

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN – BUDGET WORKSHOP  
SPECIAL MEETING – MARCH 12, 2013**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Special Budget Workshop Meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 12, 2013 in the Small Program Room of the Simsbury Public Library. In attendance were Mary Glassman, Lisa Heavner, Shannon Knall, Moira Wertheimer, Nancy Haase and Sean Askham. Also in attendance were Mary Ann Harris, Finance Director; Gerry Toner, Director of Culture, Parks & Recreation; Sean Kimball, Deputy Director of Administrative Services; Sue Bullock, Library Director; Carolyn Keily, Town Clerk, Rick Bazzano, IT Manager, Colleen O'Connor, Tax Collector, David Gardner, Assessor and other interested parties.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC AUDIENCE**

No one spoke in public audience.

**DISCUSSION – PARKS AND RECREATION**

Gerry Toner, Director of Culture, Parks & Recreation, introduced David Bush, Gerry Wetjen and Mike Wallace.

Mr. Toner advised that the Culture, Parks & Recreation Dept. provides quality leisure services to the residents of Simsbury. He reviewed his presentation outlining the services provided within the three major areas of his department: Park and Facility Maintenance, Recreation Programs and the Golf Course Maintenance and Pro Shop. He also reviewed the programs offered on an annual basis; revenue projections are impressive.

Vehicle inventory showed trucks used for day in and day out work. Two trucks were replaced last year; he is requesting another new truck to replace a 1994 R7 with 96,000 miles; it is no longer functional and becoming a safety issue.

Mr. Toner reviewed the general CP&R budget. Some accounts will be reduced due to the new Field Use Policy, i.e., irrigation costs will be passed along to the groups using the fields. One account that is going up is the tree work account. The demand for this service has increased significantly due to the recent storms and a lot of the open space area in town abuts private property.

Mrs. Glassman noted that when the sale of Pharos Farm took place it was recommended that some of the funds be used for Open Space maintenance. She asked Mr. Toner to prepare for the

Board a summary of the top projects that he wants to have done. Mr. Toner referred to a Forest Management Program that took place about 20 years ago and how revenue from timber sales went back into his account to maintain trees and trails. The timber market is coming back and he is considering resurrecting the Forest Management Program. He will include this in his report to the Board.

Ms. Heavner questioned if the new truck would be used in Open Space maintenance. Mr. Toner advised that especially with staff reductions it would be more economical to use the new truck instead of paying an outside tree service.

Ms. Knall questioned the line item about maintenance dues and subscriptions. Mr. Toner informed her that this includes professional organization fees for employees.

Finance Director Harris informed the Board that Mr. Toner cut his budget while the meeting was underway. It is important to Mr. Toner that people see what the Recreation Dept. does for the town. The budget is split between Culture, Parks and Recreation and Simsbury Farms. They added back \$10,000 for facilities maintenance for Open Space and also for summer help.

It was noted that the Aquarion Water Increase will affect the budget.

Mr. Toner commented on Memorial Pool; it was money well spent and there should be no additional expenditures for now.

Mr. Askham asked, from a CNR standpoint, if the priority \$10,000 for painting the pool building and replacing carpeting at the Club House could be dropped and use the money for the new truck. Mr. Toner feels that the paint and carpeting are needed now.

Mr. Askham then asked if the truck would be a higher priority than the green mower or the rotary mower. Mr. Toner's concern is as the equipment gets older the maintenance cost goes up and may be counterproductive; we would be robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Ms. Heavner thanked Gerry for such a banner year, the 4th year in a row that he's come in below budget. She expressed interest in exploring the Pharos Farm sale for some money for Open Space maintenance in order to fulfill our obligation to maintain Open Space land.

Ms. Knall asked what the breakdown was between residents and non-residents. Mr. Toner advised that it is 32% non-residents up from 12% the year before. A lot of time has been spent trying to capitalize and gain momentum on the work that has been done and trying to get non-residents up here. The environment has changed; it's very competitive.

