

## **Joan Coe**

Board of Finance Hearing April 21, 2020

We are presently in a time of crises with many unknowns. There is a major disruption in the economy.

The State and Federal Government will not have the revenues to fund the State expenditures and the State will no longer be able to fulfill their commitment to the Town.

Federal and State government have encumbered huge debt that will not be forgiven.

The Corvid-19 virus has placed enormous pressures on industry, business and residents' incomes. Property values will be greatly reduced leading to a lower Grand List.

As a country, we are looking forward to a long recession that will impact everyone. This cannot be ignored in developing a budget.

All models for developing a budget should be revised to a much lower collection rate and reduced revenues from other resources.

It is not the time to manipulate the budget with more long-term debt.

This is not the time for open-space expenditures.

The General Fund should not be used to backfill the expenditures.

With a recession on the horizon, the General Fund will be needed to plug up unforeseen exposures not to flatten the budget.

The General Fund will be expended with the domino effect of a recession.

Political favors should be eliminated in the budget.

Both the Boards of Selectmen and Education should produce a flat budget, reducing all non-essential expenditures. Capital expenditures should be greatly reduced.

All the expenditures in the Wish List budget should be eliminated.

The Town should not be adding legacy costs with additional expenditures in a staff shuffle in the Police Department. There is no compelling need to have a Deputy Chief by adding management and reduce a Sergeant on the front line that could add overtime costs.

The schools have established a pay to play policy. Now is the time to require any enhancements on town and education property that directly benefit a group should be paid by the group. The taxpayers can no longer be expected to pay for non-essential expenditures.

There are unfunded Labor Attorney Costs that will escalate over time. Thousands of dollars in revenues will be required to pay employee settlements.

The Board of Education can reconfigure the schools by adding a 6<sup>th</sup> grade to Henry James Middle School to reduce costs.

The Board of Education Feasibility Study's recommendations should be shelved until the economy stabilizes.

The Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen should produce a No Increase budget.

Now that the Superintendent of the Golf Course is retiring it is a good time to have the Golf Course managed by a professional Golf Association by reducing costs. Other Town's have done this with desirable results.

The Board of Finance should be presenting a budget that is a reflection of the uncertain times with greatly reduced expenditures and reduced debt.

Do not "kick the can down the road."

Use your authority to act boldly and demand a No Increase budget and reduced Capital Expenditures.

All of my comments will be posted on Simsbury Patch, Twitter@joancoe and News Feed on facebook.

**Danielle Celli**

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Danielle Celli and I am writing this email to express my interest in Simsbury purchasing the “meadowood “ property. As a life long resident and huge cheerleader for everything Simsbury I am very passionate about keeping this beautiful town as natural and special for generations to come. The wonderful idea to make this land part of our community for recreation fields, hiking and historical barns and preservation is amazing and an opportunity that we can not pass up. I believe it will not only bring happiness in joy to our residents but tourism as this is a historical and beautiful place for all. Simsbury is really something special. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Marianne Joyce**

If ever there was a time for NO increase this is it. Perhaps confer with Manchester and New Britain which have offered no increase budgets. No excuses ... no inflated rationalizations ... simply no increase.

## Gerry Wetjen

Dear Members of the Board of Finance:

I am writing as a member of the Simsbury Community for more than 40 years and as a member of the Culture Parks and Recreation Commission as well as a member of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan Committee and the Parks and Recreation Revenue Fund Analysis Committee.

You are about to adopt the 2020-2021 Budget in an extraordinary time in all of our lives and I commend each of you and the Board of Selectmen in your thoughtful deliberations on the Town's Budget.

I am concerned however that at your last meeting the first item you cut from your budget was funding for the Parks and Recreation Department. As a CPR Commission member thoroughly involved in our Parks Budget this is a common theme in the Town's annual budget. Simsbury has done a wonderful job in its Capital funding for Parks and Open Space acquisitions, however its annual operating expense funding has been abysmal. The soon to be released Simsbury Parks and Open Space Master Plan high-lites this as "A Major Threat" to our Parks and Recreation Department.

The Report specifically details the lack of funding for both Staff and Maintenance.

