

**Board of Finance  
TOWN OF SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT  
REGULAR MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES  
Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 6:00 P.M.  
Zoom Meeting/Simsbury Community Television Live Stream**

**PRESENT:** Lisa Heavner, Arthur House, Derek Peterson, Robert Pomeroy, Kevin Prell, and Linda Schofield

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Maria Capriola, Town Manager; Melissa Appleby, Deputy Town Manager; Amy Meriwether, Director of Finance; Lisa Karim, Library Director; Rick Bazzano, IT Director; Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation; Orlando Casiano, Parks Superintendent; Eric Wellman, First Selectman; Sean Askham, Deputy First Selectman; Jackie Battos, Selectman; Wendy Mackstutis, Selectman; Mike Paine, Selectman; Chris Peterson, Selectman; Matt Curtis, Superintendent of Schools; Susan Lemke, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Neil Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent of Administration; Jason Casey, Director of Infrastructure and Technology; Susan Salina, Board of Education Chair; Lydia Tedone, Board of Education; Jeff Tindall, Board of Education; Sharon Thomas, Board of Education; Brian Watson, Board of Education; Tara Willerup, Board of Education; Jennifer Batchelor, Board of Education; Todd Burrick, Board of Education; Jeffrey Wyszynski, Tecton Architects

**1. Call to Order - Establish Quorum**

Mr. Pomeroy called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Presentation of the FY21/22 Budget Process**

Mr. Pomeroy opened the meeting by stating the primary goal of the meeting was to hear the presentations of the Board of Finance, Board of Education and Board of Selectmen on the FY21/22 proposed budget. A public hearing will follow, with live public comment, and an abbreviated overview of written public comment. All written public comments are available for review on the town website. The meeting will conclude with discussion by the Board of Finance about the budget and a decision as to whether they will send the proposed budget to referendum.

Mr. Pomeroy reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Finance and the key criteria utilized in preparation of the FY21/22 budget. He provided information on Simsbury being recognized as a fiscally strong community and presented the mill rate history for the past five years which included a proposed FY21/22 mill rate of 37.46. He mentioned the town is experiencing significant grand list growth this year and reminded everyone that grand list changes can be lumpy year to year. The total proposed budgets for the Town and Board of Education totaled \$106.1M in expenditures, with a proposed mill rate of 37.46, which translates to a 1% increase over last year. He then reviewed the long-term capital planning and stated that capital projects approved now will impact debt service in the future. Projects approved now will not be bonded for 1-3 years. Tough choices and tradeoffs have already been made as to which projects to move forward and which projects to delay. He then presented a chart of projects and

reviewed what was included, and what was delayed. He provided an example of the Henry James 6<sup>th</sup> Grade project which was delayed because it would have put the Town's debt service expenditures to nearly 10% of the total operating budget.

#### **4. Presentation of Proposed FY21/22 Board of Education and Board of Selectmen Operating and Capital Budgets**

Ms. Salina reviewed the Board of Education budget presentation which started off by outlining the Board's four guiding principles. The Superintendents proposed budget of \$73,643,930 is an increase of \$1,335,455 or 1.85% over last year's spending. Enrollment projections were reviewed showing an overall increase of 60 students. It was stated that the Board worked very hard to balance their vision for continuous improvement with fiscal reality noting the pandemic's impact on the economy and the mill rate pressure. Their primary goal was to rebuild intervention and support systems that were in place prior to the pandemic. She reviewed the budget drivers, the largest being personnel costs. Negotiated contracts represent an increase of over \$1.5M or 2.07% over last year's budget; with teachers' contracts being their largest employee group at \$1.3M. A priority of the Board for the past 2 years was to hire a Director of Equity and Access. Ms. Salina said she believes it would help greatly to move that position forward this year. She mentioned there was a restructuring done at the central office as well as reducing non-certified staffing which resulted in proposed savings.

Mr. Casey reviewed proposed capital projects as follows: \$600,000 to replace the bleachers and press box at Holden Field, and \$250,000 for improved security systems throughout the district which is a continuation of an ongoing project. Mr. Sullivan spoke about the Latimer Lane renovation as a new project which has a total cost of \$36,792,406 with an estimated cost to the town of \$25,703,175 after State grants. He mentioned the decoupling of the Henry James 6<sup>th</sup> grade project as they could not move forward with both school projects at the same time. Latimer Lane was identified as the top priority. He noted that for the project at Latimer to be a renovation as new, they would need to maintain at least 55% of the current square footage then add to the rest of the building in order to receive the State reimbursement grant. A video was played to indicate the importance of the project and the concerns it would alleviate.

