

**Board of Finance
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 7, 2023, at 5:45 P.M.
In Person Meeting /Simsbury Community Media Live Stream**

PRESENT:

Lisa Heavner, Arthur House, Derek Peterson, Robert Helfand, and Mike Doyle.

ALSO PRESENT:

Amy Meriwether, Director of Finance; Matt Curtis, Superintendent of Schools; Susan Lemke, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Neil Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent; Jason Casey, Director of Infrastructure & Technology; Susan Salina, Chair, Board of Education; Jeff Tindall, Board of Education; Sharon Thomas, Board of Education; Brian Watson, Board of Education and Tara Willerup, Board of Education.

1. Call to Order - Establish Quorum

Ms. Heavner called the meeting to order at 5:50 P.M.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Presentation: Board of Education 2023/2024 Budget

Mr. Curtis introduced his team and provided an overview of the Board of Education Budget. He reviewed this year's themes and priorities, and provided an overall budget number of \$82,386,678, which is an increase of \$5,255, 859 or 6.95% increase over last year's operating costs (inclusive of Non-Public Schools budget). He reviewed their Per-Pupil Expenditure, enrollment projections and the number of students receiving specialized education outside Simsbury. Mr. Doyle asked for clarification on the relationship between the schools and the school busses services, Salters. Mr. Sullivan provided the summary and Mr. Curtis reviewed the challenges involved around transportation. Ms. Heavner asked for a prioritized list of their CNR projects (Capital Reserve). She also mentioned completing the State Audit for the HJMS project so that the \$2M in savings could be used for future capital

Mr. Casey spoke about two Capital Improvement projects.

Discussion ensued. The Board followed up with questions and got clarification on the scope of the projects.

4. Budget Discussion

Ms. Meriwether presented the preliminary proposed budget and reviewed the numbers. The numbers included the amount needed to be collected from taxpayers which totaled \$105,677,868 or \$7,489,595 (7.63%) increase over last year. Ms. Meriwether reviewed the numbers in the Levy Calculation Worksheet and entered various numbers to show the different impact they would have. She then reviewed the numbers projected for the out years. Ms. Heavner said this year will see a large increase as will next year, and they will be evaluating all options to smooth the increase in the out years. She spoke further on the overall budget, the State Cap limits, its impact, and mentioned that hopefully the exemptions will help. She said they will be monitoring

it closely, especially next year and opened the floor to the Boards for comments and/or questions.

Ms. Salina and Ms. Willerup spoke about the numbers saying they thought it is responsible budget given the enrollment numbers and everything that has happened this year. Mr. Watson said he was happy with the process and that Mr. Curtis did a good job lowering it to where it is. Mr. Tindall also agreed that he thought it was a responsible budget.

Ms. Heavner asked the BOE to look for another \$750K in cuts to evaluate and get back to them. She said it's not a mandate, but a challenge and requested they do what they can to help the overall budget. Mr. House agreed and said there will be pain on both sides this year and it is a difficult process.

MOTION: Mr. Helfand made a motion, effective March 7, 2023, to request the Board of Education to take another look at the proposed budget numbers for FY 24 with the intent to reduce. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Heavner said that they haven't had a chance to hear the BOS presentation but given what they've just gone through with the BOE they anticipate that they will be asking for a number reduction also. She said initially in her thoughts she would be asking them to reduce it by \$300K – \$350K. This would be total reduction of around \$1M for the two Boards and Ms. Meriwether confirmed that would bring the mill rate down to 31.72 and it would have an impact on the taxes. The Board concluded that was a good ballpark reduction.

A discussion followed on finding any revenues that can be adjusted and Ms. Meriwether said she can review. Mr. Peterson asked how much revenue the State audits will release, and Ms. Meriwether said she will investigate that also. Ms. Heavner asks her to evaluate using Reserves to smooth the hump of debt services. She also recommended looking at the tax collection assumption rate for next year and cautioned that if this is done, they are cutting off the source for capital funding, so she wasn't sure if this was the right thing. She added that it might be worth looking at that over the summer when they do their policy review.

5. Adjourn

MOTION: Mr. Peterson made a motion, effective March 7, 2023, to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 P.M. Mr. Helfand seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Marion Lynott
Commission Clerk