.

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

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+. Registration is on the Library's website under [Virtual 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 heard a presentation of an [Affordable Housing Plan](#) that was developed by Simsbury's Planning Commission. That plan focuses on a series of steps 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 affordability more broadly, to provide recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and our land use commissions.

Flower Bridge Dedication

I invite you to join the Town and the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge Committee for a long-anticipated dedication of the park – Hopbrook Landing at the Flower Bridge – Saturday June 26 from 10am – noon.

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

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 (Government channel) and 95 and 1070 (Education channel); Frontier channel 6071 (Government channel) and 6070 (Education channel). 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. You can also receive a link to join our virtual meetings. Send at email to Tom Fitzgerald: tfitzgerald@simsbury-ct.gov.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: May 24, 2021

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We are monitoring the state's municipal COVID alert system and are currently at "clear/grey" status, indicating that we have less than 5 COVID cases per 100,000 residents. As of May 15th, our COVID positivity rate for those being tested was 1.5%, (a decrease from 1.9% on May 8th); however, our positive case numbers were not reported by the state for the week ending May 15th.

FVHD is reporting that District-wide, they are continuing "to see significant decline in the number of new cases and are nearly where we were last summer when we had the fewest number of new cases." For the 2-week period ending May 15th, "of all reported cases in the FVHD, cases in ages 40 and older have declined and cases in ages 39 and younger have increased. The COVID vaccine is effective at preventing infection, illness and transmission."

Preliminary data from the state ending May 19th reports that 16,584 Simsbury residents have received at least their first dose of the vaccine, or 65.3% of the population, while 56.5% of our residents, or 14,349 people, are now fully vaccinated. FVHD has provided us further vaccination data by age group:

- Ages 15-44, 80.01% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 63.19% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 45-64, 79.01% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 70.01% are fully vaccinated;
- Ages 65+, 100% of those eligible have received their first dose, and 100% are fully vaccinated

FVHD completed their second clinic for youth 12 years of age and older. They have reported administering 600 first doses to this age group. FVHD will hold its last weekly clinic at the Simsbury Library on June 9th.

For the month of May we have had no staff members quarantined and no positive employee cases. 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.

The leadership team has completed the next phase of our re-opening plans for June 1st. We are resuming pre-COVID normal business hours for walk-ins for Town Hall, Eno, and the Library June 1st (with the exception of Wednesdays at the Library until the week of July 4th). We are asking staff and patrons to continue wearing face coverings in our buildings at this time.

Through the remainder of this week, 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. Beginning June 1st, curbside pickup will be Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 10am to 8pm and Friday and Saturday from 10a to 5pm.

Our Social Services Department continues to assist residents experiencing food insecurity. Our most recent Cheese Day program assisted 101 households and included 24 homebound deliveries and 22 kid friendly bags.

Tentatively, town agencies will resume in-person meetings between June 28-June 30th. Staff is researching and testing hybrid/remote technology options for meetings post-June 28th.

SELECTMEN BUSINESS

Addition to the Agenda – Congressionally Directed Spending Program: I am recommending adding an item to the agenda for tonight’s meeting, “Congressionally Directed Spending Program.” We have become aware of a possible funding opportunity from Senator Blumenthal’s office, which would require an application being submitted by June 7th. The proposed funding opportunity has been emailed to you and has been posted online. I recommend adding this to the agenda prior to the Affordable Housing Plan Presentation to accommodate staff commitments for another meeting this evening. This item can be added to tonight’s meeting agenda with a 2/3 vote of the body.

American Rescue Plan: At the May 18th Board of Finance meeting, Finance Director Amy Meriwether provided information regarding the funds the town and board of education anticipate receiving through the most recent round of federal stimulus funding. The information can be found online in the Board of Finance meeting packet, and the meeting can be viewed at www.simsburytv.org. Staff has prepared an initial list of ideas for potential uses of the funds for the Board of Selectmen’s consideration. Since the federal guidance for use of the funds was just recently issued, and is voluminous, staff is working through the guidance. We plan to present and discuss this topic at your June 14th Board of Selectmen meeting.

Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program: Over the weekend, we received notification from the state (DEEP) that we have been awarded \$400,000 in grant funds towards the purchase of Meadowood. The Board of Selectmen authorized submitting this grant application in July 2020, and staff provided a status update to you in March 2021. We plan to present a supplemental appropriation request to appropriate this grant money to the Meadowood project at your June 14th meeting. Additionally, a grant resolution will be required and addressed at that meeting. The grant was included as part of the presented funding model for the acquisition.

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.

Public Works: Kevin Lamb has been promoted from Truck Driver to Senior Mechanic. Kevin has been with our Highway Department since 2003. Prior to working for the Town Kevin had 16 years of experience servicing school busses and heavy equipment for local businesses. He has also been servicing small engines since he was a teenager. Kevin has a high aptitude with computers which will be an asset in fleet diagnostics, as well as our efforts to shift towards utilizing fleet maintenance software and electronic recordkeeping for the fleet. During Kevin's time with the Town he has performed almost every duty within Highway, which is invaluable to this position. Kevin is a lifelong Simsbury resident and his commitment to the Town does not go unnoticed. Congratulations Kevin!

Social Services:

- **Renters Rebate** - The Department of Community and Social Services will begin taking applications for the Renters' Rebate program starting June 1st. 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 3rd. Our Hearing Clinic will resume on Monday June 21st and will be held monthly. Please call the Senior Center at 860-658-3273 for more information or to sign-up for a clinic.

Town Manager's Office: On May 5th, I served as a panelist for the webinar "Facilitating Innovation Through Developing and Implementing Best Practices: A Review and Suggested Process." Panelists reacted to a recommended best practices program utilized by the state of Massachusetts, and discussed Connecticut local government services, projects, policies and other matters that could be well served by a similar best practices model. The panel was sponsored by the UCONN Department of Public Policy, CT ASPA, CRCOG, and ACIR (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations).