
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: July 13, 2020

Wildlife Feeding Ordinance

At our July 13th meeting, the Board of Selectmen unanimously passed an ordinance that prohibits the intentional feeding of wildlife. This ordinance comes after about 10 months of research, reviewing ordinances from other communities, and incorporating feedback from our public safety community, the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the community at large.

The need for this ordinance arose due to the growing encounters with wildlife in our community, especially bears and coyotes. Residents in some neighborhoods report being “stalked” by packs of coyotes. Over the July 4th holiday, DEEP responded to four separate incidents involving bears, including one where a person and his pet were injured.

Most notably, the wildlife feeding ordinance prohibits birdfeeders during the warmer months and has exceptions for certain types of bird seed that bears are less attracted to. The full text of the ordinance can be found in our [Board of Selectmen packet](#) starting on page 80.

Wildlife policy is largely managed at the state level and it's important to understand that the tools we have locally at the town level are limited. I believe this ordinance is a step that will help, but it doesn't solve the underlying problem. That's why the Board of Selectmen unanimously endorsed a letter that we're sending to members of the State Legislature, the Governor, and DEEP (page 83 of the Board of Selectmen packet). The letter doesn't advocate for a specific policy solution, but it encourages lawmakers to equip DEEP with the tools and resources to adequately assist towns like Simsbury.

Diversity and Inclusion Banner

Through the month of August, a banner will hang over Iron Horse Boulevard as a statement to Simsbury's commitment to diversity and inclusion. We put a call out to the community for design ideas and thank you to all who shared. The SPIRIT Council reviewed the designs and recommended the artwork below from Simsbury resident Lori Wagner. We anticipate the banner will be hung starting the last week of July. Thank you to everyone who shared ideas.

SIMSBURY^{Discrimination} SIMSBURY^{Prejudice} SIMSBURY^{Racism} SIMSBURY^{Bias} SIMS

Aquarion Water Company Presentation

On several occasions this summer, we have shared messages with the community urging voluntary water conservation measures. This summer, Simsbury's per capita water usage is significantly higher than most other towns in Connecticut. In response to the higher than usual demand and lower than usual rainfall, the Town has taken steps to reduce its outdoor watering by about 20%. At the July 13 Board of Selectmen meeting, Jeff Ulrich, Aquarion's Vice President of Supply Operations and Sustainability, shared a presentation about the current demands on the system, future plans to improve the water delivery infrastructure, and water conservation measures. You can [view the presentation](#) starting on slide 7 of our meeting packet.

Town Manager Contact Extension

Town Manager Maria Capriola's 3-year contract expires at the end of January 2021. This spring, the Board of Selectmen asked for the public's input on the Town Manager's performance. That feedback was summarized at our Board of Selectmen meeting on June 22nd. At that meeting the board unanimously endorsed extending the Town Manager's contract and tasked the Personnel Subcommittee to manage the process and bring a contract back to the full board for review. Thank you to all who provided input as part of this process. I anticipate this item will be on the agenda of the August 13th Personnel Subcommittee.

Fire Company Donation

Thank you to the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company which, in commemoration of its 75th anniversary, is helping refurbish the area by the ornamental clock on the lawn of Town Hall. They are donating labor and materials to replace two of the benches, refurbish the brick pavers, and installing a commemorative plaque. 25 years ago the Fire Company with assistance from the Ensign Bickford Foundation, donated the ornamental clock and the benches on the lawn of Town Hall.

Public Hearing – Sale of Open Space

At our next meeting on August 10th, the Board of Selectmen is continuing a public hearing that began at our June 22nd meeting about the potential sale of a 1-acre parcel of open space that's adjacent to 133 Holcomb Street. Letters can be emailed to our Town Clerk, Ericka Butler at ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov. Please do your best to limit your letters to five minutes of content.

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: July 13, 2020

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS

Addition to the Agenda:

- Resolution Calling for Extension of Absentee Balloting for November Election due to COVID Pandemic: Selectwoman Wendy Mackstutis has drafted a resolution for the Board's consideration. The resolution is to ask the state to extend the absentee balloting being done for the August primaries to the November Presidential election. Our Town Clerk and Registrars have reviewed the prepared resolution. This item can be added to tonight's meeting agenda with a 2/3 vote.

Reordering an Agenda Item

- Staff respectfully requests moving "Review of Diversity and Inclusion Banner" on the agenda to follow "Proposed Updates to (Human Services Aide) Social Services Assistant Classification."

