



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

P.O. BOX 495

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Lisa L. Heavner - First Selectman

Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Budget Message Board of Selectmen February 26, 2015

To the Board of Selectmen and Taxpayers of Simsbury:

I am pleased to present the First Selectman's proposed 2015-16 budget for your review. This budget request totals \$19,029,456 which is a modest increase of 1.7% over last year's budget and responsibly meets the needs of our community in the most cost effective manner.

This budget has three primary goals: (1) To maintain fiscal responsibility by delivering quality services as efficiently as possible; (2) To ensure responsible stewardship of our natural resources and Town assets to keep Simsbury a vibrant, beautiful, safe and desirable place to raise a family and do business; and (3) To modernize technology to provide transparency, increase efficiencies and meet the current and future needs of our residents.

In addition to providing effective and efficient town services to our residents, the proposed budget:

- Increases public safety by adding two police officers to meet increased demand from significant economic development projects currently underway and in anticipation of projects that have received preliminary approvals.
- Maintains a healthy and attractive community with outstanding public roads and trails that is walkable, livable, and bicycle friendly by adding a Public Works administrator to assist with energy efficiency, green technologies, complex projects, and GIS work order systems.
- Modernizes the Town's technology with funding for public access GIS, the build out of fiber optic cable through the Nutmeg Network - the statewide fiber optic highway - and participation in the statewide Gigabit initiative.
- Funds stewardship of our open space and recreational & cultural facilities, including the Library, Simsbury Farms, and the Senior Center.

In crafting this budget my goal was to avoid an increase in taxes. Careful consideration was given to what residents can afford to spend and the budget was set within the context of local, state, and national economic conditions including:

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An Equal Opportunity Employer
8:30 - 7:00 Monday
8:30 - 4:30 Tuesday through Thursday
8:30 - 1:00 Friday

- The Social Security Cost of Living Adjustments, "COLA" level of 1.7%.
- Grand list growth of 0.77%, which is below last year's growth of 0.9%.
- Simsbury's unemployment rate of 4.1% compared with a state rate of 5.7% and a national rate of 5.7%.
- Stagnant State aid grants.

As part of the budget process, Department Heads requested a 4.36% increase over last year's budget. None of the requests were unreasonable and the current proposal was finalized only after making difficult reductions. Although the current recommended budget does not contain all that our Department Heads requested, it does capture and address essential needs.

Drivers: The primary drivers of this year's budget are contractual increases including salary, funding for two additional police officers, one Public Works project administrator and an increase of \$45,000 to address a year-over-year gap in the Simsbury Farms Special Revenue Fund.

Savings: The Town has capitalized on savings from pension investment returns at 14.7%, health care consolidations, lower gasoline prices, and a re-negotiated telephone contract saving over \$40,000 per year. Through our collective bargaining process, our Town employees have helped to offset increased costs by agreeing to increased pension and OPEB fund contributions and increased healthcare co-payments. I would like to thank Town staff publicly for this and for all they do for the people of Simsbury.

In addition to the General Fund Budget, I have included a Capital Budget for your review which addresses essential needs and enhancements to key assets of the Town: Simsbury Farms rink and pool improvements, Ethel Walker Woods improvements, Public Works facility improvements, critical infrastructure repairs, public safety improvements, and resources and funding for the Senior Center.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who helped to prepare my first budget as First Selectman for the people of Simsbury, including the Director of Finance, Department Heads, and Town staff.

The Town of Simsbury budget can be found online at www.simsbury-ct.gov.

I look forward to discussing this budget request with the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance and the taxpayers of Simsbury.

Sincerely,



Lisa L. Heavner