
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Wendy Mackstutis – First Selectman
DATE: September 12, 2022

Welcome back to the school year and the start of fall! Hope everyone has had a great summer. Yes, it was a hot one, which, unfortunately, it seems we will all need to get used to. Luckily, we did get some recent rain, as it has been hard to come by.

I apologize for the late delivery of this report, but I am in re-entry mode from a family vacation. Given we had a BOS meeting on Monday night, my priority was making sure I was prepared. Now I am ready to fill you in on what's been going on!

The first thing I want to highlight, is our 'first' First SelectKID in Simsbury. On August 17th, Chase Martin was dubbed 'First SelectKID' and spent the morning with me at town hall. This was an auction item offered at Squadron Line's PTO annual fundraiser that I was approached about and was happy to participate in. Police Chief Nick Boulter and Culture, Parks and Rec Department Head Tom Tyburski were very creative in involving Chase in our town government. The article in this link appeared in the Valley Press, and shares Chase's experience from his perspective. I'm sure this will be a top item at next year's fundraiser! 😊
https://view.publitas.com/p222-6222/val_090222_p/page/16-17

The Simsbury Culture, Parks, and Rec Dept's 50th Anniversary Party on August 27th, at the Simsbury Farms complex was a huge success. There were people dancing in the streets, so to speak, to the 80's band that provided a super fun set list for the entertainment. As an older parent, who has adult 'kids', I did not get to the bounce house portion of the event, but it sure looked like fun! The party ended with fireworks ON the golf course – right over our heads – which was such a wonderful ending to the summer. Kudos to everyone involved!!

I want to note, that the town will now provide postings and signage to alert residents to upcoming event that will have a fireworks component.

This Thursday, we will be meeting with the consultants who responded to the RFQ for the Police Workforce study, which was funded during the FY 2022/2023 budget process. Stay tuned for more on this topic once a decision has been made. We hope to have this provide recommendation and insight into our staffing needs over the coming years and to help with future budget discussions.

At our meeting on Monday night, we shared a proclamation acknowledging Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, with plans to light Eno Hall up in purple as a reminder. Thank you to our Department of Public Works for making that happen. Below is a copy of the draft proclamation.

**Proclamation Recognizing September as
Suicide Prevention Awareness Month**

WHEREAS, Suicide Prevention Week (9/4-9/10) and Suicide Prevention Day (9/10) are being recognized through the month of September, where we address the persistent public health issue of suicide, raise awareness on the causes of suicide, offer support and resources to those affected by suicide, encourage communication on mental health and inform/educate the general public on suicide prevention measures;

WHEREAS, the purple and turquoise/teal Suicide Prevention ribbon symbolizes suicide awareness and prevention and serves as a reminder that suicide is an issue we need to talk about;

WHEREAS, the recent transition from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's 1-800-273-8255 number to the 3-digit 988 dialing code is not widely known and government outreach is necessary to mass communicate this number to the public;

WHEREAS, from 2020 CDC data, suicide is the 15th leading cause of death in Connecticut, 3rd leading cause of death for ages 10-24, and the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 25-34;

WHEREAS, 85.07% of communities did not have enough mental health providers to serve residents in 2021, according to federal guidelines and almost five times as many people died by suicide in 2019 than in alcohol related motor vehicle accidents;

WHEREAS, suicide prevention measures are now more important than ever as the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted social events/relationships, increased stress levels of all age groups and decreased physical contact;

WHEREAS, suicide prevention measures, education, and research will prevent the untimely deaths of Americans each year;

WHEREAS, suicide is neither a personal failure nor the evidence of mental illness, but rather a common human response to difficult environmental factors and emotional pain. Improving life circumstances, enhancing social connection and reducing emotional pain are effective ways to reduce the frequency and intensity of suicidal thoughts and feelings[®];

WHEREAS, we affirm our commitment to reducing deaths caused by suicide and pledge to do all we can to ensure that mental health resources and support are offered to those that need it;


WHEREAS, establishing September as Suicide Prevention Month promotes awareness, starts a dialogue, destigmatizes mental illness and helps prevent suicide;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, Members of the Simsbury Board of Selectmen, hereby proclaim September Suicide Prevention Month in the Town of Simsbury and ask that the Town light up Eno Hall in purple for the remainder of the month.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, we have placed our signatures and the great seal of the Town of Simsbury.

Dated the 12th day of September 2022.


