

## Report of the President Simsbury Fire District May 12, 2014

I am pleased to present this report on the activities of the Simsbury Fire District for the 2013-2014 fiscal year. This coming June will mark the 70th anniversary of the creation of the Simsbury Fire District. Seventy years ago, in 1944, the founders of the District had the foresight to create, with the endorsement of the Connecticut Legislature, an independent fire protection authority for Simsbury which has maintained a tradition of excellence to this day. With this authority, the District has been able to carry out its mission to the citizens of Simsbury in a professional, apolitical, and cost effective manner.

The District could not carry out this mission nearly as cost effectively for Simsbury's citizens without a group of dedicated citizen volunteers that devote untold hours to training and protecting Simsbury. Whether at an emergency call out or with their presence in community activities like the Torchlight Parade, the Volunteer Fire Company gets high respect and praise from Simsbury's residents. As in the past, I wish to express a sincere thank you on behalf of the District and the entire Town to all of the volunteers that make up the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company, the Junior Firefighter program, and the Ladies' Auxiliary. The extraordinary contributions of time and effort by these selfless citizens save Simsbury's taxpayers significant expense each year. If the community ever had to resort to a paid department, even with minimal professional staffing, the Fire District annual budget would likely increase 200-300%.

The Fire District also has a small complement of paid employees whose commitment and work is much appreciated as well. The Fire Marshal's office, our building and fleet maintenance staff, and our dispatch office staff have once again contributed greatly to maintaining the excellence of this department over the past year.

I also wish to acknowledge the work of my fellow District members, volunteers themselves. They continue to work together effectively to meet the fire protection needs of Simsbury in a fiscally prudent manner.

Simsbury's citizens can continue to rest assured that they have the benefit of a great group of volunteers and employees dedicated to maintaining the Simsbury's status as one of the best-protected communities in the State of Connecticut.

Following are some significant highlights of our accomplishments this past year and some goals for next year.

- The Simsbury Fire District operated within budget. The District adhered to its long-term goal of meeting both operating and capital requirements without resorting to borrowing.
- In the past year, the fire company responded to 668 call outs. Behind this number are the countless additional hours spent in training and preparing for responses by the entire SVFD family, regular members, officers that lead the department, as well as member of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

- The District solicited bids and awarded contracts for the replacement of Engines 5 & 6 both of which will be 25 years old at the time of their replacement in 2014.
- The District also took delivery of a new utility vehicle used for maintenance.
- The heating system at Bushy Hill was upgraded which should lead to both increased comfort and energy efficiency.
- A new hydraulic lift, capable of lifting 91,000 pounds, was installed in the Mechanic's building to replace an old and failing one. This lift ensures that the District mechanic can safely lift every piece of apparatus that constitutes the fleet.
- A blizzard in February that dropped 3 feet of snow left roads impassable to autos and crews were stationed in the fire stations to ensure the department's timely response capabilities.
- Simsbury maintained its status as a member of the Capital Region Hazmat Team as well as the Capital Region Emergency Response Plan.
- The Fire District has been granted a low power FM broadcasting license to enhance communications, particularly during emergencies, with Town residents. I thank Kevin Kowalski for doggedly pursuing this initiative.
- We have continued to add more public information on the District to its section of the Fire Department website. The reports and budgets presented tonight will be posted to the website for convenient access and as a matter of public record. We hope that this helps the public understand the role of the District particularly as it relates to expenditures and taxation.
- Early in this year's budgeting process, the District actively discussed the continuing weak economic environment the country and our taxpayers continue to face and set an objective to try to formulate a budget with little or no increase. The budget we propose tonight achieves that objective. If the budget proposal coming before this meeting is adopted, the mill rate for 2014/2015 will be reduced from 1.22 mills to 1.19 mills. The actual increase in expenses is just under 1% which is what the decrease in Fire District taxes should average for all residents. Highlights of this budget include initial funding to replace all of the SCBAs, full funding of the actuarial recommendations for our benefits plans, start up funding for the FM initiative, absorption of an outsized increase in fire protection charges granted to Aquarion by PURA, and acquisition of a car fire prop for the Training facility.
- The Fire District hosted the Annual Lt. Richard Kelleher Awards Dinner at which 2013 service awards were presented to the department's volunteers. (Lt. Kelleher, aged 37, died in the line of duty fighting a fire at the Knights of Columbus Hall, next to St Mary's Church, on November 6, 1981.)

A total of eleven Firefighter service awards were presented representing 175 cumulative years (and 41,146 callouts!) of volunteer service for the honored recipients! Further, six Ladies' Auxiliary service awards were also presented representing an additional 45years

of volunteer service. Simsbury can be proud to have volunteers that make this kind of commitment to the safety and protection of the community.

Additionally, three former District members were named to emeritus status for their long service on the Board. They were Daniel Coppinger (15 years of service), Kathleen Hayes (Tax Collector for 22 years), and Thomas Moore (Treasurer for 17 years).

**Special Awards**

Chief's Award – Kenneth Myers  
Carl Banks Engineer Award – Chris Hwang  
Lea Hutchinson Service Award – Brian Everest

**5 Year awards**

#483 Susan Coleman-1798 calls  
#484 Mark Zenick-1784 calls  
#489 Chris Burkett-1387 calls  
#491 Anson Brown-1471 calls

**10 Year award**

#442 Michael McDonald-1938 calls  
#448 Bryan Bulger-1849 calls

**25 Year Award**

#155 Kenneth Beliveau-5502 calls  
#296 Randall Chesanek-7407 calls  
#300 James Van Gunten-5878 calls

**30 Year Award**

#249 Walter Banzhaf-5286 calls  
#251 Michael Jepeal-6846 calls

**Ladies' Auxiliary Service Awards:**

**5 Years**

Danielle Civitillo  
Jessica Storm  
Carol Tuller  
Meredith Taylor

**10 Years**

Jackie Battos

**15 Years**


Donna Anderson

I have enjoyed working with all the members of the District as well as the members and officers of the department this year. Your hard work and spirit are a great source of pride to a grateful community. Further, your dedication and service make Simsbury a more affordable place to live than it would be if the Department was a paid one. Thank you.

Finally, this District remains committed to providing the Fire Department membership the resources which they need to continue to enhance their ability to meet the fire emergency response needs of the citizens of Simsbury. We will remain proactive about evaluating the risks and the future so that we remain on the leading edge of our important mission of protecting our community.

This concludes my report for this year.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin A. North, President