

Some of you know us, we are long-term residents (77 Seminary Road for over 30 years) and owners of Welden Hardware (10 Station Street for 17 years), and most recently, owners of the Welden Building (8-14 Station Street: 24 units-3 residential, 6 retail/commercial and 15 office). With town budget discussions coming up soon, we wanted to express some of our concerns, primarily as business and property owners.

With all of the unprecedented times we all have experienced in 2020, we would hope and expect prudence and constraint to be priority #1 when considering any budgetary discussions that are held if it would result in any type of tax increase, especially for so many Simsbury business owners that are struggling just to keep their doors open still. For most of us, our businesses are our only form of investment and living wages. Any expenses/projects should consider the economic impact on business and property owners first. As most of us are self-employed, we pay a lot in federal, state and town taxes, as well as our own health and life insurances. We have been advocating for years to remove the economic hindrance of Station Street being a one-way street. There have been many national studies on the restrictions put on businesses that are on one-way streets, and would gladly supply them to you if you so desire. Visitors and residents alike are often confused by one-way streets, especially Station Street, and end up not adhering to traffic signs thus creating unsafe circumstances with all the activities at Eno Hall and downtown. Please consider funding the improvements that we have been told are slated for the Eno Hall parking lot, along with the improvements to Station and Railroad Streets.

There have been moratoriums on the federal and state levels for preventing any residential evictions at this time, but no assistance for those property owners with losing income. While we are blessed to have good residential tenants in our building, many of our commercial tenants have expressed a challenge in the past 10 months in paying their rent, having negotiated with us to reduce or maintain their rents, while we have experienced a significant increase in utilities, insurance and taxes without any financial assistance.

In our opinion, spending town money on projects like Meadowood and other capital improvements/investments would not be a prudent economic move at this time. This conveys to many struggling taxpayers that adding to our large acreage of open space is more important to members of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance than businesses staying open, as well as not being receptive for new businesses to entertain Simsbury as their place of operation.

We request this letter be read aloud during the April Board of Finance public budget hearings.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
John & Melissa Brett

Hello All,

As life long residents and multi generational business owners of the Town of Simsbury we would like to take this opportunity to express our thoughts and concerns regarding the following:

We understand that the Town of Simsbury is currently going through their budget process and the State of CT is currently proposing Bill #171 introduced by Senator Looney 11th District that would establish a new 1 mil statewide tax on commercial and residential property.

This would have a tremendous negative impact on our business and personal financial circumstances. We currently pay substantial taxes for our business and personal properties that we own. We have approximately 75 commercial and residential tenants and 5 full time and 1 part time employee. Our understanding is that the first \$300,000 of assessed value of a residential property shall be exempt such a tax. However, this is an extremely low point of exemption especially given that property values are high right now partially due to Covid.

This would have a substantial impact on our small business and create a burden on all business that are currently struggling to make ends meet. Neither does this seem like an appropriate time for a tax increase of any kind State or local. We have several tenants we are currently working with to help them stay in business. Our revenues are down and we have cut expenses in every way we possibly can. At this time, it is not feasible to increase rents and we are being forced to accept large reductions in rent in order to accommodate our tenants. At the same time, we are not allowed to evict anyone that is not paying with no end in sight for this ruling. The State and Federal government should be doing the same(cutting expenses wherever possible) before looking for a tax increase from business and property owners that are already struggling. THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TIME FOR A TAX DECREASE NOT AN INCREASE!

We thank you in advance for careful consideration of our thoughts and ideas.

Sincerely,

Nord and Jeanine Christensen
Owner/Managers
Simsmore Square

Our homes have increased slightly in value but we have not recouped since the drop in 2008.

Does the town ever consider the fact that most of the people that live in Simsbury are not union employees and do not work for the government, therefore we are dependent on the health of the economy for our raises.

My husband and myself have not received a raise in 20 years, we have never received a cost of living raise or a bonus. I currently work part time and make less an hour than I did in 2009.

Why are union employees getting raises each year, while the rest of us are suffering from a global pandemic?

How do you justify this?

April and Michael Smith

No tax increase please. Please consider this year's budget in this light. 2020 has been an horrific year, especially for small businesses in town. We don't need anything new right now. We don't need more frills. We need to survive. Adding more fees/taxes/costs is adding insult to injury. So many of us are just barely holding on. Please don't make it worse.

Thank you.

Marc Lubetkin.

My wife and I and our two children have lived in Simsbury since 1970. The northern end of town has no local recreational facilities.

We support the budget item that will provide funds to assist in the purchase of the Meadowood property. This will provide trails... one must walk in the street on many roads in the area ... additional athletic fields, some community or leased farm land, even preserving some woodland, all would be an asset to this community. Utilizing one of the tobacco sheds as an educational facility and as an historical tribute to Martin Luther King would be another plus.

We appreciate your support in pursuing this endeavor.

Cordially,

Richard and Carol Afragola



As a concerned resident of Simsbury

I am requesting that the Meadowood property must be included in the town budget and acted upon. This has gone on for far too long. The town is not in need of another huge housing development. This

Area must be preserved for future generations to come

I am requesting that this email be shared at the meeting Thank you,

Barry/Joanne Chasen

[REDACTED]

My family, 16 year resident of Simsbury, are **opposed** to purchase of this land. We are very thankful and I remember MLK Jr in the 60's. My mother supported him in his efforts in the South. However today 60 years later we should not spend \$2.5 M of our budget to enrich individual property owner and give residents another reason to leave CT. MLK has been honored many times in Simsbury; we do know his legacy and his youth here. 2021 has many financial challenges, individual and community; \$25/year per property owner is not the answer to the challenges.

Duane Royce

Board of Finance
Town of Simsbury

Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

I am writing this letter in support of the Town of Simsbury proposed 21-22 Budget. In viewing budget deliberations on SCTV, it is evident that a tremendous amount of thoughtful work has gone into this process, by both balancing the funding of priority needs and holding the line on spending.

It is gratifying to see the work done by all the boards, commissions and Town staff in reaching agreement on this budget. It is also nice to see the increases in the grand list helping to offset spending.

Here in Tariffville we are also pleased to see funding for sidewalk improvements on Elm Street which has been in need of repair for some time. We are also pleased to see funds for playscape improvements in all the town's parks including in Tariffville Park. Both of these projects are very important to us, and we thank you for your planning and budgeting for them.

Kudos to all who participated in the development of this budget and for the professionalism which is evident, and which continues to be a hallmark of the Town of Simsbury.

John Nagy
John Nagy, President
Tariffville Village Association

Simsbury Elected Officials,

The purpose of this letter is to emphasize my support for the capitol project request relating to the safety concerns at the intersection of Notch Road and West Mountain Road. I started working with the police department in October 2019 and they eventually put me in contact with Tom Roy in April 2020. I have been working with Tom ever since and fully support his permanent intersection redesign as well as the funding requirements necessary to complete this project. The temporary intersection redesign that was implemented this past fall was a huge success. Furthermore, I have been working with my neighborhood and They also support this redesign. I have encouraged them to contact you to demonstrate that support.

As an Army National Guard Soldier with 27+ years of service and 3 deployments, safety has always been at the forefront of everything I do. When we moved into have 1 Notch Road about 12 years ago, we accepted the safety issues that came with living on a busy road. Over the years, there have been too many near misses to count. In October 2019, I had another near miss and finally decided that it was time to take action. Furthermore, Notch Road will have a few new drivers in the coming months, to include my daughter. As you would expect, young drivers don't have the skills necessary to avoid the many near misses.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope to be home for my third deployment in time to join the budget meetings in person or virtually. Stay safe and stay healthy...

Chris Evans

Dear Board of Selectmen Members,

My name is Holly McGrath and I am writing in support of the Library's budget request for \$8,000 to restore the Children's Material funding to 2008 levels and for \$5,760 as part of the capital needs for the 6-year technology replacement plan.

As we strive to create an engaged, informed and inclusive community with equal opportunities for all, we depend on the quality of our library to help us in this endeavor. Our library is a source of pride for good reason, but we must not overlook the need for current and relevant materials and updated technology. I am an avid user of the library and a new member of the Library Board of Trustees. I am proud of our library and request your support to ensure the funding needed to continue our library's commitment to excellence.

Sincerely,
Holly McGrath

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Holly McGrath.

To the Board of Selectmen:

As a member of the Simsbury Public Library Board of Trustees, I am writing in support of two budget requests for the Library as part of the 2021-2022 town budget.

First, the Library has requested \$8,100 to restore the line item "Reference Materials" under the Children's Services section of the Library Expenditures Budget to 2008 funding levels. This funding is essential to keep our books and digital content current and engaging to young readers. Refreshing the children's materials this year is more important than ever, as these materials all support school curricula, and children have already experienced prolonged educational disruptions due to school closures and remote learning. Although this request is relatively modest in the scope of the overall town budget, your support will demonstrate our community's commitment to its youngest members, and ensure that families can access engaging, refreshed materials that support children's literacy.

Second, the Library has requested \$5,760 as part of the Town's 6-year Technology Replacement Plan to fund the upgrade of personal computers and technology. In 2018-2019, the Library's public technology was used over 84,000 times. Critically, many residents use the Library's PCs to complete employment applications, making it imperative that Library technology be current in order to keep up with new employment application software and functionality. Again, this request would be a modest expenditure by the Town, but would provide a meaningful benefit to our community, especially members who do not have ready access to technology that is necessary in today's world to find employment, apply to schools, or access information online.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Amber Abbuhl
Simsbury Library Board Trustee

Dear Board of Selectmen:

Simsbury is very proud of its library and the role that it plays in the lives of its residents. In order to remain a fundamental, dominant, vital and integral part of the town's budget, I urge you to support this year's proposed budget.

The request to fund \$5,760 as part of the library's 6 year technology replacement plan is imperative to keep up with the needs of the business community and especially those residents who are completing employment applications. Restoration of funding to the Children's Materials budget to the level it was in 2008 is both a reasonable and essential request. The Children's collection supports the school curricula and this has never been more important than during this pandemic when remote learning became the norm and the schools were closed.

Libraries in general and the Simsbury Public Library in particular, have become centers for digital learning in the age of COVID. Whether a resident is seeking help with technology or a student is needing materials to complete a school project, the Simsbury Public Library is an important resource.

Simsbury is very proud of its library. Please support this modest and needed budgetary request. By doing so, you will be enabling the Simsbury Public Library to continue to be recognized on the local and state level as well as to remain an important and much used resource for its residents.

Sincerely,
Anne Erickson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Thank you so much for your continued support of the Simsbury Public Library. The Library strives to be a community center for the town. It is unique in many ways especially since it serves all Simsbury residents and demographics. Its focus is not to be a standalone institution, but to be a key component to help the Town of Simsbury and its residents meet the goals they have for our community.

I would like to ask for your support in two areas of the FY2021/2022 budget to enable us to continue to provide excellent service to you, our patrons and the residents of Simsbury. The first is to support the restoration of the Children's Dept materials budget to 2008 levels. This is a request for an additional \$8000. In 2008, the Library prepared to move to significantly reduced quarters while the Library was expanded. There wasn't room for the existing collection and patrons stored books in their homes. The purchase of new materials had to be at an absolute minimum due to space limitations. As a result, the budget for materials was cut by \$8000. Simsbury reopened an expanded Library over 10 years ago, but the budget was never restored. The Simsbury population has grown significantly in the past 13 years, but the materials budget has stayed the same. Digital books weren't widely available in 2008. They are now a part of the collection. The Library also partners with the Board of Education to provide online access to the books remote learning students would normally obtain from the School libraries. Please help us keep pace with the needs of the community.

The second request is to approve \$5,760 as part of the 6 year technology replacement plan to fund replacement of the computers in the Adult/Reference, Tech Lab, Children's and Borrowing public PCs and Technology. These computers provide access to Simsbury residents that can't afford their own computers or high speed access. This is critical for those seeking employment as well as those needing access to the world, friends and associates. In 2018/2019 the computers were used over 84000 times by patrons. Computer access for all is a need not a want for everyone in this digital age. If the computers aren't kept current, software updates and continued maintenance won't be available to those that need it the most.

The Library is continually ranked as exemplary by independent surveys and comparative studies. It also is one of the lowest in per capita funding. Please support these Library budget requests to enable the Library to continue to provide excellent service and value to the Town and its residents.

Thank you again for your support and all time and effort you give to the Town.

Marianne O'Neil
Chair, Simsbury Public Library Board of Trustees

Simsbury Town Officials: I support the Simsbury Public Library's request for \$8,000 to restore its material account to its 2008 funding levels, and its request for \$5,760 for its technology replacement plan.

Before moving to Simsbury in November of 2019, I regularly took my two grandchildren to the children's department. I was struck by the books, the educational toys and programs, and the kid-friendly staff members. After my wife Carol and I decided to move to our daughter's family in West Simsbury, the library was one of a number of wonderful things that attracted us here.

A retired teacher, I now am an aspiring picture book writer. Preferring not to be in a public place for too long during this public health crisis, I have been logging onto the library's web site, requesting specific picture book titles, receiving a phone call and email to tell me the books were ready, picking up the books, reading them, and returning them through the automated window. It's been easy. And when I've had a question, a friendly staff member always has professionally answered my question.

In this crisis, I understand the need to keep taxes down. But we're not talking about a lot of money here, and I believe we should support this library, just as it has supported us.

Thank you,
Mark McGrath

████████████████████
████████████████████

Dear Simsbury Board of Selectmen,

I am writing as a patron, mother of three young library patrons, and member of the Library Board of Trustees in support of both 2021-2022 library budget requests.

The \$8,100 request to restore children's reference material is crucial as it supports our school curricula and invests in the future of our young Simsbury residents. The \$5,760 request as part of the library's technology replacement plan is also imperative as many residents rely on technology services for many uses, including employment and business needs.

With full understanding that this is a time when financial resources are limited, I thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Heather Goetz
Simsbury Library Board of Trustees

Dear Selectmen,

I would like to give my strong support for the purchase of the Meadowood property. This is a chance to preserve a habitat of great ecological importance to a number of extremely rare birds and has some of the finest agricultural soil in America. This property could be managed both to provide needed habitat for plants and animals and for the recreational enjoyment of the people of Simsbury. I have no doubt that if this opportunity is missed there will eventually be building on this property . There are far more appropriate places in town for that. The rare opportunity to preserve a place like this should be taken without hesitation

Fred Feibel
Past President, Simsbury Land Trust

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Heather Eversdyke

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Michael Eversdyke

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Please keep Meadowood on the agenda for the May meeting. Very important !
Thank you,
Ken and Ruth Jacobson

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- John Helmkamp

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

i support the right to vote

Bruce Metzger

TO: Board of Finance

FROM: Lori Coppinger (Parks and Recreation Board member)

I am writing this letter to encourage the Finance Board to increase financing and restore staffing levels to the Parks and Recreation Division. From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000's, department staffing has been reduced from 10 parks positions to 7. However, over the last 30 years, the town has increased numerous parks, facilities and open spaces added to the department's responsibilities. Examples include:

- Simsbury Performing Arts Center (2006)
- Curtiss Park (3 fields)
- Town Forest Park Ball Field
- Tariffville Green
- Memorial Park expanded by 2 fields
- Expanded rink season
- Rails to Trails Project added 12 miles of higher level trail maintenance
- Acquisition of Ethel Walker Woods and its Trail System
- Hopbrook Landing at the Flower Bridge (2020)
- Weatogue Park Multipurpose Field

Parks and Open Space Master Plan has recommended 2-3 additional Parks Maintenance Staff, but of special concern is the Parks and Facility Maintenance Technician which desperately needs to be filled at a recommended cost of \$96, 982. Responsibilities of the new position include repairs and routine maintenance tasks at all parks and facilities, basic carpentry, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, irrigation systems, etc. The Parks Foreman is currently performing these tasks and in turn, he is not available to assign or monitor the work of crews. This leaves the Parks Superintendent to perform many of the Foreman's tasks, work orders and staff supervision when the Superintendent should be focusing on projects, budget prep and monitoring, facility inspections and staff training, etc.