Ms. Glassman asked if there were any opportunities for expansion within the main budget. Mr. Toner feels that before the renovation they debated about setting fees; since the renovations he feels that they are on a more solid footing and we can expect growth. The recreation supervisors have done a very good job in bringing in programs. One area we should make more use of is the



Band Shell; movie nights, small concerts, community band. Ms. Glassman asked if any more collaboration can be done with the Library and Mr. Toner responded that it seems that is where it's going to trend and he will keep the Board informed.

Mr. Toner then addressed the Special Revenue Fund. This entails the operation of the Farms but additionally there are other programs run outside of the Farms, such as the camps. They've held the line on Seasonal but the minimum wage law impacts us. Some extra maintenance people were added to keep the facility attractive. Also, tree health is important, Mike Wallace worked with a local arborist to establish a program and address some issues. After the first full year of the new building operating we will have a better handle on the utility costs; we are starting to realize how efficient it is.

Ms. Haase noted that the statistics are impressive and we should try to keep this trend going; continue to increase golf course revenues, etc. along with attendees at Simsbury Celebrates, rounds played, attendance at the pool.

Ms. Glassman questioned if there was any feedback from the fee increases; Mr. Toner said he hears both sides but thinks that people understand the situation. The fees are fair, we are taking care of our residents, but not all facilities are alike and costs vary. The Paddle Tennis courts had a problem with heat; the cost was passed along to the users. There was some sentiment that it was not appropriately spread across the board. The Complex Committee will address that again next year. The fees are fair and we take all things into consideration.

Ms. Haase questioned equipment rentals; Mr. Toner explained that that charge was mainly for portolets. And there is an occasional need to rent a lift to work on roofs.

### **DISCUSSION – LIBRARY**

Ms. Glassman publicly acknowledged Sue Bullock's retirement.

Ms. Bullock advised that the Library is 140 years old. She noted some recent accomplishments/innovations: a public scanner, additional parking, addition full length practice SAT tests, purchase of a suite of on-line classes with over 22 users, Grant Writing Boot Camp, new programs and events, especially weekly language classes all run by volunteers. Additionally, new programs are showcasing authors, and a Gen Y Book Group has been established. There have been lots of additions to the Children's Library, including the Westminster Teen Collection.

Ms. Bullock explained that the cost of the library is \$1.18 per week per capita. Since 1975 the Library has worked with 26 other Libraries to share computer system and maintenance and they share discounts with 802 libraries in Connecticut which provides huge discounts on books and supplies. They share collections and services with neighboring towns and the state and collaborate with schools on many programs. They partner where they can and since they are

self-service it is a money saver; additionally, they make very smart use of volunteers, especially teenagers.

In response to Ms. Glassman's question about where she sees the future of the Library with the advent of E-books Ms. Bullock replied that everything has changed since Google. People love electronics and the Library has to conform to this. They are ramping up E-books and decreasing regular books and video cassettes and music CD's are going away.

Ms. Bullock then advised the Board that more people are checking out E-books. However, this can be a problem because with E-books is there is going to be a national court case on this because public libraries are being denied access to purchase E-books. Publishers will not sell to public libraries. State Senator Witkos is working on a bill in the State Legislature on this topic.

Ms. Glassman asked that Ms. Bullock get the bill number and she would write a letter on behalf of the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Bullock informed the Board that there is a job description for a Teen Librarian. For a half time person the cost would be about \$18,000 per year without benefits and \$36,000 per year for a full time person

Ms. Haase questioned if there had ever been a Teen Librarian. Ms. Bullock responded that there was one over 17 years ago but when that person left the position was never replaced. Ms. Bullock noted that this year there are a lot more young people and teens coming in to the Library. Ms. Haase agreed that with the Gen Y group it would create a sense of place in town to attract youth which would also help businesses.

Ms. Bullock related that with this budget her goal is to preserve library levels at the 2013 level and adding back the 6 hours that were reduced last budget season. This includes 3 years' worth of step increases, 2012, 2013 and 2014. Other than the Teen Librarian, no new positions are being considered. Attrition would fund the Teen Librarian. It was noted that when someone resigns or retires the position may not always be filled as is; sometimes the job description is rewritten before filling the position. In cases of attrition new hires would start at the beginning level of the salary steps. Supporting the Teen Librarian would be a definitive process.

