

TOWN OF SIMSBURY – BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 24, 2022
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CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:01 p.m. on Zoom due to COVID-19. Present were: First Selectman Wendy Mackstutis; Deputy First Selectman Amber Abbuhl; Board members Heather Goetz, Sean Askham, Chris Peterson and Eric Wellman. Others included: Town Manager Maria E. Capriola; Deputy Town Manager Melissa Appleby; Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation Tom Tyburski; Town Clerk Trish Munroe, and other interested parties.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING

a) Use of funds received by the Town through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

- email townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov by noon Monday, January 24, 2022 to register to address the Board of Selectmen live through Zoom
- written comments emailed to the townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov by Monday, January 24, 2022 will be read into the records

Susan Masino made a plea about doing things that need to be done but still haven't been done. She wants to be proactive with different issues. She spoke open spaces and understanding ecology, dredging ponds and health and well-being issues.

Elizabeth Burt, 12 Woods Lane, spoke about funding for the Pine Hill Homeowners Association sewers. They pay taxes and really need assistance for funding this project.

Jacqueline Crockett, 7 Brook Lane, said this is not the first time the Pine Hill Homeowners Association has asked for help with their sewers. The Homeowners Association has raised some funds, but it is not enough, and they really need help with this project.

Barbara Conroy, 8 Middle Lane, said the Pine Hill sewer pipes are not up to code and they really need to be replaced.

Jerry Litner, 22 Massacco Street, said there are two rounds of money coming in and he feels some of the money should be spent on the Flower Bridge. He will send the Selectmen, staff and Commissions a 21 page report on the Bridge corrosion. This Bridge is iconic to the community and should be saved.

Joan Coe spoke about the HVAC system at Town Hall, Police Department facility issues, air conditioning in schools, storage at Simsbury Farms, the SCTV space, pickle-ball courts, etc. She feels this funding should be used to serve long term problems.

Michael Ganis, Middle Lane, said the Pine Hill residents met with the WPCA on November 3, 2021 after it became evident that they could possibly receive some help from the Town about their sewer issues. Therefore, he is also asking for ARPA funding as they are an ecological disaster waiting to happen.

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Dan Diodato said that he would like the Board to consider the important environmental issue of the Pine Hill sewer system so the residents aren't displaced. This funding would be very beneficial to the homeowners.

Joyce Martins, 8 Woods Lane, requested that some of the funding go to the sewer issues at Pine Hills.

Gary Wilcox, President of the Simsbury Fire District, said there doesn't seem to be any consideration to include the Fire District in the ARPA funding. He said they are a separate municipal organization with separate taxing authority, and he would like to use a proportional share of these funds for the Fire District.

Ms. Mackstutis said the Board received some letters, which are in the Board's packet: Brandon Robertson asked for funding for the Farmington Valley Health District, which is a regional organization. Also, from The Friends of Simsbury Farms asked for some funding to help with the 50th anniversary project.

Ms. Mackstutis and Ms. Abbuhl read other letters on this issue.

Michael Smith feels the money should go back to the government. He feels it would help the country as we have to pay it back one way or the other anyways.

April Smith feels the money should be divided evenly amongst homeowners and not apartment dwellers.

Sandra Fleet asked the Selectmen to consider funding the Housing Authority, which provides affordable housing for the elderly and disabled. There are unforeseen expenses during this pandemic that they could use help with.

Jan Litner, Secretary of the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge, said the Bridge has been a respite and haven during the pandemic. This land is a very special place that needs major repair and she would like some of the ARPA funding to be spent on this property.

Janice Johnston also spoke about the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge being a great attraction for the Town. She said the Bridge is in desperate need of repair and maintenance and some funding should go to this.

Brin Brown also spoke about the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge as it is a great outdoor place for respite.

Stuart and Gail Yaffee would like to use some of the ARPA funding for pickle-ball courts. Pickle-ball is a great activity, especially for older residents.

Richard Giorgio asked for improvements to the outdoor recreation areas. He asked that portable bathrooms, a pond pavilion, removal of weed from the bottom of the pond. He also spoke about Dewey property having a picnic area and boat launch.

Pat Pursell said needs for the ARPA funds have arisen since COVID-19. She said people need to stay active and one way to do so is with pickle-ball. She feels Simsbury have dedicated courts.

Rich Murphy also spoke about seniors having restricted activities during COVID-19. He also wants some funding for pickle-ball courts in Tariffville.

Nancy Murphy said pickle-ball is a great activity for seniors. She would also like some funding for pickle-ball courts.