Several projects also need to be completed, including renovations to the Simsbury Farms playground and the golf club house. The replacement of the Golf Course irrigation system has also been pushed back a year which could result in a very costly expense to the town should there be a catastrophic failure of this system.

Not to be forgotten is the continued training needed for staff training and professional development courses for the parks staff such as mechanical equipment training, Aquatic Facility Operator Certification, Certified Ice Technician, Pesticide Applicator's Licenses, and Certified Playground Safety Inspector. This training is vital and will result in safer recreational facilities for residents.

And as a final reminder: the total net per capita spending for Parks and Recreation services remains among the lowest of all comparable Greater Hartford municipalities.

I support keeping Meadowood on the May referendum. This property is historically significant as well as being “open space” for the community to enjoy. At the very least the community needs a chance to vote on its future.

Patricia Piano

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

With regard to the public purchase of the Meadowood land, I'm sure others have adequately captured the importance of this property for its historic, social, and cultural significance. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King has made this explicit in his own writings. There are also important ecological, agricultural, wildlife, and recreational issues.

Preserving this land, and establishing a visible recognition of this history and relevance would make Simsbury, and the State of Connecticut very proud indeed.

I can well imagine—when friends from out of state and other countries can again visit our lovely town, with its small-town feel and natural beauty—being able to say, “Hey, come on, you’ve gotta see *this!*”

I urge the Board to allow the people of Simsbury to make this decision.

Michael Park

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Scot Riley

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum. Please be sure to include Meadowood in the referendum. Our town's natural beauty, both of the land and the people, should be cherished and preserved.

Thank you,

Barbara D. Wolfe

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum. I think this is a wonderful proposal and an example of why this is such a special community and place to live. It is grand to celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and also to save open space and create more areas for hiking and reflection. Given the pandemic that we are all living through open space has never felt so important as it has in this past year. It is very important that we do whatever is necessary to make this happen. Thank you to all those who are helping to organize this effort!

-- Charles Wolfe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

During this pandemic, we have by necessity relinquished some fundamental rights for the health and well-being of all.

We gave up our freedom to assemble, to attend places of worship, school and even direct access to government.

We did not give up our right to vote.

Removing the preservation of the Martin Luther King legacy property from the referendum, denying the citizens their right to vote on this matter, is both unprecedented and unacceptable.

The public has the right to vote on this matter.

This referendum item must remain with the budget referendum to be voted upon in May.

Diane Nash

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I would like to keep Meadowood on the may referendum.

Thank you

Krishna Dyapa

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In regard to the Meadowood land, I am strongly in favor of preserving it for natural habitat, agriculture, and recreation. One of the best aspects of life in Simsbury is the amount and quality of the open space we have. The Meadowood land in particular links the Massacoe State Forest (Great Pond section) and the 4,400 acre McLean Game Refuge, and thus provides critical safe passage for wildlife between these two natural areas. It also adds significantly to the recreational trails for hiking and exploration. The idea of destroying this valuable natural resource for yet more housing is abhorrent to me. Simsbury citizens must be allowed to vote on the Meadowood use; it must not be removed from the referendum. I very much hope you will not block our chance to vote on it.

Respectfully

Susan Brachwitz

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Without question, The Board of Finance absolutely must keep Meadowood on the May referendum.

Sincerely,
Phyllis Grinspan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

My name is Dan Mudgett. I live at 30 Madison Lane, West Simsbury, Ct. 06092. I support keeping Meadowood on the May referendum. There are too many ill advised projects afoot in the Farmington Valley at this time to lose any more open or historic space without serious and truly thoughtful consideration! Thank you for your attention.

Dan Mudgett.

The Meadowood land is a valuable town resource of ecological importance as a natural habitat that links the McLean Game Refuge and Massacoe State Forest. It is also valuable to the quality of life of Simsbury residents for the recreation and agriculture that it affords.

The value (both financial and intangible) lost in degrading Meadowood from its current state to an enclave of residential properties far exceeds any financial gain to the Town from taxes or other imagined sources of revenue. Once destroyed, an open space of the size and quality of Meadowood can never be reconstituted.

Since the loss of the Meadowood land would have a significant impact on the open space and quality of life of many Simsbury residents, any decision regarding the future of this land must be made by the residents of Simsbury and NOT by a town board or committee.

I strongly oppose removing the issue of Meadowood from the referendum.

This is a question that Simsbury residents must be allowed to vote on.

Sincerely

Dr Mark P Silverman

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Dr. Mark P. Silverman.

We support the Town's purchase of the Meadowood property. And keeping the Meadowood item on the May referendum. It is important for the Town to preserve open space and historically significant properties such as this.

Thank you,

Judy & John Schaefer

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

As President of the Simsbury Grange, it is vitally important to protect the Meadowood land and to honor MLK's legacy. I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Barbara Friedland

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support keeping Meadowood on the May referendum.

Frederick Metzger



I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Tracy Labonte

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support keeping Meadowood on the May referendum. It's imperative that we retain the right to vote on this. Meadowood isn't just a piece of land. It's natural and cultural heritage must be preserved. "Open Space" is what has attracted so many of us to town. No one wants to see multiple "For Sale" signs which will significantly impact the price of houses and the tax base. BOF do the right thing!

Linda Goodman

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Susan Downes

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the purchase of Meadowood and urge the Board of Finance to allow the townspeople to vote on it at referendum.

The reason I support this purchase is that, as a resident of Simsbury for more than forty years, I have seen with much concern the disappearance of protected open land. I also see that the cutting and clearing of woods for residential and commercial use has accelerated in the past few years. I beg you to protect and preserve the quality of life in this town. Simsbury's open spaces contribute to this quality.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Adams

I support keeping Meadowood on the May referendum.

Diane LaGamba

I am writing to you in support of the proposed town acquisition of the Meadowood property parcel. As homeowners on Clifdon Drive in Simsbury, and citizens of the town of Simsbury for 8 years, we are blessed to have a front-row seat to this beautiful area of land. When we were house-hunting as a young couple with a baby on the way, my husband and I were drawn to Simsbury's quaint downtown and charm. We were lucky enough to find a home on Clifdon Drive, and now, several years later with 4 small children, we have come to appreciate it even more. The fields and tobacco barns have immense value as a trademark of our region in Connecticut and New England, and I can't tell you how much I love driving by them around town. Family and friends who visit Simsbury always comment on the rare combination of convenience and rural charm.

From a parent's point of view, I also am concerned about the impact a giant housing development at the Meadowood location would have on our school system. My children are currently in Squadron Line, and they have already dealt with overcrowding of kindergarten this year. With a massive influx of families and children, I would imagine this burden would negatively affect the quality of our town's highly ranked schools from elementary to high school level.

Preserving land as open space for our community, I believe, is one of the best investments our town can make. By acquiring the Meadowood property, the town of Simsbury will have an incredible asset for years and generations to come. Our neighborhood, as well as many other concerned citizens, has actively been supporting this effort and will continue to do so. Please support the Trust for Public Land and the Town of Simsbury in their joint partnership to protect Meadowood.

Thank you for your consideration,
Ashley Burke

[REDACTED]

Simsbury, CT

My wife and I have been Simsbury residents for the past 8 years, and we are closely following the debate regarding the Meadowood property. I would like to convey our enthusiastic support for the proposed town acquisition of Meadowood. This land is an absolute treasure, and we would love to see it preserved as a public space for years to come. The last thing our town needs is another housing development. Instead, please support this opportunity to have open space, and the preservation of a historic area, natural wildlife habitats, public recreation, and working farmland.

Thank you for your consideration,
Sean Burke

Philip Banker

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Members of the Simsbury Board of Finance:

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Meadowood conservation purchase. This is a historic preservation opportunity and I encourage its inclusion in the FY21/22 budget. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

Philip Banker

Greetings, I support the right to vote on Meadowood.

Sara Batchelder

Hi,

I support keeping Meadowood on the May referendum. My name is Katie Galt and I live at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] in West Simsbury.

Thanks, and be well.

As a long time resident of Simsbury, I am writing to support the acquisition of the Meadowood property parcel. The preservation of this beautiful open space, as well as the historic barns is in the best interest of the town in both the short term and long term.

Thank you for your consideration,
Randy Cole

[REDACTED]

Simsbury, CT 06070

We are long time Simsbury residents, and we strongly support preserving this land. We also respectfully ask that the issue stay on the May referendum. Residents must have a voice.

Karyn and Bill Cordner

I urge the BOF to keep the issue of Meadowood land preservation on the April 6 mtg agenda

Jon Covault



Hello,

I support for Meadowood being considered for purchase along with the help from the Trust for Public Lands. The town citizens need to have a chance to vote on this issue.

Meadowood represents a huge chunk of connecting wildlife corridor between McLean Game refuge and Massacoe State Forest. It would not be an orphaned piece of land. It is also an important viewshed for the town.

I also have concern of the huge costs to the town to improve infrastructure in terms of roads, utilities and Simsbury's largest school, Squadron Line. Investing in the greenway maybe a less expensive way to go in terms of actual dollars spent improving the infrastructure. Saving farmland and open space is immeasurable in terms of dollars.

Thank you,

Ieke Scully

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Ed Wrobel

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I would like to comment on the Meadowood project for the Budget meeting on the 6th. I do think it is very important to keep this area, especially with the historical tobacco barns, as open space. As of late there has been so many apartment and housing complexes that have been built in in the town over the last many years and several of them have ruined the view of Talcott Mountain and the Heublien tower. The Meadowood development has been in limbo for over 10 years. It was originally going to be over 600 houses and then was reduce to about 285. I grew up in Simsbury on North Drive which is adjacent to the tobacco field. At that point in time pesticides were sprayed by airplane onto the tobacco fields which in my opinion lead to the high rate of cancer on this street including my mother who died at age 59 from Lung Cancer after never smoked in her life. The majority of houses in the neighborhood had someone with some form on cancer over the years especially the stay at home mothers. The pesticides and chemicals that they used on these fields remain 3 feet and below in the ground. Several areas of the field have had soil remediation to reduce the amount of chemicals that lay in the fields. In my opinion if a housing complex went it to this area then the houses would have to have foundations dug into the ground which would put these chemicals back into the air.

I strongly support the town for buying this land as open space to prevent the excavation of this land. My husband and I and our 3 children moved back into town after being away for 20 years and still live close to the tobacco fields. I do not want to be exposed again to these chemicals in the ground since I was already exposed as a child. At present it is a lovely area to walk your dog and look at the historical barns, which are an important part of our history of Simsbury. I can't tell you how many times I have driven by the barns on Hoskins Road and have seen so many people in cars stopping to take pictures of the 3 barns especially at sunset, or with visiting geese or with snow on the ground. Let's not ruin another piece of open space by building more houses or apartment complexes that this community does not need. We are beginning to lose the small town feel of this town which we grew up with and continue to enjoy.

Thank you.

Barbara Bush,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I support Meadowood!

I grew up in town and this peaceful, beautiful town. I absolutely oppose the construction project. Simsbury is a beautiful town with deep history of farmland and culture, that is being destroyed in every section. Simsbury does not need to be another West Hartford. I grew up in this town, and there is a reason why I continue to stay in this town. By continually having all these new developments, the town is going to become overrun and overpopulated. I don't want to be in a city. I want to be in a beautiful small town.

Please do not let this project happen. The integrity of this town is literally on the line, and there is no need for yet another development.

There are developments within the town that have finished buildings, yet remain vacant.

I support Meadowood on the May referendum.

Petra Chesanek

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

As residents of Clifdon Drive for 44 years my wife and I are all for the acquisition by the town of the adjacent property known as Meadow Wood. This is a prime piece of open land and just begs to be natural and/or used for recreation instead of being developed. My wife and I have contributed a lot of tax money to the town over the years and I think this is a wonderful way to spend some of it.

Please do the right thing.

Marvin & Charlotte Kelly

[REDACTED]

From John H. Cheffer

██████████ Simsbury, CT 06070

April 4, 2021

My family has lived some forty six years at our current address in Simsbury. We have found Simsbury to be a wonderful place to reside. I believe one of our Town's outstanding characteristics has been a willingness to recognize those who distinguish themselves; in various ways by helping others directly, by supporting local or larger causes, by recognition of heroic actions or for the demonstrated results of their leadership.

With a positive Meadowood decision, Simsbury has an opportunity, which realistically will not be repeated, to establish a memorial space Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King. A space which can be used and enjoyed not only by townspeople; but also an educational destination. If I remember correctly, Simsbury's current initiative was driven by school students and supported by the Town.

We must acknowledge today's world continues to cry out for Peace, Respect, Understanding, Love, Equality, Humanity. Everything I know about Dr. King and his message of Peace tells me these societal issues have been well addressed by him. I suggest his universal message needs to be continued. And, by doing so in Simsbury on this unique parcel of land we can help in our own way to keep alive a message so many seek to hear.

Ms Butler: As relatively new residents of town (we purchased a home in 1979), we have seen many changes in land use over the years. The increases in taxes as a result of new single family homes has been a concern of ours for many years. My personal experience as a licensed professional civil engineer for over 40 years has led me to the conclusion that open space acquisition is typically a significant, long term tax savings for municipalities, while providing outstanding recreational opportunities for the general public as well as our children. It is with this thought that we strongly encourage the Board of Finance to consider the acquisition of the Meadowood property. The expenditure of Town funds, while significant, is, in the long term, a financial benefit to the Town, while providing for the future residents of Town. This is a unique opportunity, similar to the purchase of Orkil Farms. We totally support the purchase of the Meadowood property and encourage the Board to do so as well!

Sincerely,
Stephen & Kathi McDonnell

██████████

I strongly support the purchase by the Town to preserve the property.

Ron Patterson

I am in full support of the town's financial contribution towards the purchase of Meadowoods off Hoskins Rd., as the land deserves to be preserved and protected from development.

There are only a few open fields / meadows left in this town with the continuous boom of land development, forcing rapid ecosystem changes and less picturesque locations that bring so many admirers to our beautiful town.

Sincerely,

Rainer Blanchette
Director of Operations Auto-Bon Inc.

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Alene Galin

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Hello-

We strongly support Simsbury's acquisition of the land named Meadowoods.

Thank you.

