

From: SimsburyCT Postings March 10, 2011 3:51:22 PM  
Subject: Board of Finance Minutes 03/08/2011-Public Hearing  
To: SimsburyCT\_FinanceMin  
Cc:

BOARD OF FINANCE  
MARCH 8, 2011  
PUBLIC HEARING

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Finance Public Hearing on the 2011/12 Capital Improvement Projects was called to order at 7:30 PM in the Simsbury High School Auditorium. The following members were present: Chairman/Moderator Paul Henault, Peter Askham, Nicholas Mason, Kevin North and Barbara Petitjean. Also present were Finance Director/Treasurer Kevin Kane, First Selectman Mary Glassman, Town Engineer Richard Sawitzke, Recreation Director Gerry Toner and other interested parties.

2. OVERVIEW

Mr. Henault introduced himself, the members of the Board of Finance and all others who would be presenting the budget and answering subsequent questions. He reviewed the Public Hearing agenda, the budget process, the role of the Board of Finance and the purpose of Public Hearings which are required by Town Charter.

Mr. Henault reviewed the Town capital requests, which totaled \$3,061,000, consisting of \$2,836,000 for renovations to the Simsbury Farms main building and pool decking and \$225,000 for improvements at the golf course. The source of funding would be a 10-year bond. Mr. Henault stated that the Board of Finance adopted a debt policy in 1989 that allows for 5-7% of the General Fund budget to be used for debt service.

Mr. Henault stated that the Town currently has outstanding debt totaling \$51,375,382, consisting of \$33.4 million in General Obligation Bonds, \$17,844,185 in a Clean Water Fund loan, and \$106197 in a housing loan. The

Town's Aaa bond rating was recently re-affirmed by Moody's, who made various comments about the Town's fiscally conservative management and conservative debt policy as having influenced the rating.

Assuming a 10-year bond with a blended interest rate of approximately 4%, a current net taxable grand list of \$2.5 billion and a 98% tax collection rate, the annual debt service for bonding \$3,061,000 would be \$373,000 and would result in an annual cost of \$34 to the average taxpayer (\$330,000 home value with a \$231,000 assessment) or \$342 cumulatively.

### 3. PRESENTATION OF 2010/11 CAPITAL PROJECTS

Ms. Glassman thanked the members of the Board of Finance for their efforts in keeping the Town in good financial stead as well as the members of the Board of Selectmen for their many extra hours of work in developing the operating budgets and capital plan to be presented to the voters. She introduced Recreation Director Gerry Toner, who gave an overview of the proposed capital project at Simsbury Farms. Mr. Toner acknowledged the many hours of volunteer work put in by the Simsbury Farms Complex Committee and the Parks & Recreation Commission in preparing the project proposal being presented.

- \$2,836,000 – Simsbury Farms Main Building and Pool Decking

The 1999 Master Plan identified priorities for improvements to the Simsbury Farms Complex, including the golf club house, ice rink and maintenance building. Renovations of the main building is the final project in the plan. Mr. Toner noted that there had been a needs assessment with extensive public involvement and that the preliminary design was overseen by the Public Building Committee. The project has received approval from the Planning Commission and was unanimously approved by the Board of Selectmen.

The building, which is currently 40-years-old, was originally built as a seasonal facility and there are many inefficiencies which increase the cost of maintaining the building. It is not insulated and, therefore, energy costs are twice what they should be and the electrical and mechanical systems are outdated. Further, the building is not ADA compliant and is inaccessible to many residents. Finally, the building lacks enough space to accommodate all the current program needs.

The intention is to make the building an Energy Star-rated facility which will run efficiently for the next 25-30 years. Also, the rink team rooms (which will also be used year-round as program and camp areas) would be

completed, the public areas in the rink facility would be upgraded, and the concrete and wood pool decking would be replaced. The project would involve renovation of just over 7,442 square feet (including the decking) and additions of just over 2,000 square feet. Building energy costs would be reduced by 45%.

- \$225,000 – Golf Course Improvements

The golf course was originally constructed in 1972. A 1997 Master Plan identified needed renovations, which are about 75% completed. The primary issue is drainage. Economic conditions and competition from local area courses (which do not face the same maintenance challenges) continue to pose problems. There is a need to restore market share and maximize revenues. It is also important to maintain an important asset for the Town with cost-effective operations. The cost of doing nothing is resulting in approximately \$10,000 in maintenance costs and \$60,000 of lost revenue per year.

The proposed project includes replacement of 30% of the irrigation heads, renovating 50% of the 35 sand bunkers, the final phase of drainage repair and leveling 14 of the 18 tee boxes. Some savings can be incurred and some of the work can be performed by in-house staff.

#### 4. PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Joan Coe, 26 Whitcomb Drive, stated that capital expenses increase taxes and felt that golf fees are being subsidized by the taxpayers. She felt that Simsbury should not be increasing taxes and that the current building should be demolished and the Town should take the time to replace the building with a cost-effective building with solar panels. She asked the Board to reject both projects as being fiscally irresponsible.

Ed Dudley, 24 Southbridge Court, thanked the Town for bringing this project forward and felt that it makes economic sense in that making the improvements will generate more revenue at the golf course and will result in a recreation facility that can be better utilized by the residents. He felt that it is important to do things to attract retired residents and making the facility more accessible would do that.

