

## **CALL TO ORDER**

The Budget Workshop of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Present were: First Selectman Wendy Mackstutis; Deputy First Selectman Amber Abbuhl; Board members Eric Wellman, Chris Peterson, Sean Askham and Heather Goetz. Others in attendance included: Treasurer/Finance Director Amy Meriwether; Management Specialist Tom Fitzgerald; Town Engineer/Director of Public Works Tom Roy; Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation Tom Tyburski; Chief Nicholas Boulter; Deputy Chief Chris Davis; WPCA Superintendent Tony Piazza; Parks Superintendent Orlando Casiano; Deputy Finance Director Kelsey Chamberlain; Library Director Lisa Karim; Jason Casey from the Board of Education; Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department Chief Baldis and other interested parties.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **PUBLIC AUDIENCE**

- **Participants can address the Board of Selectmen in person at the meeting**
- **Email [townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, 2023, to register to address the Board of Selectmen live through Zoom**
- **Written comments can be emailed to [townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov). Written comments will not be read into the record, but will be forwarded to all Selectmen via email**

There was no public audience at this time.

## **OVERVIEW OF BUDGET**

Ms. Mackstutis said the Board is doing their best and working hard for the residents and Town. The Board of Education has increased costs, and the Latimer debt service is required. We do have some ARPA money that could be used for bonding and capital projects. WE need to focus on public safety needs, current projects, the economy and infrastructure needs. The last two years the Town has underspent revenues and most residents' taxes have decreased, even though some have increased.

- **Community Services**
- **Library (Tab 17)**

Ms. Karim said 60% of the community uses the Library. Her operating budget has an increase of 3.4%. She said the largest budget increase is in salaries (including the increase in minimum wages. They staff the Library 64 hours a week. There is an increase to software for added security and an increase in downloads for contractual services. There are also increases in supplies and utilities.

She said there is an increase of \$4500 for service improvements like teen reference materials. They are asking for a book-bike summer outreach Library program (ARPA funds), which would be for the 1<sup>st</sup> year of a 3-year program. Ms. Karim said the CNR project to replace public computers is \$6800.

Ms. Karim is asking for a CNR project for a Community Library Material Vending Machine for \$75,400 (ARPA) which is for all ages and would be in Tariffville. She said she hopes to have an opportunity to have a

branch Library in Tariffville in the future. After some discussion on uses of ARPA funds, needed vs. nice-to-haves, etc. no motion was made at this time.

• **Culture, Parks and Recreation (Tab 24)**

Mr. Tyburski went through their mission, vision and core values. He went through their budget highlights which included the proposed operating budget of \$4,135,733, which includes administrative, Memorial Field, the pool, golf course, Simsbury Farms Complex, Special programs, etc.

Mr. Tyburski said the pool is in disrepair and he would like to take it out and replace it with a splash pad at some point. This would also reduce the staff needed and would bring more people downtown. Most of the infrastructure is already there. It would also cost a lot less than replacing the pool at Central School.

Mr. Tyburski said the minimum wage has increased and so have supplies, insurance and utilities. He said they are asking for an increase in Simsbury Farms Special Revenue Fund due to utilities. He went through the Simsbury Farms Fund analysis that was completed in 2020.

Mr. Tyburski showed pictures of CNR successes, which were all at or below budget costs.

He said they are requesting \$35,000 for CNR which is for playground improvements, which is a 5-year plan to gradually replace 6 smaller-scale playscapes and establish a maintenance fund for future repairs and improvements. He is asking to fund the first installment for Weatogue Park playground today, which is very heavily used. He showed a picture of the new Simsbury Farms Playground which is coming probably in September 2023 and explained other things that will be happening there.

His other CNR projects include park entry signage for \$16,000, which would be in year 4. He spoke about the Simsbury Farms Pool Sundeck replacement for \$60,00, as this was installed 47 years ago. He also spoke about the irrigation system, which is in year three of a multi-year program.

Another CNR project would be for Fairway and greens mower reels and cutting reels as they are wearing out. Also, a golf course rough mower replacement is needed as it replaces a 2012 model. These would be funded by the Golf Maintenance Surcharge Fund. Mr. Tyburski also discussed year 2 of the Simsbury Farms Golf Course base prep. They are proposing to use the Simsbury Farms Fund balance for this. He would also like to use the Fund balance for cart path paving years 1-2.