Steven Reed

Janet Reed



I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Janet Beatty

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

My name is Sarah Cramer (35 Alder Road), and I am writing to fully support the budget items requested by Tom Tyburski of the Parks and Recreation Department. This was a carefully thought out budget and all items should be considered essential in order to effectively and properly function in a manner that best serves town.

Budget items that are particular importance are:

- Parks and Facility Maintenance Technician. It is extremely important that this position is RESTORED, as identified in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- Golf Clubhouse Renovation
- Paving and Accessibility Improvements at Simsbury Meadows. This was deemed to be a high priority item in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan.
- Replacement of Simsbury Farms Playground. This was deemed to be a high priority item in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan.
- Simsbury Farms Ice Rink Chiller
- Large Parks Mower
- Replacement of Irrigation System at Memorial Park Large Baseball Field. This was another need identified as part of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- Replacement of a Parks Utility Vehicle
- Small/Neighborhood Playground Equipment Replacement. This was, again, identified as necessary in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- Restoration of the Shultz Park Gazebo
- Continue Park Entrance Sign Replacements
- Parks Equipment Trailer Replacement
- Simsbury Meadows Electrical Repairs and Upgrades
-

Additionally, I would like express my full support for the Meadowood Open Space Aquisition.

Thank you,

Sarah Cramer, Culture Parks and Recreation Commission Member

I insist my citizens/residents' RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum be upheld.

-- JONATHAN GOOCH

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Chairs and Members of the Boards of Selectmen and Finance,

I am writing on behalf of the Hartford Audubon Society to urge the Town of Simsbury to purchase the 288-acre Meadowood Property. It is rare when a town has the opportunity to protect such a large, rich, ecologically productive property at such a low cost. The 288 acres provide forest, grassland, farmland, historic structures, wetlands, and active recreation that will be forever appreciated by Simsbury residents as well as the citizens of Connecticut. Some members of Hartford Audubon have reported grassland species in the fields along Hoskins Road, as well as wading birds – rare in our area – in the ephemeral wetland toward the north of the fields. It is a very special land. And in addition to the land's natural resource value is the importance of its connectivity to other protected open spaces. That the Trust for Public Lands is involved in this purchase is evidence of the value of protecting it – they don't get involved unless the land is very special.

Hartford Audubon urges the Town of Simsbury to act quickly and protect this land permanently. This is an urgent opportunity that should not be missed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sarah F. Faulkner".

Sarah Faulkner
President, Hartford Audubon

I believe voters should be allowed to vote to preserve this land and its Civil Rights history.

Meadowood is important for several reasons:

- Cultural heritage: Future generations can walk on and even work the same land as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Protecting public land protects our history and our shared future.
- Natural heritage and climate resilience: Wildlife needs connections between habitats, especially in the face of a changing climate. This land links State land and McLean Game Refuge.
- Public health, education and local resources: This land offers local resources, recreation, and respite. It offers beauty and healing. Education and agriculture serve the public good.

Taxpayers have a right to vote on this issue.

Sincerely,
Shawna Becene



West Simsbury

I support the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and urge the Town of Simsbury to contribute financially in order to make this purchase possible.

The cost to preserve Meadowood pales in comparison to the economic and environmental burdens that large scale residential development of this large parcel of land would place on ALL Simsbury residents.

Contrast the added demands placed on Simsbury's infrastructure with the benefits of preserving Meadowood as a wildlife corridor and permanent tribute to our town's history of tobacco farming and source of inspiration to Martin Luther King, Jr.

I first opposed residential development of Meadowood more than 20 years ago. Any lingering questions about the safety and suitability of the land for residential development need to be retired, once and for all, for the benefit of future generations. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take Meadowood off the block for future development and lay its controversial past to rest.

Respectfully,

Jane Spatcher McAlpine



Simsbury, CT 06070.

We are in favor of preserving the Hoskins Road property. Although we are residents of Granby, we believe the town of Simsbury should preserve this property for public use.

If you look at the Granby Land Trust properties and McLean Game Refuge usage during the past year, you will see that the public needs to have open space available for hiking and recreation. We often hike preserves in other towns and would look forward to a new preserve in Simsbury.

Tom and Marilyn Nystrom

Please consider saving Meadowood property from developers. This is such a large piece of land that abuts other properties and would be a huge help for wildlife. I am a member of Hartford Audubon and we consider this land an important birding area.

Roberta Gowing

I am writing to encourage the town of Simsbury to support the purchase of the farmland in question. I have often visited the neighboring preserve and believe development of this adjacent property will detract from the benefits of the natural environment there and reduce habitat diversity. In addition, aside from its historical significance, this land will be sorely needed for agriculture in the future as climate change and energy issues necessitate local farming.

John Halibozek
West Hartford CT

To the Simsbury Board of Finance,

I want you to know that I am in favor of the purchase of the 288 acre Meadowood property off Hoskins Road, Simsbury, CT. I am an Hartford Audubon Society Member and utilize that space for birding, hiking and walking. I do not want to see the land developed!!!

Please protect the 288 acres as follows:

1. 138 acres of open space w/ State DEEP recreational access easement
2. 24 acres for future athletic fields
3. 117 acres of farmland preservation w/ State Dept. of Agriculture easement
4. 3 acres w/ historic barns & MLK interpretive displays (there is a strong Civil Rights history associated with Martin Luther King)

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Susan Gowen

[REDACTED]

Granby, CT 06035

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Alexa Crystal

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Karyn Cordner

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- William Cordner

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Richard and Jill Schlicher

[REDACTED]

Simsbury, CT 06070

April 4, 2021

Dear Simsbury Board of Finance Members:

We are writing concerning the proposed acquisition of the Meadowood property. We strongly support the town, in conjunction with The Trust for Public Land, acquiring this property.

We have lived at 40 Clifdon Drive for thirty years, having moved here from Dallas for a banking job. When we arrived we were thrilled with the natural beauty of Simsbury and that, along with the excellent school system, was a primary reason for settling here. There have been times when we probably should have moved (ever commuted to NYC?) but we loved it here and here we stayed. We were actively involved in the previous discussions concerning the Meadowood development and were very pleased when that did not happen.

Our wonderful neighborhood is just west of the fields. Over the last three decades we have taken hundreds (thousands?) of walks in the fields and through the woods. The beauty of nature is there in spades. We have seen every mammal native to New England; some at very close quarters (the skunk was the only bad one). The bird life is also amazing and abundant and the open fields often draw unusual visitors (snow buntings one winter!). The wild flowers in the spring are beautiful and the rye grass on a bright summer day is wonderful.

You see articles every day concerning the health benefits of being in nature. Nature can also be very inspirational. Somehow over the years, I (Richard) have morphed from a banker/finance guy into an artist. These fields have been a constant source of inspiration and I have attached a few paintings of the fields/barns. You know who else was inspired by these fields? Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I know he was principally inspired by the different treatment he received here versus the South. But maybe he also was inspired by the beauty that was all around him. Who next will be inspired by this property?

Developing this property for passive recreational use and working farmland makes great sense to us. It would be another valuable asset for Simsbury and certainly would further enhance the town's reputation as a steward of nature and a wonderful place to live.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard and Jill Schlicher

Kept it on the referendum
Carolyn Stewart



Hello,

We want to take this chance to voice our support for keeping the Meadow Wood area as open space.

Having raised our family of three children and two dogs on Clifdon Drive where we back up to the tobacco field, we have enjoyed many a walk, ski, run, filled with sightings of coyotes, fox, bear and countless birds. The natural treasures are endless, as are the historical aspects of having the barns where MLK worked there.

We sincerely hope the land is kept open and not developed.

Thank you,
Cathy and John Earnhardt

[REDACTED]

Squadron line elementary is currently reporting a 13:1 student to teacher ratio which is already higher than the Connecticut average. Simsbury is facing an education overcapacity issue.

As a Simsbury resident with 3 children in the crowded public schools, I am 100% behind the conservation efforts underway.

The athletic field concept is an exceptional and much needed space in the north end of town.

The preservation of MLK's legacy and recreational land preserve will stand as a permanent reminder that an investment in the heritage of the town and health of its residents is important.

This type of lead-by-example decision will preserve the real value of this town. A 296 home complex will only serve to cripple Squadron Line and permanently de-value this town as the quality of education suffers.

Respectfully,
Garrett R. Caponetti

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Susan Prentice

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum. Keep the barns!

-- brad pfaff

brad.pfaff@uconn.edu

101 South Eagleville road APT 21D

I strongly support the purchase of the Meadowood property as open space. The need to maintain this environmentally critical parcel of land as a grassland or meadow cannot be stressed enough: through our widespread use of pesticides, bee, bird, and other wildlife populations are declining, and we are already way closer to Rachel Carson's SILENT SPRING than we should be.

When it comes to conservation, Simsbury has a rich history. Senator George McLean, Gifford Pinchot, Antoinette Eno Woods, the Reverend Horace Winslow (founder of the Connecticut Forestry Association) -- all of these are names we're familiar with or should be. McLean established the game refuge that bears his name for "the protection, preservation, and propagation of wild birds, game and fish and for the protection and preservation of the forest and other natural vegetation and the springs and watercourses thereon." As wonderful as the McLean Game Refuge is, however, we need to give more space over to nature if we are to reverse what over-development has wrought. We can't keep patting ourselves on the back about our long history as a conservation-minded town if we're not prepared to pay heed to what McLean, Pinchot Eno Woods, Winslow, et al. were saying and act accordingly.

We're talking about restoring balance of nature. And it can start with something as simple as providing a space for pollinators and birds to thrive. Because we need them if we are going to survive.

Thank you.

Sincerely, Tammy J. Banks

Simsbury Board of Finance,

I am writing to encourage the tow's participation in the purchase of this property. Though I live in Colchester, I am a member of the Hartford Audubon Society and the Connecticut Ornithological Association. Both organizations are deeply concerned for the loss of habitat and this property would be a significant step in the preservation of especially suitable natural living environment. I hope you will give this serious consideration.

Sincerely, Ernest Harris

I would like the Finance Committee to know that I fully support the purchase of the land known as Meadowood.

Marion Gilmore

[REDACTED]

Simsbury, CT 0079

Rachel Wellman

[REDACTED]

West Simsbury, CT 06092

April 5, 2021

To the Board of Finance,

As a member of the Simsbury Culture, Parks, and Recreation Commission, I am writing to advocate for the proposed budget. I would especially like to advocate for the inclusion of a Facility Maintenance Technician in the town's budget, along with the staff training and professional development required to support our parks staff. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan recommended the addition of this position, along with others, based on the many parks, areas of open space, and facilities that have been added in Simsbury. This creates more responsibilities and stretches our current staff.

I would also like to reiterate my support for the purchase of Meadowood. Purchasing the Meadowood parcel is important for preserving Simsbury's rich history of agriculture and our beautiful, pastoral landscape. This project benefits many of our residents, including advocates of historic preservation, local athletes, environmental advocates, and residents who enjoy passive recreation. I hope that the town does not pass by the opportunity to purchase this parcel of land.

Sincerely,

Rachel Wellman

Culture, Parks, and Recreation Commission

I am a member of the Hartford Audubon Society and I support the purchase and protection of the 288 acre Meadowood property off Hoskins Road. Large contiguous areas are key to the health of wildlife and the environment. Large areas offer habitat for birds and other animals as well as areas for recreation and learning for people. Additionally open space offers water resource enhancement, flood mitigation, and soil health maintenance. Last but not least is preserving a part of Connecticut's history.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

George Mack

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Ellington Ct. 06029

I am in support of the Town contributing to the purchase of Meadowlands!

Joanne Dombrosky

I support keeping Meadowood on the May referendum.

I have lived in Simsbury since 1989 and am a passionate advocate for protecting open space in town. In fact, I visit and recreate in our many protected lands every day and is the primary reason I live in Simsbury.

This parcel would provide a large, contiguous protected area that would offer trails, working farmland, and a small recreational area for Simsbury. With the Trust for Public Land along with the State of CT providing a majority of the funding for the asking price of over \$6 million, the town of Simsbury will be getting this invaluable property for only \$2,175,000.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Richard Stanley

██████████

West Simsbury

Dear Board of Finance,

I am writing in support of the town's participation in purchasing and protecting the 288 acre Meadowood property off Hoskins Road. As an avid birder, I believe this purchase is an excellent use of public funds because it will help to preserve an irreplaceable and critical habitat for migrating and breeding birds, as well as other wildlife. Some of the species of birds that have been reported in this area are considered quite uncommon or even rare. This type of habitat in particular is dwindling in our area. Please save this critical habitat.

Thank you!

Deborah C. Bishop

[REDACTED]

Weatogue

Dear Members of the Board of Finance

My primary role will always be as a mother, and as such I have to disagree with the proposed policy suggested to preserve the property on Mewdowood.

As I've stated before, I don't think we have been given all the options needed to do anything with this space. Martin Luther King Jr's foundation has not even been consulted to ensure their commitment to the preservation of the land...is this again a case of someone else speaking on behalf of the wishes of a marginalized population?

I am a firm believer that this property is big enough in history and current need, to be Open Space to honor MLK's legacy and create affordable housing which would address his mission. We cannot do any of these things without contacting his family.

I think preserving this open space without consultation of the MLK foundation is NOT a consideration of his work, but simply a projection of what we want. There is no way we should be voting on this without the input of the MLK foundation.

Shannon Leary Knall

Dear Chairs and Members of the Boards of Selectmen and Finance:

I urge you to approve the funding of \$2,175,000 to purchase the 288 acres know as Meadowood in Simsbury. The ecological value of this parcel far outweighs the purchase price, and Simsbury is being asked to contribute a fraction of what the land is worth. This is a rare opportunity to purchase property like this, that will have so many benefits to the residents of Simsbury as well as Connecticut citizens. The property is diverse and can be enjoyed by all walks of people and, best of all, it will abut two other open space parcels, creating contiguous wildlife corridors that are critical to their survival and, by extension, ours.

And the Trust for Public Land will pay the majority of the purchase price! Please, do not throw this opportunity away and let Meadowood get developed into just another housing tract. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine C. Delasco
Hartford Audubon Member
East Granby Land Trust President

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

I also wish to express my strong support for the purchase of the a 288-acre Meadowood property. This is a rare opportunity for the Town to acquire, with the invaluable help of the Trust for Public Land, a substantial piece of increasingly scarce meadow and farmland habitat and preserve an important historical site.

An essential reason for the habitat value of the Meadowood fields, forest and wetlands is its location. This property lies between the Great Pond section of Massacoe State Forest and the McLean Game Refuge. Meadowood provides critical habitat connectivity for migrating birds, pollinating insects and a variety of wildlife.

Preservation of the Meadowood property would also protect 117 acres of prime farmland soils, an increasingly rare resource in what once was a thriving agricultural state. Many of the state's farm fields and meadows have been lost as farmland and subsequently reverted to forest or been developed for housing. Over the last few years Simsbury and Avon have lost hundreds of acres of prime farmland due to multiunit housing construction. Preservation of this land would help fulfill a number of goals to protect farmland and agricultural soils as stated in the 2017 Simsbury Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) .

