
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: May 27, 2020

Memorial Day

I wanted to begin by acknowledging the Memorial Day holiday on Monday. While we were not able to commemorate the holiday with the usual ceremonies and parades, our veterans groups worked with SCTV to put together a [beautiful ceremony](#) that our residents can watch virtually at [SimsburyTV.org](#). I want to acknowledge and thank the VFW Post 1926 and American Legion Post 82 for their work on behalf of our veteran community throughout the year.

I am pleased to share that at our May 27th meeting, the Board of Selectmen adopted a resolution making Simsbury a Hidden Heroes City. The Hidden Heroes initiative is a partnership with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation that helps connect veterans and their families to local resources. You can find a presentation on the program [here](#).

Re-Opening Plans

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 has been meeting every Thursday morning at 8am to share updates and coordinate resources. Going forward, they will be meeting every other week. The next meeting is scheduled for June 4th. Those meetings can be streamed at [SimsburyTV.org](#). You can view the May 21st meeting [here](#).

Town Budget

On May 19th, the [Board of Finance](#) adopted the Town Budget for the 2020/2021 fiscal year and set the mill rate at 37.09. This brings the total mill rate, including the Fire District mill rate of 1.19 to 38.28 for the upcoming fiscal year. This results in a modest decrease in taxes (about \$50 for the median valued home). The Board of Finance adopting the budget marks a departure from our usual process, which involves the public voting on the budget at referendum. Our annual referendum was cancelled this year because of the Covid-19 virus.

Board of Education

During last night's Board of Education meeting (May 26th), the board unanimously voted to direct Tecton Architects to complete the long-range facilities master plan for the Simsbury Public Schools by prioritizing the option of a [6th grade addition to Henry James](#) and a renovate-as-new project at Latimer Lane as the first capital improvement projects in the timeline. Once the formal plan is completed, the conversation will move forward to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance for an analysis of the town's ability to fund identified projects over the long term. The Board of Ed has held more than 20

meetings to gather input from the community and share information. In the next step, Tecton Architects will share a presentation with the Board of Finance at their July 26th meeting.

As we look ahead to the fall, the Return to Simsbury Schools Task Force is proactively assessing how education will be delivered. The task force is split into two parts; one focusing on teaching and learning and the other focusing on the operational needs in an environment where requirements are ever changing. This work is being led by education professionals with input from the parent community. Please reach out to any member of the [Board of Education](#) or the superintendent's office with questions.

Open Space Acquisition

The Town is considering a significant acquisition of open space on the north side of Simsbury, known as Meadowood. The area was to be the site of a housing development off of Hoskins and Firetown Roads. The Town has engaged the services of the Trust For Public Land to explore acquiring the nearly 300 acre property, about half of which would be preserved as open space, half would be farmland, and a small portion would be used for athletic fields. The land has historical value and the project would also involve the preservation of several tobacco barns. The total purchase price would be \$6 million, although the Town's portion would be \$2.2 million, with the rest coming from grants.

You can view a presentation on the project [here](#). The Board of Selectmen has referred the project to numerous boards and commissions for comment: Open Space Committee, Zoning Commission, Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission, and Culture Parks and Rec Commission. If the Town were to ultimately acquire this parcel, it would be decided by the public at referendum.

Library Fine Free Initiative

The Board of Selectmen has made permanent the Simsbury Public Library's fine free initiative. Starting last summer, the library launched a pilot program where it stopped charging late fees for most of its material. At our [May 11th Board of Selectmen meeting](#), we heard a presentation from Rachel Gravel, the library's head of borrowing and technical services. The intent of the fine free initiative is to expand access to the library's materials, especially among younger people.

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.

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 27, 2020

Coronavirus Update: Our town buildings remain closed to the public and will remain closed through at least July 5th. Staff continues to work in our closed facilities on a limited basis. We are operating by phone, mail, email and virtually through our [online services](#). Currently our Transfer Station is now open with full services and modified practices. In a coordinated effort, the Town and Board of Education opened their respective tennis courts for recreational play amongst members of the same household, but have installed modified practices to keep the public safe while playing. Town parks, open space parcels and trails remain open for walking, hiking and cycling. People utilizing these spaces should still maintain social distancing from other patrons.

Staff is currently planning for a soft reopening of municipal services, programs and buildings for the summer. This involves gradually returning administrative staff on rotating schedules aligning with Phase II of the State's re-opening plans. Our Library staff is currently hard at work rolling out a curbside pick-up program for our residents. Tentatively, around June 22nd, residents will be able to make appointments with staff to conduct business that cannot be done by phone, mail, email, or virtually using our online services. Facemasks will be required when visiting our public buildings. Summer camp is tentatively scheduled to begin on June 22nd, at 2/3 capacity, and with modified practices. We have received permission from the state to operate our camp program.

Tonight the Board of Selectmen will be discussing the summer pool season and a potential opening of the pool starting on June 20th. The Board will also be discussing the temporary suspension of accepting cash payments through September 14th. If any actions are approved we will be sure to inform the public through the town website and social media accounts.

Meetings will remain closed to the public until further notice in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order. Meetings will be held over zoom and broadcasted on SCTV. Agenda items that are being discussed at a meeting will be posted online for the public to view.

