
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: June 22, 2020

Reopening Town Facilities

There is a lot of work going on as our staff makes plans to open our town facilities with your safety as our top priority. This weekend the Simsbury Farms pool opened for the season in a modified capacity. It will only be open to Simsbury residents and you will need to register and pay ahead of time. We will not be allowing walkups. You can learn more on the [Parks and Rec website](#).

Our athletic fields also opened this weekend for certain youth sports. Our summer camps started today. The skate park also re-opened today. Playgrounds and basketball courts will tentatively be opening on July 6th. The Library building is closed, but curbside service is available. You can access the curbside service form on the library's website.

I have received some questions about why we're not moving faster in re-opening some of our facilities. All of our plans are being developed in close consultation with the Farmington Valley Health District. I have full confidence that as staff develops this timeline for re-opening, your health and safety is front and center.

Celebrating Juneteenth

Last Friday was a holiday with such significance, yet one that has only risen in the consciousness of many. Also known as Emancipation Day, Jubilee Day, and Freedom Day, Juneteenth celebrates the liberation of those formerly held as slaves in the U.S. On June 19, 1865, Union troops brought news of the end of slavery to enslaved people in Galveston, Texas. It was nearly a year and a half after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. The arrival of the troops on June 19, meant that even those in the far reaches of the Confederacy heard the news of freedom.

In these days of social upheaval, a pandemic, and so many extreme challenges, we must remember we are part of a greater whole. Each choice, each decision, every action has the potential to affect someone else, either positively or negatively. Let us rejoice on Juneteenth that individuals made the moral choice to fight for the rights of others. Let us step up to do the same, remembering it is not just about equality, it is about humanity.

Celebrating Pride Month in Simsbury

June is LGBTQ Pride Month nationally and I recognized Pride Month locally with a proclamation. The original organizers chose this month to pay homage to the Stonewall Uprising in June 1969. The uprising became a catalyst for the gay rights movement. In Simsbury, we celebrate our LGBTQ community with a Pride Walk on the path outside the Performing Arts Center, which serves as a reminder that that we are a community that welcomes everyone.

Aligning our Words and Actions

As we reflect on Juneteenth and Pride Month, it's critical that our town and schools do the hard work to support diversity and inclusion. Earlier this month, Police Chief Nick Boulter and I shared separate video messages with the community, describing specific steps the town is taking in the coming months to move this important work forward.

[Link to Chief Boulter's video message](#)

[Link to First Selectman, Eric Wellman's video message](#)

In the next month and a half, our police department will be producing a comprehensive report, reviewing our use of force policy, the 8 can't wait criteria, and related policies. This report will be shared with our Police Commission, a board made up of citizens of our town that has governance responsibility over our police department. It will help inform the next steps our police department takes in their commitment to serve everyone equitably.

At our meeting tonight, the Board of Selectmen will be learning about a proposal to equip our police with body cameras – a project that is supported by the leadership of our police department.

At the end of July, the town is planning to hang a banner over Iron Horse Blvd. to share an unambiguous message with the community that we stand for inclusion. We're soliciting ideas for what the banner should say. We invite anyone in the community to share your ideas or even fully fledged designs. You can email TownManager@Simsbury-ct.gov between now and June 30. The ideas will be reviewed and vetted by our Spirit Council, a group that serves as our diversity champions.

Wildlife Feeding Ordinance

As interactions between animals and humans become more common, the Board of Selectmen is working on an ordinance that would prohibit the intentional feeding of wildlife. A draft ordinance was developed by the Public Safety Subcommittee in collaboration with our police department. A public hearing will take place on July 13, 2020. Since we are still meeting virtually, we invite you to share your feedback by email and it will be read during the hearing. You can send your letter to our Town Clerk, Ericka Butler ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov. You can find the full text of the proposed ordinance in our June 22 [Board of Selectmen packet](#) starting on page 22. The ordinance, in its current form, would prohibit most bird feeders during the warmer months. Bird feeders are included because they are a significant part of what attracts bears to our homes. I understand that this element will be controversial, which is why I wanted to underline it.

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.

