



# Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET, SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Lisa L. Heavner - First Selectman

## *First Selectwoman's Report – February 15, 2017*

### **Budget Update Letter and Important Dates**

*The letter below was sent out on February 13th from the First Selectwoman, the Chairman of the Board of Finance and the Superintendent of Schools. Please see a copy here:*

Dear Residents, Neighbors and Friends,

Today, thanks to the hard work of many volunteers, elected officials and dedicated town staff, Simsbury is a Money Magazine *Top Ten* 'Best Places to Live in America.' Others are noticing what Simsbury residents have known for years – Simsbury is a great place to live, learn, retire and do business. Your tax dollars support all that makes Simsbury the place we call home and we work hard every day to ensure you get quality and value for every tax dollar you contribute.

Each budget season the Boards of Selectmen, Education and Finance evaluate “must spends,” “should spends,” and “want to spends.” Priorities and goals are discussed and weighed against what our residents can afford. In addition to the tough choices we make every year at budget time, this year's budget has two additional challenges:

- A likely reduction in State aid due to the State's continued fiscal crisis, caused in large part by their chronic underfunding of the State's financial obligations and;
- A net loss in revenue of about \$790,000 from the demolition of The Hartford building.

Governor Malloy presented his budget to the State Legislature on February 8<sup>th</sup> and proposed an unprecedented and untenable ***\$4.3 million in additional costs for Simsbury***. We expect the budget that is ultimately passed by the State Legislature will look vastly different from this initial proposal and we will be advocating for real cost fixes from the State - *not cost shifts that increase the property tax burden on Simsbury residents.*

Over the next few months, the State Legislature will be reviewing and making changes to the Governor's budget. Like all municipalities, we won't know the final amount of State aid reductions to Simsbury until sometime this spring. We have reached out to Senator Witkos and Representative Hampton and will be working with them to advocate for Simsbury's best interests. The Boards of Selectmen, Finance and Education will be working together and with the Director of Finance to evaluate strategies and options.

Regarding the loss in revenue from The Hartford, fortunately, the Town has planned for this loss for a number of years and has set aside reserves to help cushion the tax impact. The good news is that within three to five years, we expect that loss to be replaced and exceeded with revenues from newly planned development.

No doubt this will be a rocky budget season with difficult challenges. We will continue to be cautious with our spending and find cost savings wherever we can. As we make hard choices and set priorities for the Town, we encourage all to be involved in the process. Give us your input and let us know what is important to you.

Sincerely,

Lisa Heavner  
First Selectwoman

Robert Pomeroy  
Chairman  
Board of Finance

Matthew Curtis  
Superintendent  
Simsbury Public Schools

Budget dates to remember:

- **February 27<sup>th</sup>**, First Selectwoman's Budget is presented to the Board of Selectmen at 6:00 p.m. in the main meeting room of Town Hall.
- **March 4<sup>th</sup>**, beginning at 8:00 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room of Town Hall, the Board of Selectmen will hold a day-long budget workshop reviewing and making changes to the First Selectwoman's budget.
- **March 6 – 9<sup>th</sup>**, additional budget workshops will be held as needed.
- **March 14<sup>th</sup>**, the Board of Education presents its budget to the Board of Finance.
- **March 21<sup>st</sup>** at 5:45 p.m., the Board of Selectmen presents its budget to the Board of Finance
- **April 6<sup>th</sup>** the Board of Finance holds a public hearing on the budget.
- **May 9<sup>th</sup>** tentative date set for the Budget Referendum.

For the most up-to-date information on this year's budget, please visit the Town's budget page: <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/finance/pages/2017-2018-budget-information>

### **Coffee and Donuts with the First Selectwoman February 24<sup>th</sup>, 9-10:00 a.m.**

All are invited to attend office hours with the First Selectwoman on February 24<sup>th</sup> from 9 -10:00 a.m. in the First Selectwoman's office in Town Hall, 933 Hopmeadow Street. With budget season fast approaching, now is the time to share what matters most to you. Please join me for an informal conversation on the upcoming budget or any other issue you wish to discuss. Stop in for a minute to say hello or stay the whole time!

### **Simsbury Recreation Department Program Interest Survey**

The Simsbury Recreation Department is looking to update program offerings. Help us understand what you're looking for by taking a brief survey – just a few minutes of your time to ensure we're offering programs the community wants. The survey will be available online until February 26<sup>th</sup>. <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/home/news/the-simsbury-recreation-department-needs-your-help>

### **Friends Coffee House: Classical Guitar Music from Around the World with the Monarca Duo – February 17<sup>th</sup>**

From Vienna to Mexico, classical guitarist Keyla Mejia and Joshua Nakama of the Monarca Duo will take you across the globe in the one language we all share – music. The concert will be held at the Simsbury Public Library on Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 p.m., with doors open at 7:30 p.m. The concert will conclude by 9:30 p.m. <http://www.simsburylibrary.info/friends-coffeehouse-classical-guitar-music-around-world-monarca-duo/>

