

North Stonington Board of Finance Special Meeting

Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, Mar. 10, 2021

Zoom Meeting @7:00pm

North Stonington, CT

1. **Call to Order:** 7:01pm, Board of Finance members present: Chairman Dan Spring, Vice-Chair Paul Simonds, Dan Smith, Carolyn Howell, Mike Anderson, Anne Akin Alternates Brett Mastroianni and Sarah Nelson
2. **Public Comments:**
 - a) Brian Rathbun – States that BoF gave extra money to the BoE last year and that money should not be counted as part of the budget going forward.
 - b) Joe Gross – Agenda items 2 and 8 are public comment restricted to agenda items only. Wants to know when he can bring forward non agenda related issues.
 - c) Nita Kincaid- Has looked at the budget timelines and even with rescheduling of BoE and BoS presentations we are still on schedule.
3. **Correspondence:** None
4. **BoE Budget Presentation FY2021-2022:** Presented by Christine Wagner. Discussion followed:
 - a) Proposed increase is 1.78%, \$68K over requested 1.3% increase.
 - b) 83% of budget is salaries and benefits, 14% is fixed costs, 3% is discretionary.
 - c) Many proposed increases not presented in budget are to be covered by two \$83K ESSER grants for Covid relief.
 - d) Five out of district students have already signed contracts to attend NS schools.
5. **BOF Policies Review/Approval:** Budget Reconciliation Policy draft to be sent to all board members.
6. **Previous Minutes:** -
17Feb 2021-2a)correct spelling, 4b) add “town is in search of new collection agency”.
Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to approve the minutes of 17Feb2021 BoF meeting as amended. 2nd Dan Smith
Vote 5/0/1 Paul Simonds abstains as he was not present for meeting

03Mar2021-2a & 8a)Correct spelling, 4d)remove 4) change expect to “draft estimates” add “and other contractual obligations” to motion by Dan Smith 8a&b) remove 1st comment from each, subjective not factual.
Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to approve the minutes of 03Mar2021 BoF meeting as amended. 2nd Dan Smith
Vote 6/0/0
7. **Future Strategies:** Keep an eye on budget schedule for changes. No reports
8. **Public Comment:**
 - a) Shawn Murphy- supports the BoE budget as presented tonight
 - b) Brian Rathbun-BoF should hold BoE to 1.3% increase. People have lost jobs, had hours cut, can’t afford tax increases, but comments fall on deaf ears. BoE contracts give pay raises every year, they need to negotiate tougher contracts. Tired of butget being 85% salaries/benefit, this has to slow down at some point. Teachers say they want to teach, but it seems like they are just there to make money.

- c) Tom Marsh- Wants to know if 5 OOD students are special needs students since the town cost to support these would be much higher.
- d) Mike Anderson- in response to Brian Rathbun-Teachers have a union with collective bargaining and there is a cost for that, but it is allowing us to bring in revenue for OOD students, so we have to look at it as an investment.
- e) Pam Potemri- with regard to special education- aside from the discrimination issue, there is a wide range of abilities, and even students that present as normal may have some special needs requirements. Cautions on the use of terms like “super star”.
- f) Joe Gross-Commends the board on attention to detail and questions for BoE. Supports BoE budget as presented. Questions the board as to the different attitude to the BoE budget presented compared the attitude of the board to the BoS budget presented.
- g) Carolyn Howell- response to Joe Gross-Difference is that BoE started from 0% increase and worked up. BoS started with everything in and needed so many cuts. Is disappointed radios and per diem FF were cut, believes safety should be town’s first priority. Thinks if BoS had started with 0% increase and worked up like BoE, attitude would have been different.
- h) Mike Anderson-response to Joe Grosse-Only discussion of BoE last week was to determine where 1.3% BoE increase would put total town budget increase. Agrees that if BoS had started at 0% increase and worked up rather than start high and have to whittle away at it BoF attitude would have been different. Thinks BoE budget is ready to be put to public vote.
- i) Joe Gross- Questions BoF why we aren’t sending BoE budget back for revision when they didn’t meet 1.3% guidance, but harshly sent BoS budget back for 0\$% increase when we didn’t give them any guidance.
- j) Tom Marsh- Appreciates all the work being done on the budget. Appreciates that BoF recognizes that a 1mil increase will not be well received.Urges BoF to keep pushing to get the mil rate increase down so that it will pass town vote the first time.
- k) Sarah Nelson- Comments on special education, wants people to understand how critical special needs services in our schools are. Just because a student has special needs requirements, does not mean they can’t be super stars.
- l) Joe Gross- supports Sarah Nelson’s comments- special needs services should never be cut.
- m) Tom Marsh- wants to clarify that his comment was purely a math and economics question. He is very aware of the high level of the special needs program in NS.
- n) Mike Anderson- wants to know if there is a stipulation in the contract for OOD students that there will be additional costs for special needs services.
- o) Christine Wagner-wants to know if the BoF will be giving the BoE additional guidance tonight, and if not tonight, then when.

9. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 9:35 by Chairman Dan Spring, 2nd by Dan Smith.

Approved 6/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin

BoF Secretary