

North Stonington Board of Finance Meeting - Special Meeting

Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, June 9, 2020

North Stonington Zoom Meeting @5:30pm

North Stonington, CT

1. **Call to Order:** 5:34pm, Members present: Chairman Dan Spring, Dan Smith, Paul Simonds, Carolyn Howell, Brett Mastroianni, Chris Hundt, Anne Akin (5:35), Michael Anderson (5:38)
2. **Public Comments:**
 - a) Chris Hundt- read a letter describing issues with BoF that led to his absenting himself from board meetings and eventually led to his decision to resign from the BoF effective 09June2020.
 - b) Kate Rocheman- No one should have been nominated for the BoF Alternate vacancy before all of the candidates had been vetted. Thinks Brett's nomination should be rescinded or if that isn't an option, thinks Brett should resign.
 - c) Toula Balestracci- thinks that before the BoF moves forward with any business, agenda item 5 needs to be discussed since there is a legal issue at hand. Also concerned that Brett participated in the discussions during the 03June2020 meeting since as RTC Chair he could unduly influence the board.
 - d) Shawn Murphy- Is confused by agenda item 3. Thought that the budget had already been approved at 03June2020 meeting. What needs to be finalized? Are there changes to the approved budget that need to be addressed? Chairman, Dan Spring responded that there were no changes to the budget approved on 03June2020. Also, Shawn disagrees with Toula about Brett's participation in the meeting. Per town ordinance, there is nothing that prohibits participation of alternates in discussion, they just cannot make motions or vote unless they have been seated on the board to fill a vacancy.
 - e) Christine Wagner- Thanks the BoF for putting the RISA account on the agenda tonight for discussion. The BoE has 2 weeks left in which to complete spending, and there are a lot of decisions that will need to be made in that short time. Approval of the RISA will give them more time in which to make smarter decisions for the students and the district moving forward.
 - f) Joe Gross- States that on old driver's licenses, there was a \$5 donation for weed control, and that money had to be residing somewhere. We should research and see how much if any is available to us for use in the town's lakes. Also called out Paul Simonds for voting no last week on the budget increase for per diem firefighters. He is afraid that if we wait for the emergency services committee to reach a decision, it will be too late. Response time is expected to decrease by 2-4 minutes with Per Diems.
3. **BoF: Budget 2020-2021 Finalization:** During 03June 2020 meeting, under agenda item 6, we voted to drop the proposed mil rate increase to 29.5 by taking additional money out of the undesignated fund. Unfortunately the amount of money we voted

to remove from the undesignated fund to accomplish this did not include the \$65K that we had added to the budget under agenda item 4.

Motion by Dan Spring to take the additional \$65K from the undesignated fund to meet the obligation that we had approved of the 29.5 mil rate. 2nd Paul Simonds.
Discussion.

Vote: 6/0/0 Motion passes

Letter designating the levied mil rate of 29.5 was signed by Dan Spring and dated June 4th, 2020.

Clarification of Line items- weed control is line item B30.07, per diem firefighters is line item B26.14

4. Non-lapsing account (RISA): BoE

Motion by Mike Anderson to authorize the creation of a non-lapsing RISA account up to 2% of the BoE budget. 2nd Dan Smith. Discussion.

Vote: 4/1/1 Motion passes

5. BoF Alternates: Representation: Chairman Dan Spring believes BoF members weren't fully informed of consequences of their vote at the time when filling recent BoF alternate vacancy. Now that there is another alternate vacancy there are several potential paths forward to resolve the issue:

- a) Pass ordinance for 3 alternates for the BoF. This may not be possible for a while with current pandemic.
- b) Rescindment of the candidate voted in
- c) Opening of the position that was locked up by Chris Hundt- This is the path forward currently available.

BoF has a level of resolve relative to issue to respect the entity of the board and what it represents and do what is right for town. In an upcoming meeting we will look to fill this vacancy.