A review completed March 11, 2019 provided by staff comparing The Town of Simsbury Culture, Parks and Recreation Department with 25 other similar communities showed:

- Simsbury population ranked 11th out of the 25 communities surveyed
- Simsbury had the third highest revenue total for recreation activities
- Simsbury ranked 14th in General Fund Budget Allocation

A review of the per capita cost analysis of eight Town's similar to Simsbury shows the following:

The financial analysis of Simsbury's Park and Recreation General Fund shows the Department is underfunded by more than 50 percent compared to the other similar towns. **An additional \$706,092 could be added to bring Simsbury" up to the average per capita spending".**

- Simsbury has the second lowest Park & Recreation budget ( If the budget wasn't subsidized by a \$185,616 from the Board of Education as a reimbursement for athletic field maintenance, it would be ranked the lowest)
- Simsbury's General Fund Park & Recreation per capita spending is the lowest
- Simsbury's percentage of expenses in the Town's General Fund for Park & Recreation is the lowest
- Simsbury's Park & Recreation Administration is the only Town not funded by the General Fund

- Simsbury's General Fund Park & Recreation per capita spending is \$29 below the average of \$68
- Simsbury's percentage of expenses in the Town's General Fund for Park & Recreation is 30 percent below the average of 63.1 percent

I would urge you to consider this information before you decide to take away funding for the Department.

Regards,

## PER CAPITA COST ANALYSIS

Town	Population	General Fund	GF P&R	Expenses in	GF All
		P&R Budget	Per capita Spending	GF Budget	P&R Admin.
Simsbury	24,348	\$949,343 *	\$38.99	33.1%	NO
Rocky Hill	20,021	\$2,093,146	\$104.54	76.7%	YES
Avon	18,414	\$801,425	\$43.52	68.3%	YES
Guilford	22,350	\$1,486,875	\$66.52	69.5%	YES
Newington	30,604	\$1,644,384	\$53.73	65.5%	YES
South Windsor	25,789	\$1,990,980	\$77.20	44.3%	YES
Cheshire	29,262	\$1,648,658	\$56.34	76.5%	YES
Glastonbury	34,768	\$3,587,276	\$103.17	70.9%	YES

\* Includes \$189,616 Board of Education reimbursement for athletic field maintenance

## **Michael Rinaldi**

Question 1: How is it fair to give wage and step increases to Town and Board of Education employees during a pandemic when taxpayers will be experiencing 15-20% unemployment and over a 30 million loss of employment? WHY SHOULDN'T ALL WAGE AND STEP INCREASES BE POSTPONED?

Question 2 With a total student capacity of our 5 elementary schools K-6 of 2387, and with a present enrollment at 2038, why do we need potential portable classrooms at Lattimer Lane school. Why isn't a modest redistricting of some students undertaken for this fall school year and put it in place to maintain Board of Education class size guidelines?

Question 3: Why did the Board of Education spend \$200,000 [Two Hundred Thousands Dollars], on a Facilities Master Plan and Reconfiguration Study, and not wait for the results of that study while proceeding with a \$24,000,000 [twenty four million dollar], Phase 3 project, when many on the board and administration knew of the possible recommendations by Tecton Architects? Both past and present Chairmen of the Board of Education and Superintendent Curtis were told of this before the Phase 3 HJMS Phase 3 project was put on the referendum, and the present Chairmen of the Board and Mr Curtis decided to proceed to referendum, WHY? A \$66,000,000 [sixty million dollar] Mistake.

QUESTION 1/ The Board of Selectmen's budgets have increased 24.75% over the past 5 years and 32.6% over the past 10 years while the cumulative inflation rates during that time period were 7.8% and 19.5%. Why?

QUESTION 2/ The Board of Education per pupil costs have increased over 11.9% over the past 5 years and 37.9% over the past 10 years while the cumulative inflation rates during that time period were 7.8% and 19.5%. Why?

QUESTION 3/ Thirty years ago, the Simsbury School system was the 5th highest ranked school system in DRG-A with a per pupil cost ranked 129 out of 169 towns/cities. Presently our school system is ranked 2nd in DRG-B with a per pupil cost ranked 92 out of 169 towns/cities, Why have our per pupil costs increased in comparison to the other 169 towns?