#### **DISCUSSION – GENERAL GOVERNMENT INCLUDING INSURANCE & PENSION**

Town Clerk Carolyn Keily addressed the Board and described some of the duties of Town Clerk's office such as issuing marriage licenses, dog licenses and death certificates. They are very involved in the election process, and the Town Clerk is responsible for creating voting ballots. Absentee ballots are also a major responsibility. They work closely with the Selectman's Office for appointments/resignations on all boards and commissions and they work with 12 agencies around the state for various record keeping purposes. About 30% of the money collected in the Town Clerk's office is forwarded to the State.



The town is responsible for maintaining older records that are stored with the Town Clerk and the funds for this restoration have been removed from the budget even though historically the funds have always been in the budget. The concern is if other funds are obtained for this year the annual budget amount would disappear. The Library has no resources in town to help with preservation and maintenance although the Town Clerk will investigate if the Historical Society could be a resource. Ms. Glassman asked Ms. Harris to add this \$2,500 cut to the list of items that could possibly be restored.

It was noted that the Registrars had a reduction in their budget this year because there are not as many elections. Most of their costs are hiring staff. The Registrars do an excellent job for the town.

#### Central Administration

Sean Kimball addressed the Board regarding the responsibilities of Central Administration. Major accomplishments included successfully negotiating 3 bargaining unit agreements; the implementation of an on line job application process; providing emergency response and town wide communication during 5 storms in the past 2 years; implementing new HR and Financial control procedures and implementing a retiree medical plan saving money for both retirees and the town.

The goals of Central Administration are to keep doing what they're doing with less natural disasters, increase transparency in all areas of town government operations, continue to develop a performance management process within town departments, ensure that Simsbury's interests are represented at the state and federal level and ensure that town safety personnel and emergency responders have the resources to ensure the safety and health of the residents.

Mr. Askham questioned if after the November election the next First Selectman chooses to delegate the responsibility of personnel to Town staff is now the time to talk about changes to salary. Ms. Glassman replied that the matter would have to go to Personnel Sub Committee to determine how that would be done. Next Board should make that decision. Ms. Heavner noted that it has been the policy to make changes with the term and not the person.

Ms. Haase questioned if there could be a potential for gas savings for individuals who take cars home. Ms. Harris advised that the town does not charge employees for gas but there is an imputed basis via the IRS of \$3/day and basically these employees drive a vehicle for the Town of Simsbury and we charge them \$3/day. They must submit a report showing x number of working days per year less vacation and holidays. This is on their tax return; they may owe taxes. Police, Captain and Lieutenant do not because they are first responders. Some take them home, some don't. The only ones that are not a union negotiated benefit are Tom Roy and Rich Sawitzke; the rest are union people. This is a benefit that has always been offered. Every Public Works Director in the state has a vehicle assigned to them. Taking away this benefit could be a morale problem and a response issue.

Ms. Wertheimer asked if there could be ways to make it more transparent. Ms. Glassman advised that this has been the practice for 30 years and suggested that maybe it should be referred to the Personnel Sub Committee and added to the job description for the Public Works Director since the Public Works Director is always on call.

There was discussion on funding for the North Central Conservation District, the Farmington River Watershed Association, CCM, COST, CRCOG and CTCMA. Ms. Haase wants to list them all next year. Ms. Harris will put these on the list.

#### Finance

Ms. Harris explained the operations of the Finance Dept. There are several divisions; Tax, IT, Audit and Finance. Budget training took place this year and department heads contributed to the budget process. The Pentamation program is being upgraded this year. The town Triple A bond rating was reaffirmed by Moody's. A/P has gone to bi-weekly payments which is a money saver, cutting postage costs by \$1,500. A new upgrade to the database is coming.