6. Previous Minutes: Tabled

7. Public Comment:

- a) Brian Rathbun- Disappointed in how budget was handled. Understand it was due to governor's ordinance, but raises were given out and committees were beefed up all without taxpayer input. Most of the BoE increase is being given out as raises, maybe they should forego raises this year. The BoF should rescind the budget and let the taxpayers at least weigh in on the changes if they can't vote on it.
- b) Joe Gross- Agenda item 4, he supports the BoE, but does not support RISA. It was brought up before and turned down. Believes there was a closed meeting between BoF and BoE to get this on the agenda and passed.
- c) Christine Wagner- There was nothing done behind the scenes for the RISA account, there was no malicious intent. The BoE was told they did not need to

make a presentation for this agenda item since they had presented on it in the past. This was not meant to be an underhanded action, it was just to allow the BoE to spend money they had already been allocated in the smartest most efficient way possible.

- d) Shawn Murphy- Has a question about budget totals. Has not heard a motion of what totals were approved. Looking for General Government, BoE, Capital, and debt redemption numbers. (not posted yet, will be tomorrow). Wants to know how much money is being used from undesignated fund to balance the budget. (\$441,000) Does this include the deobligated amount? (No) So over 1 mil is coming out of undesignated fund.
- e) Joe Gross- Does not mean to accuse anyone of anything, just questions why RISA vote had to be brought forward at a 5:30 meeting of BoF. Not a standard day or time for BoF meetings.
- f) Christine Wagner- Had asked several times for the subject to be added to the agenda. Specifically asked for it to be added to last week's meeting, but since that meeting was so lengthy, it wasn't able to be put on that agenda. Therefor she requested the BoF hold a special meeting so there could be a decision before the BoE meeting tomorrow. With a decision on the RISA, the BoE would know how to proceed, since without the RISA, they have to make all remaining budget decisions tomorrow.
- g) Caroline Howell- Reserves Wednesday nights for BoF meetings. Does not appreciate having special meeting called on different day at different time without having a chance to comment or agree to it.
- h) Joe Gross- Thanks Christine Dias for all her help. He relies heavily on her and thinks the BoF would benefit from her expertise to help us address some of the issues we face.
- i) Joe Potemri- Has a question pertaining to the seating of the new alternate. Is concerned since it was somewhat concluded that the election of Brett was illegal and that we are not addressing this. Vote should be rescinded. Vacancies should be filled following a protocol consisting of proper nominations, proper discussion, proper vetting, and then let the results be as they may. Also wants to know if we got clarification from Sec. of State? Dan Spring answered that as things stand there was no violation of process since there is no process defined. The potential violation would have been with minority representation in 7-340a with minority board members not being able to choose alternates to sit in their place whereby it's a predetermined prejudice and not fair representation of the taxpayers at large. Town voter make-up is 25% R, 25% D, 50% unaffiliated.
- j) Sarah Nelson-Echoes the support of RISA and thanks the BoF for approving it. Wants to know what the process is for closing out Chris Hundt's role on the BoF. Dan Spring answered that as long as letter is signed and time stamped in, his role is concluded. Sarah asks what is the process to determine the process to choose the BoF alternate to fill the vacancy? Dan Spring answers that the intent is to advertise and accept applicants for the alternate position, and then set up a vetting process where each candidate can represent themselves not only on the application, but in person. Sarah asks do those who have already applied have to

- reapply? Dan Spring answers for those that have applied, be sure your document is in order
- k) Joe Gross- Is RISA a new budget line item? (No)
 - l) Pam Potemri- Concerned that BoF does not have defined procedures and there seems to be a lack of clarity around process. BoE members go through training on how to operate as a board, maybe BoF should do the same. Maybe we need clarification of positions and roles, doing this would also help educate the public.
 - m) Brian Rathbun- Suggests we look at the budget as black and white paper. Concerned that town hearing doesn't go through it line by line anymore, and we should do this so taxpayers know exactly where money is going. Presentation at town hearing now is more like a commercial, and this is not helpful to the taxpayers.
 - n) Brett Mastroianni- We have all been adapting to online meeting process. Audio kept cutting out, could not hear most of comment.

8. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 6:50pm by Chairman Dan Spring, 2nd by Dan Smith. Approved 6/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin
BoF Secretary