**Lauren Miller**

I am writing today to ask for your support to increase the Library's budget for materials in FY21 by \$20,000.

Over the last ten years, the library's material budget has been essentially static while community needs have changed and the patron base has expanded. The library staff has done an exemplary job of providing high levels of service to the community with minimal budgetary resource. But a lot has happened over the past ten years and a combination of changing demographics, increased material costs and more demand for new resources have brought us to the point where the library simply cannot continue to keep pace with community needs.

The Simsbury Public Library has one of the lowest amounts of expenditure on materials per capita in the state. While we are justifiably proud of the library's efficiency, the lack of increase in the material budget has kept our material expenditures per capita to \$5.59, one of the lowest among comparable libraries. A recent study, which included Bloomfield, Farmington and Avon, demonstrated that Simsbury is last among these local institutions when it comes to spending on library materials. I bring this to your attention, not because we need to "keep up with the Joneses" but because I am concerned that without appropriate funding, library services and materials will no longer be accessible to those who most need the resources our library should provide.

Simsbury is a vibrant, active community. And our public library is arguably the center of this community, providing a wealth of information and programs that build community. Please help the library continue to enlighten, educate and build our community by providing accessible materials to its patrons.

**Anne Erickson**

Dear Board of Finance:

Libraries are vital to communities throughout our nation. This is especially true on the local level during this difficult time. Libraries in general, and the Simsbury Public Library in particular, have become town centers for sharing ideas, for learning in a digital age, and for connecting people with information. Yet, the borrowing and lending of paper bound books and materials, large print books, audio books and e-books remain part of the library's very foundation.

I have visited the Simsbury Public Library at all hours and on all days of the week. Always, the library is filled with residents of all ages from the very young to our senior citizens. Books, both fiction and non-fiction, are being checked out with the current and newest books being the most popular. On many occasions, these shelves, as well as the shelves for the Pronto Books, have been almost bare. The number of books that the library has been able to purchase in the last fiscal year, as well as the years prior, are insufficient to meet the residents' needs. Simply stated, there aren't enough new books/materials for our residents who are looking to borrow them. Simsbury has the lowest material expenditure per capital in its reference group which includes the much smaller town of Avon.

Simsbury is very proud of its library and the role that it plays in town. In order to remain a fundamental, dominant, vital, and integral part of the town's culture, the maintenance of its materials collection is essential. I urge you to support the proposed \$20,000 increase in the materials budget in this year's proposed library budget. Thank you.

**Kenneth Waite**

With all due respect, a \$50 per year reduction in taxes for the median family falls far short in helping families in these difficult times. Most of us have suffered financially in one form or another, and we need all the help we can get. Since a lot of us are digging deep to just get by, I would think that our esteemed town leaders would do likewise in proposing as lean a budget as possible. Everyone is pitching in help survive this terrible virus, and the town should do their fair share as well.

## **Susan Brachwitz**

To the Board of Finance from Dr Susan Brachwitz:

I have the impression that the unfortunate inclusion of Open Space in the Culture, Parks, and Recreation budget has caused people to think that Open Space is much more expensive to maintain than it actually is. I strongly doubt that the cost of maintenance of town-owned open space left in a natural condition is anywhere near the cost of CPR needs (staff, programs, constant maintenance of buildings and parks and playing fields, etc). I don't think that getting rid of any open space would add significantly to the money available for CPR.

Ideally, Open Space and CPR should be two separate budget items, since they are very different and have very different needs.

I think that one of the most important things that make Simsbury such a special place to live is the amount and quality of open space we have.

Before I got involved with the Ethel Walker Woods preservation project, I had no idea how many townspeople were intensely interested in keeping that forest and its wetlands intact, and how hard and how long they were willing to work for it. Ever since then, town referenda and questionnaires and surveys have shown that taxpayers in Simsbury place a high value on natural open space in general. Some of its benefits are largely unseen ecosystem services such as carbon storage in trees and soils, protection of soils and the moisture and nutrients they contain, cleaning of air and water, cooling in summer, and modulation of flooding events.

