

**Board of Finance
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 17, 2023, at 5:45 P.M.
In Person Meeting /Simsbury Community Media Live Stream**

PRESENT:

Lisa Heavner, Arthur House, Derek Peterson, Robert Helfand, and Linda Schofield.

ALSO PRESENT:

Amy Meriwether, Director of Finance; Maria Capriola, Town Manager; Melissa Appleby, Deputy Town Manager; Matt Curtis, Superintendent of Schools; Neil Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent; Jason Casey, Director of Infrastructure & Technology; Sue Lemke, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Wendy Mackstutis, First Selectman; Amber Abbuhl, Deputy First Selectman; Sean Askham, Selectman, Eric Wellman, Selectman, Chris Peterson, Selectman, Heather Geotz, Selectman; Susan Salina, Chair, Board of Education; Lydia Tedone, Board of Education; Jeff Tindall, Board of Education; Brian Watson, Board of Education; Jenna Caulfield, Chair of the Police Commission

1. Call to Order - Establish Quorum

Ms. Heavner called the meeting to order at 5:45 P.M.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget Discussion with the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education:

Ms. Heavner opened the meeting with an overview of what the Board hopes to accomplish during Tri-Board and the budget process. She outlined the BOF fiscal policies, the various challenges, positive factors, and the unknowns effecting the 2023/2024 budget process. She reviewed the past budget trends, outlined the historical tax data, and long-term obligations along with a breakdown of Town and Education debt.

Ms. Heavner presented on the preliminary look at fixed costs based on the initial figures received, which showed a net increase spend of about \$7M. She reviewed the Capital Budget Planning from FY23 – FY28 and the Grand List projections. She noted a contraction in the grand list in the out years and said it is a concern and may make future budgets difficult if these numbers hold. She said the board is looking to get more accurate long-term projections and acknowledged this is complicated and hard to do. She reviewed the towns services cost per resident, education cost per student and said that the bottom line is that their fixed cost expenditures and debt service are going up, and we don't know what the final tax impact will be. She said they have preliminary numbers which will change.

Ms. Capriola presented on the Town Managers budget information and corresponding numbers. She outlined the various areas of focus for the Board of Selectman, the Town Manager, the EDC and the Police Commission. She outlined the budget challenges and issues and a discussion followed on revaluation numbers.

Mr. Curtis presented on the Board of Education budget information. He presented an overview of the budget including budget themes and priorities, student enrollment numbers, special education trends, capital non-recurring plan, contractual fixed costs, market driven increases, potential reductions, health insurance and pension numbers.

Mr. Helfand inquired as to enrollment trends. Mr. Curtis indicated they anticipate enrollment to increase 145 students and about 113 students per year for the next few years.

Ms. Meriwether reviewed the current budget modeling. Ms. Meriwether indicated that lower value homes were seeing lower home value increases and will have a lower tax impact and higher valued homes will see a larger tax impact. Ms. Heavner indicated that this will be one of the biggest tax increases in a decade and a half, based on what we know at this point. Ms. Helfand noted that the Board does not yet know what portion of the grand list represents new development and new revenue, separate from revaluation. Ms. Capriola noted that past years' new growth was higher than usual. Mr. Helfand emphasized that even if the grand list improves, a \$7.3 million increase in expenditures will have a serious impact on taxpayers.

Ms. Heavner opened the floor for questions which were asked and addressed. Ms. Meriweather reviewed the estimated home value numbers based on the estimated revaluation increase and addressed various questions from the Board. Mr. Curtis and Ms. Capriola also addressed questions from the Board.

Ms. Schofield asked for an update on the RFP for the Assessor Performance Audit. Ms. Schofield emphasized that the Board of Finance wants to support both boards and the way to do that is to improve our revenue stream.

Ms. Mackstutis noted that the Board of Selectmen Finance committee had consensus in looking at ARPA to offset current CIP projects to help alleviate the cost impacts to our residents. Ms. Heavner added that all boards will need to be aggressive in looking for offsets to get these numbers down and noted, for example, that the Town fixed costs estimates included CNR cash, which was a planned elimination. Ms. Heavner indicated that based on what we know, this will be a year of fixed costs, legal mandates and critical needs without room discretionary spending. Even with legal mandates and critical needs, we're going to need to look for offsets to pay for those.

Ms. Goetz emphasized the need to be creative in bringing in new development.

Ms. Heavner asked if Mr. Curtis and Ms. Capriola were aware of any material expenditure requests that were not budgeted that may come before the board before the next budget. Ms. Capriola indicated they anticipate supplemental grant appropriations without town match requirements.

Ms. Heavner mentioned that this is a difficult budget as the tools are limited and there are significant expenditures. Ms. Meriweather said the new numbers for health will be coming in this week and Ms. Heavner asked for them to be sent to the Board.

Ms. Heavner asked Mr. Curtis to send his CNR requests to Ms. Capriola and said the Board has given their formal budget requests to the Town Manager and Superintendent, per the charter and CT General Statutes.

MOTION: Mr. Helfand made a motion, effective January 17, 2023, to adjourn the Tri Board meeting. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Reallocation of Savings and Use of Town Aid Road for Public Works Truck Purchase

Ms. Capriola provided an overview of the reallocation on savings to finalize the purchase of a public works truck. The initial purchase was cancelled by the vendor as they did not have enough 2022 model trucks available and was not able to fulfill the order. As a result, the Town needed to purchase a 2023 model year truck, and at a higher cost than originally anticipated. A discussion followed and the Board asked questions to get more details on the request. Ms. Heavner asked if this was the top priority on the list for next year as this means there may be less available for projects next year. Ms. Capriola stated it was.

MOTION: Ms. Schofield made a motion, effective January 17, 2023 to increase the appropriation for the purchase of the replacement Highway Division 1-ton truck and related equipment by \$29,66, for a total cost of \$79,661, to be funded with \$23,452 by CNR project savings, \$3,100 increased trade in value, and \$3,108.36 Town Aid Road contribution as presented. Mr. Helfand seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget Calendar

At the Board of Finance meeting in November, the Board approved its regular meeting dates, including budget meeting dates. To ensure the Board of Finance has sufficient time to review budget documents, Ms. Heavner would like to add an additional budget meeting on March 28, 2023. This meeting will be canceled if not needed. A discussion followed on timing and submission of documents for the meeting. Ms. Heavner suggested it would be helpful to see the draft of the documents, and the legal summary, and the draft final budget, before the budget meeting. A discussion followed on the public hearing date and schedule.

MOTION: Mr. Helfand made a motion, effective January 17, 2023 to move the Public Hearing date to April 4, 2023. Ms. Schofield seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Adjourn

MOTION: Mr. Peterson made a motion, effective January 17, 2023, to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 P.M. Ms. Schofield seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Simsbury Board of Finance
January 17, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes

Marion Lynott
Commission Clerk