Tax Collector Colleen O'Connor explained that the Tax Office works closely with the Assessor's Office, Town Clerk, Building Dept., Finance, Police, IT, Probate and Social Services Department. She noted that there are a lot more people coming in looking for assistance although there is no assistance available for taxes. Foreclosures are at an all time high. When times are good the collection rate is bad; when times are bad the collection rate is better because the banks pay us because they don't want us to lien the property.

The cost of mailing tax bills and paying for return postage charges is mounting. The answer to this is to go paperless and have people pay on line. This is possible with real estate taxes but not with the DMV; the ID program is not yet in place. Last year on line payments collected were \$645,000; this year it was \$3,220,000.

Ms. Wertheimer asked if any people took advantage of the Simsbury Bank Program. Colleen responded that close to 100 have responded; it has worked really well for people. It is an interest bearing account, a little higher than a regular savings account.

Ms. Glassman suggested once the mil rate is set sending out a post card encouraging people to sign up on line or possibly have a sign up at Septemberfest.

Ms. Glassman advised the Board that there is a retirement pending in the Tax Dept. In order to get more coverage Colleen would like to fill the position with 2 part timers instead of 1 full timer. This would eliminate having to close the office during lunch time. The part timers would most likely work more hours in the summer.

Assessor David Gardner advised that his goal is to complete the next grand list on time. The Assessors' office obtained a conversion of their software system used for pricing real estate;



converted at no cost so that system is now the live system. And it also has a personal property module.

Ms. Glassman questioned if there were more appeals because of the revaluation; in 2008 there were 350 and so far this year there are about 60. Ms. Haase commented that the Board of Assessment Appeals does a good job.

Mr. Gardner commented on the elderly tax program; there are about 300 accounts on this program and it keeps growing.

### IT

Rick Bazzano, IT Manager, advised the Board that their goals for 2013-2014 were to research, plan and implement cost savings technologies that promote enhanced services to the supervised departments and their staff as well as town constituents.

On a daily basis the IT Dept. maintains 385 devices and they keep a close tab on managing these. Residents have a secure and fast network when they come into town hall.

WPCA was the first fiber facility; money well spent. Data backup will go away once fiber is run down Hopmeadow.

The IT Dept. offers Help Desk support from website to desk tops. Requests through the internet are up 22%. Internet site and web site are all transparent.

Mr. Bazzano noted that the Simsbury Farms project was under budget; they created some wireless bridges and shot them across the complex. Wireless solution was installed with the help of consultants for \$5,200 and has been up for a few years.

In response to Ms. Knall's question about whether this is the sort of data management in line of what is being asked of other towns Mr. Bazzano advised that there is a big move in that direction because now everyone is going digital there will be stress on the network infrastructure; it has to be secure because it's a liability. Some of the equipment is getting older and we replenish and refresh as needed. Right now our network is a little technical; we're at 100 but within 2 years we'll have to go 10 times that to support the videos that will be there and all of the other transactions

Ms. Glassman added that that is why the Technology Task Force has been established. As Ms. Heavner suggested we will have to make a lot of investment over the next several years because we want to find out what our users want and what we need to do to upgrade the system and maintain the data. A lot of this is data driven and once you create the GIS systems and on line portals then all of that has to be updated. This is a long term plan and will be a capital investment.

Ms. Heavner stressed that maintenance is the one thing that we've seen as a common theme and we need to plan for the maintenance of what we're doing and support it going forward. The goal is to save money; so is this going to be worth it if it costs money and we have to add staff. She also thanked Rick for his hard work.

Ms. Glassman asked Ms. Harris to prepare a list of items that we would like to look at again. The Board will meet again on March 14th and can either take a vote on these items or schedule another workshop. The list will include \$8,500 from the Library; reinstating \$62,500 in the Public Works budget; reinstating \$2,500 in the Town Clerk's budget and reducing the North Central Conservation donation by \$400.

A discussion ensued on Hiram Peck's budget; his consulting services were cut completely. He is pushing for a full time building inspector. Under Tabs 14 and 15 money was cut and he is asking for reinstatement. Ms. Harris will talk to him, break down his requests and e-mail to the Board.

