

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting / Budget Workshop was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Present were: First Selectman Wendy Mackstutis; Deputy First Selectman Steven Antonio; Board members Kevin Beal; Diana Yeisley; Heather Goetz and Curtis Looney. Others in attendance included: Town Manager Marc Nelson; Deputy Town Manager Tom Fitzgerald; Finance Director/Treasurer Amy Meriwether; Budget Director Melissa Appleby; Parks and Recreation Director Tom Tyburski; Public Works Director/Town Engineer Tom Roy; Deputy Town Engineer Adam Kessler; Library Director Lisa Miceli; Social Services Director Kristen Formanek; Planning Director George McGregor; Police Chief Nicholas Boulter; Deputy Police Chief Chris Davis ; HR Coordinator Eric Gomes; Parks Superintendent Orlando Casiano; Golf Course Superintendent Brian Johnson; Highway Superintendent Kevin Clemens; and other interested parties.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

- **Participants can address the Board of Selectmen in person at the meeting**
- **Email townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 7, 2024 to register to address the Board of Selectmen live through Zoom**
- **Written comments can be emailed to townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov. Written comments will not be read into the record, but forwarded to all Selectmen via email**

There was no public audience at this time.

Ms. Mackstutis thanked the staff for all their hard work on this budget during the lack of growth during this post-eval year. She said this Board is trying to make the best decisions for the community as a whole.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

• Budget Overview & Revenue Discussion

Mr. Nelson went through the Budget Recap with the ARPA impact being removed:

Education operating change is 4.97 %
Town operating change is 3.46%
Open transfers change is 28.95%
Debt service change is 14.21%
Gross expenditures change is 5.72%
Anticipated revenue changes 4.44%
Net expenditures change is 7.02%

Ms. Meriwether said a big driver in the debt service is the Latimer Lane project. Ms. Appleby went through the debt service and capital costs and funding resources. She said a 6-year capital plan needs to be created and adopted each year according to the Charter. Ms. Appleby also noted that any project in excess of 2% of the

budget for the current year goes to referendum according to our Charter. She said the PAC and Flower Bridge Projects have an impact on this budget.

There was a lot of discussion on the PAC and Flower Bridge projects. If any new projects are added, they would need a 2/3 vote to add to the budget. There was also a lot of discussion on bonding and funding the projects. There was discussion on the PAC funding raising projects.

55:01

After discussion, Ms. Yeisley made a motion to approve the capital reserve funds of \$500,000 for the Performing Arts Center with the condition that the Board has a firm commitment from the PAC for the additional fund raising and have that in place before it can be moved to referendum and have the agreement in place on a revenue stream and what Town resources are impacted and to make sure this cost estimate is firm and before moving this project forward and to have that we have the Town capacity to work on this project. Mr. Looney seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

There was discussion on the Memorial Pool design. Mr. Tyburski said the pool was built in the 1950's and it is in rough shape and is also leaking, costing more money to keep open. It is used for swim lesson and day camps along with using the wading pool and adult lessons. It would either need to be taken out or put a lot of money into renovations. Parks and Recreation would like to put in a splash pad instead and to renovate the bathhouse. They are asking for \$150,000 for design. There are possible grants to look into for funding as well.

After further discussion, there was no decision at this time.

Mr. Roy said pavement management is for road maintenance. The roads in Simsbury are in very good condition after using their strategy. Now they are just paving or resurfacing about 10 miles per year. They continue to experiment with new resurfacing methods.

Mr. Kessler said the East Coast Greenway uses grant funding. He also spoke about the Flower Bridge. He said the first design plan needed more investigation as the first bids were between \$2.9 million to \$4.1 million. They made some changes and the next bids came in from \$2.3 million to \$2.7 million. They are asking for this additional funding for a contingency portion of that project. He said once they start the work problems could be found and there are also inspection costs. This is an iconic bridge to residents and visitors. Delays could increase costs. Mr. Roy said if it is decided not to do anything at this time, it still needs to be maintained and safe. There will be no flowers and no events.

Mr. Roy spoke about the new project on the Town Hall rooftop air conditioning units. He said these are part of the master plan as the units are 20 years old.