Mr. Wellman presented the operating budget for the Board of Selectmen starting off with the impact on taxes if the budget were to pass as presented. He said it would mean an increase to the median value home taxpayer of \$80 or 0.97%. The proposed operating budget is \$25,117,980. The tax increase would be \$1,013,343 or 4.2%. He reviewed the changes made to the proposed budget and budget drivers, which included increased debt service expenditures, contractual salary increases, and pension/OPEB changes. He then highlighted the FY21/22 service improvements which included 2 new positions, Parks professional development, Police de-escalation training, Library children's materials and increased support for Meals on Wheels to be funded by the Darling Trust.

Mr. Askham then reviewed the proposed Capital projects. He drew attention to the 2 signature projects consisting of the Latimer Lane renovation and the Meadowood acquisition. He outlined the unique and substantial opportunity as a community to move forward with both projects. He reviewed the proposed funding for the various other projects through operational transfers, grants, the Sewer Use Fund and the Sewer Assessment Fund.

## **5. Public Hearing on FY21/22 Operating and Capital Budgets**

- Joe Campolieta spoke voicing his support for the Meadowood Acquisition.
- Joe Treacy spoke voicing his support for the Meadowood Acquisition and the Latimer Lane project
- Barbara Friedland spoke voicing her support of the Meadowood Acquisition.
- Sarah Faulkner spoke voicing her support of the Meadowood Acquisition.
- David Bush spoke voicing his support of the Park and Rec. Facility and Parks Maintainer position, the Simsbury meadow property, the Golf club renovation.
- Susan Masino spoke voicing her support of the Meadowood Acquisition.
- Margery Winters spoke voicing her support of the Meadowood Acquisition.
- Donna Summers spoke voicing her support of the Meadowood Acquisition.
- Helen Peterson spoke voicing her support of the Meadowood Acquisition.
- Douglas Beach spoke voicing his support of the Meadowood Acquisition.
- Lori Fernand spoke voicing his support of the Meadowood Acquisition.

Mr. Pomeroy summarized and noted themes from the written comments submitted from the public. He noted all detailed submissions are listed on the town website. Over 100 names were read out in support of the Meadowood acquisition. He read out names in support of Latimer Lane and in support of the Library materials. Names were also read in relation to the following: one in opposition to Meadowood, a plea for no tax increases, cutting expenses and taxes, raises to union employees, the traffic calming work on Notch Road, Parks and Rec activities and support of the Henry James project.

Mr. Pomeroy read out the following questions for Referendum Ballot and opened the floor for discussion:

Shall the appropriation recommended and approved by the Board of Finance for the purposes of paying the expenses of the Board of Selectmen annual budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, be approved and implemented in the amount of \$25,117,980?

Mr. House provided comments on the number of projects he supports, and the difficulty in prioritizing these to send to referendum in order to keep the mill rate low. Ms. Heavner spoke in relation to the process, cost savings and had some minimal suggestions for efficiencies in the Board of Selectmen operating budget totaling around \$137,000. Ms. Schofield agreed with looking into ways to keep taxes flat, or close to flat, this year if at all possible. Mr. Prell said he agreed with Mr. House in that there are a lot of good projects but it's difficult to accommodate everything. He stated they have a fiduciary responsibility to look at today's budget but to also look at the out years. Mr. Peterson spoke about prioritization, the process and the tough decisions to be made.

**MOTION:** Ms. Heavner made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, to fund the following projects, totaling \$83,000, out of the Capital Reserve Fund: \$65,000 for traffic calming and club house repairs; \$9,000 for the library materials; and \$9,000 for Police de-escalation training. Ms. Schofield seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

**MOTION:** Ms. Heavner made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, for a change to the way police cruisers are budgeted and to make it a yearly recurring expenditure by transferring \$46,000 to the

Police Department operating budget from the CNR line. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

**MOTION:** Ms. Heavner made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, to hold Police overtime flat resulting in a \$25,000 reduction in the proposed budget, and to use alternative sources to pay for any overtime needed. Ms. Schofield seconded the motion. Mr. Peterson opposed the motion. The motion carried.

A discussion followed on holding money in the various reserves. Ms. Meriwether confirmed that bond ratings do take into account the various reserves and they are looked upon favorably.

**MOTION:** Ms. Heavner made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, to reduce the Parks and Rec. transfer amount from \$180,000 to \$150,000. Ms. Schofield seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Heavner then reviewed the five year budget modeling estimated tax increases in the out years. She went over the reasons the taxes increase in the coming years and then start to reduce again. She mentioned there may be a period where the taxes have a potential to go very high, most of which is driven by debt service. She said the numbers are based off projections, and there are things that can change, but she wanted to make sure people understand what may come down the road.