Additionally, the opportunity to develop a network of new trails and access points for hiking and exploration for neighbors and visitors will add value to the Town and surrounding neighborhoods. Development of such trails is also an objective of the POCD. As has been demonstrated dramatically during the recent pandemic, open space trails are highly valued and used by the citizens of Simsbury and visitors. This acquisition fulfills long stated POCD goals to preserve Simsbury's "sense of place" and the historic resources of our Town.

The Town should not miss the opportunity to purchase this land.

Diana Moody
Simsbury Land Trust Board of Trustee

Keep Meadowood on the referendum. I pay taxes and deserve to have my say.

Arlene Zappile

[REDACTED]

Simsbury, Ct. 06070

Dear Mr. Pomeroy, Mr. Wellman:

I am writing regarding the Town of Simsbury's '21/22 proposed budget where the current proposal is raising the mill rate by 1%.

Seeing as the Town's Grand List has increased in 2020, I think the town needs to live within its current budgeted mill rate and "right-size" expenditures to fit within the current tax base.

I wrote to you a year ago in opposition to adding new positions (Assistant Police Chief and an Accountant). That new spending was a "want" and not a "need".

Every couple of months I seem to read that the Town Manager is proposing an upgrade for this position or that. Or some kind or other of new spending. The boards also just increased from 7% to 8% the town's borrowing capacity.

This all adds up to increasing pressure on the budget - a little here and a little there - and here we are with a proposal for a 1% increase in taxation next year - WITH an increased grand list.

I feel the town is too loose with its money and there are not enough cost controls. I feel that decisions are made at the board level, input is asked for but then not really seriously considered. I feel that my input is not truly wanted as the decisions have already been made.

An \$80 increase probably seems insignificant to you. But that \$80 is added on to \$8000, and that \$8080 will be the new cost basis for next year's increase. Every effort should be made to hold the budget flat from the revenue side and just adjust wherever you can to "make it work" for FY '21/22.

Simsbury could sell some of the surplus town vehicles. (I see the town has between 150-200.) Are all needed? Are all used?

The town could get quotes for better electricity rates for the schools and town hall and Eno, etc. That could result in serious savings. Has this been looked into?

Simsbury can refinance its debt, get quotes for better insurance rates. And on and on. There are ways to do it.

The Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen need to work to hold the line on spending this year and just work a little harder to control costs.

I appreciate all you do and the time you all spend on behalf of the Town of Simsbury.

Sincerely,

James Marsh



To Board of Finance members:

I strongly support the purchase of the Meadowood property on Hoskin Rd. It is vital to the protection of birds and wildlife that inhabit and use this property . The Town of Simbury needs to preserve its lands and wildlife for the future health of residents both human and other. I live on Barn Door hills and cherish this open land where I often see deer, turkey and countless songbirds. Thank you for your consideration.

Edith Vassar

I own a home on Clifdon Drive with my wife, we have two children. We have lived on Clifdon for 10 years and enjoy the nice quiet and friendly neighborhood. Please know that we are not in favor of any company buying or acquiring the open town land and/or the adjacent farmland. Many families enjoy the path and open field to walk their dogs and have their children play. Also, there has been a lot of building of multi family housing in town lately which has put a stress on schools, roads and other infrastructure. We do not wish to see our property values decrease because the town has not held on to the land adjacent to Clifdon Dr.

Sincerely,

Eugene A. Bolognese, DC

--

Dr. Eugene A. Bolognese
Hopmeadow Chiropractic



Board of Finance

I am a long time Simsbury resident and I am writing to let you know I support the purchase of the Meadowood property by the Town of Simsbury.

Where I live on Wildwood Road I have the privilege of walking onto the Ethel Walker Woods property and from there to the Town Forest and the Tuller property too. Especially during this COVID time, getting outdoors for some exercise and peace and quiet is a wonderful opportunity, and was provided by the forward thinking of the Town of Simsbury.

I believe it would be just as important for another area of town to benefit from such a purchase. Please allow the residents of town to participate and also in the New England tradition of democracy, please let our voices be heard.

Thank you very much,

Paul Murphy

[REDACTED]

West Simsbury, CT 06092

[REDACTED]
Simsbury, CT 06070
April 2, 2021

Simsbury Board of Finance
Town of Simsbury
933 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury, CT 06070

RE: Meadowood Project

Dear Members of the Board:

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to address you.

My name is Douglas Beach. I am a Simsbury native, a member of the Simsbury Land Trust, and a member and former board member of Hartford Audubon Society.

Having left town for approximately thirty years to complete my education and to pursue my career, I returned home in 2005 and have been keeping track of local birding activity ever since. To date I have observed 208 species of birds in Simsbury.

I am writing to you in regard to the Meadowood property, which I hope will be purchased and maintained as open space. Towns rarely have the chance to protect such large and important landscapes. It would be unfortunate if we passed on this opportunity to preserve land which not only has historical significance, but also has supported some very unusual avian species.

On November 24, 2020 I discovered a pair of **Pink-footed Geese** at Great Pond State Forest. For the next three weeks they, along with over one thousand Canada Geese, grazed in the field on the Hoskins Road section of Meadowood. Pink-footed Goose is an exceptionally rare species in North America. It typically nests in Greenland and Iceland and spends its winters in Great Britain and northwestern Europe. To my knowledge, there were only two or three other Pink-footed Geese being reported in all of North America during the time our birds were in Simsbury. Our geese were included on the American Birding Association's National Rare Bird Hotline, and I was asked by the Conn. Ornithological Association to provide written and photographic documentation. Pending a vote by COA's Rare Bird Committee, the Pink-footed Geese will be entered into Connecticut's permanent ornithological record.

At the same time, two **Greater White-fronted Geese** frequented the Hoskins Road field. Although not as rare as Pink-footed Goose, Greater White-fronted is uncommon in Connecticut and is certainly a significant find. Additionally, a **Cackling Goose** was reported, although I did not happen to see it.

On May 5, 2019 I witnessed a **Bonaparte's Gull** sitting in a temporary pool of water which forms in the northwest corner of the Hoskins Road field after significant rain events. If the

timing is right, this temporary pond is also a magnet for migrating shore- birds, including **Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpipers, and Semi-palmated Plovers** among others, all of which were observed as recently as last year.

One could certainly argue that the presence of the Pink-footed Geese and the Bonaparte's Gull were anomalies, and not to be expected in the future. I would counter by saying that the presence of all of the above mentioned birds, plus others, including **Horned Larks** and **Northern Harrier**, signifies that this property has characteristics which attract uncommon and even rare birds. For example, the Hoskins Road field and nearby Great Pond create an ideal environment whereby the geese can alternately roost and forage throughout the day.

The Hoskins Road field is currently being used for agriculture, with a cover crop planted each fall. However, what is very significant is that, up until 2016, the land was maintained as a weedy field. On June 5, 2013 I, and others, observed a **Grasshopper Sparrow** in the vicinity of the three tobacco barns. Grasshopper Sparrow is classified as an **endangered species in the State of Connecticut**; primarily due to habitat loss. As recently as May 3, 2016 I observed another Grasshopper Sparrow displaying behind the same tobacco barns. Long time Simsbury birder, Dr. Roger Preston, was with me that morning and witnessed the bird himself. Unfortunately, the field was plowed under for agriculture that very afternoon, and the Grasshopper Sparrow was never seen again. However, the sighting of both individuals, on different occasions and in different years, indicates that their presence was not an anomaly. We have reason to believe that the sparrows might return if the field were to be managed properly, as evidenced by the Grasshopper Sparrows now present at the nearby Suffield Wildlife Management Area.

For your information, I have written documentation for all of the above sightings, as well as photographs of both the Bonaparte's Gull and the Pink-footed Geese.

My hope is that the Meadowood property will be purchased and maintained as open space; also that the site plan can be adjusted to accommodate what I believe is a significant birding location. Depending on how the land is managed, perhaps Grasshopper Sparrows and/or other prairie-loving species will return. And given the amount of grassland habitat that has already been lost in our state, this would be a truly significant occurrence.

Thank you very much for your attention and for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Douglas Beach

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Glenn Knight and I am writing support of the acquisition of the Meadowood Property for use as open space and soccer fields. I have been a resident of Simsbury since 2006 and I believe the Meadowood property is an important and beautiful part of our town. The aspects of Simsbury that drew my family here were its mixture of downtown area, community involvement, and open space/agriculture. We attend Simsbury Celebrates every year, we attend the Talcott Mountain Music Festival, we eat ice cream at J. Fosters and Tulmeadow, and we stop at Meadowood to see beautiful sunsets. Recently, we have enjoyed watching the many Canadian Geese that stop by the field. Please preserve this property from housing development. It adds tremendously to the character of our town.

Thank you,
Glenn Knight

April 1, 2021

Simsbury Board of Finance
Town of Simsbury
933 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury, CT 06070

Dear Members of the Board,

I write to express my strong support for the purchase of the 288-acre Meadowood property. This is a unique opportunity for the Town to acquire, with the invaluable help of the Trust for Public Land, a substantial piece of increasingly scarce meadow and farmland habitat and preserve an important historical site. The ability of the Town to purchase this property at a third of what would be required to do this on our own makes this acquisition even more desirable.

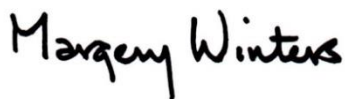
An essential reason for the habitat value of the Meadowood fields, forest and wetlands is its location. This property lies between the Great Pond section of Massacoe State Forest and the McLean Game Refuge. Meadowood provides critical habitat connectivity for migrating birds, pollinating insects, and a variety of wildlife. These attributes are intrinsic to the site and cannot be duplicated elsewhere.

Preservation of the Meadowood property would also protect 117 acres of prime farmland soils, an increasingly rare resource in what once was a thriving agricultural state. Many of the state's farm fields and meadows have been lost as farmland and subsequently reverted to forest or been developed for housing. Over the last few years Simsbury and Avon have lost hundreds of acres of prime farmland due to multiunit housing construction. Preservation of this land would help fulfill a number of goals to protect farmland and agricultural soils as stated in the 2017 Simsbury Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

Additionally, the opportunity to develop a network of new trails and access points for hiking and exploration for neighbors and visitors will add value to the Town and surrounding neighborhoods. Development of such trails is also an objective of our POCD. As has been demonstrated dramatically during the recent pandemic, open space trails are highly valued and used by the citizens of Simsbury and visitors. This acquisition fulfills long stated POCD goals to preserve Simsbury's "sense of place" and the historic resources of our Town.

While there are many worthwhile projects requesting budgetary considerations at this time, this is a singular opportunity that will not come again. The Town should act now to purchase this land.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margery Winters". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Margery" and last name "Winters" clearly legible.

Margery Winters

To the board of Finance,

I am a resident of Simsbury at [REDACTED]. I and my family enjoy so much of Simsbury's open lands and areas for walks and hikes. The addition of Meadowoods off of Hoskins would be a great addition to the town for that kind of recreation and additional open space. Given the history and viable options for this parcel this is likely the best choice for Simsbury. Any other use of this land, meaning eventual development would require investments from the town such as maintenance of infrastructure or the addition of schools should the land go toward housing. The land does have tobacco-related contamination, as do so many acres in the 'tobacco valley' where I have spend my entire life. However, letting the land rest or allowing less development-friendly types of remediation to take place (such as bioremediation or phytoremediation which can take years to slowly extract toxins) are better options than what would happen under development of any kind.

Please vote in favor of the expenditure for the town to purchase this property with the help of the TPL, the St of CT and private donations. It is a good opportunity do the best for Simsbury both financially as well as for the land and the community.

Thank you,

Cris

Cris Anderson, PMP

I am writing in support of the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Town as an important step to maintain Simsbury as the best place to live in the Farmington Valley. Acquisition of this formerly contaminated and hopefully fully remediated property can be obtained at a bargain price as the Town is paying about 36 percent of the total acquisition cost. This opportunity to convert vacant land to a sustainable habitat should not be missed.

I am sure there are more than a few influential people knowledgeable about Town affairs who would argue that there are other needs for Town funds or who will re-discover some new use for the Meadowood property for which there is no prospect of realization on the horizon. I would ask that the Board of Selectman and the Board of Finance step back from their settled positions, past battles and current preoccupations on the upcoming Town budget matters and take the long-term view.

Simsbury has gained 7 percent in population followed by 6 percent population growth in Avon with less growth in other Farmington Valley Towns. However, of all the Towns in the Farmington Valley only Simsbury has lost jobs these past 15 years. The great majority of new jobs are located further east to Windsor and East Granby and commuting patterns change as shown in the table (page 2).

Housebuilding has continued to grow in Simsbury with many more multi-family units than in the past. Twenty years ago, there was a flawed housing project proposed for the Meadowood property that failed due to the contaminated soils from years of pesticide use on the tobacco fields. The sponsor included some low-cost housing in their proposal to obtain the maximum density of housing units on the property and to secure the best price for the land.

There are fewer jobs in Simsbury than 20 years ago when this project was floated. Availability of rental property has increased significantly, and new homes continue to be built. Housing trends have changed. Builders average new home construction prices in Simsbury are down from the 1990s, as builders construct smaller less expensive houses on smaller lots. As new units become available it puts pressure on prices of existing homes. 40% of Simsbury's existing homes are valued at less than \$300,000. Newly built small homes of 1500 to 2500 square feet cost considerably more.

To the extent that low-cost housing is an issue for Simsbury, policies to encourage the purchase existing homes, which are distributed more evenly throughout the area seems to be a better strategy than concentrating low-cost housing to specific developments. There is no prospect of a Meadowood housing project being built and it should not be invoked as a red herring solution to low-cost housing.

When our family moved to Simsbury 34 years ago, we moved for the schools, the quality of the environment, Town services and the public library. I doubt that recent residents have much different reasons to move here.

Education, both public and private, is a major reason to come to Town and represents 70% of the tax bite. However, over time existing residents find schools a less compelling reason to stay. The median age of Simsbury resident is 46. As 42% of our residents are over 50, schools become less important as their children graduate. As planning for retirement nears, there are three options: stay in Simsbury, spend more time at a second home, but keep a home here, or move (usually out of State). Many retirees do leave. But the Town should want to keep its older residents in their homes, who also pay 70% of their taxes to support the schools they are no longer using. As every businessperson knows, it is cheaper to keep a customer than to acquire a new one and that goes as well for the provision of public services.

The Town's elected officials should be listening to the older residents who see the value in acquiring an asset that would grow in value over time. I am sure there were those who thought Senator McLean impractical when he set aside the McLean Game Refuge, and there was some opposition to the State in 1949 to set aside Stratton Brook Park or Great Pond. And there was opposition to the Town when it acquired Orkill Farms in 1968 to set it aside for the Simsbury Farms Recreation complex. New and old residents see these assets as part of what define Simsbury. Living near these properties is a plus and families build and buy houses located nearby. Preservation of the property will in time only enhance the property values of those who live in the North part of Town. All of Simsbury residents should have a voice in this decision. Simsbury should embrace and build on its strengths as a place to live. We can not predict the future of the Farmington valley, but Simsbury can act on the opportunities to make the Town the preferred place to live relative to the surrounding towns. Opportunity is knocking. We should not let a failure of imagination stifle the decision to acquire, preserve and enhance the Meadowood property. Take the long-term view, as others have before you.

