

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of Eno Memorial Hall. Present were: First Selectman Wendy Mackstutis; Deputy First Selectmen Steven Antonio; Selectmen Heather Goetz; Curtis Looney, Kevin Beal and Diana Yeisley. Other in attendance included: Town Manager Marc Nelson; Deputy Town Manager Tom Fitzgerald; Deputy Town Engineer Adam Kessler; Director of Parks and Recreation Tom Tyburski, and other interested parties.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING

a) Proposed Amendments to the Town of Simsbury Retirement Income Plan

- **Participants can address the Board of Selectmen in person at the meeting**
- **Email townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov by noon on Monday, April 15, 2024, to register to address the Board of Selectmen live through Zoom**
- **Written comments can be emailed to townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov. Written comments will not be read into the record, but forwarded to all Selectmen via email**

Ms. Mackstutis said this Public Hearing is to hear comments on the two changes to the Simsbury Retirement Income Plan. There are two changes to the Plan – one would allow in-service distribution to unaffiliated classifications and the other would increase the pension percentage for new Town staff who are eligible for this pension plan.

Joan Coe, 26 Whitcomb Drive, spoke about the changes in the pension plan. She spoke about the Police Chief and employees all getting the pension information when being hired. She said in-service shouldn't be considered while working. She asked if any other Towns do this with their pension plan. She feels this plan would restrict promotions and staff growth. She also spoke about how plans should benefit the taxpayers.

Travis Schweizer, Chairman of the Police Commission, said he feels they could lose staff without this plan. The Board of Selectmen should pass this – the trend statewide is 15% of the force would be down without this plan. Most retirees aren't ready to retire and just go to another Police department. He feels they are in jeopardy of losing three officers as economically they are no incentive for them to stay. He feels the relationship with the Town is getting much better, especially with the children. He feels this change should be passed.

Roger Homested Road, asked about how other towns handle distributions, how they handle retirements, and what other options they might have.

Mr. Beal made a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing, after no further comments, at 6:11 p.m. Ms. Yeisley seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

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Joan Coe, 26 Whitcomb Drive, spoke about the budget and expenditures to enhance Memorial Park. She also spoke about the ambulance issue, Simsbury Performing Arts Center and buildings in the flood plain. She also spoke about the Main Street Partnership, a mental health crisis in the country, the Police Department, a Charter Revision Commission and other issues.

PRESENTATION

a) Autism Awareness Month Proclamation

Will said he is a Simsbury Media para-educator and it is the best job he ever had. He has his associates and bachelor's degrees and now he is going back to school to get his masters. Everyone should be recognized no matter who they are.

The Board read the following Proclamation:

PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING APRIL 2024 AS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH IN SIMSBURY

WHEREAS, autism is a neurological condition affecting millions of people in the United States that demands a national response and an increase in knowledge of the programs that have been and are being developed to support persons with autism and their families;

WHEREAS, autism can affect anyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic development;

WHEREAS, symptoms and characteristics of autism might present themselves in a variety of combinations and can result in signs of lifelong impairment or an individual's ability to learn, development healthy interactions, behaviors, and understand verbal as well as non-verbal communications;

WHEREAS, doctors, therapists and educators continue to help persons with autism overcome or adjust to its challenges and provides early, accurate diagnosis and the resulting appropriate education, intervention, and therapy that are vital to future growth and development;

WHEREAS, ensuring that persons with autism have lifelong access to care and services needed to pursue the full measure of personal happiness and achieve their greatest potential;

WHEREAS, the Town of Simsbury is honored to take part in the annual observance of Autism Awareness Month and World Autism Awareness Day, in the hope that it will lead to a better understanding of the disorder;

Therefore, I, Wendy Mackstutis, First Selectman, do hereby proclaim April 2024 as Autism Awareness Month in Simsbury and call upon all of us to learn more about autism to improve early diagnosis, learn firsthand the experiences of persons with autism, and to build more welcoming and inclusive communities for persons with autism.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have placed by seal and the great seal of the Town of Simsbury.

Date the 15th day of April 2024.