Wendy Mackstutis
First Selectman


Amber Abbuhl
Deputy First Selectman


Sean Askham
Selectman


Chris Peterson
Selectman


Heather Goetz
Selectman


Eric S. Wellman
Selectman

I do have some additional information that I would like to include - which I shared at our meeting, provided by a family friend (Leah's college roommate, Megan Kelly), who lost her younger brother to suicide by use of a firearm. Megan has held multiple fundraisers and events in John's name over the last few years. She provided me with this link from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, that emphasizes the warning signs: <https://afsp.org/risk-factors-protective-factors-and-warning-signs>. These were some that may appear obvious to everyone, but she asked to highlight:

- Withdrawal from activities
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Talk of feeling trapped or overwhelmed
- Anxiety disorder
- Stressful life event (divorce, loss of job, financial crisis, other life transitions)

She also thanked the town for spreading the word on the new 988 number, as that is an invaluable service.

The Board of Selectmen completed our Goal Setting process. We used multiple ranking processes and held numerous discussions. There were multiple meetings and special meetings where these were discussed, and those are available at Simsbury Community Media. The dates of the special meetings are December 11, 2021, January 27, 2022, and August 25, 2022. These were discussed at our regular meetings on July 11th and August 8, 2022. Our high-level goals ended up as follows, with the detailed initiatives posted on the town website.

- Strong Financial Management and Capital Planning
- Support the Health, Safety, and Well-being of our constituents.
- Develop an Economic Vision for our community
- Fostering an Engaged, High-Quality Workforce

Happy New Year to those who will be celebrating the Jewish High Holidays, starting with Rosh Hashanah on the evening of September 25th. Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday night, September 28th given the holiday.

L'Shana tova! (For a good year)

Wendy

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: September 12, 2022

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We are monitoring the state's municipal COVID alert system and are currently at "red" status for the period ending on September 11th. This status indicates that we have more than 15 COVID cases per 100,000 residents. We are at 55 COVID cases per 100,000 residents in the last seven days. Over the most recent week, we had a total of 14 cases. We also had a positivity rate of 12.5%, a decrease from the prior period's rate of 15.2%. As a reminder, this data does not include positive test results from at-home test kits.

According to the CDC Community Levels categorization, Hartford County is currently "medium." Therefore, the CDC recommends that if you are at high risk for severe illness, talking to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and taking other precautions. People may choose to mask at any time. For additional information on why the CDC changed from measuring Community Transmission to Community Levels, please click on this link <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>

The Health District is providing COVID vaccine appointments on Mondays and Fridays for people ages 18 and older. Details can be found here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0c4aa9ab22a7f5c07-covid19>

Data from the state ending September 9th reports that 22,917 Simsbury residents have received at least their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or 90.24% of the population, while 83.58% of our residents are now fully vaccinated. Additionally, 57.01% of the population have received an additional booster dose. Further vaccination data (updated 9/7) for Simsbury by age group:

Age Groups	Received 1st Dose	Fully Vaccinated	Received Booster
0 - 4	27%	6.66%	N/A
5 - 11	71.04%	66.89%	13.71%
12 - 17	90.71%	85.70%	48.49%
18 - 24	100%	100%	65.68%
25 - 44	100%	97.70%	63.82%
45 - 64	88.46%	84.65%	65.82%
65+	100%	100%	95.82%

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Finance: Frank Santino has begun work as the Town's new Property Appraiser. This was one of the new positions authorized in the FY 22/23 budget. Frank started with the Town on September 6th and comes to us with previous experience as a property inspector for a revaluation company as well as a real estate broker. Frank has his bachelor's degree from Charter Oak State College in Business. Frank will be a key asset in the Assessor's Office to help ensure the Grand List has accurate and timely data. Welcome Frank!

Information Technology: Rob Lowell has been selected as the Town's new Information Technology Support Specialist. This was one of the new positions authorized in the FY 22/23 budget. Rob began work with the Town on August 31st. Rob has experience in previous technology roles such as an IT Engineer, IT Specialist, and Systems Engineer. He holds multiple certifications in the technology field. Welcome Rob!

Library:

- Cyn Thomas has been promoted from a part-time to a full-time Adult Services Librarian position effective September 6th. Prior to her promotion, Cyn has served as a library page, part-time Children's Librarian, and part-time Adult Services Librarian. Cyn recently completed her Masters of Science degree in Library Science from the University of Kentucky. Previously, Cyn was an entrepreneur developing and working at an online paper goods and gifts business. Cyn is a valuable addition to the Library team. Congratulations to Cyn on her promotion!
- The Library will celebrate National Library Card Sign-up Month with a Library Card Palooza, Friday evening, September 16th, 6-9 PM on the Library lawn. Stop by and enjoy musical performances by Camden Fuller and Sound Risk, mocktails provided compliments of the Simsbury Inn, juggling demonstrations by Xaq Zukas, lawn games and make s'mores at the Library's fire pit. It's sure to be a great time! Library cards are not required to attend, but we sure hope you'll register for one while you're here.