Mr. Tyburski said another CNR project would be for a parks and golf maintenance security fence at \$19,000 to deter theft and vandalism.

Mr. Tyburski said the Simsbury Farms Golf Course Irrigation System and Dam Repair was out to bid already. Four bids came back and the consultant has reviewed them. The low bidder left the materials out of the bid and we now need to look at different options. We will probably have to give back the cart path paving. He said Public Works/Engineering Department will now handle the dam repair and is already under construction.

Mr. Tyburski spoke about a proposed service restoration parks maintainer for \$99,569, which includes benefits. This is part of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. If they get this they will be at a very good place, almost fully staffed.

He spoke about the Service Improvements for \$37,792 to add 15 hours to the Recreation Program Coordinator, which includes benefits to allow for full time staff. He said she has already added many new programs and events to increase enrollments and revenues to offset costs. This also allows him to focus on higher priorities.

Mr. Tyburski said Simsbury Celebrates is asking for additional funding of \$3,300 to help with the events and remain viable. This money would go toward Public Works and Police overtime.

Mr. Tyburski noted that the Simsbury Farms pool is expected to open on June 10<sup>th</sup>. There was also some discussion on the pickleball courts and the floodway issues. They might not be done until next year. There will be additional lines for pickleball at two additional courts.

After discussion, no motion was made at this time. Mr. Tyburski gave a statement about the Town Manager's resignation.

• **Facilities (Tab 15)**

Mr. Roy said he is looking at a budget just under \$5M excluding the WPCA or an increase just under 5%. His budget includes Administration \$369,295; Building and Grounds \$47,326; Facilities \$296,295; Highway and Fleet \$3,318,534; Transfer Station \$80,750 and Engineering \$921,086.

Mr. Roy said the Water Pollution Control budget total is \$6,626,930, which includes the operating budget, capital projects, and Debt service. These include Avon and Granby's share of the user fees and Debt service. All expenses are supported by user fees.

Mr. Roy said his budget highlights include an increase of \$74,29, which includes full time salaries due to general wage increases and contractual increases. He said the CNR projects include \$25,000 for material recycling. He said the Town Manager had suggested that they put aside \$5,000/year for the Community Farm Maintenance and Barn repairs.

He said the North End Sidewalk (new) is \$38,000, which is the balance for the Town contribution in addition to the \$1.69M in LOTCIP grant money already awarded. This project includes some decorative streetlights.

Mr. Roy said the Electric Charging Stations is a total of \$112,200, with potential grants are awarded. This would avoid supplemental appropriations. The public could be charged for using these stations. He said he is asking for \$46,680 for crosswalk safety, which is for flashing lights at the crosswalks. He is asking for \$150,000 for a pollinator refresh planting on Iron Horse Blvd. which goes with the Pollinator Pathway project. Mr. Roy said the Town received a \$160,00 steep grant for the Station Street reconfiguration which would total \$200,000. He has \$46,000 for the Metacom Drive safety improvements to prevent rock falls.

Mr. Roy is asking for \$45,000 for GPS and dash cameras for the heavy duty snowplows. He noted that yearly subscriptions are required. He is asking for a multi-use chip truck for \$200,000 to handle chips, mulch and leaf collection. This truck would have about a 20+ year life. He is asking for \$50,000 for various drainage improvements projects.

Mr. Roy said the Building and Grounds Dept. doesn't have equipment necessary to certain area of the building so he is asking for \$18,000 for a personnel lift which would reach 24 ft.

Mr. Roy said he has \$27,000 for a fixed vehicle lift to help maintain police vehicles and small trucks. This allows for easy access for routine vehicle repair. He is asking for \$45,000 for a light duty F150 4 x 4 truck to reduce operating costs and save the Town money. Mr. Roy said another of his CNR project is for a John Deere Tractor for \$58,500 to replace the 2010 tractor. This gets used year-round to help with maintenance.

• **WPCA (Tab 22)**

Mr. Roy said the WPCA is asking for \$15,000 to replace the body of the 2013 F350 truck so it can remain in service. They are also asking for \$100,000 for the sewer rehabilitation project for the liner inserts. They are also asking for \$50,000 for the HVAC controls replacement that will replace the outdated building management system.