Thank you for your attention.

Tobey Winters

	Percent Growth 2005-2019 Population	Percent Growth 2005-2019 Employment
Avon	6.20%	6.97%
Bloomfield	3.06%	22.60%
Canton	3.24%	11.51%
East Granby	1.62%	19.22%
Granby	3.78%	10.76%
Simsbury	7.35%	-27.49%
West Hartford	2.93%	9.79%
Windsor	-0.16%	42.41%

Sources: CT Dept of Public Health and CT Dept. of Labor

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Eda diBiccari

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Erin Leavitt-Smith

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Lori Fernand

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Brett Araniti

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Lauren Roderick

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Randy Chesaneck



Hi -

I am favor of protecting the Meadowood land. The town should be allowed to vote on the conservation.

Thank you,
Lindsay Owens

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Margaret Gooch

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Geetha Shenoy

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] West Simsbury

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Anna Kahl

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I am writing to support funding to preserve the Meadowood property. As a member of the Simsbury Land Trust, and past president of the Hartford Audubon Society, I strongly believe we need to save this area from development. Several species of state endangered and rare birds such as the Grasshopper Sparrow have occurred in the meadows. As you may know, grassland is the state's most endangered habitat: the fields and farmlands of this area deserve protection. Besides its environmental quality, this property has historical relevance with its link to Martin Luther King Jr.

Please fund the preservation of this property.
Thank you.

Zellene Sandler

[REDACTED]

Bloomfield CT 06002

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Kaiden Halscheid

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Kevin Kurian

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

Simsbury should do all we can to keep and protect this land.

Thank you.

-- Penelope Kokines Sanborn

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Paul Murphy

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Susan Barney

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Bloomfield, CT 06002

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- dominique avery

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Emme Crystal

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Danielle DErmo

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum. Town of Simsbury residents should have a say in whether preservation of this historically and environmentally significant property as open space should be a town budget priority.

Thank you.

-- Sandy Coombes

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Kevin McDonough

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum. I think this is a wonderful proposal and an example of why this is such a special community and place to live. It is grand to celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and also to save open space and create more areas for hiking and reflection. Given the pandemic that we are all living through open space has never felt so important as it has in this past year. It is very important that we do whatever is necessary to make this happen. Thank you to all those who are helping to organize this effort!

Warm regards,
Chuck Wolfe

I support keeping Meadowood on the May referendum.

I have lived in Simsbury since 1989 and am a passionate advocate for protecting open space in town. In fact, I visit and recreate in our many protected lands every day and is the primary reason I live in Simsbury.

This parcel would provide a large, contiguous protected area that would offer trails, working farmland, and a small recreational area for Simsbury. With the Trust for Public Land along with the State of CT providing a majority of the funding for the asking price of over \$6 million, the town of Simsbury will be getting this invaluable property for only \$2,175,000.

Thank you.

Virginia Garratt

██████████e

West Simsbury, CT 06092

To the Board of Finance,

I am writing as a parent of the Latimer Lane Elementary school community to voice my concerns/insights regarding the current structure status of the school.

It has been brought to my attention that there have not been any significant updates within this building in an extremely long time. As this is an almost 60 year old building, I am hoping that the issues that need addressing would take top priority as you look to organize funds and projects.

Also, given the increase in population size over the past few years, and seeing that trend continue to grow, Latimer Lane absolutely needs to be prioritized as the building reaches maximum capacity. There are also accessibility concerns which then lead to safety measures that without question require structural updates ASAP, such as the K-2 wing to 3-6 wing ONLY by use of a staircase.

Finally, the library/media center is far too small of a space to accommodate all of the students at the school, and it is overwhelmed with books and media center items that makes the space an unsafe place to congregate a group of individuals.

My ask is simply this... Please take these subjects and add them to the very top of your agenda. I am truly hoping that bringing the attention of these extremely important needs and funding priorities to you as you will be useful as you organize the upcoming projects for this year.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Cristina Bussolini

For the record:

The budget needs to reflect a responsibility to the basic needs of the town.

Originally the guidance by the Board of Finance was, I believe, no greater than a 1.9% increase. Yet the town budget is double that original guidance and the schools budget also exceeds the number. There have been comments during the budget process where we are borrowing money to complete needed work in town when we should be paying for it with existing dollars.

An uptick in the grand list has given us an additional \$2.7 million dollars which we have promptly spent and then some. We should use the additional income to pay down what we owe or use it to pay for those things that we shouldn't be borrowing for.

Also – raising the debt ceiling to accommodate additional borrowing, not a smart move. As is changing the criteria for what borrowing can be used for.

Last thoughts. Pay off our existing open space commitments, before spending more money on additional land acquisition.

Go back to the drawing board and sharpen your pencils.

Thanks

Frank Bowden

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 8:55 AM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: FW: Support for Latimer Lane renovation

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

Address: Town Clerk's Office, 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070
P: (860) 658-3243
F: (860) 658-3206
E: ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov

Town Hall and the Simsbury Public Library are currently open to walk-in visitors for limited hours and services. Town Hall is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30am-12:00pm; the Library is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00am-4:00pm, and Saturday from 9:30am-3:30pm. Access to Town buildings will remain by appointment only during all other times until further notice. Town employees continue to report to duty at all locations, and are available to schedule in-person appointments for services that cannot be completed by phone, mail, email, or virtually. Please visit our website at www.simsbury-ct.gov and click on the red banner for a resource that highlights many of our online services. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we continue to address the emerging issues related to COVID-19.

From: Rebecca Mahoney [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2021 10:45 AM
To: Butler Ericka
Subject: Support for Latimer Lane renovation

Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

We are writing in support of moving forward with the proposed renovation project to Latimer Lane School. The need for this project has been extensively studied and vetted, and is supported by the Board of Education. The rapidly increasing number of students at Latimer Lane, combined with the current space inadequacies and outdated facility place an urgency on the need to invest in Latimer Lane School now. Please send this project to referendum this spring, thank you.

Sincerely,
Becky and Kevin Mahoney
[REDACTED], Simsbury

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 8:00 AM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: Fw: Latimer Lane

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

From: Teresa Berry [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 3:56 PM
To: Butler Ericka <ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov>
Subject: Latimer Lane

Hello,
I'm writing to support the Latimer Lane renovations project and its urgency. Latimer Lane is an amazing community for our children. All of the teachers, administrators, and staff are passionate about making it a safe, fun place for our kids to learn and to grow.

We are so fortunate our children have had such a nurturing, kind, and fun elementary school experience. However, the environment in which they are learning is lacking. The building is not only old and outdated, it is far too small to support our rapidly growing student body. The space does not match the positive energy of the people within it. Specifically, the common areas are far too small to accommodate the student body, additional classrooms are needed, areas for the specials are too small for the growing class sizes, and there is no space for the community to gather at the same time.

Due to the recent increase in residential property in our district, the size of the student body is continually growing. Thus, these issues are only going to continue to worsen. It is urgent the Latimer Lane renovations occur as soon as possible and are included on this year's referendum.

Thank you,
Teresa Berry

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 8:01 AM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: Fw: Support for BOF to send Latimer Lane Renovation Project to referendum

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

From: Daniel Zittoun [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 7:56 AM
To: Butler Ericka <ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support for BOF to send Latimer Lane Renovation Project to referendum

Dear Board of Finance,

My name is Dan Zittoun. I live at [REDACTED]. My three children attend Latimer Lane elementary (grades 1,4 and 6). In addition, I am a principal at a local high school and have spent 22 years in public education. I am writing in support of the Board of Finance sending the Latimer Lane Elementary School Renovation Plan to referendum for this May.

As an educator, I have seen the details of the School Facilities Master Plan and Reconfiguration Study and believe it is a thoughtful plan. My support is not based on the benefit the renovation would be for my children, as my two oldest will be at Henry James before it is complete and my youngest may be there for only one year before going to Henry James for 6th grade. In fact, it will most certainly be more disruptive for my children's educational programming during the renovation.

The importance of quality facilities for educational programming cannot be understated. Updating ADA accessibility and creating universal access to new playgrounds/play areas benefits all students. Making a commitment to upgrading bus/parent drop off, parking and safety upgrades is also critically important. Currently, many New England schools are limited in their offerings (summer programs, after school activities, community events, etc.) due to outdated HVAC systems, plumbing system distribution and fixtures. Additionally, upgrading facilities can often produce long term savings through LED lighting and other updated technology.

Finally, not moving the plan forward to the referendum this May just sets the whole plan back an additional year; an additional year before Squadron and Tootin' Hills begin their much needed elementary renovations. The quality of the public schools was the primary reason for my family to locate here. The District's reputation for excellence in education has existed for decades. Superintendent Curtis and the Board of Education put together a thoughtful plan to maintain and build on that excellence. It is vital that the Board of Finance supports that plan and moves this District-wide process forward by sending the Latimer Lane Elementary School renovation plan to referendum this May.

Sincerely,

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 8:04 AM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: Fw: Public Audience: Bd of Finance Mtg

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

From: JENNA CAULFIELD [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 25, 2021 12:49 PM
To: Butler Ericka <ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov>
Subject: Public Audience: Bd of Finance Mtg

Hi Ericka --

Please share the following Public Audience comments with the Board of Finance for its upcoming meeting.

If you need anything else from us to share these, please let me know.

-- Jenna

Dear Members of the Board of Finance --

Please support the Board of Education's Latimer Lane Elementary School capital project and include it in the budget referendum.

We have had children at Latimer Lane since 2013 and definitively can say that the school is in desperate need of renovation. The core spaces, like the library and gym, do not adequately meet the needs of the students. The building is not handicap-accessible, a fact that hit home with us when our daughter was in a wheelchair for a lengthy period and had to go outside to move between levels due stairs being the only connection between those levels.

The school's need is reason enough to support putting the Latimer Lane project to referendum. However, we also are pleased with the Board of Education's work to ensure the project is fiscally responsible and fits within the town's debt service guidelines.

These are just a few reasons why we request your support of the Board of Education's Latimer Lane Elementary School capital project and its inclusion in the budget referendum.

-- Jenna and Patrick Caulfield

Sent from my iPhone

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 8:04 AM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: Fw: My Support of Latimer Lane Renovation

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

From: Katherine Fong [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 2:34 PM
To: Butler Ericka <ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov>
Cc: Michael Luzietti [REDACTED]
Subject: My Support of Latimer Lane Renovation

Dear Board of Finance -

I hope this email finds you and your families healthy and well. I am writing this email as a parent of two children who will be attending Latimer Lane Elementary School in the fall and in support of the renovation project that is so desperately needed there. My son will be in 4th grade and my daughter starting out in Kindergarten. For three years I have attended the amazing Veteran's Day Assembly at Latimer Lane to celebrate our community's Veterans and while it always moves me to tears it also frankly causes me a lot of anxiety the way that the whole school plus the Veterans plus their families are packed into that tiny gymnasium like sardines, I could not even sit on the floor with my feet out I have to sit cross legged. It is a huge fire code violation and so dangerous and our school's enrollment keeps growing and growing.

I am also most uncomfortable with how in the video It's Elementary...Time to Meet the Need the front entryway is described as being one of the few schools without a secured vestibule entrance and that once a visitor is in those two glass doors they have access to the whole school. This needs to be urgently addressed as well. I know you are all familiar with the Sandy Hook tragedy and I don't need to belabor the extreme importance of making a school as secure as it can be to protect our children, teachers and staff.

Finally, I am very worried about the air quality in the school. Latimer Lane is in desperate need of an HVAC system to properly ventilate and condition the school so that our kids, teachers and staff who are spending roughly seven hours a day in school are breathing clean air.

All of the rest of the reasons why renovations are needed are valid as outlined in the video; the cafeteria and library are too small, there isn't a handicapped ramp up to the higher grade wing, and the space is outdated, but to me safety is paramount and my three concerns above need to be addressed as soon as possible.

Please support this renovation project and send it to referendum.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katherine Fong
[REDACTED]

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 8:04 AM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: Fw: Latimer Lane Renovation Letter

Importance: High

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

From: Lizzy Givan [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 9:16 AM
To: Butler Ericka <ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov>
Cc: Luzietti Michael [REDACTED]
Subject: Latimer Lane Renovation Letter

Dear Board of Finance,

I hope your Monday is off to a great start! My name is Lizzy Givan and I am a parent of three young kiddos. My oldest is in the 3rd grade at Latimer Lane and my other two will be entering the system starting next year. We love Latimer. The staff, the teachers, the leadership...it's unmatched. However, the facility itself needs a lot of work. My hope is that my quick note will encourage you to support this renovation project and send it to referendum.

The Latimer Lane facility is too small for the student body that it serves. With more families moving into the area, we simply can't accommodate the numbers. Classrooms are packed, large gathering spaces aren't sufficient and student learning is suffering as a result. I personally worry about the incoming Kindergarten class...so many families decided to hold their kinders this year and there will be a flooded system next school year. Crowded rooms make for crowded minds. Please consider the lack of spacing when you address plans moving forward. Spacing issues are an immediate need and we hope you have plans in place to address the growth / lack of room.

I worry about the safety of our students and staff. With packed rooms and an old building, there's just no way the school is up to code from a security standpoint. The safety of our students and staff needs to be top priority when addressing next steps, many of these steps need immediate action.

I also want to point out the building materials themselves and air quality concerns. On a wet day, all you can smell in the gym is mold. I know there have been tests done, but please at least pull the wall mats down and make sure that there isn't mold behind those mats. The gym, the library...all of our large gathering spaces are just not what these kids and staff deserve. I know the wall mats are quite the rabbit hole, but they are a good example of what we are subjecting our students / staff to on a daily basis.

I can't thank you enough for your time and consideration. I know you are only receiving a handful of letters this round, but I can assure you the Latimer community is ready to support next steps in any way that we can.

Be well ☺

Best Regards,

Lizzy Givan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Attacking from every angle.™

This message (including any attachments) is intended exclusively for the individual to whom it is addressed and may contain proprietary, protected, or confidential information. If you are not the named addressee, you are not authorized to read, print, copy, or disseminate this message or any part of it. If you have received this message in error, please notify the sender immediately.

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 5:58 PM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: FW: Meadwood

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

Address: Town Clerk's Office, 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070
P: (860) 658-3243
F: (860) 658-3206
E: ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov

Town Hall and the Simsbury Public Library are currently open to walk-in visitors for limited hours and services. Town Hall is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30am-12:00pm; the Library is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00am-4:00pm, and Saturday from 9:30am-3:30pm. Access to Town buildings will remain by appointment only during all other times until further notice. Town employees continue to report to duty at all locations, and are available to schedule in-person appointments for services that cannot be completed by phone, mail, email, or virtually. Please visit our website at www.simsbury-ct.gov and click on the red banner for a resource that highlights many of our online services. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we continue to address the emerging issues related to COVID-19.

From: Jon Gooch [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 3:40 PM
To: Butler Ericka
Subject: Meadwood

Dear Simsbury Board of Finance;

(Ms. Butler, please read this out at the meeting)

I am saddened to see the sleight of hand employed in attempting to slide this piece of decision-making through by underhand manipulation of the democratic process of transparency, fair-play and the oxygen of plain-dealing by operatives paid by taxpaying townspeople.

