

From: Susan Mazurski February 4, 2010 11:06:30 AM
Subject: Board of Selectmen Minutes 01/30/2010 BUDGET WORKSHOP
APPROVED
To: SimsburyCT_SelectMin
Cc:

TOWN OF SIMSBURY – BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP
January 30, 2010

CALL TO ORDER

The Budget Workshop was called to order by First Selectman Glassman at 9:07 AM. In attendance were John Hampton, Robert Hensley and Lisa Heavner. Thomas Herlihy arrived at 9:28 am.

First Selectman Glassman introduced all of the Selectmen to members of the Library Board of Directors. She asked that all stand for the pledge of allegiance. She also asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

Susan Bullock, Director of the Library First Selectman Glassman complimented the Library Director and the Board on coming in so low with their budget. She also gave an overview of the financial situation that the Town is facing, with the reduction in revenues from many sources. She mentioned that with all of the Department requests, the proposed budget has risen 5%.

Ms. Bullock gave an overview of her budget by category. She said that if they do not receive full funding, they will not sink into despair, they will keep moving ahead. She and the Board understand the problems with the budget. Around 100 volunteers help run the library programs. They have started many programs at no cost to the Town, but she needs a core group of staff to keep things running. They reached that core level two years ago. The Library used to have 23.7 full time people, and they are now down to 20.98 (this includes one grant position). As the staff numbers were declining, the library doubled in size. Everyone is committed to having the best possible library. Her proposed budget does not have any new services or programs and it does not meet core service level needs. There is no teen position and the library is not open a full compliment of hours. There is no web site development money in the budget and no books will be purchased for MP3s.

Selectman Hensley said he did see money in the budget for web site development. Ms. Bullock said she has applied and received a federal grant for automatic check-out. The web site development has to do with the Library's web site and enhancing it, but not redoing the entire site.

If the Board and she have to cut the budget to a zero increase, instead of the present 1.25%, there will be no new purchases of music CDs and fewer books.

First Selectman Glassman asked if there could be any savings by reducing utility costs.

Ms. Bullock said that Tom Roy, Director of Public Works, is going to apply for a grant to change the circuits to reduce electricity. It has also helped that the folding doors were finally fixed.

First Selectman Glassman said that she has seen the results of an Energy Audit that Mr. Roy has received on the Library and there are ideas for savings, example – shutting down the computers at night. Ms. Bullock said she has not seen this but will ask Mr. Roy for a copy.

Selectman Heavner asked what the optimum temperature for the Library is. Ms. Bullock said 72 degrees during the day and 67 degrees at night. She said that her and Mr. Roy are working together to see if they can shut it down lower and Mr. Roy is looking at the HVAC system, as some areas of the library are too hot. First Selectman Glassman said that the Town took action to lower the temperatures in all of the buildings they own.

Ms. Bullock said that her budget is divided into four parts. The increase in the equipment account is due to the increased cost of telephone maintenance.

First Selectman Glassman asked if they still mail out bills for fines, etc. Ms. Bullock said they no longer do this. This year, they expect to raise \$52,000 in revenues.

Ms. Bullock went on to review the Adult Services budget. First Selectman Glassman thanked the Board members for their interest in Teen services. She thought they should look at regionalizing teen services or work with the Teen Center to enhance the programming.

Selectman Heavner asked how the Library staff interacts with the High School and Middle School staff. Ms. Bullock responded that the Library has

a very active teen program in the summer, and also an improv theater group. They do programs for both schools, as their libraries have been cut way back and only have books that deal with the curriculum. The Library has some databases that are just for teens, such as the SAT testing database.

Selectman Heavner said that school libraries have cut way back; so much, that it is hard for the kids to even use them. She asked if the Library staff works with the teachers to enhance their special projects. Ms. Bullock said yes, but elementary school teachers are best at interacting with the Library staff. The Library also has special collections that the staff can put together for the elementary school teachers.

First Selectman Glassman said that there should be one staff person who is assigned to each school. Ms. Bullock said that is what they try to do.

Charmaine Glew, Chairperson of the Library Board, said she has heard complaints that the Town library closes early, so the students cannot get into the library. First Selectman Glassman said perhaps they could keep the library open later one evening. A discussion ensued as to which night might be the best night for kids to use the library with their typical schedules.

Selectman Hensley asked if there was any staff interaction with the private schools. Ms. Bullock said that Westminster School just built a beautiful new library. Some of the teachers bring their students to the Town's library. There can be no fee for Library programs.