Tom West, 10 Meadow Crossing, who has been a member of the Simsbury Farms Complex Committee for 12 years, acknowledged all the efforts of the committee and the long road leading to the current proposal and stated that the project currently being presented has been re-designed so as to meet the demands of the community.

Robert Kalechman, Simsbury, felt that a \$3 million project should not be

brought forward during such austere times. He felt that users should pay for any renovations and that fees should be raised. He noted that the complex was originally designed to be self-supporting and it is not.

Ed Lamontagne, 4 George Street, Chairman of the Aging and Disability Commission, cited a 1992 ADA report which noted 17 areas of non-compliance in the current facility. He stated that the current building is inaccessible to the disabled and seniors with accessibility options. He urged the Board to approve this project.

Gerry Wetjen, 29 Wood Duck Lane, President of the Simsbury Farms Men's Club, stated that the golf course generates positive cash flow which contributes towards the overall Simsbury Farms revenue fund. He felt that making the investment will grow revenue.

Steve Gellman, 10 Newbury Court, president of Simsbury Youth Hockey, noted the need for repairs to the team room and common areas, which have fallen into complete disrepair. He stated that the facility is used to host two outside tournaments which bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars of revenue to local hotels and restaurants. He stated that the program is thriving and currently includes 125 skaters under 8-years-old.

Dennis Fallon, High Hill Circle, member of the Simsbury Farms Complex Committee, stated that his children used this facility when they were growing up and now his grandchildren are using it. He noted that the building has not aged gracefully and is a major draw for potential new residents. He strongly supported the project.

Vincent Deangelo, Pia Lane, agreed that Simsbury Farms is a great facility that helps draw new residents. He noted that the facility is for community use and should be funded regardless if one personally uses them. He felt that the facility is a positive attribute for the Town and helps home sales and that an "I don't use it and therefore don't want to pay for it" attitude is not what community is all about.

[Mr. North made note that the Board of Finance's vote this evening will be as to whether or not to move the project to Town Meeting and ultimately on to Town Referendum, where the final decision as to whether or not it will be done or not will be up to the voters.]

Harry Ryan, 21 Shadowbrook, stated that he has been in real estate since 1980 and felt that Simsbury Farms benefits all property owners, either directly or indirectly.

Tom Cross, 12 Northfield Road, coach of the Simsbury High School Boys Varsity Hockey team, stated that he was here in support of the Boys JV

team, Girls Varsity and Girls JV team, who presently use the facility about 20 hours per week. He felt that the current building has served its useful purpose and they fully supported the renovations.

David Bush, 4 Catherine Lane, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, stated that the building is not energy efficient and the maintenance dollars can be better used. He stated that 40 years ago Russell Shaw, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance had a vision for a project that existed in no other town. He asked the current Board of Finance to pass the project on and let the taxpayers make the decision of whether or not this is money well spent in tough economic times.

John Brighenti, Managing General Partner of the Simsbury Inn and the 1820 House, stated that, as a taxpayer and business owner in Town, he felt that Simsbury Farms is a revenue-generating asset in Town that needs to be maintained. He noted that a capital project that was recently approved was to replace a school roof that was nearing the end of its useful life, a proactive decision. He noted that the golf course roof is leaking and needs to be repaired.

Brady Laubscher, 10 Clifdon Drive, stated that his primary concern is the safety of his children who enjoy Simsbury Farms as a family and participate in the various camps that the Town has to offer and, if this project brings the facility into compliance relative to safety issues, he was all for it.

Michael Downs, Simsbury Manor Drive, wanted an assurance that, should the project go forward, the renovated building would not face the maintenance issues currently being experienced at the recently renovated Library.

[Town Engineer Richard Sawitzke stated that the issue at the Library was that a state-of-the-art addition was attached to a very old building. Since the shape of the roof has some highly steeped peak roofs coupled with some very flat roofs, when 3-4 feet of snow get added, there are issues with how certain portions of the roof melt and freeze. He noted that some proactive measures have been taken to remedy the problem and hopefully solve it going forward.]

Douglas Beach, 138 Terry's Plain Road, remembered attending the original meeting with his father regarding the original construction of the Simsbury Farms facility and noted that the discussion was very similar to the current one. No one can question how the decision that was ultimately made back then benefited the community over the years. He asked the Board of Finance and taxpayers to have the same foresight.

Mr. Henault noted that the project, if approved by the Board of Finance at the meeting immediately following the Public Hearing, would move forward to

Special Town Meeting. A notice for the May 3rd Town Meeting will be published in the newspaper on March 30th. Due to its size, the project would then have to be moved on to automatic referendum at the Special Town Meeting.

Mr. Henault noted that Kevin Kane, who has been the Simsbury's Finance Director and Treasurer for 17 years, will be leaving the Town to become the Finance Director & Board of Education Business Manager for the Town of Clinton. He thanked Mr. Kane for all his service to the Town of Simsbury and the Board of Finance.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Henault closed the Public Hearing at 8:45 PM.

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Paul Henault, Chairman & Moderator  
Clerk

Debra L. Sweeney,