In addition, these wild places together constitute a treasure house of wild things--plants, animals, fungi, as well as the tiny organisms that are essential for keeping everything running, probably many of which are as yet unknown to science. Even small pieces of wild land are important in a landscape where development continues apace. They are likely to be refuges for species whose original habitat has been severely altered or destroyed around them.

In fact, one of these species is us. People who spend time in our wild places feel that these places make a major contribution to their quality of life by enhancing their physical and mental health.

As our town population continues to climb, more of these quiet places, not fewer, will be needed to continue to offer these important benefits.

Clearly, our Open Space more than earns its keep. Please do not give away any of it or decrease the funding for it.

**Lisa Newell**

As a regular visitor to Simsbury's open spaces I want to urge the Board of Finance to make the protection and enhancement of Simsbury's open spaces and wild places a top priority informing your budget considerations. Simsbury is a beautiful place because of its undeveloped land and this brings visitors from nearby towns and around the state. People who visit Simsbury spend money in Simsbury! Open space brings quantifiable benefits to human health, quality of life, clean air and water and biodiversity; benefits that can only be achieved by protecting intact forests. Simsbury's open space is a tremendous asset to the town. Please protect it.

Thank you.

## **Jerry Epstein**

This is in response to your letter of April 13<sup>th</sup> .

I am a 50-year Simsbury resident with 3 children who have gone thru the Simsbury school system. I am retired after 31 years with IBM, but am not unfamiliar with public school teaching. After graduating from Northwestern with a B.S. degree in Secondary Education, followed by 2 years in the Army, I spent 3 years teaching Algebra and Geometry at Herricks High School in New Hyde Park, NY. Having watched the way our schools operate, I believe they need some changes. I'm convinced there is ample opportunity to improve the education process and at the same time achieve significant cost savings. Here are my suggestions.

In the first 4 –5 weeks of the school year, teach one subject only all day with a break for lunch. By the end of that period, students would take a final exam just for just that subject. There could still be quizzes and homework assignments. In the next three 4-5 week periods, three other subjects would be taught the same way. 4-5 weeks should be sufficient time to cover any subject. School sports and other non-academic activities could remain after the school day.

Scheduling classes this way eliminates the practice of students moving from room to room 4 or 5 times a day wasting weeks of time out of the school year. It's also a better way to teach.

Finally, I would take full advantage of the “best” teacher of each subject. Lectures, presentations, and explanations by the best should be available to all students through computer technology that exists today and is widely used in industry.

## **Wanda Colman**

Dear Members of The Board of Finance,

It was my pleasure to take part in the Parks and Rec. study last year, and was delighted by the study results showing a deep appreciation and enjoyment of our parks and OPEN SPACES by Simsbury residents. We love to get outdoors and enjoy Nature!

I have read all 54 pages of proposed upkeep and improvements and support most of it, except for any enhancement of motorized access including automobiles and motorized mountain bikes, which will come if mountain bikes are allowed in any park.

As for Tariffville Park, I realize that hunters, fishermen, picknickers, and paddlers need to drive to the point in Tariffville Park, but because of the water table at road level most of the time, a plain gravel road would be a lot cheaper, and easier to maintain without encouraging speeding and off road "mudding". I wish there was some way to close the park at dusk and open it at dawn. As soon as one passes over the culvert just below the softball field to the lower end of the park, no matter how much money is spent, NATURE will prevail, and this small but very special OPEN SPACE deserves minimal vehicle traffic and paving is futile and a big waste of money.

Also, only the white water kayakers who are headed for the gorge and the summer camps who teach white water kayaking put in at the old rail road crossing, so only minimal clearing of fallen trees would be needed there. It would be very dangerous to encourage non expert paddlers to put in there instead of at the point.

Yes to pickle ball!!

No need for an expensive straightened out parking lot, and there is no need to move the kiddie play ground. The plan seems to be in a wet land area, would require fill, and is definitely too close to foul balls. And there is a nice sign for Tariffville Park just above the Tennis Courts which perhaps could just be moved up to the entrance.