Wendy Mackstutis, First Selectman, Deputy First Selectman Steven Antonio, Selectmen Curtiss Looney, Heather Goetz, Diana Yeisley and Kevin Beal.

Ms. Yeisley made a motion, effective April 15, 2024, to authorize First Selectman Mackstutis to issue a Proclamation in support of Autism Awareness Month. Further move, to light Eno Memorial Hall blue for the rest of the month of April 2024. Mr. Beal seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REPORT

First Selectman, Ms. Mackstutis, reviewed her First Selectman’s report.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

Town Manager, Marc Nelson, reviewed his Town Manager’s report.

SELECTMEN LIAISON AND SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) **Personnel** – there is no report at this time.
- b) **Finance** – there is no report at this time.
- c) **Public Safety** – Ms. Goetz said the Police Department has a rapid SOS program which will be added to work with 911 calls. Further information on who to use this will be coming soon.
Ms. Goetz said Social Services and the Fire Department are working on the steps to safety program which helps educate seniors on fires and fall safety with home visits and presentations.
Ms. Goetz said the Fire Department mill rate will go up from 1 to 1.05% due to increased costs of apparatus and gear. They are also going to replace Engine 3.
- d) **Board of Education** – Ms. Yeisley said they recognized the girls basketball team for their great year; they reported on fine arts for the district; and they discussed Central School’s vision statement.
Ms. Goetz said the Board of Ed said Latimer Lane is ahead of schedule.

Mr. Beal said the sustainability fair will be held on May 4th and there will be speakers from the Land Trust and smart energy in our homes.

Ms. Yeisley said Aging and Disabilities said they will hold a senior forum on May 4th and the next super Thursday will be held on May 9th,

Ms. Yeisley said Parks and Recreation will be holding a clean-up event on Saturday starting at Town Hall. They also had about 1000 kids attend the flashlight egg hunt. They are also planning a last day of school event and a Father’s Day Touch a Truck event.

Ms. Yeisley said the Youth Advisory Board will be having a tie dye event on June 27th,

Ms. Yeisley said a Taylor Swift Band is coming August 3rd. Soundbites is be here on May 18th. Also, the Talcott Mountain Music tickets will be on sale soon.

Ms. Goetz said the Planning Commission is having a meeting on April 22nd with the three finalists on the Tariffville Neighborhood Plan RFP.

Mr. Looney said Zoning met and approved the sign change at Simsbury Farms. They also voted to hold a Public Hearing on the flood plain amendment.

Mr. Looney said the Police Commission said they have six officers out on leave and have two vacancies at this time. The speeding grant we received has stopped 77 vehicles. They applied for a grant to upgrade dispatch software.

Ms. Goetz said the ambulance had their State inspection, which is good for another 2 years. They are also creating a Public Relations Committee to help residents.

Ms. Goetz said the elevator at Town Hall will be closed from April 6th to mid June.

CONSENT AGENDA (39:28)

Ms. Yeisley made a motion, effective April 15, 2024, to move the following items to the consent agenda: item b Tax Refund Requests; item c Public Gathering Permit – SMPAC Soundbites; item d Enhanced Dial-a-Ride Grant Application; and Appointments and Resignations. Mr. Antonio seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

SELECTMEN ACTION

a) Proposed Amendments to the Town of Simsbury Retirement Income Plan (49:19)

Ms. Mackstutis said this item came before the Board back in February. The Police Commission wanted to find a way to maintain key staff members. This would allow for an in-service distribution. There were some comments about turnover in positions or keeping knowledge from current staff. There are no changes for current staff, just for senior officers.

Mr. Nelson said they did do a lot of investigation on the drop plan and all alternatives. They also investigated the cost involved with the transition. Turnover for us is a negative for Simsbury. After all this investigation, the presented option was the best for Simsbury.

