

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:02p.m. on Zoom due to COVID-19. Present were: First Selectman Eric Wellman, Deputy First Selectman Sean Askham; Board members Mike Paine, Wendy Mackstutis, Chris Peterson and Jackie Battos. Others in attendance included: Town Manager Maria E. Capriola; Deputy Town Manager Melissa Appleby; Mike Glidden; Public Works Director Tom Roy; Tom Hazel; Town Engineer Jeff Shea; Kristen Formanek; Chief Baldis, Bob Crowther, Chairman of EDC, Chief Kevin Kowalski, and other interested parties.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING

a) Proposed Amendments to the Tax Abatement for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Personnel Ordinance

Mr. Wellman said the State has given communities the opportunity to increase the size of the tax abatement for volunteer first responders. If this passes, the annual cost of the program would double to approximately \$135,000 per year.

Mr. Wellman read comments from John and Virginia Tracey, who said these volunteers are heroes. They saved their home from total destruction at a fire at their home. Their training, teamwork, and attention to details was evident during this awful time. They support the increased tax abatement as these volunteers risk their own safety for their neighbors.

Mr. Wellman read comments from Harold Bender, who said he supports the tax abatement for the volunteers.

Mr. Wellman read comments from Jeff Holmes, who is the President of the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Co., who said the volunteers are very valuable. Training they receive and the response times they had are tremendous. A paid department would cost a lot more. These volunteers miss a lot of family events and holidays and have many sleepless nights. The Town has had a volunteer department for 76 years now. They deserve this increase.

Chief Baldis said the letters speak for themselves. He feels these volunteers do deserve this increase as it has been a long time since there was an increase in the abatement. He mentioned the horrible accident on Rte. 185 and how they volunteered to go and help.

Chief Kowalski said he was in favor of this increase and went through the increases. He said the firefighters have responded to approximately 650 calls per year at no cost for labor. They do a lot of training at no cost also. They require a minimum number of calls per year to be eligible for this abatement. These volunteers enjoy servicing their community. They are the best for this community. He asked that this ordinance be approved.

Ms. Mackstutis made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 6:11 p.m. after no further comments. Mr. Paine seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

- Email written comments to ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov by 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 14, 2020, to be read into the record; or
- Email tfitzgerald@simsbury-ct.gov by 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 14, 2020 to register to address the Board of Selectmen live through Zoom.

Mr. Wellman read a letter from Joan Coe, 56 Whitcomb Drive, who wrote about a picture note being shown at the September 29th meeting, a Hartford Courant article, the Town Manager’s contract, calendar of meetings, C-tech Solar, and other issues.

Mr. Wellman read a letter from Maria Ecke, who wrote about a letter addressed to Linda Schofield from Board of Finance, the Town Manager, rides, bulky waste and garbage pick-up, the Social Worker, Police issues, and other issues. Mr. Wellman said the letter would be posted on the Town Clerk’s site as it was too long to read with the five minute time limit.

PRESENTATION

a) Economic Development Commission Annual Report

Bob Crowther, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, gave a presentation on the Annual Report. He gave the roles of the EDC, gave the names of the Commission members, staff, and partners, their work stream projects, and accomplishments. Mr. Crowther also went through the approval process, marketing issues, incentives, their outreach, vision and support.

Mr. Crowther said the members do sit on Zoning and Planning as observers to better understand what people go through to get approvals. They would like to stay with the project presented to help build relationships.

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REPORT

Mr. Wellman, First Selectman, reviewed his First Selectman’s report.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

Ms. Capriola, Town Manager, reviewed her Town Manager’s report.

SELECTMEN ACTION

a) Tax Refund Requests

Mr. Peterson made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to approve the presented tax refunds in the amount of \$6,854.65, and to authorize Town Manager, Maria E. Capriola, to execute the tax refunds. Ms. Mackstutis seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

b) Acceptance of Donation from Big Y for the Simsbury Police Department’s Blue for Pink 2020 Campaign

Mr. Wellman said there is a pink Police car driving around Town to help focus on cancer awareness and raise money. This donation would help wrap one of the cruisers in pink.

Mr. Paine made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to accept a \$2,000 donation from Big Y to support the Simsbury Police Department’s Blue for Pink 2020 Campaign with our thanks. Ms. Battos seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

c) Application for Community Connectivity Grant - Firetown Road Sidewalk Extension

Mr. Wellman said the Town has the opportunity to apply for a grant that would help fund the construction for a sidewalk along Firetown Road. This is a high propriety in our Master Plan. The total cost of this project would be approximately \$600,000.

Mr. Roy said this is a critical link to allow connectivity from community development along West Street to the Middle School and Belden Court to Main Street. This is a very valuable link.

Mr. Peterson made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to apply for the 2020 Community Connectivity Grant as presented; and in the event that the grant is awarded, to accept the 2020 Community Connectivity Grant and to authorize Maria E. Capriola, Town Manager, to execute all documents related to the Grant award. Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

d) Road Acceptance for Hendricks Lane

Mr. Wellman said this is a new location for a 19 home sub-division on Climax Road. This would make it so that those residents can receive Town services. This has been reviewed by the Public Works Director, Planning Director, and Town Engineer.

Mr. Askham made a motion effective October 14, 2020, to refer the acceptance of Hendricks Lane roadway to the Planning Commission pursuant to CGS §8-24. Ms. Mackstutis seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

e) Proposed Public Gathering Permit – Wedding Event

Mr. Wellman said the Public Gathering Committee approved the application for a wedding event at the Flower Bridge on November 2nd.