### **Help Us Keep Simsbury Safe by Clearing Fire Hydrants of Snow!**

Help us keep Simsbury safe by clearing fire hydrants of snow. Local firefighters need quick access to hydrants during emergencies - *every minute counts*. A few minutes of clearing now can save a life during a fire emergency. And it's the law! A new town ordinance requires that fire hydrants be kept clear of any obstructions that would impede the use or maintenance of a hydrant. The ordinance can be found by control-clicking on the following link:

<http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/public-safety-subcommittee/files/fire-hydrant-maintenance>

### **Help with Taxes**

Trained and certified volunteers with AARP are available to assist seniors and others with preparing and electronically filing federal and state taxes, free of charge. Appointments are available on Thursdays, February 2 through April 13 starting at 10 a.m., at the Simsbury Public Library. For an appointment, please contact the Senior Center at: (860) 658-3273.

### **Even Though it is Winter, Drought Watch Still in Effect Statewide**

Just a reminder that all Connecticut residents and businesses are requested to voluntarily reduce water demand by 15 percent. Check out these tips to conserve water from the Farmington Valley Health District: <http://www.fvhd.org/>

### **Revaluation of Real Estate in Simsbury**

In accordance with State law and in order to make sure residents are taxed on the fair value of their properties, revaluation of all real estate in Simsbury is now underway. Over the next year each property in town will be reassessed in-line with current market values. You may see town employees and contractors from *Municipal Valuation Services* assisting with this process.

The first phase is a pre-review which includes comparisons between what is actually observed at the property and what is shown on the assessor's card. The next phase beginning in March or April will include property questionnaires, updating records for work done under building permits, inspection of recently sold properties and valuation. Revaluation notices culminate the process and are expected to be mailed to taxpayers in December 2017. For questions, please contact the Director of Finance Sean Kimball at [skimball@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:skimball@simsbury-ct.gov) or (860) 658-3244 or the Tax Assessor David Gardner at [dgardner@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:dgardner@simsbury-ct.gov) or (860) 658-3251.

### **Energy Assistance Available**

The Simsbury Social Services Department has been designated as an official intake site for residents wishing to apply for the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program. This program is available to assist households paying for primary heating bills incurred after November 9, 2016. The program also has a "heat included" component for renters. Income and asset limits apply. For further information or to schedule an appointment, please call the Social Services Department at (860) 658-3283.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Town of Simsbury Residential Development Trends**

Wondering about the impacts of new development planned and anticipated for Simsbury? While Simsbury is down almost \$790,000 in revenues this year due to the demolition of the office building formerly owned by The Hartford, the good news is that within three to five years we expect that loss to be replaced and exceeded with revenues from planned new development. To see the Director of Planning Jamie Rabbitt's informative report on *Residential Development Trends*, please visit: <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/planning-and-land-use-department/pages/residential-development-trends>

### **Small Business Assistance Programs**

For information on Small Business Assistance Programs from state, federal and Connecticut non-profit programs providing grants, loans and tax breaks to small businesses, please check out the Office of Legislative Research Report on Small Business Assistance Programs:

<http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/first-selectwomans-office/files/small-business-assistance-programs-research-report>

### **Town-wide Energy Savings Campaign for Businesses**

The Town of Simsbury, the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce and Eversource have launched a town-wide energy-saving campaign for businesses. Thanks to the Simsbury Clean Energy Task Force and the Department of Public Works for initiating and coordinating this program. The campaign encourages local businesses to participate in Eversource's Small Business Energy Advantage program where technicians conduct a no-cost energy audit and propose recommendations for energy-efficient improvements. For every project completed by the Eversource-authorized contractors Artis Energy or JK Energy Solutions a \$50 donation will be made to the Simsbury Clean Energy Task Force. For more information, please contact 877-WISE-USE (877-947-3873) or visit <http://www.energizect.com/your-business>

### **Wednesday Night is Business Night at the Simsbury Library**

The Library is offering programming on a consistent night for business people or those interested in business. Be on the lookout for *Wednesday Night is Business Night!* events throughout the year. Currently scheduled programs include:

- *Business Development from the Inside Out* - Relationships drive the world. The more of the 'Positive Type' that you develop with clients, prospects, co-workers, family and friends, the more likely you are to be happy and successful in life. Wednesday, March 8, 6:30-8:00 PM
- *Taking Care of Your Prime Real Estate* – hands on program to help with organizational issues that keep you from reaching your goals. Wednesday, March 22, 6:30-8:00 PM

To register for these free programs or to see all the great educational programs offered to assist small businesses in Simsbury, please visit the Library website and click on the business tab at the top of the screen: <http://www.simsburylibrary.info/> or contact Sarah Loudenslager, Business Resource Coordinator, at (860) 658-7663, ext. 2107

### **Simsbury Chamber of Commerce 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Leaders Breakfast on March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

The Simsbury Chamber of Commerce is holding their 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Leaders Breakfast on March 3<sup>rd</sup> from 7:30 - 9:45 a.m. at the Simsbury Inn located at 397 Hopmeadow Street. New Britain Mayor Erin Stewart and Rebecca Lobo are the two featured speakers. For more information about the event or to register, please visit: <http://simsburycoc.org/m/events/view/9th-Annual-Business-Leaders-Breakfast>

### **Open for Business**

New to Simsbury! Congratulations to Dana Kosior, the new owner of *Farmers Insurance – The Kosior Agency*. Please join us for a ribbon cutting sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce on February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. at 522 Hopmeadow Street (Simsmore Square). Welcome to Simsbury!