**Judy & John Schaefer**

Simsbury Board of Finance:

We strongly support natural open space in Simsbury.

We are very concerned with the recent discussions about the Town divesting itself of some open space parcels. Simsbury's open space is important to the image and experience of Simsbury. The ongoing costs of open space, especially natural open space, is low. Particularly, when one considers the benefits that Simsbury residents gain from it. The Town can save money on our current natural open spaces, such as Ethel Walker Woods, Stratton Brook, & Onion Mountain, by leaving them as they are and not "improving" them. That will save the capitol expenditure and the maintenance costs for hard facilities. Many residents have worked very hard to conserve that natural open space for nature and passive human activities. We urge you to preserve our open space land and not get rid of it. Thank you for your service.

**Bill Corder**

To the Board of Finance,

I am a long-term resident of Simsbury, and one of the most important things that I love about our town is our open space. Please ensure that Simsbury continues to be a leader in preserving all of our open space and don't support any efforts to give away or sell small sections of our precious property. We need to preserve this asset for future generations, and we need this asset to help fight global warming and to protect wildlife habitat. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this issue.

**Phyllis Bornstein**

As a resident of the Town of Simsbury, I feel we should leave the budget as is. Yes, we can decrease taxes for each household by \$50.00 but at this time we should plan for the unknown happening. We need to keep Simsbury ahead of the unforeseen in the near future.

**Erin Leavitt-Smith**

As a member of the Simsbury community I wanted to send an email to the BOF letting them know that I strongly support open space in town ahead of the discussion on the budget. Any way to preserve our beautiful town and the open space we have, I strongly urge the BOF to support efforts to preserve and avoid plans that say they offer financial possibilities that are really not the windfall it reports to be.

Thank you for your attention to this matter

**Gail K. Ryan**

Members of the Board of Finance:

I am writing you as a former member of the Simsbury Library Board of Trustees and a town resident to ask you to please increase the Library materials budget by the \$20,000 that is in the proposed budget. For the past 10 years this budget has been stagnant while the rest of the budget has seen needed increases in funds for personnel and facilities. The materials budget includes more than hard and soft cover books, the cost of which have certainly increased substantially in the past 10 years. It also includes other formats such as eBooks which can be read on Kindles, Nooks and iPads and smartphones, however, the cost of these to the Library is significantly higher than physical books although they can still only be read by one patron at a time.

It is now time to increase this budget to allow for more and newer reading materials in all formats to be purchased.

**Allen Cramer**

To whom it may concern,

Pursuant to the letter I received and as a town resident, I'd like to offer my thoughts on the budget and taxes.

With all of the town schools being closed since March, I would think there would be some major cost savings. These would include - Reduced utilities Reduced janitorial and admin costs  
Reduced Daily police presence at schools Hopefully other costs.

Realizing that the education budget is by far the largest budget item, I would hope it would create savings from the current years budget that can be applied toward next year. I hope the town has a firm grasp on these savings.

More importantly, simsbury is known to have a relatively high mill rate which makes the town less affordable and attractive to young families to move into.

I strongly believe that for simsbury to continue to prosper it needs to keep its tax rate and burden on its residents as low as possible. This is particularly true after the current financial downturn due to corona virus. Many town residents are out of work and most small Businesses are greatly suffering. Given these dire financial Circumstances, I would expect and hope the town would do all in its power to significantly lower the tax rate for the next budget year. Many people will fall behind on many of their bills and obligations, so that a tax reduction this year would be Most welcome, even if it means cutting some town programs.

## **James Marsh**

To the Town of Simsbury Finance Committee:

Here is a follow-up email for the finance committee. Since they will be meeting virtually, would you you see they get this?

I am writing a follow-up email to the Finance committee with regard to next year's (SFY 21) budget.

I urge you to use your veto authority to cancel new funding for all new positions next year.

As you all know Connecticut is in a world of hurt. With each day that passes, more bills come due with no income with which to pay them.