First Selectman Glassman said that the Social Services Department has speakers on youth issues and other topics, so perhaps if other Departments are having these types of events, the Library could publicize these programs by setting aside books or film, etc. that have a similar theme. She asked Ms. Bullock to work with other Departments to make sure she is aware of what they are doing for programming, so they coordinate publicizing these events to as many citizens as possible.

Ms. Bullock explained the Children's Services budget. She discussed the new theme packs that the Library staff put together for parents. The Library offers programs for special need children with their parents.

Selectman Heavner asked what the average number of people that go into the library per day. Ms. Bullock said 800-900. Selectman Herlihy asked how many days per year is the library closed. Ms. Bullock said that the Library is closed all Town holidays and during the summer months, they shorten the days and times.

Ms. Bullock reviewed the Buildings and Grounds budget. She said that it is the same budget as last year. They are using less in the area of refuse disposal.

Selectman Herlihy said that natural gas prices have dropped considerably and will thus allow for some relief in the Library budget.

First Selectman Glassman said that the Town locked in natural gas prices for one year for all Town buildings.

Deputy Selectman Hampton told the Library Director and Board congratulations on a well done budget. He said that while he was laid off, the Business Resource Center was so helpful and the staff was terrific. With the unemployment rates so high, the library is key to people for jobs and camaraderie. He would hate to lose the grant position in the technology center as the work being done by the staff person is fantastic. A lot of people have commented on what a great job the person does in that role.

Gail Ryan, Library Board Member, said that Charmaine does a great job with the Friends' book sale and as Chairperson of the Board. Without the Friends of the Library, the library could not do all that it does.

Ms. Bullock said that when she started working at the library, their budget was 2% of the total Town budget; now it is 1.5%.

First Selectman Glassman mentioned the National Award that will be announced on Wednesday and hopes the Library Board members can attend this event. Although she cannot go into any details, she said the process will involve voting on computers, so perhaps the Library could set up a computer or two for this purpose.

Selectman Hensley said that 90% of the youth in Simsbury have library cards and that is an amazing number.

Selectman Herlihy commended Ms. Bullock, the Library Board and the Friends of the Library. As a business owner, he has received excellent service and assistance from them.

Gerard Toner, Recreation Director Mr. Toner said that he tried to maintain his budget at the same amount as last year.

First Selectman Glassman asked about the report that was due on options for

the Memorial Pool. Mr. Toner said that the Parks and Recreation Committee formed a subcommittee to look at this topic and they will have their first meeting next week. First Selectman Glassman said that the Selectmen will need their final report during this budget period. Mr. Toner said that if the report is needed quicker, they could move faster. First Selectman Glassman asked if the pool can open this year. Mr. Toner said yes, as he brought in a consultant to check the status of the pool. It does have issues, but can open. First Selectman Glassman said that she would like to have a list of different options for the pool by the beginning of March.

Selectman Heavner asked what the foot traffic is for the Memorial Pool vs. the other pools. Mr. Toner said less than others; it has become more like a neighborhood, community pool. Mr. Toner said they receive about 7% of their revenues from this pool.

Selectman Hensley said that if the pool is closed, you probably will never get it back in operation. Mr. Toner said different programs have been added, which has enhanced participation. Selectman Hensley said that it is important to receive feedback on what the citizens want to do with the pool. First Selectman Glassman said that Mr. Toner could work on putting together a survey through the Town's Survey Monkey software.

Selectman Hensley said that through the charette process, the Town wants to build a walkable community, but if we close the pool, future residents wouldn't be able to use this pool for programs. The future of Simsbury may mean keeping this pool open and working properly. First Selectman Glassman said that there is a walkable path to the pool and it's not that far from downtown. Everyone needs to be creative when looking at the future of Memorial Pool.

Mr. Toner reviewed the maintenance budget for Parks and Open Space. These two areas are a priority for his Department. In the future, user groups must assist more with the maintenance. They emphasize maintenance for all Town owned property. First Selectman Glassman said that not all groups are stepping up to the challenge at the same level. Mr. Toner said that they are trying to come up with an equal and uniform level from all groups. Some towns charge \$25 per participant to go towards the maintenance costs; we charge \$5. The Parks and Recreation Committee will look at these fees. His concern is that the surcharge is placed on each player and his/her family, and it is very hard for families to meet this in this economy.

Mr. Toner mentioned that the greenway is taking on more maintenance and the staff maintains 35 fields, 400 acres of park and 1200 acres of open space.