**MOTION:** Ms. Heavner made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, for \$73,881,930 to be approved and implemented for the purposes of paying the expenses of the Board of Education annual budget for the fiscal year ending June30, 2022. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

**MOTION:** Ms. Heavner made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, for the Town of Simsbury to appropriate \$2,515,860 for the purchase and improvement of Meadowood (approximately 288 acres of undeveloped land located off Hoskins Road, County Road and Firetown Road); and authorize bonds and notes in the same amount to finance said appropriation. Discussion ensued. Ms. Schofield spoke to her reluctance to second the motion, and mentioned it not being on the CIP list previously, resulting in other projects being bumped that were on the list. She also spoke about the cost to taxpayers down the road and the implications of adding more land, responsibility and cost to the town at a time that there is no money to maintain what they already have. She also said the Board of Finance is looking at the big picture, competing priorities, and doing what is best for the town when it makes decisions, and thanked everyone for voicing their support of the acquisition. Ms. Heavner mentioned that the Boards made difficult choices to bring their recommendations in front of the public and believes the public should have the opportunity to vote on them. The motion was not seconded.

**MOTION:** Ms. Schofield made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, for the Town of Simsbury to appropriate \$3,250,000 from the Sewer Use Fund and anticipated grants for berm improvements at the Water Pollution Control Facility. Mr. House seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

**MOTION:** Ms. Heavner made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, for the Town of Simsbury to appropriate \$36,792,406 for the renovation and expansion of Latimer Lane Elementary School; and authorize bonds and notes in the same amount to finance said appropriation. Ms. Schofield seconded the motion. It was discussed, all were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Schofield made a recommendation to have a better process and an architectural plan before estimates and projects are approved. She'd like to know exactly what is being built, and then get an estimate for approval. Mr. Peterson recommended they trust the professionals who do an excellent job putting these estimates together, and these development budgets are protected by guaranteed maximum contracts.

**MOTION:** Ms. Schofield made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, for the appropriation of \$24,979,980 recommended and approved by the Board of Finance for the purposes of paying the expenses of the Board of Selectmen annual budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, be approved and implemented. Ms. Heavner seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

**MOTION:** Mr. House made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, for the appropriation of \$14,666,200 recommended and approved by the Board of Finance for the purposes of paying the expenses of Sewer Use Fund (Sewer Treatment Plant), Residential Rental Properties, Simsbury Farms/Special Programs, Non-Public Schools, Debt Retirement/Capital and Capital Non-Recurring annual budgets for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, be approved and implemented. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

**MOTION:** Mr. Prell made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, to wave the reading into the minutes of the full text of the resolutions set out below, copies of the resolutions having been made available to those in attendance, and recorded in these records immediately following these minutes. Ms. Schofield seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

**RESOLUTIONS:** That the Board of Finance recommends and approves the following projects:

Move to approve Parking and Accessibility Improvements at Simsbury Meadows in the amount of \$700,000 to be funded with bonds.

Move to approve the Highway Pavement Management project (Bonding \$605,000; Cash \$200,000 & LoCIP Grant \$156,500; Town Aid Road Grant \$243,500), in the amount of \$1,205,000 to be funded with bonds.

Move to approve Sidewalk Reconstruction in the amount of \$200,000 to be funded with bonds.

Move to approve North End Sidewalk Construction in the amount of \$810,000 to be funded with grants.

Move to approve Sewer Liners in the amount of \$600,000 to be funded by the Sewer Use /Assessment Funds & Grants.

Move to approve Berm Improvements in the amount of \$3,250,000 to be funded by the Sewer Use /Assessment Funds & Grants.

Move to approve Woodland Street/Hopmeadow Upgrade in the amount of \$1,200,000 to be funded by the Sewer Use /Assessment Funds & Grants.

Move to approve District Security Improvements in the amount of \$250,000 to be funded with bonds.

Move to approve SHS Bleachers/Press box Improvements in the amount of \$600,000 to be funded with bonds.

Move to approve Renovation and Expansion of Latimer Lane School in the amount of \$36,792,406 to be funded with bonds.

Mr. Peterson seconded the resolutions. All were in favor and the resolutions passed unanimously.

**MOTION:** Ms. Heavner made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, to allow the bonds to be repaid over a period of twenty years for Latimer Lane. Mr. House seconded the motion. Mr. Prell opposed the motion. The motion carried by majority.

**MOTION:** Mr. House made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, to close the public hearing on the budget. Ms. Schofield seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Pomeroy stated the Board of Finance budgets will be sent to Referendum.

## **6. Appointment of Auditor for FY20/21 Audit**

Mr. Pomeroy said the firm and people are the same but just the name has changed.

**MOTION:** Mr. Prell made a motion, effective April 6, 2021, to appoint CliftonLarsonAllen LLP as the Town of Simsbury's auditors for the fiscal year ending 2020/2021. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.

## **7. Approval of Minutes**

The following minutes were approved as submitted:  
March 9, 2021; March 16, 2021; and March 22, 2021.

## **8. Communications**

The Building Department Report for February 2021 was provided.

## **9. Adjourn**

**MOTION:** Ms. Schofield made a motion to adjourn at 9:33 P.M. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Lynott  
Commission Clerk