Police:

- Christina Deltatto has been selected as the Accreditation Specialist for the Police Department. This was one of the new positions authorized in the FY 22/23 budget. She is a well-experienced, trained, and respected public safety professional with over 30 years of experience. She has held roles as an assistant accreditation manager and accreditation manager for state and national (CALEA) accreditation since 1995. In addition, she was an assessor for CALEA, with the responsibility to review other police departments for compliance with national standards. Christina has worked for the department per diem since May 2022 and moved into this full-time position on September 6. Congratulations Christina!
- Stephanie Corbeil has been selected to fill the Animal Control Officer position. Stephanie holds a bachelor's degree in Animal Science from the University of Connecticut. She has held positions as a kennel and veterinary technician, a canine trainer, a procurement specialist, and an assistant animal control officer. Stephanie began employment in her new position on September 12, 2022. Welcome Stephanie!

Public Works:

- After 15 years with the Town of Simsbury Highway Division, Dave Harris retired on September 1st. Dave was a dependable and hard-working member of our team and he will be missed. Dave is lifelong resident of Simsbury and an active member of the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department.
- David Acosta has been appointed to serve as a Building Custodian for our 2nd shift in our Buildings and Grounds Division. David had previously worked for the Town as a part-time weekend custodian. We are excited to welcome David back to Simsbury in his new full-time capacity. David has previous experience as a certified HVAC Technician that will be a key addition to our facilities team. David will be responsible for the routine cleaning of Town Hall, the Police Department, Library and Eno Memorial Hall as well as the setups for meetings and events. David will start on September 19th. Congratulations David!

Social Services:

- We are currently in our Renters' Rebate season, taking applications for the 2021 program year. Please visit our [website](#) for eligibility criteria, and contact our office at 860-658-3283 to apply.
- Erika Cleveland has been selected as the Town's new Family and Youth Social Worker. This was one of the new positions authorized in the FY 22/23 budget. Erika starts with the Town on October 3rd. She has a Bachelor's degree from Central Connecticut State University in Social Work and a Master's degree from Springfield College in Social Work. Erika has experience working as a Rehabilitation Counselor, Assessment Counselor and other related positions. We are excited to have her join our team and our community!

Town Manager's Office:

- The Farmington Valley Health District is now booking flu vaccine clinics for businesses! Clinics will be held at the FVHD beginning in October with the standard adult dose available, they will not have the high dose for those that are over 65 years old. To schedule a clinic call FVHD at 860-352-2333 or email them at info@fvhd.org. For business with 10 or more individuals the FVHD is available to come to your place of employment.
- Aquarion Water Company has filed an application with the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) for new water rates that are expected to become effective in March 2023. The average impact to customers in our region would be a 27.8% increase, using an inclining rate structure for single-family, residential customers. This tiered approach would result in smaller increases for efficient/average use customers whereas inefficient/high use customers would see a larger increase. Aquarion has also proposed the expansion of their customer assistance program, offering a 15% bill discount for eligible, low-income customers.

Aquarion is also seeking approval of a 3-year rate plan. Increases for the second and third years are estimated at 6.0% and 3.7%, in addition to the 27.8% increase. These proposed rate increases will be subject to review and approval by PURA in separate proceedings.

For additional information regarding Aquarion's current and proposed rates, please contact Aquarion at (800) 732-9678.

Customers may provide written comments on this proposal to PURA at Ten Franklin Square, New Britain, CT 06051, or by sending an e-mail to PURA.ExecutiveSecretary@ct.gov (refer to Docket Number 22-07-01 in any correspondence). Virtual public hearings are scheduled as follows:

Thursday, October 6, 2022 at 5:30pm:

- <https://ctdeep.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZl0cuurpigtHtbCjCnSFInEZLTVlz3tdTgS>

Tuesday, October 25, 2022 at 7:00pm:

- https://ctdeep.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEkdO6rrDMvG92NDAf7EywU3W7at1SGMZ_O

For questions about the public hearings, contact PURA at (800) 382-4586 or visit www.aquarionwater.com for information on rates and the rate case process.