First Selectman Glassman said that 50% of Mr. Toner's salary is now in the general fund. She is requesting that this be moved into the Simsbury Farms budget and asked what impact this would have on the Parks budget. Mr. Toner said that he and his staff are meeting on this.

First Selectman Glassman asked if his budget equates to no new programs. Mr. Toner said yes.

Deputy Mayor Hampton asked about the status of Schultz Park. Mr. Toner said a Committee has been formed to work on this. Everyone wants to see the park better utilized. The park is off the street, so it is important that they open up the front, so people know that it exists.

Selectman Hensley said that the Memorial Pool is right above this park. It would be important to try and link the two areas. Selectman Heavner mentioned that Tom Roy, Director of Public Works, is looking at what paths are around Town, and perhaps Mr. Toner should work with Mr. Roy to develop this list. It would be great to have a bike path for kids to go from the pool to the park. First Selectman Glassman said that signage will be very important.

Selectman Herlihy asked about the fountain near Abigail's. First Selectman Glassman said that the fountain is run by a Trust and this is now in Probate. They don't have the money to maintain the fountain and pay for the water. The Historical Society is interested in taking this over.

Deputy Selectman Hampton asked for a list breaking out the costs to maintain each park. First Selectman Glassman said that Mr. Toner and Mr. Roy are working on putting this together, so the Town will have a master list. From there, they can figure out the costs to maintain each park, schedule to maintain each park, and when to maintain them.

First Selectman Glassman said that this Department had lost staff through the years, but the Town has given them more properties to maintain.

Selectman Herlihy asked if the Town monitors swimming at the ponds. Mr. Toner said no, but the areas are posted that there is no lifeguards or supervision. He asked that the ponds having no supervision be placed on the website. First Selectman Glassman said that once cleaned, it won't cost a lot of money to maintain the ponds.

Gerard Toner, Recreation Director – Simsbury Farms/Special Revenue Fund

Mr. Toner said that this budget includes all programs but the Memorial Pool. The revenue fund should be self-sustaining, but in the last few

years the General Fund has had to give \$65,000 per year to balance out the budget. This year, the fund has a very small fund balance for the first time.

He explained which salaries are in this account. The biggest challenge for this Department is utility costs. He has seen an increased use of the pools. The biggest piece of the fund is the golf course. Revenue for the golf course has increased but play is going down. They are marketing more and giving special and discounts. There was a survey done this year for the golfers as to what is most important for improvements and way the staff could improve things there.

Selectman Herlihy asked why usage was down. Mr. Toner said it is partly the economy and there have been new golf courses built in the region. He feels if you can get people to go to the Simsbury Golf Course, then they will return. Selectman Herlihy asked if the clubhouse serves only beer and wine. Mr. Toner said yes.

First Selectman Glassman asked if there were any questions on non golf course related items. Selectman Herlihy asked if the usage of the tennis and paddle courses were also down. Mr. Toner said no. Selectman Herlihy asked about the numbers for the pools and hockey. Mr. Toner said the pools are up and the hockey rink is level.

First Selectman Glassman said that with the economy, people are staying much closer to home, and perhaps we should be looking at new and different programs. The Town has offered the same programs for the last 25 years, and it is time to be creative and think of new things to offer our citizens. Mr. Toner said the Parks and Recreation Committee as well as the Simsbury Farm Committee is looking to offer programs that are more affordable and different. First Selectman Glassman also

mentioned that programs that are not working, or have low usage should be eliminated.

Selectman Herlihy asked if Parks and Recreation works with the Library for joint programming. Mr. Toner said no. First Selectman Glassman asked Mr. Toner to work with the Library staff to develop joint summer programs.

First Selectman Glassman asked Mr. Toner about his Capital Improvement Program list. She asked where the figures are for the Simsbury Farms Main Building. Mr. Toner said that Mr. Sawitzke, Town Engineer, and the Building Committee are looking at this project. First Selectman Glassman said that she needs this report for budget deliberations. Selectman Heavner asked that the plan also include a new phase, along with

renovations. Selectman Hensley said the Parks and Recreation Commission had already discussed this and is on top of it.

First Selectman Glassman asked for questions about the golf course. Selectman Heavner asked whether they had considered going to businesses in Town to offer them discounts for their employees, or to have them sponsor events for their staff. Mr. Toner said they do have corporate rates. First Selectman Glassman and Selectman Heavner both agreed that the golf course should have targeted nights for certain businesses. Mr. Toner will look into this.

Gerard Wetjen, Chairman of the Men's Club, said that the PGA is giving stipends to courses on a national basis to encourage new golfers. The person makes a commitment for one week.

