
FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Wendy Mackstutis – First Selectman
DATE: April 15, 2024

FY 2024/2025 Budget Process

Last night, the Board of Finance passed the budget, resulting in 4.68% tax increase. The impact to a home at around the \$400,00 market value will see an increase of \$408 per year.

The mill rate, including the Fire District is moving from 31.82 (1.00 Fire), to 33.31 (1.05 Fire). Detailed information on the Budget can be found at this link where you find the progression of the budget from the Town Manager, through the BOE, to the BOS, who passed it along to the BOF for final approval.

<https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/finance/pages/2024-2025-budget-information>

The Board of Selectmen will hold a special meeting tomorrow, 4/18, via zoom, at 9:30am to set the referendum date and approve the budget mailer. The planned date for the Budget Referendum is *May 10th at Town Hall*, with instructions to follow for parking, etc. Absentee Ballots will be available for the Budget Referendum but must be picked up in person at the Town Clerk's Office. There is no early voting for the referendum.

Clarification on Flower Bridge Appropriations, Approvals

At last night's BOF Public Hearing, there was discussion on the cost of work needed to be done on the Flower Bridge. The item in the CIP – Capital Improvement Plan – shows the following.

Old Drake Hill Road Flower Bridge Rehabilitation – Supplemental (Bonds \$495,000; Prior Authorizations \$2,269,000)	\$2,764,000
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What was missing from last night's discussion was that the previous BOS voted to approve funding on this project twice, as shown in the Prior Authorization above. In 2022/2023, when we received the American Rescue Plan Act during the pandemic, we allocated \$300K to do the evaluation and study to bring the bridge up to its needed level of maintenance. In year 2023/2024, we approved an additional use of ARPA dollars for the estimated cost of the project at \$1.9M, making it a priority. During ARPA, we sought input from residents, many of whom came and spoke to the importance of the Flower Bridge. As you'll recall, these funds were intended to benefit the community as a whole, and also to remediate the impact of the pandemic. The Flower Bridge was a good fit, as it was a place for people to enjoy the outdoors, and to also stimulate the economy, which it did by drawing people to Simsbury.

The \$495K is due to finding additional work, critical to the bridge, found when the project was being finalized. As shown above, most of the cost of the project has already been approved and designated – and also voted on in last year's budget.

Hometown Hero Nominations

It's that time of year, when the town is asking all of you to nominate people who you want to recognize for the acts and services that they have provided to our community. All of the info that you need, along with the application can be found at the following link.

<https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/home/news/nominations-sought-for-simsbury-hometown-heroes-6>

Applications will be accepted throughout April, so time is of the essence to submit them. The Hometown Hero Committee will then meet and review the applications and make their selections. Recipients of the reward will be honored at a date (TBD) at Town Hall by members of the Board of Selectmen.

Clean up Day

Please join the Board of Selectmen, Town Staff and Members of the Community as we join together to help us clean up Simsbury! Equipment and locations will be available on Saturday morning in the Town Hall parking lot. Hope to see you there as we pick up our garbage bags and gloves!

https://simsburyct.myrec.com/info/activities/program_details.aspx?ProgramID=28907

Fair Rent Commission

Thank you to everyone that submitted applications and showed an interest in serving on the Fair Rent Commission. The Personnel Subcommittee has interviewed the applicants moved forward from the Town Manager's office and will be contacting those selected (and not) in the coming weeks, with the target of having this on our May 13th agenda.

Recycling Committee Swap Shop

The Swap Shop will be opening on Saturday, April 6th, weather permitting, to start the season. This is a great opportunity to bring your attic or basement valuables that might find a new home. It's a good way to keep them out of the landfills. They will be open on Saturdays thru October.

Sustainability Committee

Our Sustainability Committee will be hosting a fair, on May 4th, from 10:00-2:00 at the Simsbury Public Library. There are many groups representing including Blue Earth, Abode, EV Club of CT, Simsbury Land Trust, Sierra Club, Avon Clean Energy Commission, DEEP, Earthlight, Pollinator Pathway, and more. Here's the link to the event at the library.

<https://simsbury.librarycalendar.com/event/sustainability-fair-trade-show-36917>

Public Hearing on the Retirement Plan

After Monday Night's Public Hearing on the Retirement Plan, and much discussion, the Board of Selectmen voted to approve the changes that were recommended by the Police Commission, Town Manager Marc Nelson, and Interim Town Manager Lee Erdmann. This change allows for unaffiliated employees to take an in-service pension distribution under certain conditions, and also lowers the town contribution to the plan for new members. The information is available in our agenda packet from Monday, linked to here. https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf9751/f/agendas/4-15-24_regular_meeting_packet.pdf

School News

Sharing the school news, as I wanted to thank Tenesha Grant and the SHS Girls Empowerment Group, for having me join them last month and posting the photo we took. It's also great to see the Simsbury Girls Basketball team on the cover winning the State Championship.