A recent Executive Order required municipal chief executive officers to designate an individual(s) to enforce recently enacted sector rules for re-opening. I have designated the Police Chief, Planning Director, and Building Official with that authority. They then have the authority to empower their subordinates to enforce sector rules. This does not apply to sectors such as salons, spas, and tattoo parlors, for the Heath District was identified by the Governor as the entity responsible for enforcement.

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, laundry and dish detergent, baby items (wipes, diapers, baby food), kid friendly snacks, 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 most recent food distribution served 118 households, an increase from the 80 households we typically served prior to the pandemic. 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 1,600 donated sewn face coverings

and distributed over 1,000 masks. 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.

On May 19th the Board of Finance adopted the Town Budget due to no referendum this year. The new Town mill rate for 2020/2021 is 37.09 mills, the Fire District mill rate is 1.19 mills for a total mill rate of 38.28 mills. This is a decrease from last year and will reflect about a \$50 in savings to the median valued home. The property tax deferral program approved by the Board of Selectmen is still accepting applications. Please visit the Revenue Collector's website for the application. We have approved 31 applications for the property tax deferral program. We are now at \$187,000 in deferred revenue for the first installment due with the July tax bills.

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. An update regarding outdoor dining is provided below under the Planning Department.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Planning: Currently 10 restaurant establishments have been approved for temporary outdoor dining pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order. All of these requests were reviewed and approved by the Fire Marshal, Building Official, Director of Planning and Farmington Valley Health District. More detailed information from the Planning Director, including the approval form, is attached to this report.

Social Services: I would like to share that the Simsbury Police Department has teamed up with Social Services to help distribute hand sewn masks. Last week and yesterday, officers stood outside of Eno Hall and distributed masks to passing motorists. Last week an officer distributed 178 masks. Yesterday Social Services and Public Works staff held the fourth curbside food distribution. One-hundred and eighteen households were provided with two bags of food, a bag of fresh produce, toilet paper, household cleaning items, and a grocery gift card. Children received gift cards to Necker's. Masks were distributed to these households and two police officers distributed masks at the front of Eno. A total of 254 masks were distributed yesterday. We continue to receive donations of non-perishable food, household items, cash and gift cards. We also continue to receive donations of masks with 244 new masks taken in last week.

Town Clerk: 2020/2021 Dog Licenses will be available during the month of **JUNE**. Yellow renewal postcard reminders will be mailed out on Friday, 5/29/20 to all residents who licensed their dog(s) in the previous year. Residents can renew online (new this year!), renew through the mail, or utilize the lock-box outside of Town Hall to drop renewal(s) off. **Town Hall remains closed to the public at this time, so renewing at the counter in the Town Clerk's Office will not be permitted.** If mailing, please mail renewal to: Town Clerk, 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070. To renew online, please [click here](#). Please note: If the rabies expiration date is highlighted on the postcard, the Town Clerk's Office will need to see an up-to-date rabies certificate (please send a copy if renewing by mail).

- **This year ONLY: Late fee accrues beginning AUGUST 1st** per an Executive Order of the Governor; \$1 per dog, per month past July (not applicable if licensing dog for the first time).
- **\$8.00** - Fee to license a neutered male or spayed female dog.
- **\$19.00** - Fee to license a male or female dog.
- Fee is payable to: Town of Simsbury (Please pay by check or credit card to avoid handling cash payments)

- An original certificate(s) from a licensed veterinarian is required when licensing a spayed or neutered dog for the first time and for proof the dog has been vaccinated against Rabies. (CGS Sec. 22-338)
- State law requires that all dog owners license their dogs with their local town clerk. All dogs 6 months or older must be licensed and wear a collar and tag at all times.
- Do not use a tag on any dog other than the one described in the license for that tag number.
- You are liable for damage done by your dog, including damage to shrubs, flowers, or trees.
- A dog without a tag is presumed to be unlicensed and is not protected by law.
- Owners of roaming dogs are liable to prosecution.

If you no longer have a dog that you licensed during the past year, please call to let us know at 860.658.3243 or email ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov.

Engineering: Construction activity will commence on Monday, June 1, 2020 on the Drake Hill Road Bridge Improvements. The first phase of the project will include milling of the bridge deck and bridge approaches and the removal of existing concrete expansion joints on the bridge. The contractor will maintain one-way alternating traffic during work hours and open the bridge to two-way traffic during the evening hours and on weekends. Flagmen will assist with traffic control during work hours. Staging of equipment and materials along with installation of temporary signage in preparation of construction will be initiated starting on Thursday, May 28, 2020.

Police: Route 167, from Route 4 in Farmington to Route 44 in Simsbury, will be milled and paved by the state through its contractor, Galasso Materials. The project will begin around June 4, 2020 with an anticipated completion date of June 25, 2020. Construction will occur during daytime hours. During this time, expect an increase in construction vehicles traveling on Routes 167, 10 and 315 in Simsbury.

Public Works: Paving of Firetown Road began this week and is progressing nicely. The paving work will be completed by Tuesday June 2nd, weather permitting. We will then be back for final touches including line striping and driveway aprons.

The sidewalk project is wrapping up this week and has been moving along without incident. We now have ADA compliant ramps and a safe walkable sidewalk along Firetown Road from Plank Hill to Squadron Line Road.

With the light traffic associated with the quarantine, we have been closing the road to thru traffic and this has allowed the work to be done in a safe and efficient manner. We may continue this practice in small sections while we do our driveway ramps provided traffic remains light.