Selectman Hensley asked if the rounds were up at all. Tom West, Chair of the Simsbury Farms Committee, said no but the revenues are up due to fee increases. The highest number of rounds in a single year was 50,000, and now they are below 40,000. His goal is to raise the play from 40,000 – 45,000. Selectman Heavner asked that they work with The Main Street program to perhaps develop a partner deal with an area restaurant and playing golf. Mr. Toner said he would try to work with the corporations to put together a program to come experience everything at the Farms area and not just golf. First Selectman Glassman asked for Mr. Toner to bring back his marketing ideas to the entire Board during budget deliberations.

Mr. Toner reviewed equipment requests. Selectman Heavner asked whether equipment can be shared with other golf courses. Mr. Toner said no, as everyone is using their equipment at the same time. They could share bigger pieces of equipment that are not used every day, but equipment you need every day cannot be shared. Selectman Herlihy asked if the present rake is falling apart. Mr. Toner said it was 10 years old and needs to be replaced. All of their equipment is old.

Mr. Toner also reviewed the Park vehicle requests.

Selectman Heavner asked how much the golf fees were raised for next year. Mr. Toner said the Parks and Recreation Committee is talking about a 2.6% increase, which is around 50 cents. Selectman Herlihy said he is surprised that the rate is not going up a whole dollar. Chairman West said that they are just trying to cover their expenses and due to the economy, they would like to keep it at 50 cents. He would like the Selectmen's OK to be flexible with the rates, depending on how the day's reservations are looking and the weather. Selectman Herlihy asked if you can do that with the published rates, since the rates are already on the form. Mr. Toner

said they would have to work on how to do this.

Mr. Toner also commented that they are trying to get families out to the course. The pro is looking at doing a short course, because playing full rounds of golf takes quite a lot of time. He is also working with the junior high school to peak interest in younger people playing golf. Mr. West commented that the pace of the play is also important, as you must keep people moving around the course.

First Selectman Glassman introduced Gerry Wetjen, Chair of the Men's Club, to discuss his concept of a surcharge to be put on the golf rates that would go exclusively into a capital account for golf course improvements. Mr. Toner said that Mr. Wetjen has discussed this concept with the Parks and Recreation Commission and in some ways, people agree on this concept, but Commission members do not want to hurt the number of rounds even more.

Selectman Hensley said when the Parks and Recreation Commission decided on fees, they didn't know they had to absorb more expenses, so the fees should go back to the Commission to relook at all fees. First Selectman Glassman said that perhaps the price could be raised \$1.00 with 50 cents going towards operating expenses, and 50 cents toward the capital fund reserve for the golf course.

Chairperson West would like all of the money to go to the revenue/operating fund. The Board of Finance told the Board of Selectmen that all golf improvements must be paid for from user fees.

Selectman Hensley asked whether people could donate voluntarily toward a capital reserve fund, and do not make it mandatory. He thinks many people would do this.

Mr. Toner felt it would be better to have the rounds begin rising first, and then look at a surcharge. If, at the end of 5 years, they cannot pay for capital, then put on a surcharge. The most important thing right now is giving the pro and the staff flexibility to change fees each day if it is warranted. Selectman Hensley said that

this is done with many golf courses across the country. He has seen this with e-mails from Florida that he receives on his computer.

Selectman Heavner said it is more cost efficient to increase rounds, than raise the fees.

Selectman Herlihy said that he is not sure who to thank, but the golf

course has had an enormous amount of improvements in the last 10 years. Mr. Toner said a lot of that has to do with the budget increases they have received and Golf Superintendent Mike Wallace's performance.

Mr. Wetjen reviewed his concept of a golf surcharge. He handed out a summary sheet on his idea.

First Selectman Glassman said that she wants to pursue the voluntary donation concept that will go towards the CIP. Bonnie Therrien, Interim Director of Administrative Services, will work on this, as she has experience with the surcharge in Berlin for the Timberlin Golf Course.

Mr. Wetjen asked whether people can donate money towards the golf course as a bequest, and if so, how you do this. Ms. Therrien will research this.

A motion was made by Selectman Hensley, seconded by Selectman Heavner to go into Executive Session for Union Negotiations at 12:12 pm. It was an unanimous vote. A motion was made by Deputy Selectman Hampton; seconded by Selectman Hensley to come out of Executive Session at 12:19 pm. The vote was unanimous.

A motion was made by Selectman Herlihy to adjourn at 12:20 pm; seconded by Selectman Hensley. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Therrien, Interim Director of Administrative Services