
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: August 10, 2020

As our community continues to navigate through an unprecedented time, I am grateful to the vast majority of our residents for respecting social distancing measures, wearing masks in public, and for your overall generosity and patience in interacting with our fellow neighbors. I am also grateful that we live in Connecticut and a part of the country that has made incredible strides in beating back this virus to the level that it is now. Yet we are reminded when we look at other parts of the country and the world that we must remain vigilant and respect the advice of the public health professionals that have guided us so competently up to this point.

I hope that you and your loved ones are as well as can be. I know for many families, including my own, the new school year brings stress and unprecedented uncertainty. We're all trying to do what's best for our children while balancing the demands of work and life. Throughout this summer, the Board of Education and staff have been planning for the educational needs as well as the operational complexities that come with delivering education during a pandemic. The school district has created a Coronavirus webpage where it's aggregating information relevant to the upcoming school year and preparations underway [here](#). I want to give a particular thank you to educators everywhere who are preparing to work with our children under extremely challenging circumstances.

Storm Cleanup and Power Restoration

As of Monday evening, Eversource tells us that power should be restored to nearly every customer in town. At the peak, more than two thousand homes and businesses were without power in Simsbury. Throughout this week, the Town has been challenged to get accurate and timely information from Eversource. It took nearly 48 hours before the first make safe crews arrived. During that time there were a handful of neighborhoods that were entirely blocked in due to downed trees and power lines. Throughout this week, the Town attempted to provide information to Eversource to allow them to prioritize neighborhoods so they could effectively partner with our Public Works crews. It's not clear how that information was used. Any post-storm response is most effective when organizations work together, communicate, and share information. Eversource appeared either incapable or unwilling to do that. It's my hope that PURA conducts a thorough investigation and that there is genuine accountability because their inept response and lack of communication puts lives at risk.

I wanted to thank our first responders (police, fire, EMS) for their work this week, our Public Works Department who conducted tree removal, our Social Services Department who checked in on many of our older residents, and our Facilities and library staff who set up a charging station for those without power. I also wanted to thank our Emergency Management Director, Mike Berry and Town Manager, Maria Capriola for their communication and coordination, and every member of our staff who assisted any resident in getting back on their feet this week. Finally, thank you to the power restoration crews – men and women from across the country who left their families to come to Connecticut this week to restore our power.

Supporting our Food Programs

Simsbury Social Services has nearly doubled the number of households it's serving during the Covid-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic the Town was serving approximately 80 households per month with our food programs, which has now increased to about 140 households and we have increased the frequency to

every three weeks. Once school starts, we will return to monthly because of sustainability concerns and also decreasing the amounts of gift cards we are distributing.

Local families continue to rely on your donations. Donations of money will help us purchase gift cards for groceries as well as fresh produce for our distributions. Donations of gift cards are also appreciated. We are also seeking donations of non-perishable food items, household cleaning products, and toiletries. Our goal is to give everyone at least one full bag of items at each distribution, plus a bag of produce, and a gift card.

There is a donation cart in front of Eno Memorial Hall, 754 Hopmeadow Street. If you have any questions, please call Social Services at 860-658-3283.

Wildlife Feeding Ordinance

A new ordinance goes into effect this week that prohibits the intentional feeding of wildlife. It was developed over the past year in response to the growing encounters with bears, coyotes, and other wild animals. Most notably, the ordinance requires that residents remove their bird feeders during the warmer months unless they are using bird seed that is not an attractant to bears. We have received numerous questions about what kind of bird seed applies and how this ordinance will be enforced. We are working on a question and answer document that will be part of a larger public information campaign later this month.

Simsbury Woman's Club

On August 10, the Board of Selectmen recognized the Simsbury Woman's Club, which in May of this year, made the difficult decision to dissolve due to declining membership. For more than 50 years, the Woman's Club has contributed to the Simsbury community in countless ways, most notably through its signature event, the annual Arts & Crafts Festival. Last year, the festival celebrated its 50th season, having grown over the years into a regional event that brought artists and visitors to our town. Thankfully, the festival is expected to continue into the future under the leadership of the Junior Woman's Club. The Simsbury Woman's Club has touched our community in innumerable ways through scholarships, donations to civic and nonprofit organizations, historic preservation, and more. With time, talent, and money, the generosity of this community never ceases to amaze me and the Woman's Club embodies that generosity. On behalf of the Town, I want to thank the Simsbury Woman's Club for more than half a century of service.

Welcoming a New Business

I'd like to welcome Your CBD Store to Simsbury at 1243 Hopmeadow Street. The Simsbury Main Street Partnership and the Chamber are holding a ribbon cutting on August 18 starting at 5pm.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: August 10, 2020

STORM UPDATE

The Town of Simsbury is experiencing a multiday power outage due to Tropical Storm Isaias. Today Eversource crews made substantial progress with their make safe and restoration work. The only road that remains closed is Deer Park (at Evergreen) due to downed wires. As of Monday afternoon, approximately 100 Eversource customers were without power in Simsbury. Our Public Works Department worked throughout the day today removing debris where downed wires weren't involved.

If you are currently experiencing a power outage please contact Eversource. You can use the Eversource website to [report a power outage](#). You can also call 800-286-2000 to report a power outage. The Town of Simsbury has reported downed wires and road blockages to Eversource.

