

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices and via Zoom. Present were: First Selectman Wendy Mackstutis; Deputy First Selectman Amber Abbuhl; Board members: Heather Goetz, Chris Peterson and Sean Askham. Others in attendance included: Interim Town Manager, Nick Boulter, and Acting Deputy Town Manager Tom Fitzgerald.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING

a) Neighborhood Assistance Act Program Proposals

Ms. Mackstutis shared that at the last meeting, the Board of Selectmen scheduled a public hearing to receive public comment on the Neighborhood Assistance Act Program Proposals for the Simsbury Grange and Simsbury Community and Social Services Department.

Ms. Masino, 41 Madison Lane, spoke in favor of the program. It is money given out by the state every year to help community groups. She spoke regarding the updates the program has assisted them to accomplish.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

- Participants can address the Board of Selectmen in person at the meeting
- 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.

Joan Coe, 26 Whitcomb Drive, spoke about the Town's budget, taxes and lawsuits against the Town regarding property assessments. She also spoke about food truck permits in Town and police department recent gun upgrades

Jeff Dornenburg, 225 Old Farms Road, Chair of the Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center shared that it is an exciting season coming up. They have Little River Band in June, Talcott Mountain Music Festival all through July as well as Circus Smirkus and Brewstock in August. He thanked BOS and Town staff stating the paved lot and fence is amazing. They are also working with CPR to put in native plants and pollinator pathway.

Sarah Nielsen for Simsbury Mainstreet Partnership, shared that they have been hearing for many property owners this year regarding complaints about property values. Many cases property assessments have doubled, they are asking the BOS to help avoid costly litigation. She stated there is an unprecedented number of vacancies in Simsbury and they are pricing Simsbury so high that people are going to move to other towns.

David Richman, 52 Wood Duck Lane, commercial property owner, shared that increasing assessments force them to raise rents due to increased maintenance and utility costs.

Steve Antonio, 133 Holcomb Street, spoke regarding increase in commercial property values. He shared that the Town Assessor is saying that commercial properties increased in value 35.1% over the past 60 months. He stated they are being forced to sue themselves and they are the Town of Simsbury. The legal fees are also going to be expensive for the Town as it cannot be a class action suit.

Melissa Brett, 77 Seminary Road, spoke regarding commercial value assessments, stating they put their blood, sweat in tears in their properties, it is their retirement. Her taxes will be increases 23% with the new mill rate

Andy Andreo, 10 Sugar Hollow Lane, spoke regarding commercial property assessments. He shared that from 2017-2022 values went up 100% and he has no recourse other than a lawsuit and the cost of litigation is high.

Bill Daum, 19 Adams Road, spoke regarding commercial property assessments stating that these public audience members who spoke are also Simsbury residents so they are double tax payers.

Ms. Mackstutis suggested they talk to the Finance Director who works with the Assessor and there might be data that they can get to see what kind of trends there are.

Nord Christensen, Simsmore Square, shared that he is a 6th generation resident and has never seen anything like the present commercial property values. He stated that notices came out between Christmas and New Years, received half of them and had to call to get the others. He stated that they have 70 commercial/residential tenants and have been at 100% occupancy since 2009. They are not charging what they should get for rents. He is also expecting 10% increase across the board on insurance.

Matt Natcharian, 3 Ridgebury Road, shared that in over 5 years since they have been commercial property owners in Town, they haven't made any money on their property yet the valuation still goes up. They need more support in being successful.

Mike Beconsall, 18 White Oak Lane, on behalf of ISCC, spoke reminding everyone that small business ownership is the foundation of every town.

Susan Masino read a comment by Diane Nash, 5 Merrywood, regarding Simsbury's affordable housing proposal and Simsbury's eligibility for a moratorium as the latest housing proposal undermines the principles and objectives of Simsbury's core values.

Susan Masino, 41 Madison Lane, spoke regarding the inclusive housing forum she attended. She would like the town to get on a positive path on this. She also stated the Grange Fair is on June 10th. The second episode in the beaver wildlife series is this Thursday.

Mr. Peterson spoke regarding the public comments on commercial property values, and how much he is part of the small business ecosystem. He stated he feels that no one on the BOS doesn't want to respond to their requests to the depth that they can and he appreciates everyone coming out tonight.

PRESENTATIONS

a) LGBTQ+ Pride Month Proclamation, Pride Flag Raising Ceremony

Proclamation Recognizing June 2023 as LGBTQ+ Pride Month in Simsbury

Whereas, the Town of Simsbury is committed to supporting the visibility, dignity, and equity for everyone in our community and affirms our obligation to protect the most vulnerable among us; and

Whereas, Simsbury recognizes the contributions of LGBTQ+ residents, students, employees, and business owners to the cultural and civic fabric of our town and remains committed to protecting their civil rights in our unified effort to forge a more open and just society; and

Whereas, advancements have been made with respect to equitable treatment of LGBTQ+ people throughout the nation, but there continues to be discrimination, injustice and acts of hate making it important for towns like Simsbury to stand up and show support for members of our community who identify as LGBTQ+; and

Whereas, Simsbury joins many cities and towns across the United States in recognizing and celebrating June as LGBTQ+ Pride Month as a commitment to standing in solidarity with all LGBTQ+ Americans; and

Whereas, the rainbow flag is widely recognized as a symbol of pride, inclusion, and support for social movements that advocate for LGBTQ+ people in society; and

Whereas, the Pride Walk along Iron Horse Boulevard serves as Simsbury’s ongoing and unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and

Whereas, we ask for and encourage everyone to reflect on ways we can all live and work together with a commitment to mutual respect and understanding; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, Members of the Simsbury Board of Selectmen, hereby proclaim June 2023 Pride Month in the Town of Simsbury, in support of our LGBTQ+ community and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the rainbow flag will be raised on this day, June 1st, 2023, recognizing all LGBTQ+ members of our community whose influence, advocacy and contributions to our neighborhoods make the Town of Simsbury a vibrant community in which to live, work and play.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, we have placed our signatures and the great seal of the Town of Simsbury.