I'm sure you're all very proud, rightfully so, of the budget you've crafted where taxes are actually set to decrease. But with things getting worse by the day, the Town of Simsbury is certain to run into budget trouble sooner than we can believe. But this will play out differently than we can see from here and affect us all greatly in ways we have yet to anticipate. I worry about unpaid commercial rents, leading unfortunately to business loss and foreclosures, affecting local and commercial banks. Lots of people have already stopped working and have zero income. Even the homeless guy with his sign in front of R.E.I. has disappeared due to lack of traffic.

My point is we will all be *greatly* affected by this but the full effects cannot possibly be known at this time.

So why at this time commit to new spending for non-essential positions [Deputy be Police Chief (\$183K) and Accountant (\$75K)]? Over ten years, this will cost the town's taxpayers almost \$3,000,000. And add to that the pension and other benefits.

There will be so much *new* need, with much less revenues, we can't even begin to anticipate. Even if some side deal has already been made, or even worse, these positions have been "slotted" for someone, now is not the time.

I just ask the committee to step back, reflect until the full fallout of this unprecedented time becomes evident. Create a little margin in the next year's budget.

Please exercise fiscal prudence during this extremely uncertain time and veto these two new discretionary positions.

Thank you, and thank you for serving our great town.

**Jane Moos**

I strongly support open space in Simsbury with no infringement upon it for mountain biking.

## **Diane Nash**

Why suddenly has open space fallen into disfavor, attacked by BOF people suggesting “if it costs so much, sell it”?

Is it due to a mistaken job description that included natural open space with parks and recreation?

The combining of Open Space and Parks & Recreation inflates the data by adding all the acreage, and skews the budget, by grouping maintenance and upkeep for our active areas (pools, golf course, tennis courts and defined parks) with maintenance on natural open space lands.

It misleads consultants, who combine the TOS open space acreage with other towns P&R acreage and then recommends more personnel be added and more dollars spent.

The survey was done and the question was asked.

The public wants Nature.

A far different kind of attention, and far less expensive, is needed for natural open space.

When people on the BOF see this budgetary request for more money, more personnel, they are led to believe it is for Open Space - Natural Open Space

Before we even think about selling a single parcel The Parks & Recreation Director should be required to separate any and all requests for maintenance of Natural Open Space and carefully review all of these costs - bring these proposed actions to the Open Space committee to endorse which ones, if any, they support, and only then should money be allocated. - from perhaps a contingency budget fund.

The requests to the BOF would simply be made for the defined parks (by parcel) and active recreation areas, so it can be carefully reviewed as to what is a legitimate expense and what is a nice to have .

Extra personnel requested should be denied and maybe even in place staff should be reviewed, to see if there is a more efficient way to do business.

We have always used volunteers groups - example SLT clean ups on their properties - the flower bridge , the beautification plantings - the free concerts.

Why suddenly has the Parks & Rec. group padded their budget with these inclusions?

It may be a misunderstanding of what the P&R director was hired to do.

It may be an ask for the sun, and happy to get the moon, way of formulating a budget.

Either way, for both job description and budget clarity, it needs to be redefined...and before damage is seriously done .

**Danielle D'Ermo**

I just want to let the Town know how valuable all the open space is in Simsbury.

All remaining natural space should be protected and preserved for future generations.

It can be left in its natural state and not overly maintained.

Ethel Walker is a location that should be preserved and protected.

More open space should be procured and preserved in the Town and building and development should be curtailed it has gotten out of hand.

**Rosemarie Hargrave**

To the Board of Finance...As a homeowner in the Town of Simsbury for 48 years, kindly be advised that I strongly support open space in this town I love so well. It is a precious resource that needs to be preserved..

As a senior, the preservation of our open spaces, what sets this town apart from many others, is what keeps me here. Please value it as much as I do.

**Amber Abbuhl**

To the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Town Manager –

I am writing in support of the \$20,000 increase to the Simsbury Public Library's material budget for the upcoming fiscal year. These funds will be used primarily to enhance the Library's digital material offerings, which are already in great demand and will likely be even more highly requested as many people continue social distancing. Further, digital materials allow the Library to reach some of the most vulnerable members of our community, including people with limited physical access to the library or audio/visual challenges. This investment is also necessary to keep our Library's materials collection on par with other local libraries. For instance, materials expenditures for fiscal year 2019 showed Simsbury's investment at \$6.41 per resident, compared to Avon's \$9.37; Farmington's \$7.91; and West Hartford's \$7.09. Please support this additional expenditure of \$20,000 for library materials so that the Simsbury Public Library may continue to provide not only excellent programming and service, but also up-to-date and relevant materials for our patrons.

