



2022 Candidate Survey on the Environment

Eric Wellman Democrat
House , 16

OPEN QUESTION

As First Selectman of Simsbury, I championed the purchase of the 300 acre Meadowood property as town owned open space. Meadowood was the place where a young Martin Luther King farmed tobacco while in Simsbury. We purchased Meadowood for historic preservation, but also environmental stewardship as a key bridge between the McLean Game Refuge and Great Pond. The project was rejected by our board of finance, but I led a successful signature drive to put the issue on the ballot and it passed with 89% support.

Among my top legislative priorities is ensuring a plan is in place to ensure CT achieves its 2040 carbon reduction targets. A goal is great, but we need an actionable plan to ensure we get there.

As First Selectman, Simsbury became a member of Sustainable CT and we achieved silver status, the organization's highest designation. The real value we achieved however, wasn't the certification, but instead the Clean Energy Plan we established through the process. Under my leadership, Simsbury also passed a wildlife feeding ordinance which went on to serve as a template for other communities including Granby.

I believe that climate change is the single defining issue of our time. Another legislative priority would be working on solar access rights so that homeowners associations can't block rooftop solar and related investments. We also need to allow homeowners to put up solar arrays of any size that fits on the roof regardless of previous usage.

1) ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

- Yes

As Simsbury's First Selectman, we formed our town's first DEI Council which has been our most active town committee over the last two

years. They have helped us review town policies to ensure they are not disproportionately and negatively impacting any particular constituency. Environmental justice is incredibly important to me.

2) WASTE MANAGEMENT:

- Yes

3) POLYSTYRENE:

- Yes

I wholeheartedly support this. CT needs to be a leader in this space. I think about when we enacted a ban on single use plastic bags. Despite initial concerns, I would say this was largely met with a collective shrug once enacted.

4) PFAS:

- Yes

5) NEONICOTINOIDS:

- Yes

As First Selectman, we partnered with the nonprofit Simsbury Pollinator Pathways and signed a resolution to take a hard look at the chemicals we are using as a town. We have not taken action on this issue yet locally, but I think action at the state level is far more impactful due to the reach.

6) RODENTICIDES:

- yes

7) DIESEL BACKUP GENERATORS/DATA CENTERS:

- Yes

8) BEARS:

- yes

I am incredibly enthusiastic about this recommendation. See my comments above about Simsbury's wildlife feeding ordinance. This issue is one that cannot be managed effectively by towns like a patchwork quilt. We need strong leadership by the state to look at the

data, the science, and what other states are doing successfully in this space.

9) TREE CUTTING PROTOCOLS:

- Yes

I wholeheartedly support this. In Simsbury, DEEP attempted to log Massacoe forest and I was among the town leaders calling for a halt to the cutting and we were ultimately successful. The Simsbury Board of Selectmen also approved Belsen Forest becoming an Old Growth Forest, the first such designation in CT. I am very familiar with DEEP's interest in logging and I support more passive management techniques, only removing trees when a hazard or when absolutely necessary. We also passed a Natural Stewardship policy to codify this practice on town owned open space.

10) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY:

- Yes

11) RIPARIAN BUFFERS:

- Uncertain

I need to learn more about this issue. I indicated uncertain because I need to learn more, not due to a lack of support.

12) RANKED CHOICE VOTING:

- yes
- I am a real proponent of ranked choice voting and believe it will have numerous benefits that would strengthen democratic participation.