Mr. Piazza said they are asking for \$60,00 for Polymer Pumps. This upgrade will allow change in product to a fully liquid system. The product we use now will not be available in 5 years.

Mr. Roy spoke about the Highway Pavement Management program capital project, which maintains 165 miles of public roads, and includes bonds, grants and general fund money. He said the goal is to pave 10 miles of road per year.

• **Capital Projects**

Mr. Roy is also asking for a Capital plow truck replacement for \$261,000. This would be 1 of 13 front line trucks and would replace an 11-year-old front line truck. The sidewalk resurfacing and reconstruction capital project is in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of a 20 yr. program. This is for a 14-mile network of sidewalks for \$223,400. The design work has been done in-house for this project.

The elevator refurbish capital project is for \$877,500 for Eno, Library and Town Hall elevators as the existing ones are becoming unreliable.

Mr. Roy spoke about the Drake Hill Flower Bridge for \$1,989,000 with CIP FY 23 funding. The paint has reached the end of its life and it is deteriorating. There was some discussion on using ARPA funding on this.

Mr. Roy said the Meadow Barn Restoration capital project would restore and preserve historic barns acquired from Meadowood. We received grants in 2022 for the inspection and design work.

Mr. Roy said a grant provides 80% reimbursement for the Multi-use trails and Development capital project. This connects the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail to Curtis Park. This is a long-range plan to expand the trail system to Tariffville.

He said the Eno Memorial Hall infrastructure design work, with construction in FY 24 is identified on the Facilities Master Plan.

Mr. Roy said he applied for a LOTICP grant for Climax Road over Nod Brook bridge improvements is \$372,000. This project would be a few years out.

Mr. Roy said he is out to bid on two smaller projects – Firetown Road and Barndoor Hills bridges requires a Town match for a grant accepted in 2021 for \$402,500.

Mr. Roy said a primary clarifier for WPCA is for \$1,000,000 for structural deficiencies in the concrete. He said this does need to be put back into service.

Another WPCA capital project is for the Pine Hill Sewer Replacement for \$1,075,000. He said the costs would be repaid by the homeowners with assessments. He said the WPCA Grit System upgrade would eliminate 90% of hauling and disposal costs of our waste as we are currently hauling it to MA for disposal.

Mr. Roy is asking for a mechanic/driver position, including benefits, which is shared with the Board of Education, would be \$102,933. They maintain all of the Town vehicles. This position would be partially funded by the Board of Education.

Mr. Roy said the proposed service improvements for public works and engineering on call consulting is \$50,000. If we don't have this money put aside, we won't be able to apply for grants as we don't have staff time or resources.

Mr. Roy said the Sustainability Group has asked for an Energy Manager/Sustainability coordinator several years in a row. This would help coordinate outreach and cost about \$123,120 including benefits. This position would hopefully generate grant revenues and cost savings. We have had great savings with changing lights, etc. and becoming more energy efficient.

Mr. Roy said he has asked for a staffing study for the past 5-6 years now. He is asking for a Highway Department – truck driver for \$99,956, including benefits, which would support infrastructure and resident services all year round.

After a lot of discussion, there was no motion at this time.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **· Police (Tab 13)**

Police Chief Boulter said the Department oversees 5 separate budgets. The total proposed operating budget has an increase of \$262,331 or 4.2%. He said they handle emergency and non-emergency needs of the Town and are supported by all Town departments. The annual State mandates are for wellness, drug screening and training of all officers. This budget includes an annual Town-wide maintenance for the radio system. There are wage increases for police, dispatch and animal control. He said they look at each line item and adjust wherever possible. Gas has increased due to market conditions. There is a slight reduction in holiday pay.

Deputy Chief Davis spoke about the CNR project. He said they are asking for 3 hybrid cruisers for \$185,000 which fits with the regular cycle of cruisers. He said they are asking for \$101,430 for 2 replacement administrative vehicles (1 from operating and 1 from capital). They are asking for \$10,000 for training room technology replacements. Most of the technology they have in the training room is over 17 years old.