Dated the 22nd day of May 2023.

Wendy Mackstutis
First Selectman

Amber Abbuhl
Deputy First Selectman

Sean Askham
Selectman

Chris Peterson
Selectman

Heather Goetz
Selectman

Eric S. Wellman
Selectman

Move, effective May 22, 2023, to endorse a Proclamation in honor of Pride Month. Further move, to authorize the Pride Flag to be raised outside of Town Hall for the month of June 2023.

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REPORT

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

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

Mr. Boulter, Interim Deputy Town Manager, reviewed the Town Manager’s Report.

LIAISON AND SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. **Personnel** – no report at this time.
- b. **Finance** – no report at this time.
- c. **Public Safety** – no report at this time.
- d. **Board of Education** –no report at this time.

Ms. Goetz shared that The Friends will begin collecting used books for the book sale starting next week.

Ms. Abbuhl shared that the Senior Center will be closed on Monday for the holiday.

SELECTMEN ACTION

a) Tax Refund Requests

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective May 22, 2023 to approve the presented tax refunds in the amount of \$283.16, and to authorize Interim Town Manager, Nicholas J. Boulter, to execute the tax refunds. Ms. Abbuhl seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

b) Neighborhood Assistance Act Program Proposals

Mr. Peterson made a motion, effective May 22, 2023 to approve the Neighborhood Assistance Act Program applications as presented and to authorize Interim Town Manager Nicholas J. Boulter to submit the application to the Department of Revenue Services. Further move to designate Acting Deputy Town Manager Thomas Fitzgerald as the municipal liaison. Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

c) 55 Hoskins Road Easement (Map H05 Block 103 Lot 024)

Ms. Goetz made a motion, effective May 22, 2023 to authorize Interim Town Manager Nicholas J. Boulter to execute an easement on land owned by DESRI TVS REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS LLC to the Town of Simsbury for the purposes of constructing, using and maintaining outdoor classroom area for use by Squadron Line School of way on the southwest side of 55 Hoskins Road on Assessor Map ID H05, Block 103, Lot 024. Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

d) Proposed Public Gathering Permit – Art on the Green

Ms. Mackstutis shared this event will be held on June 4th on the Tariffville Green and it is a new event.

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective May 22, 2023, to approve the public gathering application for the Art On The Green Vendor Market and to authorize the issuance of the public gathering permit for the event. Ms. Goetz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

e) Proposed Public Gathering Permit – Brewstock

Ms. Mackstutis shared that this is a new event at SPAC in August with 8 breweries coming, the ticket includes sampling.

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective May 22, 2023, to approve the public gathering application for the Brewstock event and to authorize the issuance of the public gathering permit for the event. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Ms. Abbuhl commented that the DD ticket price was an important consideration.

f) Proposed Public Gathering Permit – Juneteenth Celebration

Ms. Mackstutis shared that this event will be held in conjunction with a few neighboring towns and will be held at the SPAC.

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective May 22, 2023, to approve the public gathering application for the Juneteenth Celebration 2023 and to authorize the issuance of the public gathering permit for the event. Ms. Abbuhl seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

g) Termination of Local Emergency Order Related to COVID

Mr. Askham made a motion, effective May 22, 2023 to authorize Interim Town Manager Nicholas J. Boulter and First Selectman Wendy Mackstutis to execute the Termination of Local State of Emergency related to COVID. Ms. Abbuhl seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Askham made a motion to amend the agenda to include item h) a discussion giving direction to town staff or not on what their options might be for the tax appeal process. Ms. Mackstutis seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Askham shared that his understanding is that the process is extremely regimented from a state statute standpoint. He stated that if it is the consensus of the Board they can empower Mr. Boulter and Mr. Fitzgerald to work with counsel to find out what options there might be. He also encouraged all property owners to exercise all their appeal options. Ms. Mackstutis shared that she would be interested in getting some metrics regarding how many commercial businesses reached out to the reval company in that initial period and then second, had to go to the Board of Assessment Appeals and then third how many are seeking litigation. Ms. Abbuhl stated she thinks they should have the Town’s attorney not only advise on what the process is going forward but also take a look at some of the methodology to see if it drove some of the valuations. Ms. Goetz shared that she agrees that they need to at least explore it as it does sound like the assessments have been quite surprising.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

a) Appointment to Simsbury Youth Service Bureau Advisory Board

Ms. Abbuhl made a motion, effective May 22, 2023, to appoint Story McCarty (Student) as a non-voting youth member of the YSB, with a term to expire on June 7, 2024, upon her graduation. Ms. Goetz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Ms. Mackstutis confirmed that no one had a conflict for the next meeting as it is during high school graduation.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

- a) May 8, 2023 Regular Meeting**
- b) May 15, 2023 Special Meeting**

No changes were made to the May 8, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes or the May 15, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes. Ms. Mackstutis declared the minutes approved and requested that they be put on record.

COMMUNICATIONS

a) Memo from N. Boulter re: Administrative Approval of Public Gathering Permits, dated May 18, 2023

ADJOURN

Mr. Askham made a motion to adjourn at 7:14 p.m. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully
submitted,
Heather Taylor
Clerk