

**Town of Simsbury Board of Finance
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, April 6, 2016 at 7:00PM
Simsbury High School – Amphitheatre
34 Farms Village Road, Simsbury, Connecticut**

PRESENT: Barbara Petitjean, Jeff Blumenthal, Robert Pomeroy, Jr., Kevin Prell, Moira Wertheimer and Linda Schofield (via phone).

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Lisa Heavner, Selectmen Elaine Lange and Chris Kelly; Director of Administrative Service Tom Cooke and Interim Finance Director Sean Kimball; Business Manager Burke LaClair.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Barbara Petitjean called the regular meeting to order at 7:57PM.

Ms. Schofield expressed concern with the Police Department's request for the purchase of body cameras that were included as part of the Non-Recurring Capital (CNR). Body cameras are believed to be effective in reducing police brutality and reducing frivolous citizen complaints, according to Ms. Schofield. She noted that she had a conversation with Chief Ingvertsen and he confirmed that these are not problems in Simsbury. Ms. Schofield's concerns lay with the resulting operational costs of body cameras such as training, data cataloguing, and FOI requests.

Ms. Wertheimer asked Chief Ingvertsen whether these body cameras were part of the department's accreditation process and by not having them, whether it could jeopardize the department's accreditation. He noted that the cameras are not part of the accreditation process.

Mr. Blumenthal opined that the use of body cameras by Simsbury would appear to be a solution without a problem. He noted that the Town already does a great job with open and transparent communications. Mr. Blumenthal noted that other towns who have the use of body cameras have had to hire an additional FTE just to accommodate the increase in operating costs, including FOI requests.

Ms. Heavner distributed a memo that the Chief had prepared regarding operating costs but that not all pertinent information is known at this point. Ms. Heavner explained that in anticipation of a state mandate wherein these will be required, the Police Commission wanted to get ahead of receiving the mandate and establish a policy that will take eight months to a year to complete. The Police Commission represented that body cameras are helpful in training police officers and in reducing exposure to false accusations made. Chief Ingvertsen agreed that with the purchase of the body cameras, there is no guarantee that the department wouldn't at some point need an extra employee to work on this project.

Ms. Schofield noted that if a mandate does indeed get made, mandates are sometimes accompanied by funding. She noted that if a town has already made a purchase in advance of a mandate, they would likely miss out on any accompanying funding. Mr. Pomeroy concurred,

noting that the purchase of body cameras would solve a problem that does not really exist and does not appear prudent during a tough budget year.

It was noted that \$6K would be needed in year two of the purchase for the body cameras for licensing and while this fee may increase through time no other incremental operating costs have been identified with the program.

Chief Ingvertsen reported that the Police Commission Chairman had advocated for the purchase of the body cameras in advance of a state mandate so that Simsbury would be a leader in setting the standards for the state.

2. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGETS:

Discussion occurred regarding the directive that had been issued at the March 29, 2016 Board of Finance meeting wherein \$20K for the salary of an additional engineer was supposed to be absorbed by the Board of Selectmen's budget without adding an increase.

MOTION: Ms. Schofield, Mr. Pomeroy second, **to remove from the CNR the purchase of body cameras; unanimously approved.**

It was agreed that with the removal of this allocation, the resulting \$12K that had been built into the approved Board of Selectmen's 2016-2017 Budget, may now be applied to partially fund the \$20K shortage associated with the new engineer position. There was also consensus that the remaining \$8K associated with the position could be achieved through the Board of Education's budget through the savings derived from the OPEB figures. It was noted that the message is now very clear that when a new person is added to the payroll, it must first be fully funded.

Ms. Schofield suggested that the Board of Finance adopt a practice that for every CNR request and every Capital request, there should be an independent fiscal note from the Finance Director informing the Board as to what the ongoing operating costs are and what the future impact on budgets will be. Ms. Petitjean agreed but noted the shortage of staff in the Finance Department this year. She pointed to the surprise that resulted this year to the utilities line due to the new truck wash as the cost associated with utilizing more water had not been identified and instead only the savings that would result from buying fewer trucks over time had been considered. Ms. Petitjean noted that the Board does need to understand the operating impact as projects come through and noted there is concern that the Finance Department is understaffed. Ms. Wertheimer pointed out the additions made to the Library as another example. Ms. Petitjean pointed to the acquisition of the Ethel Walker properties as an additional example. Mr. Blumenthal suggested that the department making the Capital request could be charged with the responsibility of providing to the Board information regarding the incremental operating costs that may accompany the request. Mr. Prell suggested that the accompanying information could be mandatory.

Mr. Pomeroy suggested creating a different calendar for receipt of the Capital budgets and the Operating Budgets. Ms. Petitjean explained that the calendar is prescribed through the Town Charter but that the Board has made an effort to work cooperatively with the Board of Education and Board of Selectman and is in the position for the first time to have a cash flow plan. She noted that it is likely that the Board of Finance could work cooperatively with the two boards to put the Capital together earlier. Ms. Heavner noted that she would be amenable to this suggestion. Mr. LaClair noted that he would bring this suggestion back to the Board of Education.

Discussion ensued regarding raising the mill rate ever so slightly to allow the town to stay with the 7% debt ratio. Ms. Petitjean reminded the Board that the reason for raising the mill rate is to afford the capital budget, not to smooth over uncertainty. It was noted that the big projects that lay ahead will need to be reviewed and decided by the tax payers. Ms. Petitjean explained that some of the projects that have been requested are unaffordable no matter what and that the question remains where and how they will be trimmed.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Petitjean, Mr. Kimball noted that the Capital Improvement Projects that will be put before the voters include the following: Multi-Use Connections and Master Plan Updates (\$1,16M), Highway Paving Management (\$2.5M), Henry James Middle School - Phase 2 (\$1.95M) and Climate Control – Phase 2 (\$950K).

3. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS ON FUTURE MEETINGS:

MOTION: ~~Mr. Prell, Mr. Pomeroy second, to set a second public hearing on April 19, 2016 at 5:45PM at a place to be publicly announced; unanimously approved.~~

MOTION: Mr. Blumenthal, Mr. Pomeroy second, **to adjourn at 8:50PM; unanimously approved.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Pamela A. Colombie
Commission Clerk**