He said they are also looking for \$54,512 for the annual maintenance cost for the body worn cameras and soft body armor replacements for \$7,000 for 7 officers. Mr. Davis said they are looking for \$45,000 for the annual taser replacements as the current models have reach their end of life. These will have a rechargeable battery and updated technology. He said the less lethal launchers would be \$30,000 which also replaces old technology to improve safety and versatility. The time and attendance software would manage time and attendance more efficiently. This would also reduce paper usage.

There was some discussion about cannabis training and in-service training for different things. He said the State may eventually mandate specific training for DWI and cannabis at some point. He said the Administration cars are 8-9 years old now and there is a plan as to when to replace them. We have 39 officers instead of 41 at this point.

The Chief said they are in the final stage of the hiring process of a new Animal Control Officer. He had some draft recommendations on staffing. He staffs 27 patrol officers, but the recommendation is 29. They recommend keeping all the assignments outside of the patrol division and fill in the assignments outside that have not been filled like the third detective. We are still trying to find more officers at this point, hopefully we will be at least up to 40 by the end of the year. The Certus study recommends 3 more sworn officers and two full time civilian officers based on current workloads. He is asking for 3 sworn officers and the funding to promote an existing officer to Sergeant. He discussed a chart of leave and overtime hours. There are other recommendations to do things better also. There was a lot of discussion on regular and overtime pay. Chief Boulter also went through the chart on supervisor shift replacements. He would like to have an additional Sergeant to increase the pool of Sergeants and to provide better support and supervision to the dispatch center. It would also provide additional support to the patrol function. He is asking for 2 full time clerks for the records division also. They do a lot of the court paperwork, permits, background checks, etc. This would be \$90,582 for the full-time clerk and \$12,957 for added hours for the part-time clerk. There was also some discussion on the school resource officers.

After discussion, no motion was made at this time.

### **CAPITAL, CNR AND DEBT SERVICE**

#### **• Board of Education Capital Projects (Tab 27)**

Mr. Casey said he had 2 capital projects – to replace modular classrooms at Tariffville School, part of the previous year’s budget, and security improvements that are done every other year. They are asking for an additional \$500,000 for the modulares. The modulares are deteriorating at this point. There was discussion on how to pay for these new modulares. The security improvements are district wide for security cameras. After a lot of discussion, no motion was made at this time.

#### **• Simsbury Volunteer Fire Department**

Chief Baldis said the Fire Department wasn’t part of the ARPA money municipality funding. They need generators as the ones they use are almost 40 years old. They did make a presentation about using some ARPA funds for these. This would be a cross-avoidance for taxpayers. They have to be done either with ARPA or with the fire tax.

Chief Baldis said the First District mill rate will be going down from 1.2 to 1. They work on a no debt basis with no debt service.

Chris Kelly, Vice Chairman of the Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association, spoke about a grant application they submitted for \$150,000. They have some ongoing funding issues. Their reimbursements are not even close to manage their costs. They are committed to trying to fund a second vehicle, but it is not critical at this time. This would be a back-up vehicle and a bridge to help as Simsbury grows. They do have an update on how they are doing on their metrics and do have other data to discuss.

There was a lot of discussion on the Town’s responsibility to the residents for ambulance services. We need to look at the reality of a financial situation also. We need to discuss this issue with the Town Attorney to come up with a solution. There was also some discussion on upgrading their radio systems. We will need a workgroup to come up with a solution to their problems. This is a mutual aid problem and we need to figure it out collectively.

• **Outside Agency Funding Requests**

Mr. Fitzgerald went through the outside agency requests like VNA, the Chamber, Community Media, etc. There are 2 new requests from the Simsbury Performing Arts Center and the Volunteer Ambulance Association. Some of the items are per capita. There was some discussion on the \$5,000 for Interval House. There was some discussion on who received \$10,000 ARPA funding already and who didn’t. Some of these requests didn’t show enough details to reflect they actual work they do. The Board went through the different requests. There will be a more complete narrative on these requests on Monday.

Ms. Heavner spoke about different ways to handle budget items. She also spoke about using bonds to reduce the budget and other ways to reduce the budget. She wants the Board to look at all correspondence and discuss the mill rate for next year. We do need to keep looking forward. The Board also needs to look at how much CNR is critical. There are hard choices to be made at this point.

**ADJOURN**

After no further discussion, Mr. Askham made a motion to adjourn at 4:25 p.m. Ms. Goetz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathi Radocchio  
Clerk