
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: June 8, 2020

In Support of Simsbury's African American Community

I want to acknowledge the historic week we have been through as a country, where unprecedented numbers of people came out to protest racial injustice and show support for our African American friends and neighbors.

At the June 8th meeting, the Board of Selectmen unanimously expressed support for the following letter to our community:

As leaders of the Town of Simsbury, we write to share in the heartache that is felt by our community and our country following the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police. We denounce this horrific event and extend our support to our Black/African American friends and neighbors. We denounce racism in all of its forms and we stand with those in our nation who are calling for systemic change.

The death of George Floyd occurred against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, a global crisis that none of us have experienced in our lifetimes. The pandemic exposed deep-seeded inequities, bringing them into greater focus, as the Centers for Disease Control reports higher illness and death among minority communities.

In Simsbury, there is no place for hate toward any person or group of people. We are committed to the ideals of diversity and inclusion. We thank the members of our community who have spoken up, reached out, and shared ideas for making Simsbury a more equitable place to live and work. Your feedback is evidence that we need to continue to support the work of our Town's Spirit Council and our School's Equity Council.

That's only a start. As the leaders of this community, we must ensure our words align with our actions. As we commit to diversity and inclusion we must look introspectively at our organization; the policies and practices that guide our work and how we serve the public. We must reflect on our practices as an employer. The Board of Selectmen supports our Police Chief in his department's continuous drive to serve everyone equitably and with distinction.

We strive to remain thoughtful in this work. We commit to deepening the dialogue between your local government, our police, and the Black/African American Community. As a country, we know that we can do better to confront systemic racism. In Simsbury, it is our intent to be leaders in this space. This work is integral to ensuring the collective well being of our entire community.

In the weeks to come, the Board of Selectmen will be discussing meaningful steps we can take on the path to ensuring everyone in our town is treated equitably. One such step is the adoption of body cameras for our police. We expect that proposal to come to the Board of Selectmen this summer.

The Board also discussed hanging a banner across one of our roadways that expresses the unambiguous message that racism has no place in Simsbury. We invite the community to provide input into what

exactly the banner would say. You can send your input or even a design to TownManager@Simsbury-ct.gov. We will collect feedback until June 30th.

Re-Opening Plans

The Town is developing plans to re-open our facilities 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/](https://www.facebook.com/TownofSimsbury/)

Our Public Safety Subcommittee has been meeting every other Thursday morning at 8am to share updates and coordinate resources. Their next meeting is June 18th and it will be streamed live and archived at [SimsburyTV.org](https://www.simsburytv.org). These meetings contain the latest information about our town's re-opening and are a great source of information.

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.

Hidden Heroes City

At our meeting on May 27th, the Board of Selectmen voted unanimously take make Simsbury a Hidden Heroes City. The Hidden Heroes initiative is a partnership with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Simsbury Social Services, and our local veterans' organizations with a focus on assisting the caregivers of veterans in our community. One of the primary goals of the Hidden Heroes campaign is to develop resources at the local level. You can learn more about Hidden Heroes by reaching out to Social Services 860-658-3283. You can also [view a presentation](#) from our May 27th meeting starting on page 7.

Board of Education

Late last month, the Board of Education (May 26th) 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.

Simsbury Grange

The Simsbury Grange was awarded a matching grant to fund apprentices for local farmers. They are currently accepting applications from anyone 16 or older. You can earn a stipend for learning from and working with a local farmer. Please send an email with the subject "apprentice" to info@simsburygrange.org by Friday, June 12th. More information is available at www.simsburygrange.org under "latest news."

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 8, 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](#). The Transfer Station remains open with full services and modified practices. In a coordinated effort, the Town and Board of Education re-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. The Library has started doing curbside pick-up for materials, more information can be found [here](#).

Our Recreation staff is hard at work preparing the pools to open for the season on June 20th. There will be modified practices to reflect guidelines from the state and public health officials. Summer Camp is also scheduled to begin on June 22nd at two thirds capacity with modified practices. We are also evaluating the ability to re-open youth sports and related facilities during Phase II.

Staff is currently planning for a soft reopening of other 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. 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. 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.

Our Property Tax Deferral Program has received 42 approved applications so far resulting in approximately \$234,000 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.

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.

Staff is working with the Farmington Valley Health District, the Fire District, and a local urgent care provider to provide local COVID testing for the community, likely to be held on June 24th and June 25th. I am grateful for all involved in working to get this service to our residents and will share more information as it becomes available in future Town Manager's Reports.

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

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.

Police: We have received a favorable outcome for the Town regarding the police pension arbitration case 2018-MBA-98. In a panel decision, the arbitration case was awarded in favor of the Town with the exception of one minor issue. The pension changes proposed by the Town and awarded are estimated to save approximately \$1,000,000 over the first 15 years. The police union proposal would have cost the town approximately \$940,000 over a 15 year period; it was rejected by the arbitration panel.

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 began around June 4, 2020 and has 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: The Household Hazardous Waste Collection scheduled for Saturday, June 13, 2020, will be held from 8AM to 1PM at the Town of Simsbury Public Works Facility at 66 Town Forest Road, West Simsbury, Connecticut. Please wear a mask or facial covering and remain in your vehicle. Public Works Staff will guide you as to where to go and how to dispose of the items you bring. Acceptable items include, fluorescent and CFL Bulbs, items containing mercury like thermometers and thermostats, household chemicals, fertilizer, used motor oil, paint, etc. For a complete list please see the Public Works web page. We will also be collecting electronics and paper shredding (2 box limit). This event is free to all residents, but it not open for business or commercial operations.

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.