To permit, encourage or facilitate the plowing-under of the beautiful, vital piece of property known as Meadwood would be an irreversible crime of staggering proportions and (were it allowed to proceed would literally deface one of the more beautiful, significant and meaningful parts of this historic town) MUST not be allowed.

Should you do so, for whatever reason, against the will of the people who nominally own a lifetime interest in the area, you will be remembered in history as the people who plowed under a significant and formative piece of the history of this country's relationship with the civil rights movement AND nature.

Better management/use of existing finances with more creative thinking than bulldozers, development and greed are required. Any knee-jerk reaction to "grab some more cash" can be practiced by the thoughtless and permanently ruinous action considered in this development. The world is not progressing if this action is permitted. It is regressing.

I beg, plead and shame you all into examining your consciences and deny this abhorrent, unnecessary and destructive proposal.

thank you

Jon Gooch



Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 9:29 AM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: FW: Henry James fields

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

Address: Town Clerk's Office, 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070
P: (860) 658-3243
F: (860) 658-3206
E: ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov

Town Hall and the Simsbury Public Library are currently open to walk-in visitors for limited hours and services. Town Hall is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30am-12:00pm; the Library is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00am-4:00pm, and Saturday from 9:30am-3:30pm. Access to Town buildings will remain by appointment only during all other times until further notice. Town employees continue to report to duty at all locations, and are available to schedule in-person appointments for services that cannot be completed by phone, mail, email, or virtually. Please visit our website at www.simsbury-ct.gov and click on the red banner for a resource that highlights many of our online services. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we continue to address the emerging issues related to COVID-19.

From: david johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 8:48 AM
To: Butler Ericka
Cc: david johnson
Subject: Henry James fields

I would encourage the board to place aside FUNDS in the future to further develop the Henry James (HJM) fields for multi sport utility. The potential is huge at Henry James to vision and develop a outside multi sport fields

The current state of the HJM fields is poor, the high school turf field is constantly utilized, and HJM could offer simsbury youth leagues such as soccer, lacrosse and even football an area dedicated for youth development.

David Johnson
[REDACTED]
Weatogue,CT

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 4:16 PM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: FW: Meadowood Habitat

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

Address: Town Clerk's Office, 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070
P: (860) 658-3243
F: (860) 658-3206
E: ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov

Town Hall and the Simsbury Public Library are currently open to walk-in visitors for limited hours and services. Town Hall is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30am-12:00pm; the Library is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00am-4:00pm, and Saturday from 9:30am-3:30pm. Access to Town buildings will remain by appointment only during all other times until further notice. Town employees continue to report to duty at all locations, and are available to schedule in-person appointments for services that cannot be completed by phone, mail, email, or virtually. Please visit our website at www.simsbury-ct.gov and click on the red banner for a resource that highlights many of our online services. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we continue to address the emerging issues related to COVID-19.

From: TOLLY ZONENBERG [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 4:11 PM
To: Butler Ericka
Subject: Meadowood Habitat

This land is where Martin Luther King Jr. and the Morehouse College students worked while in Simsbury. It connects State land to Mclean Game Refuge.
The price to the town is \$2.5M, or \$25 per average household for 10 years. The price per acre is lower than any other recent purchase.

To me saving 239 acres for public space is worth it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Tolly Gibbs
[REDACTED]
Simsbury

Meriwether Amy

From: Butler Ericka
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 4:18 PM
To: Meriwether Amy
Subject: FW: Support of Meadowwood

Thank you,
Ericka L. Butler
Simsbury Town Clerk

Address: Town Clerk's Office, 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070
P: (860) 658-3243
F: (860) 658-3206
E: ebutler@simsbury-ct.gov

Town Hall and the Simsbury Public Library are currently open to walk-in visitors for limited hours and services. Town Hall is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30am-12:00pm; the Library is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00am-4:00pm, and Saturday from 9:30am-3:30pm. Access to Town buildings will remain by appointment only during all other times until further notice. Town employees continue to report to duty at all locations, and are available to schedule in-person appointments for services that cannot be completed by phone, mail, email, or virtually. Please visit our website at www.simsbury-ct.gov and click on the red banner for a resource that highlights many of our online services. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we continue to address the emerging issues related to COVID-19.

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 1:37 PM
To: Butler Ericka
Subject: Support of Meadowwood

Hi Erica
Here are my comments for the April 6 meeting regarding my support of Meadowood.

As always thank you

March 31, 20221

To : The Board of Selectman and Board of Finance My family and I would like to share our strong support for the purchase of the 288-acre Meadowood property. This location is an iconic and important location in Simsbury and should be preserved.

This is a unique opportunity for the Town to acquire, with the invaluable help of the Trust for Public Land, a substantial piece of increasingly scarce meadow and farmland habitat and to preserve an important historical site.

The over building and elimination of habitat that has taken place in Simsbury over the past few years makes this purchase even more of an imperative.

This habitat provides critical habitat for birds, insects and other wildlife. Rare and endangered birds have been documented as being sighted on this location.

The preservation of the Meadowood property would also protect 117 acres of prime farmland soils, an increasingly rare resource in what once was a thriving agricultural state. Many of the state's farm fields and meadows have been lost as farmland and subsequently reverted to forest or has been developed for housing.

Over the last few years Simsbury and Avon have lost hundreds of acres of prime farmland due to multi-unit housing construction. Preservation of this land would help fulfill a number of goals to protect farmland and agricultural soils as stated in the 2017 Simsbury Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) .

Additionally, the opportunity to develop a network of new trails and access points for hiking and exploration for neighbors and visitors will add value to the Town and surrounding neighborhoods. The importance of the availability of outdoor recreational areas for hiking and outdoor activity has been invaluable. In addition there is a great deal of wildlife that is dependent on this habitat.

Simsbury needs to act to preserve what little open space it has left before it becomes too late and the land is gone forever. Simsbury's rural nature needs to be preserved for the generations to come.

Thank you

Danielle D'Ermo and Family

April 3, 2021

Simsbury Board of Finance
Town of Simsbury
933 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury, CT 06070

Dear Members of the Board,

I strongly support the purchase of the Meadowood property. This is a wonderful opportunity for the Town to acquire, with financial assistance from the Trust for Public Land, a vital habitat and preserve an important historical site.

To understand the significance of Meadowood a short background history is in order. I served on the Board of Directors for the North Simsbury Coalition (NSC) in the early 2000s. We were a citizens-action group concerned with the planned over-development of this parcel of land by Griffin Land, the real estate subsidiary of Culbro Tobacco. Griffin proposed a high-density development of 620 homes on a 300-acre parcel of land and called it Meadowood. Griffin Land's plan would have paved and over-developed an environmentally fragile parcel in the name of profits. NSC collected data, worked with environmental experts from the commercial sector as well as the University of Vermont, and DEEP. In fact, among our Board members was an environmental scientist. Our findings about Meadowood and the damage that would result from development were astounding. The matter was eventually settled out of court after lengthy proceedings which brings us to the present situation. If this land is not purchased as open space it leaves open the possibility of a developer purchasing the land and high-density development which would be devastating.

This parcel of land is a major portion of one of the largest aquifer recharge areas in Simsbury. Any development will have a deleterious effect on our wells' ability to recharge and the quality of our drinking water. This includes Town water which is also drawn from local aquifers. If development should occur on this parcel, large areas of the aquifer recharge area will be paved reducing the ability of rain to reach and recharge our vital aquifer. In addition, residential properties tend towards heavy pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer use. These harmful chemicals cause damaging runoff and can leach directly into the aquifer recharge area causing irreparable damage to the aquifer with pesticides eventually finding their way into drinking water as has happened in some areas of Simsbury.

The Meadowood parcel is a major migratory pathway between the Great Pond section of the Massacoe State Forest and the McLean Game Refuge for migrating birds, pollinating insects and a variety of wildlife. These attributes are specific to this site and cannot be replicated elsewhere. The parcel is home to several vernal pools. Vernal pools are critical to the ecosystem as they provide habitat for numerous rare plants and animals with many of these plants and animals spending the dry season as seeds, eggs, or cysts, and then grow and reproduce when the ponds are again filled with water. In addition, birds such as egrets, ducks, and hawks use vernal pools as a seasonal source of food and water. Even during the dry periods vernal pools are critical to the life cycles of many species and their destruction would be detrimental to the food chain and ecosystem. Once this parcel is preserved, it can be managed as a grassland or meadow which would provide and enhance the habitat for nesting birds and pollinating insects; both of which have had disastrous declines in population.

Finally, this parcel of land holds historical significance that will be preserved with the purchase of the Meadowood. In the 1940s a teenaged Martin Luther King, Jr., spent two summers working on the tobacco farms in Simsbury. In letters home during those summers, King described the liberating experience of getting out from under the Jim Crow laws of the segregated South. "I had never thought that any person of my race could eat anywhere, but we ate at one of the finest restaurants in Hartford," he wrote to his mother.

One point of clarification. The letter to residents from the Board of Finance lists the price of the Meadowood purchase as \$6,115,860 under Capital Projects. However, the Town's portion of this purchase is \$2,515,860, not the full amount, due to significant support from the Trust for Public Land of \$3,450,000 and a private lot sale of \$150,000. It is important for residents to understand the true impact on the Capital Budget is \$2 million dollars, not \$6 million dollars, making this

purchase very cost-effective with a per acre cost of Meadowood at \$8,386. How does this compare to recent open space acquisitions by the Town? A recent example is the purchase of the Ethel Walker Woods which cost approximately \$18,000 per acre. In addition, the purchase of the Meadowood property would fulfill several of the stated goals of the 2017 Simsbury Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) as set forth by the Town's Planning Commission.

Meadowood is an environmentally sensitive parcel of land that is available for purchase at a cost-effective per acre cost. The parcel's purchase ensures a major aquifer recharge area is protected, maintains a vital migratory corridor for birds and other animals, protects a sensitive ecosystem, and with proper management will help increase bird and pollinating insect populations. Meadowood will be enjoyed by residents with walking trails and preserves our history. In addition, the Meadowood purchase accomplishes several of the stated goals of the POCD.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Board of Finance to keep the purchase of Meadowood in the Capital Project budget.

Sincerely,



Joseph L. Campolieti

To: Board of Finance
Re: FY 2022 Budget
From: Susan Van Kleef
[REDACTED]
Tariffville

I would like to start out by thanking the members of the Board of Selectman, Board of Finance, and Town employees for the time they spent developing this budget. It is a huge endeavor.

I am writing this letter to express support for the Meadowood project and keeping this capital expenditure for the project on the May referendum.

With help from the Trust for Public Land, we have an opportunity for the Town to preserve a meadow habitat and prime farmland soils that provide a variety of ecosystem services. The lands proximity to the Massacoe Block at Great Pond and the McLean Game Refuge habitats provides corridors for wildlife including migrating birds, mammals, and pollinators. Meadow habitats and prime farmland soils have become increasingly scarce in the Farmington River Valley due to development. Preserving open space with diverse characteristics is increasingly necessary to provide resilience in the face of climate change for both wildlife and farmers.

Protecting farmland and agricultural soils and development of new trails are all goals in the Town's 2017 Plan of Conservation and Development. This project would fulfill those goals.

Preserving the historical connection to an experience that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King identified as important to shaping his future goals is beneficial to the entire state of Connecticut. Including Meadowood in the Connecticut Freedom Trail provides an opportunity for more people to know the significance of MLK's time in Connecticut.

As for losing space for affordable housing, the twenty-four acres that the town will own can be used for anything. Maybe the Town can build some actual affordable housing and not \$280,000 deed restricted homes that were only

included to usurp the Zoning Commission and don't really seem affordable to people who fall within the income restrictions to purchase affordable homes.

Over and over surveys show that open space is incredibly important to the citizens of Simsbury. We are lucky to have this valuable property and to have the opportunity to preserve it to benefit people far beyond the borders of our little town.

Thank-you for listening,
Susan Van Kleef
Tariffville

April 5, 2021

Dear Simsbury Board of Finance,

I would appreciate it if this letter is read aloud to the public during your April 6, 2021 meeting and if possible included in the minutes.

I would like to thank you for your time and commitment to the inner-workings of the town of Simsbury. Most of us take for granted the volunteers behind the scenes who maintain and make a machine function—that fine-tuned machine being this small town. The decision to move here and raise our children was made with great care 46 years ago. And now, we have grandchildren enjoying the schools and the many amenities afforded to Simsbury citizens.

I am now concerned about the Meadowood area which has a long history of its own in terms of development. I have watched our town transform throughout the years and for the most part they have been well-planned changes. But, there has been an extraordinary amount of change squeezed into a much shorter period of time over the last few years. The most impressive is the unending development of large-scale apartment complexes as well as a commercial-size solar farm, which destroyed hundreds of acres of active farmland and the destruction of over 35 acres of forest. The company, Deep Water Wind, that was designated to fight for the project was a Rhode Island company backed by a 46 billion dollar New York Hedge Fund. Though the majority of Simsbury Boards, as well as the CT Department of Energy and Environment Protection, and the CT Department of Agriculture opposed the project, the Connecticut Siting Council pushed this project through. We were promised “robust screening and landscaping” which presently is sorely inadequate. My fear is that the Meadowood area will be sold for additional solar farm development, blessed by the CSC, or for additional large -scale apartment complexes.

Simsbury is quickly losing open space and seemingly losing its ability to plan intelligently for growth. The Meadowood area is one of the last undeveloped spaces in town. \$2.5 million seems a small price for Simsbury to be a participant in its own land plan. \$8,000 per acre for Meadowood appears reasonable compared to \$18,000 per acre that Simsbury approved for the purchase of Ethel Walker Woods a number of years ago. I would like to support the Board of Selectmen in their quest to secure this property for future use that is determined by the town itself, rather than outside entities who rarely have our best interests in mind.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dianne Treacy

[REDACTED]

Simsbury, CT

April 5, 2021

Simsbury Board of Selectmen
Simsbury Board of Finance
Town of Simsbury
933 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury, CT 06070


Dear Chairs and Members of the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen:

The Town of Simsbury has stepped forward and purchased other large open space parcels in the past for environmental and recreational purposes, for example, Orkill Farm that is now Simsbury Farms, and Ehtel Walker Woods. Given the public's appreciation and heavy use of these properties, I hope you will support the protection of the Meadowood property.

I join the conservation community in expressing the view that the natural features of the landscape and the wildlife that use it are very important. Also, people will value it for the recreational value of its trails, and its connection to other open space.

Additionally, I want to express my hope that the town will take seriously the need to exercise good conservation practices such as controlling invasive plants and protecting the ephemeral wetland through establishing an adequate buffer around it. Properly managed, the property can provide for wildlife and for people for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Sally S. Rieger

Simsbury, CT 06070

April 5, 2021

Simsbury Board of Selectmen
Simsbury Board of Finance
Town of Simsbury
933 Hopmeadow Street
Simsbury, CT 06070

RE: Support for Meadowood purchase

Dear Board of Finance and Board of Selectman:

I am writing in strong support of the Meadowood purchase. I have lived in Simsbury most of my life. This purchase will continue our town's legacy of protecting wetlands and open space that has made Simsbury such a popular and peaceful destination for nature lovers, hikers and residents alike. I am often told that Simsbury's natural areas are what makes it so special.