Thank you,

**Helen Peterson**

To the Members of the Board of Finance:

I write in support of the annual budget as presented, fiscally and environmentally responsible.

More specifically I speak in support of continuing Simsbury's leadership role in land conservation, both in its natural state as well as in continued agricultural use.

Through our very actions of conservation over the years, the people of Simsbury have proven time and again, beyond any doubt that conserved land is a public asset, held in the public trust, for the public good!

Conservation of open space is the ultimate win/win for all of us, our health, our quality of life and the life of our endangered Planet!

As a reminder..throughout all our community's conservation efforts, studies have proven convincingly and repeatedly the high value and LOWER cost of conserved land rather than the higher cost to a municipality of developed land. These studies are updated and can be readily identified and accessed.

Also as a reminder..in the many years of ardent conservation dialogue and in the more recent Town Survey of over 1000 citizens, the conservation ethic in our community rings loud and clear.

Respectfully,  
Helen Peterson

**Ralph Martin**

To the Simsbury Board of Finance,

As invited by the April 13 letter from the Board of Education, I write to share my comments on their notification. I strongly support all efforts to avoid any increase in taxes for the coming year, and efforts to reduce taxes. Taxes have become a great burden, especially for those on fixed incomes. Thank you for your work in this regard.

## **Shannon Knall**

Dear Members of the Board of Finance -

Thank you for your diligent, continued service to our town during these uncertain times.

My question is in regard to special education funding.

If you are familiar with the nature of special education, there are periods of time during which students receiving special education services are more likely to experience something called regression. (This could occur over summer break, Thanksgiving, December or Spring breaks.) This means that a student will experience a loss in educational gains, social development or behavior management. For many students in special education, regression occurs during a time when service implementation is interrupted, not delivered or delivered inconsistently/inappropriately (according to the student's legal right under the IDEA, and through an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) - this is one reason students in special education often require and receive Extended School Year services (ESY) during the summer months.

As I'm sure you will recognize, we are in the prime circumstance for regression. (Hartford Courant reporter Josh Kovner, has done several pieces on this subject)

In a normal school cycle, should regression be a topic for IEP discussion, the issue of how to reverse the inability to maintain skills would be addressed. The provision of services is ultimately driven by budgets.

Due to the likelihood of operational cost savings while school is not in session, it would seem that there is an opportunity to address the needs of special education students who will likely experience regression until a regular school schedule begins. I understand that the BOE cannot solely absorb these costs, and since the BOF will likely experience their own cost savings, I am hopeful that at least some of those monies will be allocated to support those within our community who require this assistance. I will add that services through the IEP are legally required under the IDEA, and again, while we are in extraordinary times, some level of compensation should be implemented.

This request is not a suggestion that EVERY student in special education will require compensatory services at the same intense level of intervention, because as we know, special education is not a location...it is a service to an individual, with individual needs. The IEP team can best assess those needs.

I am happy to speak with you about this further, but I truly hope that Simsbury will make these students a priority in our pandemic recovery efforts.

Best,  
Shannon Knall

**Elizabeth Burt**

To the Simsbury Finance Board:

Please support the proposed budget for the Simsbury Public Library.

As you know, operating expenses and staff salaries have increased over the years, but the budget for acquisitions has not.

As materials supplied to you by the Library Director show, our allocations for material expenses has gradually decreased by \$10,000 over the last ten years and when compared to other libraries in our part of Connecticut, we spend the least percent of our total budget on acquisitions per capita.

The Simsbury Library is a vibrant and vital resource to our community that serves residents of all ages from infants to seniors. Please help keep our materials up to date and relevant to this community by supporting our request for an additional \$20,000 in funds for material expenses.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Burt

**Kathleen Miller**

To: Members of the Board of Finance, Simsbury, CT  
RE: Library Materials Budget Request FY 2020-2021

I am writing in support of the \$20,000 Increase to Adult, Teen Business Material Budget request for FY2020-2021.