There was discussion on making a contract of what can and can’t be done at these events, such as parking, alcohol, etc. Ms. Capriola said she will work on a contract. There was also some discussion on following up on the events to make sure things are being done properly.

Ms. Mackstutis made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to approve the Public Gathering Permit application and to authorize the issuance of the Public Gathering Permit for a wedding event. Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

f) Proposed Simsbury SPIRIT Council Statement of Purpose and Procedures

Mr. Wellman said this proposed Statement was brought before the Board and he introduced some of the members on the Council. Ms. Formanek said these policies and procedures are in line with others brought before the Board, like the Youth Service Bureau. She would like to see it moved forward.

Mr. Peterson made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to adopt the proposed Simsbury SPIRIT Council Statement of Purpose and Procedures as presented. Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

g) Request for Rent Abatement – Simsbury Farms Restaurant

Mr. Wellman said the Town received a letter from the operator of the Restaurant to reduce the rent because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The owner requested the Town forgive about \$9,200, but after discussion the amount was reduced to \$4,637.50.

Ms. Mackstutis made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to reduce the 2020 Simsbury Farms Restaurant lease payment by \$4,637.50 due to the impact of COVID-19 and to authorize Town Manager, Maria E. Capriola, to execute the proposed agreement and general release. Mr. Paine seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

h) Summary of Town Manager’s Performance Review

Mr. Wellman said the Board met in Executive Session last month to go through the six attributes and four goal areas as done in the past years. The Board agreed that she met her goals above their expectations.

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to accept the Town Manager’s Performance review summary. Ms. Mackstutis seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

i) Town Manager’s Employment Agreement, 2021-2025

Mr. Wellman said at the last Board meeting there was an issue with the three-year term. After discussion, the Personnel Sub-Committee recommended a four-year term instead. Mr. Wellman also noted this new Agreement does allow for an additional week of vacation and if the Town Manager unexpectedly passes away her family would be allowed to keep the insurance for three months. This offer would be passed on to all Town employees.

After some discussion, Mr. Askham made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to execute the Town Manager’s Employment Agreement between the Town of Simsbury, CT and Maria E. Capriola, for a four year term commencing on January 29, 2021 –January 29, 2025. Mr. Paine seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Askham made a motion to add agenda item j to vote on the proposed amendment to the Tax Abatement for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Personnel Ordinance. Mr. Wellman seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

j) Proposed Tax Abatement for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Employees

Mr. Wellman this was discussed at the Public Hearing and would allow the Town to increase the size of the Tax Abatement for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance employees.

Ms. Capriola said the only substantive change is to increase the dollar value of the tax abatement. She said there would be an increase for the current tax year, no increase for the next tax year, and the third year there would be an increase again.

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to adopt a proposed amendment to the tax abatement ordinance for the Volunteer Firefighter and Ambulance personnel as presented, which shall be effective 21 days after publication in the newspaper having circulation in the Town of Simsbury, and further move to authorize the summary of the adoptive ordinance be published. Ms. Battos seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

a) Appointment of Simsbury SPIRIT Council

Mr. Peterson made a motion, effective October 14, 2020, to appoint the following individuals to the Simsbury SPIRIT Council with terms to expire on December 6, 2021:

Dana Albrycht, Sara Batchelder, Carol Clark-Flanagan, Cheryl Cook, Meg Evans, Annalise Febar-Barlow, Mary-Margaret Girgenti, Lisa Grant, Tenesha Grant, Rebekah Hatch, Lloyd Huie, Chris Kelly, Nicole Kodak, Nkosi Lee, Gene Ott, and Diana Yeisley. Ms. Battos seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

a) Special Meeting of September 29, 2020

Ms. Mackstutis made corrections to the minutes of September 29, 2020 – page 6 there was no need for her second to the motion withdrawn from Mr. Askham. Also, under Board of Education, the school enrollment isn't down by 18%, although it is down.

SELECTMEN LIAISON AND SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Personnel –there was no report at this time.

b) Finance – there was no report at this time.

c) Welfare – there was no report at this time.

d) Public Safety – Mr. Wellman said the Public Safety Committee will be meeting tomorrow morning. He will give and update at the next Board of Selectman meeting.

e) Board of Education – Ms. Mackstutis said Matt Curtis's contract was renewed.

Ms. Mackstutis commented on questions received on the Elderly and Disabled Tax Credit. The change was to include trusts. She said the information is on the website.

COMMUNICATIONS

a) Memo from E. Wellman, re: In-Person Meetings, dated October 14, 2020

Mr. Wellman summarized his personal thoughts and challenges on in-person meetings. He does want to move back to in-person meetings as soon as safe. Masks would have to be worn.

After some discussion, including public audience still being by e-mail or letter, going back to their regular in-person jobs, and increases in illness in fall/winter season.

Mr. Wellman said that people who are not comfortable in returning, they would be able to participate remotely.

b) Memo from M. Capriola, re: Administrative Approval of Rain Date for Halloween Spooktacular Event, dated October 7, 2020

c) Memo From M. Capriola, re: Administrative approval of Public Gathering Permit, dated October 8, 2020

EXECUTIVE SESSION

a) Pursuant to CGS §1-200(6)(E), discussion of an exempt document.

Mr. Askham made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to CGS §1-200(6)(E), at 7:40 p.m. and to included Attorney Robert DeCrescenzo, Town Manager Maria E. Capriola and Deputy Town Manager Melissa Appleby. Mr. Paine seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

ADJOURN

Mr. Askham made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:38pm, Mr. Wellman seconded, all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathi Radocchio
Clerk