David Hartwell said he would like some of the funding to construct six pickle-ball courts as it is gaining in popularity.

Florie Manasia also spoke about pickle-ball courts. She said there should also be indoor pickle-ball courts so they can be used all year round.

Charlotte Couchon asked that some ARPA funding be used for the pickle-ball courts at Tariffville Park.

Borden Schofield said he supports the Town for the betterment of all residents. He is also asking for some funding for pickle-ball.

Mary and John Verbeke wrote in support of using some of the ARPA funding for pickle-ball. They are also asking that a bike path be created from Tariffville Park to the rail-trail.

The Simsbury Police Commission asked that the ARPA funding be spent on their 2023 fiscal year priorities as stated in their memorandum which was submitted to the Board on November 23, 2021. This includes more officers and CNR funding.

Nick Mason said he understands the competing needs of the residents. He said the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge brings economic vitality to the Town. He would like the bridges upkeep and maintenance kept up.

Christine Boswell was advocating for pickle-balls courts at Tariffville Park. She feels it will revitalize the Tariffville neighborhoods. The courts would provide many benefits to Simsbury residents.

Maxine Asnis wrote about the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge as it is a focal point of the Town, especially during the pandemic.

Diana Yeisley, Chairman of Aging and Disability, requested that the Board advocate funding for movable and accessible pathways for the handicapped to help navigate difficult facilities as they have less access for events and need to be included in every activity.

Diane Nash spoke about seniors being forgotten or ignored. They pay taxes and could use expanded busing services, less expensive delivery costs, freezing taxes, etc.

Evelyn Holland asked that the maintenance of the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge be funded with some of the ARPA money. Tourism is very important to our Town and this is a great outdoor space. This Bridge needs many repairs.

Kristi Warters said the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge is a wonderful place. It is very important to repair this Bridge and help is needed to maintain the Bridge.

Deeg Mackay and Sharene Wassell asked that some the ARPA funding go to the Drake Hill Flower Bridge as it is in need of upgrading and maintaining.

Ms. Mackstutis said there are a lot of ideas on how to spend the funding out there. COVID relief is one of the main priorities. The Board will also be looking at capital items and items that have a big impact to our residents. Residents can still email their thought to the Board for review after closing this hearing. There will be a future public hearing on these issues. The funding needs to be assigned by 2024 and the money needs to be spent by 2026. The Board has to vote on all of the uses.

Mr. Askham said there are a lot of different projects that the funding can be used for, and that this highest need areas will be prioritized.

Mr. Wellman said the work group is continuing to meet and he encouraged residents to watch the meetings.

Mr. Wellman made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 6:58 p.m. Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

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Bob Patricelli spoke about the State Police Firing Range. He spoke about the important meeting with State staff about reconsidering rebuilding the firing range in Simsbury. It was a flat denial for reconsideration. However, they did release a final consultant report on this issue. Because of the flood plain the building 14 ft. above the ground. He is urging the Board to take a position on this matter and to write a letter to the State in opposition of this project.

Joan Coe, 26 Whitcomb Drive, spoke about the Personnel Sub-Committee and union grievances, planning and community development interim director, and toxic work environments. She also spoke about an article in the Hartford Courant about a sticker on a car. This is being investigated. Ms. Coe also spoke about Meadowood Triangle and other issues.

Art House, East Weatogue Street, spoke about the State Police Firing Range and how it doesn't fit in a suburban neighborhood. He feels the State Police deserve an indoor modern facility when they can be trained with realistic events. He doesn't feel this building will look good sitting on stilts.

Christine Traficante spoke about the ambulance service being slow due to staffing issues. She is asking that the Simsbury ambulance be staffed with two ambulances 24/7. She spoke of her own wait-time experience. She asked about getting response time data, about a Selectman attending the Ambulance meetings and why two ambulances aren't scheduled 24/7. She would like steps to be taken to reduce the time for residents to get help.

Carl Meyer said they have been asking for data from the ambulance for five months now, but haven't received anything. He and 500 petitioning residents are asking for two ambulances to be staffed 24/7. He read some letters he received about wait times for emergencies. He thinks it is time to bid on this service.

PRESENTATION

a) Police Commission Budget Priorities

Ms. Mackstutis said this presentation has been postponed.