Beginning in FY 2010, spending on library materials has declined, from a high of \$174,847 in FY2010 to \$164,200 in FY 2020, or 10.6% of total budget in FY2020 from a high of 12.6% in FY 2010. The ten year decline in spending has led to an inability of the library to keep pace with comparable communities in providing patrons with materials.

I ask that you consider this modest budget increase so that Simsbury Public Library can return to the same level of patron service as in past years, as well as provide for the future.

Sincerely,  
Kathleen Miller

## **Marianne O'Neil**

I'd like to thank the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance for their past and ongoing support of our Simsbury Public Library. The Library is a wonderful resource for all residents of Simsbury. It is the town's multigenerational gathering place and destination for early literacy, technology access, hands on learning and volunteer opportunities. The importance of the Library to town residents is demonstrated by over 370,000 visits annually.

I would like to ask for your support to increase the Library's material budget for FY21 by \$20,000.

The material budget has basically been the same for the past ten years. A recent analysis of similar libraries shows our material expenditures per capita of \$5.59 to be the lowest in the study, which included Bloomfield, Farmington and Avon. While the budget and expenditures over this timeframe have been flat, the needs of the community have increased as well as new and expanded ways to meet our residents needs. Resources and content have expanded to include visual, audio and digital formats.

Ten years ago, the main focus and availability of materials were standard books. Today, many more books are available in large print, which aids our residents with visual challenges. Audiobooks are available for those who can no longer read or those that enjoy a book while driving, walking, hiking or other activities. The biggest increase in demand has been in the digital arena. Ebooks enable the Library to be open 7X24, giving patrons access whenever and wherever they are. The situation today with our stay home guidelines, magnifies the need to address and increase this digital material collection. Today, instead of buying a standard copy of a best seller, we also purchase a large print copy, an audiobook and a digital copy in order to serve all our residents.

The need and demand for these additional media materials has increased, but the material budget hasn't. Please support this \$20,000 increase to the Library's material budget, to enable us to maintain our excellent level of service to ALL the residents of Simsbury.

Thank you!

**James Marsh**

To the Simsbury Finance Committee:

I am writing with regards to the upcoming budget. There are two new positions under consideration, 1) the Deputy Police Chief, and 2) the new Accountant position.

Regarding the new Deputy Chief position, I feel Simsbury is a small enough (and safe enough) town where this admin. position is just not needed. With all the recently added new apartments, the population has grown some, so if any positions are added, they should be Patrol Officers. One hundred eighty-three thousand (\$183,000) is a lot of money to be adding at this time for a “want” and not a “need”.

Ditto the Accounting position (\$70-something thousand).

With the coronavirus hitting the economy the results are sure to be devastating; whatever the State of CT promises for SFY 21 funding, it is sure to be significantly less. Even if federal funds are available for 2021 as a pass-thru to the town, please be conservative and err on the side of caution. You know the State will be trouble at some point soon. Remember too all these positions add legacy costs, pensions, OPEB, etc. that are a drag on the budget for future years.

Please be cautious at this time and delay adding these new positions until another time.

Thank you for serving, and thanks for listening.

Sincerely,

James Marsh

**Frederick & Marlene Petersen**

There are paths cut through Mountain Farms which are used and appreciated by many in Mountain Farms and other areas. Property along the foot paths is owned by the town. There are many trees and shrubs on this town owned property. We need some funding for town employees to cut down dead and dying trees, as well as a town pick up for broken branches which fall and clutter the area. Mountain Farms provides volunteer clean up 2 times a year, but there is no way to get rid of the debris. My home is adjacent on two sides by town owned property, as well as other families homes. Funds are need for this area as the trees in need of help tend to break off at the top and fall to the paths, creating a danger to walkers and children.

**Donna & Tracy Page**

My husband and I would like to support the \$20,000 increase to the Simsbury Public Library materials budget.

The library is an integral part of our community, and we feel it will be even more utilized in the days ahead as our country gets back on it's feet.

Thank you for your consideration.