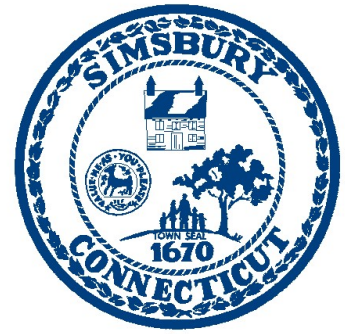


Town of Simsbury

Citizen's Budget Guide



General Fund

The General Fund provides for general purpose government services. In other words, the General Fund finances the regular day-to-day operations of the Town. This is also referred to as the operating budget.

What types of activities does the General Fund provide for?

The General Fund provides services such as education, public safety, street maintenance, library services, senior services, and general administration.

Where does the money for the General Fund come from?

The money that funds the General Fund comes from a variety of sources. The primary source of revenue is local property taxes (91%). Other sources include intergovernmental revenue, such as state aid (6%); local revenue, such as inspection fees, fines, and permits (2%); and transfers, such as use of fund balance (1%).

Understanding Your Tax Bill

What is a mill rate?

The mill rate is used to calculate the amount of taxes a property owner pays to the Town of Simsbury. The Town established a mill rate of 38.76 mills for Fiscal Year 2017/2018 (excluding the Fire District). Under the Town Manager's proposed Fiscal Year 2018/2019 budget the mill rate would decrease to 36.56 mills for real estate, personal property, and motor vehicles. One mill produces one dollar for each \$1,000 of property value. In other words, under the proposed budget, a property owner would pay \$36.56 in property taxes for every \$1,000 of "assessed" value.

How are my taxes calculated?

In Connecticut, your property taxes are calculated based on 70% of your home's current market value, or its "assessed" value. For example, the median single-family home price in Simsbury is \$305,392. The assessed value of a \$305,392 home is \$213,775. Your tax bill is calculated as follows:

$$(\text{Assessed Value}/1000) \times \text{Mill Rate} = \text{Amount Due in Taxes}$$

Using the example of a home valued at the median single-family home price in Simsbury, a typical single family homeowner would

**View the proposed budget at:
www.simsbury-ct.gov/budget**

Residents can also view a hard copy of the budget at Town Hall, the Library, Eno Hall and Simsbury Farms during normal business hours.

Where does the money go?

FY 18/19 Proposed Operating Budget Expenditures

Education	\$69,858,042
Public Safety	\$4,886,637
General Government	\$2,446,598
Public Works	\$4,126,987
Community Services	\$2,996,653
Community Development	\$653,879
Benefits & Insurance	\$5,286,134
Capital, CNR & Debt Service	\$6,640,900
Contingency	\$89,673
Total:	\$96,985,503

pay the following property taxes next fiscal year (excluding the Fire District):

$$(\$213,775/1000) \times 36.56 = \$7,816$$

Property taxes are generally perceived as a less progressive means of taxation than an income tax. Due to statutory limitations, the Town has a nearly impossible task of diversifying its revenue base in such a way that would create a more progressive tax structure.

Fire District

Why isn't the Fire District included in the budget?

The Fire District is a separate and independent taxing district. While residents pay taxes to fund the Fire District, this budget is not approved by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance and residents do not vote on this budget at referendum. Instead, the Fire District passes their budget and sets the mill rate at their annual meeting held in May, which is open to the public. The Fire District established a mill rate of 1.23 mills for Fiscal Year 2017/2018.

The Grand List and Property Revaluation

What is the Grand List?

Simsbury's Grand List is the total assessed value of all taxable property within the Town. The Grand List includes residential and business properties, personal property (business equipment), and all motor vehicles. Per Connecticut state statutes, the revaluation of all real estate occurs every five years. Revaluation occurred in 2017, and will first affect property taxes for Fiscal Year 2018/2019. The Grand List increased by 6.4% (subject to change based on the outcome of assessment appeals); this growth will likely result in a mill rate decrease.

Property Tax Relief

I need help paying my taxes. Where do I go for help?

Simsbury offers a number of property tax abatement programs. Taxpayers that may be eligible for property tax relief include veterans, seniors, and disabled persons. Information about tax abatement programs, including eligibility requirements, can be obtained by contacting the Assessor's Office at 860-658-3251, or online at <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/assessor>. The Community and Social Services Department also offers energy assistance, medical as-

sistance and various forms of financial assistance. For more information, call 860-658-3283 or visit <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/social-services>.