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REPORT

Ms. Mackstutis, First Selectman, reviewed her First Selectman’s report.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

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

Mr. Wellman made a motion to amend the agenda to add two appointments under Appointment and Resignations. Ms. Abbuhl seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Goetz made a motion to amend the agenda to add discussion on a draft letter to the Commissioner of Department of Administrative Services regarding the State Police Firing Range renovation project to Communications. Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

SUB-COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

- a) Personnel** – no report at this time.
- b) Finance** – no report at this time.
- c) Public Safety** – Mr. Askham said there will be a presentation on the Ambulance situation on February 14th at 5 p.m. before the regular Board of Selectmen meeting
- d) Board of Finance** –no report at this time.

Mr. Wellman said the SPIRIT Council will hold a 4-part historical awareness of race series in February. These are virtual programs that can be registered for on the Library website.

SELECTMEN ACTION

a) Tax Refund Requests

Mr. Wellman made a motion, effective January 24, 2022, to approve the presented tax refunds, in the amount of \$23,386.64, and to authorize Maria E. Capriola to execute the tax refunds. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

b) Ground License Renewal - Barndoor Hills Agricultural Property

Ms. Capriola said there are a number of agricultural parcels owned by the Town. This parcel has been leased by the current farmer since 2016 without any issues. The recommendation is to lease this parcel again to this farmer for a three year lease.

Mr. Peterson made a motion, effective January 24, 2022, to authorize the Town Manager to execute an amendment to the current Ground License with the Hall Family for a 3 year extension of the Ground License for the Town owned agricultural property at Barndoor Hills Road “East” (Parcels A & C – 17 acres) and the storage of produce in an existing Town owned barn located on parcel ID E04207001 (aka Barndoor Hill triangle). Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATION

a) Proposed Re-appointments and resignations of various Boards/Commissions

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective January 24, 2022, to approve the appointments/re-appointments as presented in the attached documents on the Board of Selectmen agenda. Mr. Wellman seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

b) Appointment of Jackie Battos as an alternate member of the Zoning Commission

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective January 24, 2022, to appoint Jackie Battos as an Alternate Member of the Zoning Commission. Ms. Goetz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

c) Resignation of Robert Helfand from the Board of Ethics

Ms. Abbuhl made a motion to accept the resignation of Robert Helfand as a Regular Member of the Board of Ethics retroactive to January 18, 2022 with our thanks. Mr. Wellman seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Wellman made a motion, effective January 24, 2022, to appoint Christine Boswell as a Regular member of Culture, Parks and Recreation, with a term expiring January 1, 2026, and Tucker Salls as an Alternate Member of the Zoning Commission with a term expiring December 4, 2023. Ms. Abbuhl seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

a) Regular Meeting January 10, 2022

Ms. Abbuhl made a motion to adopt the Regular Meeting minutes of January 10, 2022 with corrections under Liaison and Sub-Committee Reports. Ms. Abbuhl’s remarks in the second paragraph should not be about parking standards; Public Act 21-29 is in regards to governing accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and the Zoning Commission voted to opt out of the State statute and will send the Board of Selectmen an analysis that shows what the statute dictates regarding ADUs and what the Town of Simsbury regulations are. Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

COMMUNICATIONS

a) Memo from T. Munroe re: Discontinuing the issuance of Sporting Licenses by the Town Clerk’s office, dated January 10, 2022

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Ms. Capriola said the new Town Clerk is taking an opportunity to evaluate services provided by the Town and how efficiencies might be able to be achieved. The Town is not required to issue sporting licenses; they can be obtained online at the DEEP website, or in person at Dick’s Sporting Goods.

Ms. Munroe spoke about her staff being stretched and they are trying to streamline things. There are not many fishing/hunting licenses being distributed each year, and the Town only receives \$1 per transaction. Sometimes it takes over 15 minutes per transaction.

After discussion about these licenses being a service to residents, it was decided that this is a needed service to provide to the residents.

b) Memo from T. Munroe re: Notification of number of Electors and number of Polling Places, dated January 10, 2022 – there was no discussion at this time.

c) Memo from E. Wellman re: State Police Firing Range

Mr. Wellman said he learned that the State Police were looking at different options for the firing range. They chose to renovate the location in Simsbury even though it floods and would be on stilts. He is advocating the Board that the State Police need and deserve a training facility, but it doesn’t need to be in a residential area where automatic fire can be heard.

After discussion about this issue and how it is being discussed with Senator Witkos and Representative Hampton, it was decided to discuss further at the February Board of Selectmen meeting.

ADJOURN

Mr. Askham made a motion to adjourn at 8:05 p.m. Ms. Goetz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathi Radocchio
Clerk