

TOWN OF SIMSBURY - BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 27, 2012

CALL TO ORDER

The Budget Workshop Meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 5:07 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Present were: First Selectman Mary Glassman; Board members Moira Wertheimer, John Hampton, Lisa Heavner, Nancy Haase and Sean Askham. Other interested parties in attendance were Thomas Cooke, Susan Bullock, Mary Ann Harris, Thomas Roy and Hiram Peck.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Joan Coe, 26 Whitcomb Drive, complained that there were no hard copies of the budget for the public; not everyone has internet access. Mrs. Glassman informed her that copies are available and will get one to her. Mrs. Coe is against restoring the Library hours.

It was agreed that Mrs. Coe will make her comments on each topic as it comes up.

Residents who appeared before the Board to show their support for giving back the hours:

Ms. Rogers, Guidance Counselor from Simsbury High School; Lynn Crane, 4 Weatherly Road;
Jewel Gutman, 8 Daniel Lane; Mary Margaret Horan, Hopmeadow St.; Cathy Chamberlain, Crestwood Road; Nancy Bugbee, Fox Den Road and Rob from Riverside Road.

Ann Marie Potter, Simsbury Bike Walk, supports Rich Sawitzke's request for \$90,000 for capital maintenance for our multi use trails; paving on West Street, a section along the Greenway and commented that Federal and State governments are quick to build the trails but don't maintain them. Simsbury needs to commit to maintenance.

Ms. Glassman thanked everyone for their input and expressed the hope that they would all stay involved in the budget process. She also passed around a public comment sheet.

Library

Ms. Glassman introduced Marianne O'Neil, Chairman of the Simsbury Library Board of Trustees. Ms. O'Neil thanked everyone at the meeting for their support of the Library. She listed the services offered by the Library: books, services, computer information, children's room, summer reading program, tutoring, SAT prep and the Business Resource Center to name a few. She noted that the Library is an invaluable resource to the Town and makes Simsbury a great place to live.

As a result of cutbacks the Library had to reduce their hours by 6 to meet budget. She clarified that they are looking for \$36,000 which is staffing with 1 Reference Librarian, 2 Circulation Clerks upstairs and 2 downstairs in the Children's Room with a Page in the Technical area and 1 Reference Librarian. All staff

would be part time with no benefits added. Ms. O'Neil referred to the 2 surveys that were conducted regarding the Library hours, the most recent one that was sent to 1500 residents asking about restoring the hours, out of a total of 413 responses 351 or 85% said yes and 62 or 15% said no. The second question asked if the household would be willing to spend .40 cents per month to restore these hours. The response was 339 or 83,3% in favor and 68 said no, which is 16.7%.

Ms. O'Neil then turned the floor over to Susan Bullock, Library Director. Ms. Bullock discussed new trends in the country and the world that affect the Library. She mentioned that the age group between 18 and 24 is experiencing a high rate of unemployment. Young Entrepreneurs classes have been established with the help of business leaders in the community to aid this group. Downloadables are also in high demand; the need for tutoring has increased and self-employment is also a big trend. Circulation has increased steadily and the use of our Business Resource Center has grown tremendously. Visits to the Library have topped over a quarter of a million per year.

The Simsbury Public Library is recognized nationally and is a contributing factor in the quality of life in the town. Ms. Bullock referred to letters of thanks from residents for their services during Storm Alfred and also some letters from satisfied Library patrons.

Ms. Bullock stated that the reduced hours bring the Library to a total of 48 hours per week which has changed the national ranking from #2 to #6. She assured the Board of Selectmen that the Library Board has been diligent in making sure that costs are managed. Some efforts were deciding to close on some holiday weekends, endorse self-service check in and check out, send all notices by e-mail, they have automated as much as possible. Another effort to contain costs is making smarter use of volunteers – there are 214 which is the equivalent of 9 full timers. She also acknowledged the excellent work that Jennifer Keohane does with the Business Resource Center.

Ms. Glassman confirmed with Ms. Bullock that \$20,000 would be enough for the Library to restore these additional 3 hours and that would be what the money would be used for.

Ms. Glassman confirmed that the Board of Selectmen would carry the \$20,000 forward on their Wish List for consideration as part of an overall review at the end of the process.

Social Services

Mickey Lecours-Beck, Social Services Director presented her budget to the Board.

Joan Coe, 26 Whitcomb Drive, commented that Mickey is doing a fine job but she would like to see an outreach program at Eno Farms, Owen Murphy Housing, making them aware of available programs.

Ms. Lecours-Beck explained to Mrs. Coe that there is an outreach program in place and the Town also has a friendly visitor available to shut ins and she spends a lot of time at the Owen Murphy Housing complex.

At this time, Ms. Lecours-Beck is requesting that 3 items be added to the Social Services budget: an additional 2% to the Dial A Ride contract, an additional 1 meal per week at the Senior Center which would be a pilot program and \$1,000 more to the Equipment Rental account to provide an additional Dial A Ride trip to the mall.

Ms. Glassman praised Ms. Lecours-Beck and Ms. Marschall for their work in the Social Services Dept. She informed Ms. Lecours-Beck that all of the money for the SSD requests have been put into the budget.

Ms. Glassman asked about the Teen Center. Ms. Lecours-Beck explained that the \$8,000 is in the Community Budget that goes to the Teen Center. SSD uses this as a match with the State in order to get other funding. Ms. Lecours-Beck is comfortable with their services. It was suggested that the Teen Center Director, Carla Marciano, be asked to make a presentation at a Budget Workshop on what goes on with the Teen Center.

