
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: September 23, 2019

New Development

- Big Y is proposing to build a 52,000 square foot store on the north side of Simsbury. This is a project that has been on the table for a number of years. Big Y had previously gathered all of the approvals it needed to build, but has not moved forward until now. The company is in the process of coordinating with the Connecticut Department of Transportation for the excavation permit process and reviewing the plans with town staff. [Here is a link](#) to a recent Courant article about the development.
- 200 Hopmeadow Street (former Hartford property): The project includes 282 rental units (about half have been permitted so far), a 120 bed assisted living facility, and 11 thousand square feet of commercial space. All of the development is on the north side of the property. The south side, where the former Hartford building was located, has no development at this time. The assisted living facility has recently received a certificate of occupancy. Construction is proceeding on 124 out of the 282 rental units.

Grand Opening – New Program Room

Construction has finished and Simsbury Public Library's newest program room is now open! The Tariffville Room is a beautiful space located on the lower level of the library and will be able to seat up to 80 people. This renovation was made possible thanks to the hard work of a lot of people including the Board of Selectmen, former First Selectwoman Lisa Heavner, the Board of Finance, the Library Board of Trustees, the Library Building Committee, and the Friends of the Library. Also, significant funding for this project was provided by the state, so we thank Representative Hampton and Senator Witkos for their support.

Ribbon Cutting

The public is invited to attend a ribbon cutting at Fitzgerald's Foods to celebrate their new façade and other updates. It will take place October 3rd at 5pm.

Rainbow Crosswalk Update

On October 11th from 1 – 3pm, the Town will be hosting a community event for the painting of a permanent rainbow walkway on the Greenway near the Performing Arts Center. In celebration of Simsbury's LGBTQ+ community, the rainbow walkway will replace the nearby crosswalk that was recently converted back to white stripes.

On August 12th, the Board of Selectmen unanimously endorsed the concept of a permanent walkway. Earlier this summer, the Town asked residents to submit ideas for a permanent design. We are currently seeking feedback from the LGBTQ+ community via social media.

On October 11th, National Coming Out Day, the community is invited to join us near the Performing Arts Center to help paint the permanent design.

Wildlife Feeding Ordinance

In recent years, there have been growing encounters between our residents and wildlife. This is not just apparent anecdotally, but is reflected in the calls for service data provided by our Police Department. This is a particularly challenging issue at the local level, because wildlife policy is managed by the state. I believe we also need to look at all of our options locally so that we are remaining proactive.

At our September 9th meeting, the Board of Selectmen requested that the Public Safety Subcommittee begin work on a draft wildlife feeding ordinance. The drafting of an ordinance is a public process and we will be seeking input from the community in the months ahead. How the ordinance is structured and what exactly is prohibited is very much open to conversation.

Tobacco Valley Solar

Construction is scheduled to wrap up in the coming month on the Tobacco Valley Solar development on the north side of town off of Hoskins and County Roads. Anyone with concerns can always reach out to me or to Aaron Svedlow, the project's Director of Development (aaron@nleservices.com).

At our August 12th Board of Selectmen meeting, Tobacco Valley Solar delivered an update on the project and its progress. You can find a link to that presentation [here](#).

I am frequently asked whether the Town benefits in any way from the project. When the solar installation is complete, Tobacco Valley Solar will be one of the biggest taxpayers in Simsbury. Estimated tax revenue is expected to be more than \$1 million per year for the first few years and will decrease over time as the solar panels depreciate. Over the life of the project, the tax revenue is estimated at more than \$500 thousand per year.

If you're interested in learning more about the project, we have aggregated additional information on the [First Selectman's Page](#) of the Town website.

Chili Fest

The 2019 [Spooktacular Chili Challenge](#) is scheduled for October 20th at the Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center.

Belden Forest Dedication

Belden Forest in Simsbury is the first forest in Connecticut to be included in the Old Growth Forest Network. On Friday October 25th there will be a dedication ceremony starting at noon near Boy Scout Hall followed by a walk in Belden. Everyone is welcome.

On October 24th, the documentary "The Lost Forests of New England" will be featured at the Simsbury Public Library. This 2018 film features stunning footage of rare Old Growth Forests in New England. Filmmaker Ray Asselin will introduce the film and join a post-film discussion.