I spent many seasons as a child enjoying the natural areas in town, learning about plants and animals and how to contribute as a citizen scientist. I chose to move back here as a young parent, to stay in town when I bought my first home and thereafter. The natural areas in this town have always been an important part of my life. Back in the day we had meadows with grassland birds and pollinators to share with our children. As a grandparent, I look forward to teaching my grandson about Simsbury's natural areas, their intrinsic value, and how to preserve them for future generations of people and wildlife.


This parcel is important ecologically and environmentally. One of the reasons that bird, pollinator and other species are declining is due to development that removes habitat needed for successful breeding and for rest areas during migration. This parcel interconnects several wildlife habitats. In so doing, it provides corridors and continuous woodlands they need to survive and thrive. This parcel is not just important for its size and habitats, but for its uniqueness in connecting existing open space areas.

I am an avid birder, and know first hand the value of this property to those of us who monitor and count bird species in this area. I was fortunate to see the pink-footed geese this year, a life bird and benchmark for me as a "lister." In addition, well managed grasslands are instrumental in providing habitats for grassland species disturbed by development. Whip-poor-wills used to reside here when I was a child and were in the open tobacco fields off Holcomb Rd. near Barndoor Hills Rd. in prior years, but have not been found recently. This parcel is adjacent to those habitat areas, and its preservation is important for providing habitats that are otherwise declining. Other species that could benefit from these grasslands include the eastern meadowlark and grasshopper sparrow.

As a long-time Simsbury resident, I am also struck by the connection our town has to Martin Luther King. In this day, when preserving cultural history is so important to all of us, preserving Meadowood for its cultural and historical significance is another critical part of our town's legacy.

We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to preserve these habitats and this iconic cultural site at Meadowood. As a nearly lifelong Simsbury resident, I urge the Board of Finance to vote YES to include this purchase in this year's budget.

Respectfully submitted,


Donna Summers
Simsbury CT

Susan Masino

West Simsbury

Comments re: budget public hearing

I'm writing to provide comments on the purchase of Meadowood from the perspective as a scientist, an educator, and a member of the Simsbury Open Space Commission. It is essential that this issue remain on the referendum and open to a public vote. This land is irreplaceable and a proud and tangible piece of our civil rights history.

I have not been outspoken previously on this issue because the Open Space Commission endorsed it long ago (after asking a few questions) and because the project makes so much sense. It will be another feather in Simsbury's cap. Even having this land, this history and this opportunity is a point of pride.

Now, after watching several recent meetings, I'm concerned that some of the facts and the multiple values of this land have not been highlighted adequately - or in some cases have not even been part of the discussion. Perhaps they were discussed at previous meetings. It is important that land use decisions are made with full and accurate information, which in these cases span multiple disciplines.

I focus here on interdisciplinary science and economics, but most importantly on why this should be allowed to proceed without interference to a public vote at referendum. If proceeding as planned to a referendum vote is already guaranteed, and there is no issue with continuing to the vote, then please take these comments simply in support of the project and in the spirit of full public information.

Science:

Climate science: It is a matter of international consensus that land stewardship writ large is essential to protecting the planet. But it is also essential to local ecology and making local communities resilient to the disruptions that we will face. Clean water and local natural land is literally a lifeline for a community. It's critical for all species, including species that need to migrate as the environment changes.

Natural science: Meadowood is a major habitat corridor and also a place to grow local food or resources such as hay, something that has been in short supply locally in recent years. On top of these benefits there are 24 acres left open to future interests. This land transaction offers a balance of uses that all serve the public good. Not least of all, Connecticut is known for outstanding farmland, and Simsbury is recognized as one of 21 "*River Valley*" towns in Connecticut with soil that is the best in the nation, if not the world.

River Valley Municipalities

Bloomfield	Glastonbury	South Windsor
Cromwell	Granby	Suffield
East Granby	Manchester	Vernon
East Hartford	Portland	West Hartford
East Windsor	Rocky Hill	Wethersfield
Ellington	Simsbury	Windsor
Enfield	Somers	Windsor Locks

Social science: Beyond all of this, Meadowood offers a deep connection to a sense of place and to history – which is *how* and *why* people connect to and care about their community. Simsbury has that pride of place based on the generosity and stewardship of previous generations. But specifically protecting a civil rights history site, where a visionary civil rights leader worked? It's irreplaceable. Martin Luther King Jr. and fellow Morehouse students were transformed by experiences here in Simsbury – and this a powerful message and a real place that everyone can share in, forever. It is a touchstone, and an immersive experience that can never be replicated in a monument or a book. It's powerful, and protecting this place for the public is based on science and it is an impactful way to show everyone that they have a place here.

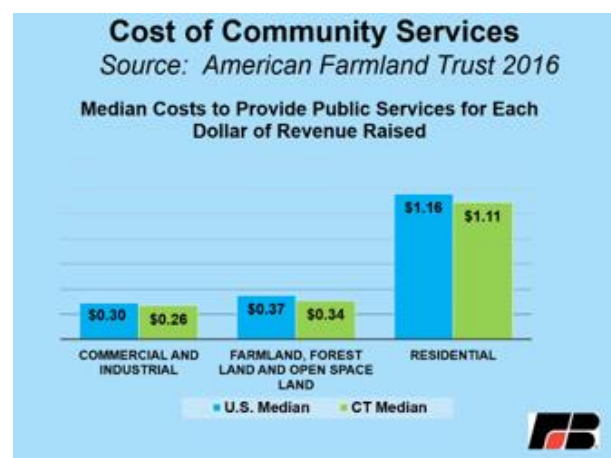
Place-based experiences and the combined cultural, natural and historical benefits of public land are great equalizers, and opportunities for co-benefits of community, science, education and inclusivity. A sense of place is a big predictor of success in education and in life. And the sense of place is why Simsbury is quantifiably “sticky” – people love it here, they volunteer, and they donate. People tend to stay here longer (and return to Simsbury) at much higher levels than other communities. Survey after survey – including the statistically valid surveys – all point to open space and nature as one of the top two reasons why people move here and why they stay here.

There is no question that this land is special, for multiple reasons, and I fear we are getting distracted by the stress we are all under. We have been isolated, and we are underestimating the ability of our community to problem-solve. Every consultant that comes to town is so impressed with what we have and how we are taking care of it. There are numerous solutions to any possible concerns about this project, and some concerns are based on misunderstandings. But there is no other place that is an iconic landscape, with these multiple values, and with a national effort to help the town hold this land in the public trust, for the public good. And this land preservation transaction is based on science.

Economic:

I will focus here on the top 5 reasons why it is financially responsible to keep this on the referendum:

1. This project makes clear financial sense. The short-term cost will be far offset by the long-term savings. Multiple studies over decades have shown that open space makes economic sense, and some of these benefits are featured on this fact sheet from the Land Trust Alliance. Improved property values, and reduced strain and costs of infrastructure and services, are matters of consensus, nationally: <https://serppas.org/media/1078/lta-fact-sheet-economic-benefits-of-land-conservation.pdf>
2. In Connecticut, as shown here, open space costs \$0.34 per acre and residential development costs on average \$1.11 per acre per this recent analysis. These numbers are consistent with previous studies in Connecticut.



3. The short-term cost of the project is more than offset by permanent financial savings.
4. These financial benefits do not even include the economic benefits of public health, ecosystem services or community resilience offered by local resource production. When local systems are disrupted - and they will be, more and more - this value of local land cannot be overestimated.
5. Preventing a public vote means rejecting ~\$3.5 million dollars helping the town to leverage this. Why would we reject this opportunity to do the right thing, complete a project of national significance, and get help from all over the country to pay for it? There is no financial risk - the town's price is locked in at \$2.51M and that price is what voters will decide on at referendum.

At this juncture, preventing a public vote on Meadowood for monetary reasons should only be considered if the town was in a very desperate financial situation, with no options, no ability to look beyond next year, and no reserves. None of these comport with our recent AAA rating. It would also mean ignoring science and public opinion, as well as common sense and long-standing public values.

The Big Picture

During a pandemic, and whenever people or a system are under stress, it can be hard to look at the big picture. I am asking you to do this now, because purchasing Meadowood is not a zero-sum game that is eliminating any other specific project or goal and should not be misconstrued as such. The cost to the average taxpayer is \$25 for 10 years, and the cost of not protecting it is unknown. It is a small short-term cost that makes enormous long-term sense and is something that must proceed to referendum.

The decision that voters will make at referendum is similar to the decision to buy the land for Simsbury Farms, or to protect the aquifer and the natural area of the Ethel Walker Woods. People can have differences of opinion, and different values, and different special interests - but ultimately this is a matter that should be decided by the people.

If the elected Board of Finance votes to remove Meadowood from the referendum they would be deciding this issue on behalf of the public. It is my strong opinion that should only be done by the Board if moving forward is clearly against the public good and interest, and thereby the Board of Finance would be overriding the recommendation of the majority of the other boards in town. Like in the case of the Ethel Walker Woods, it would force citizens to collect signatures on a legal petition. And while there have been executive orders during the pandemic giving special powers to the governor, and special rules for virtual town meetings, unfortunately there has been no such provision or accommodation for citizen's right to petition. Requiring a petition to signed by nearly 1000 electors - in person, then presented to a notary, and then delivered in person to the town clerk, is a barrier to democracy that I and many others consider unfair and unjust during a pandemic when we are trying to just get through it.

As I noted in my first paragraph, if proceeding as planned to the referendum vote on Meadowood is already the settled intention of the Board then please take these comments simply and fully in support of the scientific and economic benefits of the project and in the spirit of full public information.

And thank you for your tireless work on behalf of the town.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of preserving Meadowood and not removing it from the referendum. I am a life long resident of Simsbury as was my father, who worked tobacco as a youngster and was present in Simsbury when Martin Luther King, Jr came here to do the same. We have every reason to make much of this association which no other town can claim. I am proud of our beautiful memorial to Rev Dr MLK,Jr and support preserving the land on which he worked.

I am also a student in the UMass Stockbridge School of Agriculture and am aware of the difficulty young farmers have in accessing/affording farmland. The intent of preserving working land is critical - a resource to preserve or lose forever. Please take the long view and retain this initiative in the upcoming budget.

Thank you
Susan Andrus Olson, [REDACTED] Weatogue, CT

Dear Simsbury Board of Finance,

We are writing to express our strong support for the purchase of the Meadowood / Hoskins Road property. We are former Simsbury residents who pass by the property while visiting a relative who lives on Surry Circle. The land in question has historical, agricultural, and environmental importance that must not be overlooked.

We understand that the purchase will make this property a contiguously protected area with Massacoe Forest and McLean Refuge. Ongoing fragmentation of natural areas in Connecticut depreciates the health of the natural landscape—and that negatively impacts the well-being of the citizens of our state. Please take into account the experiential information provided by members of the Hartford Audubon Society concerning wildlife needs in this area.

In the case of Meadowood, added to the environmental and agricultural significance of the property is the Simsbury connection to the memory of Martin Luther King Jr.; recent efforts in Simsbury to tell the young MLK's story will only be enhanced by preserving the area that was formative in King's early experience.

This is a rare opportunity to preserve open space for future generations. Please try to see this purchase in the light of an amazing opportunity rather than a fiscal burden.

Respectfully,

Pamela J. Cartledge

Robert J. Bitondi

My name is Deborah Jan Olsen and I live at [REDACTED] here in Simsbury. I am writing on behalf of my husband Jeffrey Olsen and myself to encourage our town to purchase and protect the 288 acres on Hoskins Road that is called the Meadowood property.

The fields, wetlands, pond and woods located on the property are important wildlife habitats. They also act as a wildlife corridor that connects other town open spaces and are adjacent to the McLean Game Refuge.

The town of Simsbury has the opportunity to protect and preserve these 288 acres from development and my husband and I both encourage town officials to participate in their purchase.

Sincerely,

Deborah Jan Olsen
Jeffrey A. Olsen
[REDACTED]
Simsbury, Ct 06070

I support the RIGHT TO VOTE on Meadowood at the May 18th referendum.

-- Michael Glenn



We support keeping Meadowood on the Nay referendum.

Joe & Elizabeth Curreri

 Weatogue CT 06089

Town of Simsbury Board of Finance,

I am in support of the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to protect the property from future residential development. I am opposed to any residential development on the land. The land should be preserved for future generations to enjoy for passive recreational use or as an open space for wildlife.

I urge the Board to reallocate financial resources necessary to support the funding of this acquisition.

Zhong Wang



Town of Simsbury Board of Finance,

I support the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and urge the Town of Simsbury to contribute financially in order to make this purchase possible.

The cost to preserve Meadowood pales in comparison to the economic and environmental burdens that large scale residential development of this parcel of land would place on ALL Simsbury residents.

Sincerely,

Mark Schulz



Town of Simsbury Board of Finance,

I support the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Trust for Public Land and request the Town of Simsbury support it's purchase and protection.

The cost to preserve Meadowood compared to the future costs created is highlighted by the line next to it for the Latimer Lane improvement, made more critical by the strain placed on thar school from rapid development.

Open space is what sets our town apart, and the fields on Hoskins and County embody the agrarian nature of Simsbury. Living almost across the street from the area in question, the loss of the beautiful fields with our historic barns, the loss of a starry sky viewing spot, landing zone for migrating geese, and if you are out early enough, lovely sunrises would be sharply felt by my family.

I hope we can move forward with preserving and protecting our open spaces that are the very fabric of our town. Thank you

Meghan Pugliese



Town of Simsbury Board of Finance,

We strongly support the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and urge the Town of Simsbury to contribute financially in order to make this purchase possible.

More than twenty years ago we opposed the residential development of Meadowood because of the toxins in the soil that would require the entire land to be remediated in order to keep residents safe and healthy. We submitted documentation of toxic chemicals used in traditional tobacco farming in Connecticut in the 1950's that Culbro claimed they did not have (because the barn that housed their chemical records burned down). Following our public comment, Culbro's attorney was so interested in our public testimony and documentation that he asked us for copies of the Chemicals used in CT Tobacco Farming articles we obtained from the Connecticut Agricultural Resource Center. We refused to share them; however, we did submit a hard copy for public record at the Simsbury Town meeting. They should be in your files.

Additionally, the North Simsbury Coalition hired a scientist with expertise in toxins from farming chemicals and she testified at that same public hearing over twenty years ago. Her professional expertise still stands; she reported that all land would need to have the first two feet of soil remediated in order to protect the aquifer that lies beneath this land as well as to protect the health of our residents. The land is full of toxins known to cause cancer. It would be a liability for the Town should this land ever be developed.

The cost to preserve Meadowood is significantly less than the enormous economic and environmental burdens that a large scale residential development on the 280 acres of land would place on all Simsbury residents. New sewers and water lines, significantly expanded or new elementary schools, and full remediation of all soil on this land would be required to mention the biggest financial expenses.

