



# Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET, SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Lisa L. Heavner - First Selectwoman

## *First Selectwoman's Report – March 13, 2017*

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

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 residents can afford. In addition to the tough decisions we make every year, this year has two additional challenges: A likely reduction in State aid due to the State’s continued fiscal crisis, and the Town’s net loss in revenue of about \$790,000 from the demolition of The Hartford building. We have been planning for a number of years for the loss in revenue from The Hartford and have set aside reserves to help cushion the tax impact. The magnitude of the State’s crisis, however, will be a challenge for Simsbury and all towns.

The *recommended* budgets by the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education are the first steps in a long budget process and will be reviewed and changed by the Board of Finance before final referendum. The Board of Selectmen’s *Recommended Budget*, adopted on March 7, 2016, proposes an additional \$702,361 (3.6% *Town/BOS increase*) in expenditures and the Board of Education’s *Recommended Budget*, proposes an additional \$1,670,601 (2.48% *BOE increase*) in expenditures. Cost drivers of the Town’s budget include health care, negotiated salaries, contractual services, additional staffing hours in the Building department to meet economic development needs and the addition of a police dispatch position for public safety. To see the details of both budgets, you can visit the Town and Education websites.

Although the Board of Finance will ultimately set the mill rate for Simsbury, the tax impact from these *recommended* expenditure budgets is an **estimated 2.9% tax increase**. This modest increase comes after three consecutive years of no tax increases and preserves the quality of life in Simsbury we value: excellent schools, well-maintained roads, parks, athletic fields, the Library, Senior Center, Simsbury Farms, Police, open space, social services and much more.

We should be prepared, however, that the financial crisis at the State will likely place additional costs on Simsbury and lead to a higher tax increase. Governor Malloy has proposed an unprecedented and untenable \$4.3 million in additional costs for Simsbury. Were the Governor’s proposal fully adopted by the Legislature we would see an *additional* tax increase of nearly 6% with a 2.11 mill impact. 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 with the Director of Finance to evaluate strategies and options.

We expect the budget that is ultimately passed by the Legislature to look vastly different from the Governor’s initial proposal, but will not know the final impact to Simsbury until later this spring. As we get better information from the State, we will further evaluate local budgets and seek your input to determine what is best for Simsbury.

We welcome your input at every step in the process and look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions.

### **Budget dates to remember:**

- **March 21<sup>st</sup>** Board of Selectmen and Board of Education present budgets to the Board of Finance.
- **April 6<sup>th</sup>** Board of Finance holds a Public Hearing on the budget.
- **June 13<sup>th</sup>** tentative Budget Referendum.

## **Citizen's Guide to the Budget March 29<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Library**

Everything you ever wanted to know about the budget process! Please join the First Selectwoman Lisa Heavner and Director of Finance Sean Kimball to discuss information about Simsbury's budget and how it is prepared. We will show you where to find budget information and how to use *OpenSimsbury*, the Town's newly launched budget portal where you can view historical budget information and view trends by expense or revenue type across Town departments. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions about this year's budget. <http://www.libraryinsight.com/eventdetails.asp?jx=scp&lmx=%C7ac%25%AA%AB&v=3>

## **Simsbury Mini Maker Faire – April 1<sup>st</sup> from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Simsbury Library**

Join us for the greatest show (& tell) on Earth! Simsbury's Mini Maker Faire is part science fair, part county fair, technology expo, and part something entirely new! As a celebration of the Maker Movement, it's a family-friendly showcase of invention, creativity and resourcefulness.

The Mini Maker Faire gathers together tech enthusiasts, crafters, educators, tinkerers, hobbyists, engineers, science clubs, artists, students and commercial exhibitors. Makers come to show their creations and share what they've learned.

The Library will also have other activities going on throughout the day, such as 3D printer and Cricut training in the Innovator's Workshop and Minecraft in the Computer Lab. There will be something for everyone, no matter their age!

The Simsbury Mini Maker Faire is free to attend! We ask those interested in attending to register online for their free tickets at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/simsbury-mini-maker-faire-tickets-32191063337>. More information about the Faire can be found at <http://simsbury.makerfaire.com/> See you there!

## **The Future of Our Forests: Stewarding Our Lands Thoughtfully**

Please join us for a forum on stewarding our lands thoughtfully. This Regional Forum will feature Dr. Edward Faison, Senior Ecologist from *Highstead*, a regional organization in Redding, CT, dedicated to forest research and long term monitoring. Dr. Faison will present information on how municipalities and land trusts can establish a landscape and historical approach to stewarding our protected preserves and better understand How, When and Why we should monitor and manage our forests.

We will provide a light supper at 6:00 pm with the program starting at 7:00 pm on April 17 in the Program Room at the Simsbury Public Library, 725 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury CT.

Questions and RSVP's (by April 10<sup>th</sup>) to Helen Peterson, [hkpeterson@comcast.net](mailto:hkpeterson@comcast.net).

## **Please Help Simsbury Earn a National PlacesforBikes 5-Star Rating!**

Simsbury is seeking to earn a national *PlacesforBikes* 5-star rating as a top U.S. community for biking. Our achievements as a Bicycle Friendly Community are likely to score well, but we need your help! We will only be rated if the community provides input. Residents, town employees, elected officials and community leaders are encouraged to complete the short *PlacesforBikes* survey, whether or not they bike. The deadline is April 15. This is an opportunity for our community to shine on a national stage and promote Simsbury as an attractive place to live, work, and visit.