Simsbury Public Library Fine Free Initiative

Since July, The Simsbury Public Library has been conducting a pilot program which eliminates fines on all but the most popular items. Instead, people with overdue materials will be encouraged to contribute to a voluntary donation jar. In eliminating fines, Simsbury joins a growing number of libraries across the country. The primary goal is to ensure all members of our community have access to our library's resources. Our research shows that other libraries that have gone fine free see an increase in circulation and no significant change in how quickly items get returned. We're going to monitor for a year and evaluate whether to continue.

[Here is a link](#) to a Courant article with more information on the initiative.

Opportunities to Serve Your Town

There are numerous boards and commissions that serve our town whose members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Here is a list of current vacancies:

- Community for Care
- Clean Energy Task Force
- Culture Parks and Rec (per charter this position needs to be filled by a registered Republican)
- Design Review Board
- Historic District Commission
- Recycling Committee
- Tourism Committee

If you're interested in applying for any of these opportunities, you can submit a [volunteer form](#) online. If you have any questions about what these committees do or the appointment process, you can always reach out to me directly at ewellman@simsbury-ct.gov.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: September 23, 2019

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS & NOTES:

Engineering:

- In June our grant application for \$1.58 million in federal funding for the multi-use trail from the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (Route 10) to Curtiss Park was selected as one of three (3) priority projects of the eight (8) applications received by CRCOG to be recommended for federal funding under the recent Transportation Alternatives (TA) funding solicitation. The recommendation was forwarded by CRCOG to the Department of Transportation and is currently under review.

Although the selection of our grant application under this solicitation does not guarantee project eligibility or funding, this selection positions the project for future federal funding not yet authorized under this TA program. The funding for this grant application would be authorized for federal fiscal years 2021 through 2025. This provides time to complete plans and permitting required for the project with local funding that is currently appropriated.

- ***Hop Brook Landing at the Flower Bridge Update:*** After some delays during the summer in completing abatement and demolition activities, progress on the project has accelerated with the removal of the wood retaining wall and rough grading of the site. The construction of the pavilion and storage shed is currently underway and planting of the vegetative buffer will begin along Drake Hill Road this week. We anticipate the project will be substantially complete by the end of the construction season in November.

Police: During a ceremony with colleagues, friends and family, JP Lessard was promoted from Patrol Officer First Class to Sergeant on August 19, 2019. Sgt. Lessard participated in a competitive process and was selected to fill a first line supervisor vacancy. His promotion was approved by the Police Commission on August 12, 2019 and he was assigned to the Patrol Division.

On August 29, 2019 Patrol Officer First Class Jameson Ball was assigned to the Community Services Officer position. His assignments will vary, but will focus on participation in community events, coordinating police based community and safety programs, enhanced services to the public, etc.

Police/Town Manager's Office: The Town has been receiving feedback from attendees of the Simsbury Fly-In regarding difficulties with traffic and parking. The Police Department will be conducting an after-action review of the event. This will help to identify improvements in regards to traffic and parking management for next year's event.

Public Works: A group of Senior Civil Engineering Students from UConn working with an experienced engineer from Jacobs (a large multi-disciplinary engineering firm) will be investigating long term options for the realignment of Notch and Dry Bridge Roads in Simsbury. This is a very busy roadway and the narrow, curving and hilly nature of the roadway presents many issues including safety. The UConn students will be working to develop conceptual plans and possibly cost estimates to better align the roadway to safely carry the traffic volume and improve pedestrian and bike accessibility. They will also be looking at the intersection configuration where Notch and Dry Bridge split near the Canton border.

Culture, Parks and Recreation: The Town of Simsbury is working on a Parks and Open Space Master Plan. All residents are encouraged to have their voice heard in this process by taking part in a comprehensive survey regarding the Town's Parks and Open Spaces. The link to the survey can be found on the Simsbury Culture, Parks and Recreation website, www.simsburyrec.com. The Town's website, www.townofsimsbury.com or accessed directly at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SIMSBURY-PARKSMP>

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Culture, Parks and Recreation: The Culture, Parks and Recreation Department and Simsbury Performing Arts Center's "Movie In The Park" has been moved to its new date on **Saturday, Sept. 28th** at Simsbury Meadows, 22 Iron Horse Boulevard. Bring your blanket and chairs and come enjoy the live action Disney movie Aladdin under the stars. There will be refreshments available for purchase but you may bring your own picnic to enjoy. A children's bounce house will be available to enjoy prior to the movie. There is no admission charge for this event and we hope everyone will come out and join in the fun. Gates open at 5:00pm.