Ms. Appleby spoke about the Board of Education projects. She said they are asking for 4 projects: technology, district flooring, sections of roofing and auditorium/amphitheater. They are trying to get on a program for flooring.

Ms. Appleby said the majority of FY25 capital improvements are bonded. The Board of Finance target limit in debt service line items every year is to be about \$8.5 million. To achieve this, we would need to cut all bond funded projects. The pavement management is partially funded by bonds so it would be cut significantly.

Ms. Mackstutis also noted that they also have reserves to work with if needed. Mr. Nelson noted that the budget proposal is also respectful of the needs for next year.

CNR Projects

Ms. Appleby talked about the Capital Non-Recurring Plan. She said they are not required by Charter, to put together a 6-year plan, but have been doing that for years now. She said the items on this plan are between \$10,000 - \$250,000, which is before they get to the capital plan. She said there are about 50 projects on the plan for year 1. She went through the funding sources for this plan. They would like to increase the base amount by \$300,000. There was discussion on the traditional paybacks and building up the revolving fund.

Ms. Meriwether said she has an upcoming meeting with the Board of Finance and all of this will be discussed at that time. Ms. Heavner spoke about the Board of Finance paybacks and how they are done. There was discussion on items like drainage improvements, intersection safety, police cruisers, concept design work, etc. There are grants for a lot of projects. The projects have to be “design ready” so the grants can be awarded. Mr. Nelson said all projects have an impact on the operating budget at some point. There is a cost of not doing something now and deferred the project.

Mr. Nelson noted that next year there will be an automated platform called Clear Gov for the capital plan. It also covers the digital budget book.

There was discussion on the General Government items like Library furniture, the zoning regulations update costs, the neighborhood planning item, East Coast greenway, Tariffville projects, etc. Mr. McGregor spoke on the planning items and the POCD. There was also discussion on the Iron Horse landscaping, the Apple Barn, irrigation projects, the pickleball courts, school projects, playground projects, the use of tasers, etc. There was also discussion on what projects were done on the plan for this year.

Mr. McGregor spoke about rewriting the zoning regulations for Tariffville. Hopefully, this will be done by 2025. The document we have is a very challenging document with a lot of errors in it. We need to update it in order to update the document to comply with the law as well.

FY 25 Staffing Changes

Mr. Nelson spoke about his staff and their initiatives, like working with this Board on implementing their goals and objectives, isolating them and getting them into a manageable form for them. They have an elevated form in the Town Manager’s office. He said the staffing changes include estimated benefits and taxes.

Mr. Nelson spoke about the Human Resource Department is trying to restructure their department. They are looking for an Administrative Specialist, which needs to be separate from the Town Manager’s office. He went through line items like the Public Works Mechanic/Driver, Police Records Clerk, Economic Development and growing the grand list, ABC House, Main Street Partnership, Simsbury Performing Arts Center, etc. He said there are compliance and mandate challenges to meet the Board of Selectmen goals, but the mission is critical.

There was also discussion on the CNR projects like the buses and the Social Worker that was paid through ARPA funding. Ms. Heavner explained that needs to be funded out of capital reserves. There was also discussion on a classification study for job descriptions and technology improvements.

The Department Heads went through their reasons for their asks and how important the asks are for them. There was discussion on making an agreement with the Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association and Main Street Partnership. There was discussion on the SVAA needing an agreement with the Town before giving them money.

There was some discussion on the Chamber of Commerce and how that brings in economic development as well.

Policy Discussion & Wrap-up

Ms. Heavner said the budget is Town needs, Board of Education needs and the taxpayer needs. She said right now the budget is out of balance, so everyone needs to take another look at their budget proposals. She said the Board of Education is facing unfunded mandates at this time, so their budget needs to come down to 4.3%. The guidance to the Board of Selectmen was to bring it down 3.5%. The Board of Selectmen had contingency in their budget, so they won't need too many contingency cuts. She explained how the revenues and capital funding needs work. She talked about what is crucial this year and the use of different sources of funding. She asked that this Board prioritize their capital as well.

Mr. Nelson said the team is working on strategies and looking at every line item for savings to reach their goal. He feels they will be able to get to where they need to be.

Mr. Beal made a motion to adjourn the Budget Workshop at 4:55 p.m. Mr. Antonio seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathi Radocchio
Clerk