

**Simsbury Board of Finance  
TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 5:45 P.M.  
Simsbury Town Hall - Main Meeting Room  
933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, Connecticut**

**PRESENT:** Lisa Heavner, Arthur House, Derek Peterson (via phone), Robert Pomeroy, Kevin Prell (via phone), Linda Schofield

**ALSO PRESENT:** Melissa Appleby, Deputy Town Manager (via phone); Sean Askham, BOS; Jackie Battos, BOS; Chief Boulter; Maria Capriola, Town Manager; Wendy Mackstutis, BOS; Amy Meriwether, Director of Finance/Treasurer; Chris Peterson, BOS; Tom Tyburski, Culture, Parks & Recreation Director; Eric Wellman, First Selectman

**1. Call to Order - Establish Quorum**

Mr. Pomeroy called the meeting to order at 5:50 P.M.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Presentation: Board of Selectmen 2020/2021 Budget**

Mr. Wellman began by reporting that the Town Manager signed an Emergency Declaration yesterday in response to COVID-19. He also noted the Governor has given extended budget deadlines for municipalities. He provided a slide presentation, noting the BOS budget is significantly above BOF guidance of 2.5% on the operating budget and significantly below BOF guidance of no more than a 2% increase in the mill rate. Mr. Wellman noted the budget approved by the BOS is a little under \$24M, an operating increase of 6.69% with the anticipated mill rate increase to taxpayers at 1.19%. He further noted this budget did not pass the BOS unanimously.

Mr. Wellman noted there are four service changes being recommended in this budget and asked for further guidance from the BOF based on the developing COVID-19 situation. He added that Ms. Meriwether put together some very preliminary analysis on how the Town may be impacted from a cost and revenue standpoint. Questions and discussion followed. Mr. Wellman highlighted the BOS four recommended service additions: Assessor inspection services (\$25,000); Parks facility maintenance technician position (\$96,232 including benefits); Police administration reorganization of upgrading one sergeant position to lieutenant (\$4,260 including benefits) and adding a Deputy Chief position (\$183,872 including benefits); and Library materials (\$20,000). Mr. Tyburski added that the Parks position is a service restoration, not a service improvement, noting two positions were lost in the early 2000s. Since that time, the Flower Bridge park, Simsbury Meadows and Ethel Walker Woods have been added. Sports organizations demand has grown. In addition, the department is continually down a person due to leave. Discussion followed.

Chief Boulter spoke about the Police service changes, noting they will improve oversight and productivity of the entire department across divisions, functions and shifts. He further discussed

the need for these changes due to increased mandates and reporting, the need to spend time with each employee and for he and the two lieutenants to get out into the community. He spoke about the need for after work hours duty officer status coverage, social media responsibilities, crimes and analysis responsibilities, and important projects that need to be completed. He reported there has been no increase in the number of administrators in over 25 years. Other areas of need he noted are succession planning, planning for the next event and training. Discussion followed.

Mr. Wellman addressed the Library materials service change by noting \$20,000 was cut from the Library budget during the last financial crisis and this is a service restoration. Mr. Peterson spoke in support of the Library service change and reported Simsbury's per capita spending for library materials is the lowest of its peer towns. He noted the materials budget has not been increased since 2008 and he referenced the higher cost and recent demand for digital content. Discussion followed.

Mr. Wellman next addressed the budget drivers, which include contractual salary increases, debt service and pension/OPEB. Discussion ensued. Mr. Askham spoke about the FY20/21 Capital Fund projects. Under Bonds, he noted a radio system upgrade/replacement (\$1,202,000), an open space acquisition (\$2,200,000) and highway pavement management (partial) (\$605,000). Mr. Pomeroy noted that there was no information on the open space acquisition and it was requested that the open space acquisition decision be deferred to a referendum in November. Discussion followed.