Capital Improvement Program

What is a capital project?

Capital projects are those that help the Town maintain, improve, or expand our assets and infrastructure. These could be items such as building renovations, construction of new facilities, and large equipment purchases.

What is a capital improvement plan?

Annually, the Town prepares a six-year plan for all capital projects. The plan accounts for anticipated revenues and expenditures that will be used to fund capital projects. A variety of revenue sources are used to fund projects in the plan, including the General Fund, grants, and bond issues.

What is the Capital and Nonrecurring (CNR) Fund?

The CNR Fund is included in the General Fund budget and is typically used to fund capital projects under \$100,000 in value, special studies, and one-time expenditures.

What are some upcoming capital projects?

Examples of some upcoming capital projects include street paving, Greenway improvements, and purchase of a Public Works dump truck used in snow plow operations.

Why do we vote on some capital projects but not others?

Capital items greater than 1% of the total budget are presented as separate referendum questions for the voters. Capital items under 1% do not require a vote.

Debt Management

How do we pay for capital projects?

Just like citizens often borrow money for large purchases such as homes and vehicles, so do towns. The largest source of financing for capital projects is borrowing through the issuance of general obligation bonds in accordance with the Town Charter. Examples of projects that have been paid for by bonds are the renovations to the High School and to the facilities at the Simsbury Farms Recreational Complex.

What is debt service?

Debt service provides for the payment of debt related expenses. The Board of Finance has a policy specifying that the Town’s annual debt service (principal and interest payments) be between 5-7% of the total operating budget.

Why is it in the Town’s interest to have a favorable bond rating?

Better bond ratings mean that the Town’s bonds are considered to be a good investment. Good bond ratings are also evidence that the Town is financially healthy. A bond rating is the primary factor in determining the interest rate that the Town needs to pay on debt. The better the bond rating, the more likely it becomes that the Town will pay lower interest rates on debt. Simsbury currently has a AAA bond rating from Standard and Poor’s. This is the highest rating that a municipality can receive.

Special Revenue Funds

What are special revenue funds and why aren’t they in the General Fund budget?

Special revenue funds are funded by user fees for specific services rather than by general revenue. Therefore, these funds do not impact the mill rate and are not included in the General Fund. Examples of special revenue funds include Simsbury Farms and the Sewer Use Fund (Water Pollution Control). Voters approve the expenditures for the special revenue funds at the annual referendum.

Fund Balance

What is a fund balance?

A fund balance is the excess of revenues over expenditures for a fund. A fund balance protects the Town against catastrophic revenue losses and major emergency expenditures. Examples include severe economic downturns and extreme weather conditions such as hurricanes and other natural disasters.

How much needs to be in the General Fund balance for the Town to be considered financially healthy?

The Board of Finance has a policy specifying that the Town’s fund balance be between 10-12% of the General Fund budget. A healthy fund balance contributes to the Town’s favorable bond rating. Bond rating agencies have typically advised that fund balance be between 10-15%; however, since the state’s financial crisis has occurred, bond rating

agencies are now recommending that fund be between 15-17%. It is estimated that on June 30, 2019, fund balance will be at 13.8% of the operating budget.

Budget Approval

The Board of Finance holds at least one public hearing to gather citizen input on the budget. According to the Town Charter, this hearing must be held no later than April 10. The Board of Finance must approve a budget and file it with the Town Clerk, and the referendum must be held between 14-21 days After that. The referendum on the Fiscal Year 2018/2019 budget is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 15, 2018. The Board of Finance meets immediately following the close of voting to set the mill rate.

Board of Education Budget Process

The Board of Education independently creates and manages the Education and Non-Public Schools portion of the budget. In February, the Superintendent submits his proposed budget to the Board of Education, which reviews and adopts the budget. This budget is then submitted to the Board of Finance for its consideration in March.

Budget Dates

Board of Education budget presentation to Board of Finance	March 13, 2018
Board of Selectmen budget presentation to Board of Finance	March 20, 2018
Public Hearing on the Budget	April 5, 2018
Board of Finance Hearing Continuation and Budget Approval	April 24, 2018
Budget Published	May 9, 2018
Automatic Referendum	May 15, 2018

*Dates & times subject to revision.
Check www.simsbury-ct.gov for updates & other meeting information.*