Congratulations to Lisa and Matt Natcharian, the new owners of *Fiddler's Green*. Welcome to Simsbury!

A ribbon cutting ceremony sponsored by Main Street Partnership for *KR Styles* was held on Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:00 p.m. at 14 Station Street. Congratulations on the new location and thanks for staying in Simsbury! Check out their website here: <http://www.krstyles.com/>

New to Simsbury! A ribbon cutting for *Shred Fitness* sponsored by the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce has been rescheduled for February 28<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. at 17C Herman Drive. Shred Fitness offers semi-private training, endurance and core crush classes. Check out their website: <http://shredfitnessct.com/>

*Benny's* located at 562 Hopmeadow Street has completed a new dining room expansion, package store improvements, and parking and landscape improvements. Congratulations! A grand re-opening and ribbon cutting sponsored by Main Street Partnership will be rescheduled soon! <http://bennysofsimsbury.com/>

### **Under Construction in Simsbury**

*Garden Homes* on the south side of town along Hopmeadow Street is now under construction – building foundations have been completed and framing has started. This development was approved for 181 residential rental units, including townhomes and apartment style housing. Commercial and retail units were also approved as part of the Planned Area Development (PAD), but zoning and specific site plan approvals have yet to be sought and therefore only the residential component is under construction at this time. You can visit Garden Homes' website at <http://www.gardenhomes.com/> for more information about the development company.

*Highcroft*: 272 residential rental units off Powder Forest Drive are also under construction by Landworks Development/Nelson Construction team. The project includes *Highcroft Apartment Homes* with 224 apartment units and *Highcroft Townhomes* with 48 units. Move-ins commenced in July 2016 and construction is expected to conclude on the first 128 unit phase in late spring 2017. You can visit their website at: <http://www.lifeinsimsbury.com> for information on their sale and rental offerings or <http://www.highcroftapartments.com/>.

*Berkshire Bank*: At the Corner of Bushy Hill and Albany Turnpike, Berkshire Bank is waiting on interior fit-out and is not yet open.

### **Permitted**

*Big Y* has indicated that they have delayed a start date in Simsbury for at least a year and possibly into 2018 based on internal financial priorities and commitments elsewhere, but will begin removal of the buildings on their property. Big Y further indicated that they are still interested in Simsbury and confirmed that they have all their town and state permits in place for when they do begin.

*Hoskins Road Workforce Overlay Zone (WHOZ)*: The Town planning boards have approved 88 residential units for the property with twenty percent affordable housing. Although the project has been approved there is currently no activity.

*Chestnut Hills*: Located on the corner of Drake Hill and Hopmeadow Street, 46 unit apartments have been approved for the historical building and the surrounding property. This property is currently for sale.

### **On the Horizon**

*The Silverman Group*: On October 17<sup>th</sup> the Silverman Group from New Jersey submitted an application to the Town's Zoning Commission for a Master Site Development Plan (MSDP)

under the Hartford-Simsbury Form Based Code for the northern portion (40 acres) of the former Hartford property. Their application included plans for a 120 bed assisted living facility, 280 units of luxury rental housing (156 units in stacked flats and 124 units in town homes), a community center and 11,600 square feet of retail/office space in a Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) setting. The Town's Design Review Board approved the Master Site Development Plan on November 21<sup>st</sup>.

On December 5<sup>th</sup> after two public hearings and considerable deliberations, the Zoning Commission approved the Silverman's application for a MSDP with seven conditions. The Hartford-Simsbury Form Based Code was adopted on July 7, 2014, and went into effect on August 1, 2014. It was adopted after a systematic study of the site was undertaken by the Town of Simsbury and The Hartford in 2013 utilizing various consultants (Gateway Planning, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. Catalyst and CB Richard Ellis). The adoption of the Code solidified a two-step process. The first step was the application for and approval of a Master Site Development Plan (MSPD) which was accomplished on December 5<sup>th</sup>. The second step requires a subsequent application to the Zoning Commission for site plan approval conforming to the MSPD. Upon approval of the final site plan the applicant can begin the building permit process, pending any additional state approvals. It is anticipated that the applicant will apply for site plan approval in late February or early March 2017.

*Girard Brothers Corporation*: 32 and 36 Iron Horse Blvd. (Simscroft-Echo Farms). Initial concept plans have been presented to Design Review, Planning and Zoning for a multifamily residential community. The Planning presentation can be viewed on SCTV at the following link: <http://simsburytv.org/v/4rffJvkGMTA>

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