Talk about empowerment!! <https://lws.simsburyschools.net/intheloop/04-15-24.pdf>



For Women's History Month, the theme for the SHS Girls Empowerment Group was "Living in your Power." Leader of the group, **Tenesha Grant**, SHS Open Choice Liaison, mentioned that they had two guest speakers visit. First Selectman Wendy Mackstutis and First Black Female Fire Chief Shelly Carter, spoke about their journeys to leadership and encouraged the group to follow their dreams, and to lean on supports to help them get through difficulties.

Office Hours

Check my webpage for updates.

Feel free to reach out using either method below.

I'm happy to meet with you to talk all things or anything Simsbury.

Cell: 860-543-3770

Email: wmackstutis@simsbury-ct.gov

Wendy

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Marc Nelson – Town Manager
DATE: April 15, 2024

DEPARTMENT NEWS & NOTES

Police Department:

The Police Department has hired Mario Mairana (pronounced Mayor-ana) as the town's newest police officer after approval from the Police Commission at their regular meeting held on April 8, 2024. Mario joins the department after a 17-year career in the banking industry. He begins employment on April 17th and the 6-month police academy starts later this month. Please welcome Mario to Simsbury.

Town Manager's Office:

After a competitive RFP for our Labor, Employment, and Pension Counsel; FordHarrison was selected to continue to serve as the Town's Labor, Employment, and Pension Counsel.

Town Clerk:

The Connecticut Town Clerks Association holds conferences twice a year, in April and September, for all Town Clerks and Assistant Town Clerks in the State. These conferences provide educational sessions and updates from many state agencies, keeping us informed as to both new laws and changes to existing laws pertaining to our responsibilities as Town Clerks. On April 18th, the Simsbury Town Clerk's office will be closed for our staff to attend this valuable conference.

Library:

I'm thrilled to share that our Teen Services Librarian, Mary Richardson, has been recognized by the Connecticut Library Association as this year's winner of the Outstanding Young Adult Award for the work she's done creating a welcoming and safe space for teens at the Library. Mary will be recognized at an award ceremony during the CT Library Association Annual Conference at the end of April.

The Library is holding a Volunteer Expo Saturday, April 27, 10 AM -12 PM. If you're interested in volunteer opportunities, please join us. There will be 20 local organizations seeking volunteers represented at the Expo.

The Library is partnering with the Sustainability Committee for the Sustainability Fair which will be held Saturday, May 4, at the Library from 10 AM-2PM. Many other organizations will be taking part that day, as well, and kids can plant seeds to take home. The Fair will also feature a 'Repair Cafe' so those attending may bring an item they'd like to have repaired rather than discarding it and adding it to the landfill.

Social Services:

Join Simsbury Youth Service Bureau and School Resource Officer Brittell in welcoming Scott Driscoll to Simsbury on Monday, April 22nd at 6:30 PM at Simsbury High School in the Amphitheater to discuss S.M.A.R.T. (Social Media and Responsible Technology) internet safety concepts. Scott will be discussing current apps students are using, cyber bullying, sexting/texting, online gaming, and more. Most importantly, he will be talking about how to keep our kids safe online. Please contact Community Social Worker Rachael Loveland at RLoveland@simsbury-ct.gov with any questions.

Simsbury Aging & Disability Commission is hosting a focus group to gather ideas how we can be a livable community for all ages. Focus groups are in-person and 90-minutes long at the following locations:

- Wednesday, April 24: McLean Goodrich Building, 75 Great Pond Rd, Simsbury (7PM)
- Friday, April 26: Library Weatogue Room, 725 Hopmeadow St, Simsbury (2 PM)
- Saturday, April 27: Trinity Episcopal Church, 11 Church St, Tariffville (10:30 AM)

If you'd like to be one of the 8-10 residents in the groups, please call the Senior Center at (860) 658-3273 or email at agefriendlysims@gmail.com.

Culture, Parks & Recreation:

Join your friends and neighbors as we aim to clean up Simsbury's neighborhoods, parks and trails! The event will take place this Saturday, April 20, 2024. Stop by the Town Hall Parking Lot at 8:30am for gloves and trash bags before heading out to clean up. Trash bags can be returned to a dumpster, generously donated by Paine's Inc., at Town Hall by 11:30am. Share your best cleanup photos! Tag #simsburycommunitycleanup

Pre-registration is not required, but is helpful to organizers for planning purposes. Please visit the Simsbury Parks & Rec website:

https://simsburyct.myrec.com/info/activities/program_details.aspx?ProgramID=28907

Public Works:

We have our regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection at Farmington High School (10 Monteith Drive) on Saturday from 8:00am to 1:00pm. This is free for Simsbury residents. Please bring a form of ID. Please check the Public Works page on our Website to see what's allowed.

Also, this Saturday, the Town is beginning a food waste composting pilot program! Residents with a landfill permit can dispose of food waste at the Simsbury Transfer Station at 66 Wolcott Rd. Please reach out to the Transfer Station to obtain a permit.

Thank you....