

**Board of Finance**  
**TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 5:45 P.M.**  
**In Person Meeting /Simsbury Community Media Live Stream**

**PRESENT:**

Lisa Heavner, Art House, Robert Helfand, Todd Burrick, Mike Doyle, and Art Wallace

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Amy Meriwether, Finance Director/Treasurer; Marc Nelson, Town Manager; Tom Fitzgerald, Deputy Town Manager; Melissa Appleby, Budget Director; Tom Roy, Public Works Director/Town Engineer; Tom Tyburski, Culture, Parks and Recreation Director; Orlando Casiano, Parks Superintendent; Lisa Miceli, Library Director; Nick Boulter, Police Chief; Chris Davis, Deputy Police Chief; Wendy Mackstutis, First Selectman; Steve Antonio, Deputy First Selectman; Curtis Looney, Selectman; Diana Yeisley, Selectman; Kevin Beal, Selectman; Heather Goetz, Selectman

**Call to Order - Establish Quorum**

Ms. Heavner called the meeting to order at 5:45 P.M.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Audience**

Ms. Heavner opened the floor to Public Audience.

Joan Coe, 26 Whitcombe Dr. spoke about Simsbury Meadows being on a flood plain related to the Performing Arts proposed project and said the project will be a drain on future budgets.

The proposed budget should include \$50,000 to fund the Simsbury Farms parking area drainage as this is a public safety issue.

She also spoke about the Simsbury volunteer ambulance services saying the taxpayers should not be supporting a failed business plan.

She said overall the approved budget should not place an undue burden on the taxpayers.

Lori Boyko, 15 Oakhurst Road, spoke about the Board of Education 4% budget saying that it should not be referred to as a “cut” because it was just a reduction of the 6% wish list they had hoped for. She mentioned how the residents are struggling financially and spoke about spending and noted some cost savings. She said there must be a balance between excellence and real people and family budgets.

Jeff Dornenburg, 225 Old Farms Road, Simsbury. Spoke as the current President of the Simsbury Performing Arts Center Board and asked for support in the budget for the performing arts project. He noted it represents a public private partnership and said he’s available to address any questions as needed.

**Presentation: Board of Selectman Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget**

Ms. Mackstutis presented the Board of Selectmen proposed budget for the FY 2024/2025. She started off with opening comments including thanking the Board of Selectmen members who had put time into preparing and their due diligence working on the budget. She went through the staffing positions needed to shape the Town Hall for the future. She mentioned she is a resident of the town and feels the burden of the tax increases. She noted they do not have the \$7.5M American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding this year which was used in previous years to improve town's assets and not create any fiscal cliffs. She also noted some tradeoff's residents will have to consider.

Ms. Mackstutis went through the budget goals, budget calendar, and a summary of the numbers. She reported on the Revenue assumptions and the grand list, past and projections. She presented the Operating Budget Changes and the staffing changes. She reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan and talked through the projects listed and the associated costs. She reviewed the CNR projects and their costs. The Board asked several questions which were discussed and addressed. Ms. Mackstutis and Mr. Nelson elaborated on the staffing needs and their overall approach to how they came to their final numbers. Ms. Heavner thanked the Board of Selectman for their work on the budget and followed up with some additional questions which were addressed. Ms. Heavner did request that the team keep pushing for the Henry James Middle School audit as there is approx. \$2M waiting to be used as soon as it's released. There was a lengthy discussion on the Splash Pad and additional questions from the Board.

The Board of Finance took a five-minute recess.

Following the break Ms. Yeisley spoke further on the splash pad project and the basis for approving the \$150K. She noted it would put the Town in a better position to apply for grants as the project would be "shovel ready."

**Budget Discussion**

Ms. Heavner provided an overview of the next steps in the budget process. Ms. Meriwether went through the Levy Calculator and talked in detail through two scenarios and how they affect taxes in the current year and the out years. The Board asked questions which were addressed. Ms. Heavner reiterated the amount of work that went into these scenarios and said the key factors they adhered to were that it is within their policies, there is no risk to their Aaa bond rating, and there's still a plan to use capital reserves in a methodical way. She added the biggest disadvantage is that the proposal only allows for \$5M a year (or \$10M biannually) in bonding which is less than the current plan and it will involve prioritization. Ms. Heavner said the Boards will have to revisit their CIP for the next meeting on April 3rd with this new direction in mind. She said it will help get the taxes down to 4.9%. Ms. Heavner explained the process they use for funding capital in the ensuing year and said the proposed scenario will limit how this is done, but it will help get them back on track. She added it will take discipline and comprises so it may not work. She added the community will have to decide if they want the Grand List to grow or do they want to pay more taxes. The Board agreed with the plan as presented and Ms. Heavner asked Ms. Meriwether to prepare motions to review on April 3rd.

Ms. Meriwether said the Quarterly reports will be ready for the April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting and Ms. Heavner said the motions will need to be done the same time.

Ms. Heavner mentioned the audit presentation is scheduled for Thursday and asked if anyone cannot make it to let her know so they have a quorum check.

Ms. Heavner went over the next steps in the budget process and the requirements in relation to the motions. Ms. Heavner added it will take some time for the motions to be drafted up because they are changing for this budget and bond counsel will need to review them. After the hearing once they hear from residents, they will have an opportunity to update the budget again if needed. Ms. Heavner added that public safety, maintain current assets, and perhaps spend to save should be their top priorities. Ms. Heavner reviewed the process and next steps in the upcoming hearing process.

**Approval of Minutes – March 5, 2024**

**MOTION:** Mr. Helfand made a motion, effective March 19, 2024, to approve the minutes from March 5, 2024, as submitted. Mr. Doyle seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

**Adjourn**

**MOTION:** Mr. Helfand made a motion, effective March 19, 2024, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 P.M. Mr. Doyle seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marion Lynott  
Commission Clerk