
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Eric Wellman – First Selectman
DATE: December 17, 2018

As 2018 comes to a close, I reflect on Simsbury's first year under a Board of Selectmen/Town Manager of government. To say the least, it's been a year of transition with the hiring of Maria Capriola as Simsbury's first Town Manager and the hiring of 4 new department heads overseeing the Police Department, Planning, Finance, and Parks and Rec. Over many years Simsbury has developed a well-earned reputation as a town that's been well run. But I've also appreciated that with new people come new ideas, especially around management practices that help ensure our town is the most professional, efficient, and well-run organization it can be to serve our residents. I want to thank this Board for working in such a collaborative manner through this transition. The team is in place and I look forward to great things in 2019!

At our last meeting in November, the Board of Selectmen unanimously adopted its priorities for the coming year. The priorities include infrastructure improvements such as connecting Tariffville to Simsbury with a bike path, and improved cell phone service, especially in our downtown. Other goals center around financial management, improving transparency and identifying opportunities for the Town to work more closely with the Board of Education on shared services. Other goals speak to quality of life, including improving transportation options for seniors. You can find more details on these and other goals [here](#) (page 100).

Teens & Vaping

In my time as First Selectman, I have come to learn about the prevalence of vaping among high school and even some middle school students. A study released just this week by the [University of Michigan](#) surveyed more than 44-thousand teenagers. It found while many forms of substance abuse are steady or declining, vaping continues to increase. Last year, the Community For Care held an excellent program that you can view [here on SCTV](#). Earlier this year, the city of Hartford became the first community in Connecticut to raise the legal age to purchase vaping/tobacco products from 18 to 21 (most communities in Massachusetts have already taken this step). I meet regularly with the leaders of other towns in the Farmington Valley and there is some interest from our neighboring towns in raising the legal age in our local communities. Avon's town council recently discussed this issue in November, and we will be having a discussion at our meeting tonight (December 17th). However, I believe that local ordinances can only be so effective on an issue like this. Representative John Hampton is working on proposed legislation that would raise the legal age to buy tobacco products, among other things. He shared with me that he welcomes any member of this board or the public to reach out to him with any thoughts on this issue.

Economic Development Commission

Economic development has been and continues to be a major priority for me and this Board of Selectmen. I believe that sensible economic development can expand our tax base and take some of the pressure off of residential taxpayers. In late November, we had our first meeting with the new Economic Development Commission (EDC). Selectwoman Cheryl Cook and I attended that meeting and shared our board's priorities. The new EDC will be focused on 4 areas in particular, including identifying business incentive programs that make sense for our town, developing a roadmap of economic development priorities, refreshing branding materials, and developing a business visitation program. You can read more about the priorities [here](#) (page 12).

Cell Phone Service

A small cell tower has been installed at Maple Tree Café. The tower is small device which has been attached to the top of the existing light pole. This installation was made on behalf of Verizon. The device should boost cell coverage in the Center of Simsbury. Similar small cell towers have been installed already across from Simsbury High School and off Winslow Place. I frequently hear from residents who are concerned about the quality of cell coverage. The Board of Selectmen has identified this issue as one of its priorities for 2019 and I will continue to keep you up to date on what steps are being taken.

Planning Update

- The application for re-development of 1 Old Bridge (aka Betty Hudson property) has been filed with the Zoning Commission. The plan will be discussed at a public hearing scheduled for January 7, 2019 at 7:00pm.
- A zone change was approved on December 3, 2018 by the Zoning Commission for the Tennis Center property (241 Hopmeadow Street). The existing industrial zone designation was changed to business in order promote re-use of the vacant office building.

Simsbury Trail News

I'd like to offer my thanks and congratulations to all who were involved in our Bicycle Friendly Community application. We got word from League of American Bicyclists that Simsbury will maintain its Silver status for another 4 years! Across Connecticut there are 9 Bike Friendly Communities and only Simsbury and New Haven have achieved silver status. Out of the state's 11 Bike Friendly Businesses, 3 are here in Simsbury. This application fills a three ring binder. I am so appreciative to Bike-Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the volunteers, and town staff who worked cooperatively to make this possible. It's a testament to the work that's been put in to encourage cycling, improve infrastructure, and improve cycling safety in our community.

Stay Connected

You can sign up for email updates from the town so you always know what's happening in our community. On the homepage of the Town website, click "[subscribe to news.](#)" and you'll be able to specify exactly what kind of news you want to receive.

Opportunities to Serve Your Town

There are more than a dozen boards and commissions that serve our town whose members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. We're always looking for volunteers willing to serve and I'm pleased to share that the Town has made the process easier and more transparent. You can learn more about all of our boards and commissions, current vacancies, and how to apply [here](#).

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: December 17, 2018

BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUSINESS:

Addition to the Agenda: On Friday afternoon we received a request from the state Department of Social Services that we complete paperwork related to our Senior Center Design Grant extension by the end of the calendar year. Our Town Attorney has suggested that I seek approval from you to execute the requested documents. I am respectfully requesting that "Senior Center Design Grant Extension" be added to the agenda as action item d) following "Proposed Donation from Garrity Asphalt Reclaiming." This

item can be added to your agenda this evening with a 2/3 vote of the body. We had previously received approval to use remaining grant funds towards various renovation items at Eno.

Non-Noticed Meeting: Time permitting, following adjournment of the meeting per §CGS 1-200(2) I would like for the Board of Selectmen and staff to meet to discuss strategy and negotiations with respect to collective bargaining for the unit represented by IBPO.

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS & NOTES:

Community and Social Services: The Sensory Friendly Santa event on December 7th was a great success and event organizers plan for it to be an annual tradition moving forward. Over 40 children and adults from a group home participated. Many thanks to staff, our own Board member Cheryl Cook, and the volunteers that hosted this event. The Santa was especially kind and patient with all of the children. Pictures of the event can be viewed at:

<https://flickr.com/photos/34907679@N03/sets/72157703078853071>

Planning and Community Development: The Town of Simsbury has been notified by FEMA that survey work will start in December for the flood map updates. A detailed report from the Planning Director is attached highlighting the project.

Public Works: The Department of Public Works has completed the installation of the two solar panel arrays on the DPW Facility Campus. The solar panel arrays will power the shared Board of Education/Custodial Building and the Public Works main facility. Both systems are designed to handle approximately 90% or more of the electric load of the buildings. The system was energized earlier today, December 17, 2018 and will produce approximately 134,515 kWh per year. This will save over 40% of the electric costs for these building with an annual savings in excess of \$11,000 per year!

SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMS:

Culture, Parks and Recreation: Simsbury Farms has scheduled extra public skating sessions for the holidays. The extra sessions are: Monday, 12/24 from 1-3pm; Wednesday, 12/26 from 1-3pm and 6-8pm; Saturday, 12/29 from 2:15-4:15pm and 6-8pm; Sunday, 12/30 from 2:15pm-4:15pm; Monday, 12/31 from 1-3pm and 6-8pm; and Tuesday, 1/1/19 from 1-3pm. The Simsbury Farms Ice Rink will be open for many public skating sessions during the holiday vacation week and will host a special Family New Year's Eve Skate on Dec. 31 from 6-8pm featuring a reduced admission price, free hot chocolate and skate rentals while supplies last. More information can be found by visiting www.simsburyrec.com.

Library: On Saturday, December 22nd at 1:30 pm the Library will host the "A Christmas Carol," adapted and performed by Greg Oliver Bodine. This one-man play is based on the condensed version Dickens himself used on his historic reading tours of the United States and is adapted to offer a unique theatrical experience. This hour long show is rated G and is suitable for adults and children over ten (10) years of age.