Mr. Askham noted the SHS bleacher and press box project was not included in the projects. Ms. Meriwether indicated that the Board of Education was aware that that project was not included. Under the General Fund, Mr. Askham noted Public Works facility paving and storm drainage (\$330,000), sidewalk reconstruction (\$200,000), Capital reserve contribution (\$50,000) and District network infrastructure for the BOE (\$500,000). Discussion followed. Under Grants, Mr. Askham noted highway pavement management (partial) (\$400,000 - LOCIP & Town Aid Road) and a plow truck (\$258,000 - Town Aid Road). Discussion followed. Under Operating Transfers, Mr. Askham noted highway pavement management (partial) (\$200,000). Under Sewer Use Fund, he noted secondary clarifier weir covers (\$275,000). Under Capital Fund, he noted greenway improvements (\$135,000). Discussion followed. Mr. Askham continued with CNR projects, General Fund to include a Compensation and Classification Study (\$40,000). Discussion ensued. Ms. Heavner asked for clarification as to whether the Compensation study would include a benefits analysis as part of the compensation analysis. Ms. Capriola indicated that if funds permitted, it would be included. Mr. Askham indicated he would not support the Compensation study without that analysis and Ms. Heavner indicated she would not vote for the study without that analysis. Mr. Askham said the BOS would clarify the scope.

Mr. Askham further noted CNR projects to include network storage (\$130,000), 2022 revaluation (\$60,000), a Building Department permit software upgrade (\$27,700), soft body armor (partial) (\$10,500), replacement of digital fingerprint system (\$19,000), various drainage improvements (\$125,000), and Ash Borer tree mitigation (\$36,500). Questions and discussion followed. In the interest of time, Mr. Pomeroy suggested that the remaining projects did not need to be read aloud and that any questions be asked instead. Discussion followed.

Ms. Heavner took a moment to explain how the BOF looks at Capital. Further discussion followed. Mr. Pomeroy then asked Ms. Meriwether about her COVID-19 report. She noted a potential loss of summer programs income and a change in electricity costs with building closures. She reported a very rough net cost to the Town of \$1M. Discussion about the budget continued and the potential impact of the COVID-19 virus was discussed.

Mr. Pomeroy recommended that the BOF is not in a position to refer this budget to the Town for public hearing. The Board requested the BOS re-evaluate its budget in light of the changed circumstances regarding the pandemic. It was suggested that the \$2M open space item be removed from the budget and possibly considered for referendum in November during the presidential election, if it remains a priority at that time. Mr. Pomeroy noted that a 6.5% pension investment rate should be used and the Board agreed. Ms. Heavner suggested the BOS look at capital as means to reduce the budgets and to preserve reserves. She suggested, in addition to the open space deferral, that the Board of Selectmen consider eliminating \$50,000 from Capital Reserves, bonding Public Works Drainage for \$330,000, bonding Sidewalks instead of the open space purchase as that is a current priority of the BOS instead of a new priority, and possibly bonding the BOE District Network project. It was also recommended that the BOS look to current year savings in Public Works overtime and elsewhere to pre-fund some of next year's equipment or vehicle needs. Mr. Pomeroy asked that the BOS look at realignments based on this evening's meeting.

Mr. Pomeroy asked that the BOE similarly evaluate the potential impact of the COVID-19 virus on costs and revenues and the Board indicated that it might be appropriate to re-evaluate the BOE budget in light of the changed circumstances. Mr. Pomeroy asked that the BOS report back at the March 24 BOF meeting with the goal of referring these budgets to public hearing. Discussion followed. Mr. Pomeroy asked BOF members to comment on the budget presented, especially the large dollar items. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Meriwether clarified that the BOF request is for the BOE to use a 6.5% pension investment assumption without using the non-lapsing account. The Board discussed using the non-lapsing account for COVID-19. Discussion followed and comments from BOF members were made. Ms. Schofield clarified that the non-lapsing fund may be used for COVID-19 if there is an expenditure need upon review of the BOE financial situation. Mr. Pomeroy noted the public hearing will be virtual as meetings are closed to the public through March 29. Ms. Capriola noted comments from the public can be submitted to the Town Clerk's office the day before the hearing. Board members indicated the importance of having someone monitor emails during the meeting as well. Mr. Pomeroy asked that board members think about whether they are all comfortable meeting in the same room. Discussion about the budget process followed.

#### **4. Adjourn**

**MOTION:** Ms. Schofield, Mr. House second, to adjourn at 8:44 P.M.; unanimously approved

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Haberlin  
Commission Clerk