To complete the survey, please copy and paste the following web address into your browser:  
<https://corona.researchfeedback.net/wh/s.asp?k=148665804820>

### **Summer Camp Registration Has Begun!**

Registration is now open for Summer Explorers Camp, Awesome Explorers Camp, Junior Explorers Camp and Playground Explorers Camps. More camps are available for registration in the coming weeks, so keep an eye out for emails and check [www.simsburyrec.com](http://www.simsburyrec.com)

### **Department of Public Health: Time to Test for Radon**

The State Department of Public Health (DPH) urges Connecticut resident to test their homes for radon gas, the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. Testing is recommended in the winter months, when radon tends to be the highest. Free radon test kits are available at the Farmington Valley Health District, 95 River Road, Canton (860) 352-2333. Stop by or call to get your free test kit while supplies last. <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/home/bulletins/radon-testing-kits-from-farmington-valley-health-district>

### **Movies at Simsbury Public Library**

Come join us for free movies offered on Friday afternoons at 1:00 p.m. at the Library!

- Green Lantern on March 17<sup>th</sup>
- Green Fingers on March 24<sup>th</sup>

For more information or to check out other programs, please visit:

<http://www.libraryinsight.com/calendar.asp?jx=sc>

### **Try Simsbury Adventure Triathlon – Sunday, May 21 at 11:00 a.m.**

Try Simsbury is back this May! Join us for a quick 5k run on the re-established “River Walk” trail system, a 12 mile bike course on scenic country roads and a 2-mile paddle segment on the Farmington River. Post-race festivities take place at the Simsbury Performing Arts Center. To register online: [www.trysimsbury.com](http://www.trysimsbury.com)

### **Talcott Mountain Music Festival at Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center**

Celebrate all summer long at the Hartford Symphony Orchestra’s annual Talcott Mountain Music Festival! Pack your picnic, attend with family and friends, relax under the stars, and enjoy the Hartford Symphony Orchestra under Music Director Carolyn Kuan and distinguished guest conductors.

- Celebrate America! Friday, June 30
- Sgt. Pepper’s 50<sup>th</sup>! Featuring Classical Mystery Tour. Friday, July 7
- The Music of David Bowie. Friday, July 14
- Williams and Warner Bros. Friday, July 21
- Broadway A to Z. Friday, July 28

For more information, please visit: <https://hartfordsymphony.org/concerts-tickets/series/talcott-mountain-music-festival/>

### **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 this spring 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**

### **Simsbury Chefs Named James Beard Semifinalists!**

Congratulations to Tyler Anderson of *Millwright's* and Jeffrey Lizotte of *Present Company* on being selected as semifinalists for the James Beard Foundation 2017 Restaurant and Chef Awards. This is Chef Anderson's fourth nomination and Chef Lizotte's first. Glad to have you both in Simsbury!

### **Economic Development Implementation and Strategic Activities Report**

Looking for an update on current and anticipated actions to promote economic development in Simsbury? Check out the *Economic Development Implementation and Strategic Activities Report* to see what we are working on. Our goal is to support and spur *Smart Growth* economic activity which will keep Simsbury affordable for families, businesses and retirees and to preserve Simsbury's unique character.

This plan builds upon the work of the many commissions and boards. Feedback was sought from residents and businesses through the 2015 Town Survey, the Economic Development Task Force and the Marketing Study focus groups. I want to particularly thank and recognize the Board of Selectmen for their work in setting priorities for sensible growth. In creating this plan, we have utilized the framework recommended by the EPA: *Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities and Towns (January 2016)*.

To see the report, please visit: <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/first-selectwomans-office/files/economic-development-strategic-plan>

### **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 informative report on *Residential Development Trends* prepared by Director of Planning Jamie Rabbitt, 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>

### **Simsbury Public Library's Business Resource Center Offers "Promoting Your Organization" Programs for Non-Profits and Small Businesses**

The Simsbury Public Library through its Business Resource Center and with the Simsbury Tourism Committee is offering a three-part program series called **Promoting Your Organization**. The series is designed to help non-profits and small businesses promote themselves. Information about the three programs and sign-up links for each follow:

#### **Utilize the Connecticut Office of Tourism Website**

Tuesday, March 21, 2:30 – 4:00 PM

Simsbury Public Library – Technology Learning Center

Link to sign

up: <http://www.libraryinsight.com/EventSignUp.asp?t=570940164&jx=scp&lmx=%C7ad%2C%AB%AA>

#### **Develop a PR Strategy**

Tuesday, March 28, 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Simsbury Public Library – Program Room 2

Link to sign

up: <http://www.libraryinsight.com/EventSignUp.asp?t=570940164&jx=scp&lmx=%C7ab%23%AE%AA>

### **Digital Marketing & Your Website**

Wednesday, April 12, 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Simsbury Public Library – Program Room

Link to sign

up: <http://www.libraryinsight.com/EventSignUp.asp?t=570940164&jx=scp&lmx=%C6ag%23%AA%AF>

### **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:

- *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

### **Open for Business**

New to Simsbury! A ribbon cutting for *Shred Fitness* sponsored by the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce was held on 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 is underway. 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. (Simscrest-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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