Ms. Glassman commented on the status of the Board of Education security study; they are not finished yet, but did indicate that they are looking at school resource officers. The BOE is absolutely doing the right thing in looking at all aspects of this study. We currently have one School Resource Officer (SRO) and Ms. Glassman will have the Chief give us a status of what's in the school system and how it is funded.

We have one officer at SHS during the school year; strictly dedicated to the school. If we added another SRO it would be one assigned to the Jr. High and each Elementary School. Total cost now is \$107,000 through the town budget for one dedicated officer with benefits and a cruiser. An additional SRO would cost the same amount of money since we would need a seasoned officer. Town funds pay for the first SRO 100%, the Board of Ed has said they would be willing to contribute 50% toward the cost of a second SRO. We're not being asked to take action tonight; just be aware that this could come in the future.

Mr. Askham asked when we would know if there will be two SRO's and if someone from the BOE could come to the March 14th meeting to talk about this. Ms. Glassman replied that the BOE has indicated that one SRO would work but they will go through their process first and come in with a suggestion. However, a timeline won't come in before our budget is finished. According to Ms. Glassman the Governor and the Legislature has indicated there would be some funding available for towns with only one SRO.

Ms. Heavner questioned if things don't get done in a timely manner and we go to referendum and it's not determined what would be the procedure. Ms. Glassman stated that we need to do a budget walk through and timeframe. For tomorrow, the BOS should expect an e-mail with a list of all the itemized requests to date. If any additional info is needed please let us know ASAP. Come on March 14th prepared to review the budgets where we are and if we need additional time we will schedule it.



More discussion ensued on the capital projects projected through 2018. Ms. Glassman advised that once the BOS adopts the town's plan they will then need to have a conversation with the Board of Finance and the Board of Education to determine how they're going to fit the various projects within the debt guideline. It's the BOF's call as to how long they want to issue the bonds for and it is not appropriate for the BOS to split projects.

Mr. Askham questioned spending \$3.5 million at Simsbury Farms; why we would pay another \$1 million on a rink that we just spent \$3 million on. Ms. Glassman answered that if you don't have a project on you can't get it funded by the Board of Finance.

Mr. Askham feels that these projects are not fitting the policy and it gives the appearance that the BOS is endorsing these policies and for the ones that we control they can fluctuate. We put them out there and the voters see them as a project that we potentially endorse so we're giving a signal that we are going to spend this money.

Ms. Glassman acknowledged his point and promised that for the March 14th meeting she would get clarification on the Town's projects so we can communicate to the BOE that there are concerns that they don't fit the policy. Maybe before the Capital Plan is adopted we can also have a conversation with the other boards as to how they want to take any projects off or move them out.

Mr. Askham is concerned that if the consultant says we need three SRO's and move the office; we're going to go all the way against our spending limit.

Ms. Glassman suggested that we look at town projects that fit within our recommended limit and the projects that we know are ready to move forward. Some can be postponed to fit within the limit. The HJMS project just does not fit.

Ms. Harris said the 17-18 cash flow analysis is wild; the years 14, 15 and 16 are tight. Ms. Haase asked if we're not looking at the tightest years, we have EWS, could we split the center Charrette into 2 years or split something else. According to Ms. Harris, for authorization purposes yes, cash flow analysis needs work.

Ms. Glassman advised that the town's projects are small and fit within the debt limit. The BOE has the big ones that can't be split. We'll look at ones that aren't ready and move them out. The Finance Dept. has to tell you what you need. The Charette is in a grant process, so we can't split it if we get the half million. We have time for conversation with the BOE. We all agree that we should have a 3 way conversation with the BOE and BOF. On March 14th could we give the board a little bit of comfort in what projects are over; it might be easier to work backward instead of forward.

Mr. Askham added that folks are getting ready to give us a suggestion on the senior center so we are getting closer to committing to some big numbers. And Ms. Harris added that the school

safety measures are not known. According to Ms. Glassman this whole conversation is BOE projects and they need to drive.

Mr. Askham made motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Heavner and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan B. Mazurski