Our Town has done a wonderful job preserving important farm land from development, and none of those properties were not contaminated like the Culbro land is today from 40+ years of toxic tobacco farming. We ask that you preserve the Meadowood land, protect residents from toxic exposure to farming chemicals, and allow animals to continue to enjoy this important wildlife corridor. Please end the concerns about the safety and suitability of this land for residential development once and for all.

Sincerely,

Kathleen and Steven Bessette

[REDACTED], Simsbury, CT

I support the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and urge the Town of Simsbury to contribute financially in order to make this purchase possible.

I am a senior citizen and have lived in town, nearby to this parcel of land, for over 40 years.

Residential development of this parcel of land would threaten the nearby water supply, necessitate other costly infrastructure changes in this area of town (e.g., water supply, school building), and cause other detrimental environmental and economic impacts. The safety and suitability of the land for residential use has been, and continues to be, a concern.

Due to the numerous benefits of keeping this land protected from residential development (e.g., as a wildlife corridor and permanent tribute to our town's history of tobacco farming and source of inspiration to Martin Luther King, Jr.), I strongly support its acquisition by TPL and Town of Simsbury.

Sincerely,
Claire Sandstrom
[REDACTED], Simsbury

My name is Anna de la Fe, and I am a resident of the Weatogue area and a parent of former Latimer Lane Elementary students. I am proud to support the capital project to remodel Latimer Lane Elementary.

When the discussions began about the project to enhance the schools in our district, I was at the meeting at HJMS and proudly voiced my concerns about the lack of space at Latimer. As I said then, the school is at maximum capacity and with continued construction in the area, the issue of overcrowding will continue. Two of my children finished the 6th grade at Latimer, but my youngest is currently in 2nd. We made the decision to pull her from the school for a few reasons and one was because of overcrowded classrooms. Putting this project on the budget is necessary to ensure that Latimer can safely and properly continue to provide quality education.

I am in full support of this issue being sent to the board of finance and moving forward to referendum. If you have any questions or would like any additional information regarding my support, I can be reached via email at: [REDACTED]

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Anna de la Fe

Dear Simsbury Board of Finance,

I was born and raised here in Simsbury and now raising my own family in this very special town.

I am now concerned about the Meadowood area. Our town has changed over the years but the continuous development of large-scale apartment complexes and a commercial-size solar farm, have taken the town in a very rapid new direction. My fear is that the Meadowood area will be sold for additional solar farm development or for additional large -scale apartment complexes.

Simsbury is losing open space and the ability to plan its own growth. The Meadowood area is one of the last undeveloped spaces in town. I would like to support the Board of Selectmen in their path to secure this property for future use decided by the town and its people.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kelley Hodgson

[REDACTED]

Simsbury, CT 06092

I'm writing in support of the proposal to acquire a portion of the Meadowood project property. As a parent of a current Simsbury Soccer Club player and former youth soccer and lacrosse coach, I know that Simsbury generally needs more athletic fields. Further, buying land on Hoskins Road would provide additional sites close to Curtiss Park and Iron Horse Boulevard, which serve as hubs for statewide soccer and lacrosse tournaments. This potential complex would also relieve some the demand on the fields at Squadron Line School and other schools.

Acquiring this land would also help preserve a valued open space area and vistas in northern Simsbury. My family lives on Clifdon Drive, near the Meadowood property. Seeing the sun rise over the field in the morning and watching wildlife as we drive or run by are some of the experiences that we value about our larger neighborhood. Particularly since the recent installation of the solar panel complex close by, preserving the Meadowood property as open space should be a priority to help preserve the character for this part of Simsbury.

Thank you for your consideration.

Derek Mogck



Town of Simsbury Board of Finance,

We support the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and urge the Town of Simsbury to contribute financially in order to make this purchase possible.

The financial and environmental burdens incurred from developing this land would have a much larger impact than preserving Meadowood.

We strongly encourage the town of Simsbury to purchase the Meadowood property.

Thank you,

David & Cindy Franklin



It is my hope that the BOF will allow Simsbury Voters to decide if the town should purchase the Meadowood open space parcel. Please keep this item on the referendum.

Sincerely,

David Galt



WEST SIMSBURY

Please accept comments from these two people, who expressed their **support for a vote on Meadowood at referendum.**

Due to a miscommunication the support of these individuals went to the Grange and not to the Town of Simsbury. They are under the assumption that their comments went to the town.

Lisa Leblond

Richard Huebner

Town of Simsbury Board of Finance,

We support the acquisition of the Meadowood property by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and urge the Town of Simsbury to contribute financially in order to make this purchase possible.

As residents of the town of Simsbury for the past 22 years, we share concerns over rising property taxes. However, increasing residential development comes with its own costs and concerns such as detrimentally impacting the school system, local traffic and surrounding environment and increases the town's financial burden to improve infrastructure.

The cost to preserve Meadowood pales in comparison to the economic and environmental burdens that large scale residential development of this parcel of land would place on ALL Simsbury residents.

Mark and Allison Schmitz

[REDACTED]

Simsbury

Please save as the people's land.

Thank you.

Joe Cary

To the members of the Board of Finance:

I have followed most of the deliberations during the Budget preparation this year. It has not been an easy effort but you have all navigated the process commendably.

Today I would like to address the issue of acquisition of Meadowood.

Usually I might concentrate on environmental concerns and values, which are more than validated in the due diligence process with this project.

I am certain others will address this parcel's convincing value environmentally and historically as well as its cultural heritage, natural heritage and as a public health resource.

As this is the last large parcel of land available to us for conservation, this opportunity should NOT be thought of as 'just nice to have '. The carefully researched and documented reasons for conserving are extremely important and valid, for acquisition to be seriously considered.

You have that data. You also have the overwhelming, combined support and recommendation for acquisition of the Board of Selectmen, the land use Commissions, the Parks and Rec Commission and the Open Space Committee on I which I serve.

I hope I am correctly quoting, paraphrasing perhaps, the comment of Selectman Sean Askham ...' a once in a lifetime opportunity'.

Considering the struggle to absorb the high cost of the Latimer Lane project in this year's budget, and considering also the unknown or yet to be determined impact of the numbers of school age children from all the apartments and condo units proliferating in town these recent years...I was reminded of the Study conducted by the Trust for Public Land or maybe another thoughtful organization, way back in the 1990's called "COWS DON'T GO TO SCHOOL!", when we began our more earnest efforts for land conservation.

They proved to us then that it was economically far more prudent to conserve land than to allow it to be developed with houses! Again, in the due diligence conducted for this project, it is proven , that should development be fully built as planned and as already permitted to the private owner by our land use commission, the tax revenue generated from those houses is estimated over the long term, NOT to be sufficient to cover the costs of educational nor municipal services needed to support them in any given year!

Some things don't change. Trees, agricultural products OR cows, still don't go to school.

Finally, my last concern is whether or not the question of acquisition be on the Referendum.

This past year has been such an unprecedented experience in so many ways for all of us. Simsbury's residents have most always involved themselves readily in important town business and decisions, attending or observing meetings on SCTV. This virtual/Zoom way of communicating has had such a frustrating and thwarting effect on our participation.

With your necessary support, I respectfully request and urge that you vote to have the question of acquisition of Meadowood on the Referendum, allowing all residents to vote their decision, reflecting Simsbury's continuing commitment of high level resident participation...especially as the Pandemic continues to challenge us.

I appreciate this opportunity to address this important issue.

Helen K. Peterson

[REDACTED]

I support the Right to Vote at
Referendum re acquisition of Meadowood!
Helen K. Peterson



As a Simsbury resident, I write to encourage the Simsbury Board of Finance to purchase the Meadowood property because it is both an important ecological habitat and has significant historical value. Preserving this property will protect local wildlife, critical migratory patterns and a major aquifer feeding area, all of which would be undermined if this land is turned over to the proposed developer.

Thank you for your attention.

Allen Bradford



06092

I hope you read this commentary that I suspect was produced by the Simsbury Grange that is advocating for a petition of the electorate to make sure that the Meadowood land purchase is on the town budget referendum this year. I was aware that a special referendum required a 15% legally signed petition of the town's electorate and a 15% voter turnout to make the resultant binding. What I was unaware of was that a 5% legally signed petition of the town's electorate would enable a question be placed on a budget referendum where a 15% voter turnout is unnecessary for the result to be binding. There has never been a budget referendum that has had a 15% voter participation. A very low bar to overturn an elected town board's decision{ Board of Finance},

How does your board approve a budget increase more than twice the rate of inflation{ 1.3% } and an increase in the taxation rate{ Mil Rate } when the town's Grand List has a 2.9% growth? How do you take out the last large developable land that is already zoned for affordable housing? What would Martin Luther King say, "Put a monument to me on it or put affordable housing on it"? How do you make Simsbury affordable when it has the 8th highest "Equalized" tax rate in a state that has the 2nd highest taxation rate in the USA? How do you put more town debt on our credit card[8%] of the town's budget when it is already one of the highest taxed towns in our state? Imagine a 1.3% inflation rate and a 2.9% increase in our grand list and an increase in the Mil Rate, How Ridiculous!

A very concerned taxpayer,

Michael J. Rinaldi M.D.

P.S. I hope someone will deliver this mail to cpeterson@simsbury-cgov

PSS I would appreciate that your board read this email into the record at your Virtual Town Meeting on the referendum.

I would like to share my support for the Meadowood project. I hope the town will bring the project to a referendum, so the public can vote to save and preserve this great space for the public to enjoy, that its history can be preserved, that wildlife will have more habitat to use, and the space better utilized for the future. Like many others in town, I have donated to this campaign through the Trust for Public Land, and want this to be a success. This is the type of project that makes Simsbury so special and why I love being here.

Thank you,

Kyle Testerman

To the Simsbury Board of Finance

Please keep Meadow Wood on the May referendum.

Thank you

Wanda Colman

[REDACTED]

TARIFFVILLE, CT 06081

Board of Finance Public Hearing April 6, 2021

This year the Town of Simsbury has had an unusual increase in revenues.

These revenues should not be used for tax and spend projects but should be used to lower taxes.

The Mill Rate should be lowered with additional revenues from an increased Grand List.

This year Simsbury has had an increase in development with all the new apartments developed or scheduled to be developed, the Big Y Market, home sales and Solar panels increased the Town's revenues and the Grand List.

The Grand list will generate approximately \$2.7 million in new tax revenue.

Real Estate comprised a 1.55% increase with the construction of new apartments and the Big Y market.

Personal property increased by 17.90% made of new growth driven from the Tobacco Valley Solar project and the expansion of Curaleaf.

Motor Vehicles increased by 6.72%.

The difference between budgeted tax collection rate of 98.5% and anticipated tax collection rate of 99.5% is an additional projected revenue of \$882,549.

Millions of dollars will be coming from the State and Federal Governments.

More developments are in the pipeline.

An expenditure of \$22,000 for the Spirit Council to study diversity is an unnecessary expenditure since the 2020 Census and other organizations have already studied diversity with data in communities. This would be another redundancy that should be removed.

The taxpayers have been overtaxed for years, now is the time for the taxpayers to realize the "pot of gold" with lower taxes and a reduced Mill Rate.

The Capital Expenditure budget reflects an addition to the Latimer Lane School with a price tag of \$ 36 million.

It appears that the Facility Study did not produce scenarios that would reflect changes in the educational delivery services and the move of the 6th grade to the Junior High.

The Board of Education promoted an addition to the Junior High at \$23.9 million before the Facility Study was initiated.

The Facilities Study should have been priority one which would have reduced wasteful spending.

After the Facilities Study was completed, the Board of Education could have promoted an addition to the Junior High incorporating the 6th grade as part of the renovation and complete the task in one phase.

With the elimination of the 6th grade in the elementary schools the Board of Education should consolidate some of the schools under one roof producing an economy of scale.

This would lower the overhead costs and reduce redundancies in inventories while providing the same educational needs to more students under one roof.

The immediate pressures were eliminated from the Latimer Lane renovation by redistricting to eliminate overcrowding.

The Latimer Lane School should be removed from the Capital Expenditures budget until a comprehensive study is done addressing the 6th grade transition into the Junior High and the consolidation of elementary schools.

Included in the Capital Expenditures is the purchase of the Meadowood Land in conjunction with the Land Trust that will pay for the additional cost if they can raise the money for the project.

The Taxpayers are asked to support a \$2.6 million project for land that has been vacant for years and produces \$200,000 a year in revenue. The Plan of Development does not support this purchase and additional infrastructure costs and overhead expenses have not been presented. The development of the land reflects 88 homes for affordable housing that would be eliminated.

The Meadowood Project should be eliminated from the Capital Expenditures.

I am asking the Board of Finance to take a pro-active position and review the projects on their merits with the long-term debt and increased overhead expenses on the back of taxpayers that have not realized windfall revenues.

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

Lori Fernand
[REDACTED]
West Simsbury, CT 06092
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Dear Chair Pomeroy and Members of the Simsbury Board of Finance,

My name is Lori Fernand and I and my family have lived for the last 15 years with a trailhead at the bottom of our driveway at [REDACTED] in West Simsbury. The primary factor in our choosing to move to Simsbury was its amazing natural spaces. Having grown up playing in the woods in Western Connecticut and then living in the Santa Monica Mountains outside the city of Los Angeles, the top criteria for choosing a place to reside was access to the woods.

I benefitted from the vision of the Town, the Simsbury Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land, as the trailhead at the bottom of my driveway leads into the 73-acre Tulemeadow Woods with access to the Ethel Walker Woods' over 400 acres and then to Stratton Brook Forest State Park. These protected lands underscore the importance of natural spaces for the vast majority of Simsbury residents. We are here because of the preserved open spaces that define our human habitat in this town.

Since we moved here in 2005, there has been a good deal of development in our town with 9 percent growth in population over the last decade and I believe Simsbury is the only small town in Connecticut to have had a recent increase in its public school population. In order to maintain the natural world that is so valued by the residents here, we need to have a corresponding prioritization on preservation to balance the significant growth.

The Meadowoods project helps us achieve that goal, as evidenced in the support this effort has received from the Historical Commission, Conservation Commission, Open Space Commission, Culture Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission and Board of Selectmen. I believe the majority of Simsbury residents will follow the example of these boards and commissions by voting in support of preserving Meadowoods if given the chance in the referendum on the budget.

In addition to protecting our legacy of open space in Simsbury, this project also builds on the legacy of the civil rights movement in our country and provides a view of Simsbury many people do not yet know. As we look to enhance our individual and collective understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion, this is another path to achieving a more just community.

Of course, as we look at the threats posed by the climate crisis, it is important that we use resources now to help mitigate what will likely be overwhelming costs in the future. All protected open space builds on other preserved lands to create a stronger environment for our species to survive.

Which brings me to the cost of not protecting this land. We can project out additional costs of a housing development on this property in regards to educating the children of any new homes, in addition to road maintenance, police and emergency services, the library, senior needs and other town amenities, a number that will drown out the current \$2.5 million purchase price for us today.

I believe this is exactly the kind of endeavor that residents of Simsbury will embrace. However, it is not up to me, but it should be up to the people of our town to fairly have a chance to decide this in the budget referendum.

Thank you so much for the work that you do in support of a better Simsbury and for your time this evening.

Warm regards,

Lori P. Fernand