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Our playgrounds and basketball courts re-opened on July 6th. Regarding other parks and recreation facilities, our town tennis courts, skate park, the golf course, parks, open space parcels and trails are open and social distancing is still strongly encouraged at these locations.

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 August 2nd. Residents are now 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 is continuing to do 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. To date we estimate collecting over \$2M in payments via the drop box.

Our Property Tax Deferral Program has received 93 approved applications resulting in approximately \$850,910 in deferred revenue. One commercial establishment applied and was recently approved, totaling \$272,600 in deferred revenue, or reflecting 32% of all deferred revenue to date. The application period for this program has closed.

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.732997960244104/1365939280283299/?type=3&theater> . Our most recent food distribution served 128 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. During the pandemic we have increased the frequency of our food distribution program from once every month to once every three weeks.

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 2,700 donated sewn face coverings and distributed over 1,740 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, July 20th & Tuesday, July 21st 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> Please be aware that when registering for the event the clinic site will say "West Hartford" even though the testing for July 20th and 21st will be at the Simsbury High School parking lot.

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

Culture, Parks and Recreation: The Simsbury Farms Golf Course will be hosting the Connecticut Public Links Championship for the second time on August 10th & 11th. Simsbury Farms has also previously hosted the CT Women's Open, The CT Seniors Championship and the CT Super Seniors Championship on other occasions. The selection of our course for this prestigious event is a testament to our hardworking professional staff and the pristine conditions our facility provides to our members and guests. The Simsbury Farms Golf Course has been recognized as one of the finest public golf courses in New England. The golf course will be closed to other players both mornings but will reopen for public play each afternoon.

Engineering:

- I would like to announce the hiring of a new staff Engineer in our Engineering Department, following the vacancy created by a resignation. Daniel Gannon is a civil engineer who graduated from the University of Connecticut and has almost 4 years of experience working for private sector consulting firms. Daniel is also a resident of Simsbury and is involved as a referee in our youth soccer leagues. Please welcome Daniel to our Engineering Department!
- Aquarion Water Company Stratton Brook and Eno Place Centralized Treatment Facilities Project

Aquarion is constructing improvements to its wellfields that supply drinking water to customers in Simsbury, Granby and East Granby. The improvements consist of new centralized drinking water treatment facilities and upgrades to the wellfield sites located at the existing Stratton Brook (190

Stratton Brook Road) and Eno Place (4 Eno Place) Wellfields. The new centralized treatment plants will improve the reliability and safety of the water system by combining six individual treatment facilities into just two – one at each wellfield.

Construction is anticipated to begin in July 2020 and run through March 2022. The majority of construction related activities will occur on Aquarion's property at the two wellfields. Public access to Stratton Brook State Park from Stratton Brook Road and Town Forest Road will be closed during construction. Periodic closures of a portion of the Farmington River Trail from Stratton Forest Road northerly will also be required during construction of the project. Also, a portion of work will occur along Town Forest Road up to the intersection with Stratton Brook Road, primarily during Summer and Fall of 2020; Town Forest Road will remain open during construction. Minor road work is also expected at Eno Place in 2021.

No interruptions to the town's water supply or disruptions in pressure or water quality are anticipated as a result of the construction activities.

For more information, call Aquarion Water Company: 203-337-5906.

Finance:

- Finance Director Amy Meriwether was recently appointed as a member of the Board of Director's for the Connecticut chapter of the Government Finance Officers Association. Congratulations to Amy!
- Our shared services agreement between the Town and Board of Education for Finance Director Amy Meriwether to provide temporary financial management services to the BOE has been extended for another 90-day period from July 1st through September 30th based on mutual agreement of the Town Manager and Superintendent. This shared service arrangement has been beneficial to both the Town and BOE and I am excited that it has been extended.

Library: We wish Library Services Assistant Suzanne Battos the best as she retires from her position at the Library and begins this next chapter. Suzanne worked at the Library for 12 years and has helped many people determine what their next great read should be. Suzanne will be missed by the staff and everyone whose life she touched in her many years at the Circulation Desk.

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 Manager's Office: Due to favorable LAP (liability-auto-property) and workers compensation claims experience, along with CIRMA's financial strength, the Town and Board of Education have received a members' equity distribution in the amount of \$22,305 from CIRMA, our insurance provider. Since the members' equity program began in 2011, the Town and Board of Education have received a total of \$324,183 in distributed members' equity.