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: June 22, 2020

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS

Additions to the Agenda:

- LGBTQ Proclamation: Our First Selectmen has prepared a proclamation for LGBTQ Pride Month. I would recommend that this item be placed on your agenda following Public Audience. The Proclamation was emailed to you earlier today.
- Committee Appointments: I have received requests to have appointments to the Clean Energy Task Force, Aging and Disability Commission, and the Housing Authority added to the agenda. I am respectfully requesting that “Proposed Appointments to Various Boards/Commissions” be added to the agenda under Appointments and Resignations. Supporting documentation regarding these appointments was emailed to you today.

These items can be added to your agenda tonight with a 2/3 vote of the body.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Our Recreation staff worked tirelessly to prepare the pools for opening day on June 20th. We opened with modified practices to reflect guidelines from state and public health officials. We had a successful opening weekend. On opening day our two public swim sessions had 165 and 166 attendees. The following link is for a video WFSB did on the pool opening by our staff:

https://www.wfsb.com/news/simsbury-town-pool-reopens-saturday-with-new-rules/article_006012f0-b33e-11ea-b8b8-9b8058d2dac0.html. We also worked with our local youth sports organizations on re-opening related athletic facilities on June 20th. Summer Camp began today and will be run through the summer at two thirds capacity with modified practices. We also re-opened the skate park today.

Tentatively, if public health conditions allow, our playgrounds and basketball courts will re-open on July 6th. The golf course restaurant is currently open for outdoor dining and the golf pro-shop is working to re-open for retail. Regarding other parks and recreation facilities, our town tennis courts, the golf course, parks, open space parcels and trails are open.

We are operating by phone, mail, email and virtually through our [online services](#). Our town buildings remain closed to the public and will remain closed through at least July 5th. Starting today, 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. The Library has started doing curbside pick-up for materials; more information can be found [here](#). The Transfer Station remains open with full services and modified practices. With guidance from local health officials, our senior center will unfortunately be closed through Labor Day and potentially later.

As a reminder, at the May 27th Board of Selectmen meeting the temporary suspension of cash payments was suspended through at least September 14th. While there are a few exceptions, this practice will help reduce contact between the public and staff. In addition to mailing tax payments to the town, taxpayers can also leave payments made by check in a secure drop box at Town Hall.

Our Property Tax Deferral Program has received 46 approved applications so far resulting in approximately \$349,000 in deferred revenue. Applications are being accepted and available on the Revenue Collector's website.

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.

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 126 households, an increase from the 80 households we typically served prior to the pandemic. We also were able to deliver to 28 home bound individuals and seniors who could not attend the food distribution in person.

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 2,000 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.

AFC Urgent Care and the Farmington Valley Health District are offering COVID-19 PCR Swab and IgG Antibody Testing on Monday, June 29th & Tuesday, June 30th from 7am - 4pm at the Simsbury High School parking lot located at 34 Farms Village Rd, Simsbury, CT 06070. **Pre-Registration is required, please click the following link to register for your test:** <https://bit.ly/3ekH4Hr>

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. Our Planning Department has done an outstanding job working with restaurants to support outdoor dining options.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Public Works: Last Saturday, June 13th, the Public Works Department held our regional household hazardous waste collection event where we serviced 842 households from the region. Our participating towns included Avon, Canton, Farmington, Granby, Suffield and Simsbury. In addition to safely disposing common household chemicals, we collected paint, electronics, waste oil and conducted paper shredding. This was an impressive collection and we saw an uptick in participation due to our spring collection event being cancelled due to COVID. Our next collection is scheduled for October 17th here in Simsbury.

Town Manager's Office: Aquarion Water has informed us that due to below average precipitation, unseasonably warm weather, and demand on the system, it has been difficult for them to maintain adequate pressure in the Simsbury water system. They recently asked customers to voluntarily turn off their irrigation systems to allow the system to recover from the high water demands.

Please also look for ways to conserve water indoors on their website at www.aquarionwater.com/conserve for simple tips on how to reduce your water use by 10%.

Social Services: The Farmington Valley Visiting Nurse Association will perform blood pressure and blood sugar screenings, each Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the back parking lot of Eno Memorial Hall, at 754 Hopmeadow Street in Simsbury. Appointments are not required. For those that are unable to attend the screenings, nurses will be available to contact residents via phone for wellness checks to assess the need for a home visit. For more information, contact the Simsbury Senior Center at 860-658-3273.

Town Clerk: 2020/2021 Dog Licenses will be available during the month of **JUNE**. Yellow renewal postcard reminders were 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.