After discussion, Mr. Antonio made a motion, effective April 15, 2024, to adopt the proposed amendments to the Town of Simsbury Retirement Income Plan as presented, which shall be effective 21 days after publication in a newspaper having circulation within the Town of Simsbury. Further move, to authorize a summary of the revised Plan to be publicized. Mr. Looney seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

b) Tax Refund Requests

This item was moved to the Consent Agenda.

c) Public Gathering Permit – Simsbury Performing Arts Center – Sound bites

This item was moved to the Consent Agenda.

d) Enhanced Dial-A-Ride Grant Application - This item was moved to the Consent Agenda.

e) Department of Justice Grant Application 1:14:50

Ms. Mackstutis said this is a grant through Senator Blumenthal’s office to help with the 911 system. We did not receive this grant last year. There is an annual operating cost of \$9,300. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that this cost would be in 2026 budget.

Ms. Yeisley made a motion, effective April 15, 2024, to retroactively submit a grant application to the Department of Justice, through the Office of Senators Richard Blumenthal and Christopher Murphy for the 2025 COPS Law Enforcement Technology and Equipment Grant, and authorize Town Manager, Marc Nelson, to execute the grant application. In the event that the grant is awarded, the following additional motions are in order: Move, to accept the grant and authorize Town Manager, Marc Nelson, to execute all documents related to the grant award. Ms. Goetz seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

f) Department of Economic and Community Development Grant Application (1:17:40)

Ms. Mackstutis said this is a State Commission grant – a DECD Urban Action grant, related to the SMPAC expansion.

Ms. Yeisley made a motion, effective April 15, 2024, to submit a grant application to the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development and authorize Town Manager, Marc Nelson, to execute the grant application. In the event that the grant is awarded, the following motions are in order: Move to accept the grant and authorize Town Manager, Marc Nelson, to execute all documents related to the grant award. Mr. Antonio seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

g) Capital Region Council of Government Development Grant Application (1:25:48)

Mr. Kessler said this is about the grant for the trail and we are not going to allocate a match for this. This is a Federal grant requirement. This is just an application for the entire project itself, about 15 million dollars. The State should kick in about a 20% match. There are a lot of discussions between the DOT and DEEP on the trails.

Ms. Goetz made a motion effective April 15, 2024, to submit a grant application to the Capital Region Council of Government Development and to authorize Town Manager, Marc Nelson, to execute the grant application and signature of the “Project Sponsor and Commitment Statement”. In the event the grant is awarded, the following motion is in order: To accept the grant and authorize the Town Manager, Marc Nelson, to execute all documents related to the grant award. Ms. Looney seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

h) Board of Selectmen 2023-2025 Goals (1:37:53)

Ms. Mackstutis said after discussion in January on the goals, this is the summation of that discussion. The additions are in yellow. Make sure in agreement of the goals and then prioritize them. There was some discussion on not being caught flat-footed in unexpected departures come up so that there is mentoring, training, and a succession plan in place. Also, the Board would like to see some bullet points on the goals and would like the goals posted for the public.

After more discussion, Ms. Goetz made a motion, effective April 15, 2024, to adopt the Board of Selectmen 2023-2025 Board of Selectmen goals as presented. Ms. Yeisley seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

i) Discussion and Clarification on Memorial Park Redesign Capital Project

Mr. Tyburski explained what was included in the \$150,000 that was approved for the Memorial Park project, which included the feasibility of a splash pad, restrooms, etc.

There was discussion on reaching out to the community for options they might be looking for. There was also discussion on looking at the \$950,000 possible cost for the new park. All of this information will be brought up to the Board of Finance presentation tomorrow.

There was no motion at this time.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

a) Appointments to Various Boards and Commissions

This item was moved to the Consent Agenda.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

a) March 25, 2024 Regular Meeting

There were no changes to the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 25, 2024, and, therefore, the minutes were adopted.

COMMUNICATIONS

- a) Memorandum from M. Nelson re: Administrative Approval of Public Gathering Permit, dated April 14, 2024**
- b) Letter from Planning Commission Chairman re: Plan Implementation Committee, dated April 3, 2024**

Ms. Mackstutis noted that Mr. Looney will be the Board representative on the POCD committee and Mr. Beal will be the representative on the 250th committee.

Mr. Beal asked if there was an update on the housing policy. Ms. Mackstutis said they are still looking at this issue.

ADJOURN

Mr. Beal made a motion, effective April 15, 2024, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Ms. Mackstutis seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathi Radocchio, Clerk