Land Use/Economic Development

Mrs. Coe thanked the staff for getting the paperwork together. She is concerned with certain issues with the budget and thanked Ms. Glassman for making drastic cuts in the budget, and she feels that it is inappropriate.

Robert Kalechman, 971 Hopmeadow Street, feels that economic development is good, but it seems that's all we do in Simsbury. The Economic Development Commission

should be looking for new big industry, such as Wal-Mart, to move in to Town. He feels that the EDC people should be paid.

Planning and Development

Ms. Glassman explained that the Department Heads were asked to come in with a zero budget but were also told they could make recommendations for areas that they thought would be beneficial to the Town; the priority is only Social Services and emergency operations. Because of this standard a lot of recommendations and the new initiatives were not funded in the First Selectman's budget.

Ms. Glassman noted that there were a number of statistics provided with respect to the amount of applications generated through the Building Dept. are down considerably, inspections performed have dropped and the value of permits has dropped due to the economy. In keeping as close to zero as possible there were not a lot of items funded in the First Selectman's Budget.

Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, informed the audience that the costs of copying and printing are in the budget due to the number of requests for documents from the public.

He went on to say that the number one concern of town residents is tax increases. He emphasized that nothing goes to the Building Dept. without first going before a board or a commission or Planning and Zoning staff; however, we are now at 2007 levels with regards to permits. Mr. Peck did state that he was concerned with his staffing level at this time, as long as we don't lose staff we should be OK.

Mr. Peck explained that the biggest item for funding is under EDC - \$50,000 for a marketing study, essentially a way to market the town. Since potential developers will ask about profiles if we had a completed marketing study we would be better able to attract more developers. Even though \$50,000 will not cover a full study but would probably pay for about 75% of a study which would enable us to pursue grants for the remaining 25%. EDC feels this is a valuable item which could enable us to stem the increase of people's taxes.

Mr. Peck advised that there is also a request for \$5,500 for a DOT appraisal on the Iron Horse parking lots. When DOT is finished with their appraisal of the lots in about 60 days we can then accept the DOT appraisal or generate our own appraisal if we question theirs. This would enable us to determine if we participate in a public private partnership or participate in some kind of design competition in order to get those properties, designed, planned and approved. We may not have to spend it but will know in two months.

There are programs available for a cost of \$3,500 which would enable a graphic design company to put all of the Town regulations under one cover, making it easier to understand. Mr. Peck knows of a graphic designer who is will to undertake this task for \$2,500.

Mr. Peck's final significant item is a request to hire a GIS Mapping Consultant to update the mapping for the Town and move forward. Mr. Peck informed the Board that today the margin for developers is so thin that a difference of 1% on ROI could kill a deal. If a town is able to streamline the process it would represent a tremendous difference to developers. Having this information at our fingertips could seal the deal. This request has a value of \$2,500, bringing the total request from the Land Use/Economic Development area to a total of \$75,500.

When asked to prioritize these items Mr. Peck replied: 1) marketing Study for \$50,000; 2) Village District study for \$15,000 (Tariffville, Weatogue and West Simsbury); and 3) "In Design" graphics for integration of Town Center and other Zoning Regulations for \$2,500.

After conferring with the Finance Director the Board of Selectmen then voted to put these items back in the Land Use Department wish list for a total restoration of \$67,500.

Ms. Glassman gave some background on GIS mapping; she has asked Richard Sawitze and Tom Roy to look at a master GIS plan. The Town has always lagged behind in implementing a GIS system because it is very costly. We're trying to put together a program the Board could look at.

Mark Deming, Chairman of the EDC stated that a marketing study would be in effect for many years; look at the expense as something that could be amortized.

Sarah Nielsen, Executive Director of the Simsbury Main Street Partnership addressed the Board relative to their \$50,000 line item in the EDC budget. She stated that SMSP will wrap up their fiscal year on March 31st and that they plan to continue almost all of last year's activities and maybe add some more. They are looking at writing a substantial grant this summer and are focused on moving some of the Charrette forward.

She stressed that the Town must focus on economic development, bringing in new businesses and helping existing businesses. Many communities are poised for growth and we must make our plan of development a much bigger focus.

Ms. Glassman clarified that SMSP is already looking for funding. Go after it and fund that piece rather than appropriating the \$50,000 – that was the rationale in not including it in her budget.

Ms. Glassman moved on to discuss the Capital Improvement Program. There have been significant changes – renovation at HJMS has changed; Burke LaClair, Business Manager for the Board of Education was present to offer an explanation. Ms. Harris will

plug the new number into the 5 year plan. CIP itemized accounts are on the Town website. We'll review the change and have Burke explain it and Mary Ann tell us what it will cost.

Mr. LaClair explained that the renovation cost of \$1.1 million for the Henry James Memorial School that was in the Capital Improvement process has changed due to the fact that adding fire sprinklers to the remaining 70% of the building must be completed before renovations can take place. Based on the revised cost estimate, future year funding (beyond FY 12-13) of the Capital Improvement Plan for completion of all Henry James renovations would increase from \$5,960,000 to approximately \$8,660,000.

This topic needs to be a coordinated effort with the Board of Finance. It has two parts; you don't want to issue more than 7% debt and then you have to factor what you've already issued in terms of debt and new items coming on; the Board of Education is saying no way that this project will fit within a 7% debt policy. We need to have this conversation with the Board of Finance.

Mr. Hampton made motion, seconded by Ms. Wertheimer to forward the Capital Improvement Plan as presented to the Board of Finance for review and action. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Hampton made motion to adjourn at 7:07 p.m., seconded by Ms. Haase. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary A. Glassman, First Selectman