Due to the widespread power outages we are fielding inquiries regarding the ability to vote in-person for the primary on Tuesday, August 11th. Power has been restored at all voting locations and in-person voting will not be disrupted as a result.

The safety of our residents is our utmost priority. We want to remind residents to please respect road closure signs. Please do not remove any barricades. They are posted and placed for your safety so you do not encounter any downed trees and/or power lines which could potentially be dangerous. **Please remember to keep a safe distance from any power lines that have fallen due to the storm.** During the make safe work we continue to find live wires that are down and in one instance a guardrail that was energized.

All woody debris that fell into the roadways during the storm has been cleaned up. Town crews only collected brush that fell into the roadway or right-of way. Crews will be working tomorrow (August 11th) to clean up any debris left behind from work performed by Eversource. Due to the nature of the extensive damage caused by Tropical Storm Isaias, in combination with the negative financial impacts inflicted on many of our residents due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Simsbury Bulky Waste and Recycling Center ("landfill") will be accepting storm damage brush free of charge for a limited time. Residents will need to bring the brush to the facility themselves in order to take advantage of this program. Proof of residency will need to be shown when dropping off brush (12-inch diameter max). By providing proof of residency, residents will not have to obtain a landfill permit for brush disposal. No commercial vehicles will be allowed to utilize this temporary expansion of services. During the length of this special program, the landfill will be open additional hours. On Mondays and Fridays, they will be open from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM to accept brush only. The acceptance of storm brush for disposal at no charge to residents will begin on August 8, 2020 and end on August 22, 2020.

The Town of Simsbury will continue to provide electronics charging stations for those who are experiencing a power outage. These charging stations will be in the Program Room on the ground floor of the Library, 725 Hopmeadow Street, from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm on August 11th. Please remember to bring your own charging cords to your devices. People utilizing the charging stations will be required to use face coverings. Please do not come to the Library to use the charging stations if you are experiencing any symptoms of illness or COVID-19. Do not use the charging stations if you have recently visited or been in contact with someone who visited a location that is restricted by the [Connecticut Travel Advisory](#).

Our Social Services Department is contacting at-risk seniors and residents. If you or anyone you know is experiencing critical needs please contact the Department between 9am-4:30pm, Monday-Friday, at [860-658-3283](tel:860-658-3283). If you have an emergency, please call 911.

The Simsbury Fire District is currently providing potable water stations at all fire stations in town. Please bring your own bottles and containers to fill up. The locations of the Simsbury Fire Stations are:

- The Main Station located at 871 Hopmeadow Street
- The West Simsbury Station located in the west-central section of town at 235 Farms Village Road.
- The Bushy Hill Station is located in the southwest section in the city at 345 Bushy Hill Road.
- The Weatogue Station is located in the southeast part of town at 251 Hopmeadow Street.
- The Firetown Station is located at the intersection of Firetown Road and Hoskins Road in the northern part of town.
- The Tariffville Station is located at 7 Church Street in the Village of Tariffville, situated in the northeast section of Simsbury.

A reminder to our residents utilizing generators to ensure they are installed and functioning properly. Tips for generator safety can be found [here](#). Eversource offers the following suggestions:

- Always run the generator outdoors and as far from the house as possible.
- Make sure the generator is kept away from doors, windows and air vents to avoid potentially fatal carbon monoxide poisoning. Installing a carbon monoxide detector in your home can help you avoid a buildup of these toxic fumes.
- Gasoline is highly flammable. Be sure that the generator is turned off before adding fuel.

If the electrical service to your property has been damaged, Eversource will make temporary repairs to safely restore your power, if possible. Eversource has advised that your local wire inspector will need to inspect your property and issue a permit for permanent repairs to be completed. Click [here](#) for additional information on the steps you should take.

Currently, our emergency operations center (EOC) is open and operating virtually. The virtual EOC allows us to keep in contact with regional and state emergency management officials. Key staff members of Emergency Services are meeting regularly to ensure the quickest possible recovery for Simsbury.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We are operating by phone, mail, email and virtually through our [online services](#). Our town buildings remain closed to walk-ins through at least Labor Day. Residents are 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. Our playgrounds, basketball courts, 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. Our Senior Center remains closed to the public until further notice.

We learned today that our vendor for our Tax Collection software system sent in error delinquent notices to those individuals and businesses approved for the COVID-19 related tax deferment program. We apologize for this error. The vendor will be issuing a correction to this to affected people and businesses.

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.

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 set up another COVID testing site similar to the last two events we hosted in June and July. This time it will be on August 25th and 26th at the upper parking lot of the Simsbury Public Library. 725 Hopmeadow Street. To register for an appointment, please follow this link: <https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/home/news/more-local-covid-testing-dates-announced-0> Please be aware that when registering for the event the clinic site will say "West Hartford" even though the testing for August 25th and August 26th will be at the Simsbury Public Library upper parking lot.

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 Social Services staff is helping to coordinate local efforts to both make and distribute sewn face masks to staff and members of our community. 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.

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 Manager's Office: Eversource will be performing an upcoming transmission line project, which will require a temporary closure of the Metacomet Trail from trailheads located on Mountain Road in Simsbury to Wintonbury Road in Bloomfield. The expected time frame of the trail closure is from mid-August to early November. Signage will be posted at the trailheads to notify the public and this information will be shared on social media.

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.

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.