

North Stonington Board of Finance Special Meeting

Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, Mar. 31, 2021

Zoom Meeting @7:00pm

North Stonington, CT

1. **Call to Order:** 7:04pm, 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) Nita Kincaid- North Stonington Quarterly will be in mailboxes tomorrow. Contains a lot of info about the budget, and the back page has notice for Monday April 5th town meeting.
 - b) Joe Gross-1) BoF should reinstate first Selectman's salary to the amount originally proposed in the BoS budget and there should be a 2% raise for the other two selectmen positions. 2) For each revaluation year starting in 1968, every following year had a mil rate increase. No BoF has ever been able to achieve a mil rate decrease following revaluation year, over 8 separate boards since 1968 and none have been able to do so. Board is trying to squeeze a 32 mil rate into a 29 mil rate and this is taking away our general government. We need to stop doing this and face reality
3. **Correspondence:** BoF received a letter from the Volunteer Fire Company Chairman of Trustees. Letter requested that we maintain the 1 per diem fire fighter currently in the budget and add the 2nd requested per diem fire fighter. If we intend to use the rescue funds for this budget item, he would like a letter or memo from the BoF committing to this. He also expressed concern that the Fire Chief was not allowed to speak during the meeting to address questions on the fire company's budget even though he was present at the meeting.
4. **Budget Review/Approval-**
 - a) Proposal to make up budget deficit over 4 years with most of funding coming from undes. fund and out of district students, not taxpayers. Some interest in this, but not consensus that this is the way to move forward
 - b) Proposal to have assessor look at properties that dropped by double digits during reval. Chairman to discuss this with him.
 - c) Proposal to ask BoE to give back any funds slated for RISA account for this year only. No support for this.
 - d) Concern that we are acting prematurely without results from April 5 town meeting.
 - e) Concern that things kept in the budget will not be eligible for coverage by rescue funds.
 - f) New information provided by 1st Selectman on American Rescue funds that are being made available, thinks these funds would cover truck and 298NW Rd.. Advises we remove these from the budget. Consensus on removing the truck from the budget, some concern with removing all funding of 298NW Rd from the budget.
 - g) Proposal to leave some money for 298NW Rd grounds keeping and repair labor and supplies in Public Works budget. No support for this.
 - h) Removing 298NW Rd., and the truck from the budget puts it at \$21,185,008 or a \$432,247 (2.08%) increase. Consensus that if we move forward with this plan that at the town hearing it needs to be made absolutely clear to the taxpayers what we are

taking out of the budget and why we are taking it out, and that we will be coming forward with an appropriation request to cover the expenses of 298NW Rd for 2020/2021 FY.

Motion by Dan Smith to remove \$20K for line item C1.19, F250 truck, and \$100K from line item B22.06, 298NW Rd., from the BoS budget. 2nd Paul Simonds

Vote: 6/0/0 Motion passes

Motion by Vice-chair Paul Simonds to move the proposed budget for FY2021/2022:

BoE	14,371,465
General Gov't	5,178,341
Debt Redemption	1,382,949
<u>Capital</u>	<u>252,253</u>
Total	21,185,008

Forward to a town hearing scheduled for April 19, 2021 at 6:00 pm as a hybrid

Zoom/public meeting. 2nd Mike Anderson. Discussion on meeting format and need for public disclosure of 298NW Rd. funding.

Vote: 6/0/0 Motion passes

5. **Reports- BoS P/L, BoE P/L, Tax Report, Check Register, Undes. Fund report, Old MS/HS 6 Month Expenditure Report:** No discussion

6. **Policy Reviews/Approvals:** Tabled

7. **Previous Minutes:**

10Mar2021- item 4d- don't abbreviate OOD

Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to accept the 10Mar2021 minutes as amended. 2nd Dan Smith. Vote: 6/0/0

17Mar2021-

Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to accept the 17Mar2021 minutes as provided. 2nd Dan Smith. Vote: 6/0/0

8. **Future Strategies- 2021-2022 Budget Schedule, BoF Members Reports:**

a) Education Subcommittee report- tour of both buildings scheduled for April 9th.

b) FOIA Training- Take away message for meeting minutes- they should be concise, but should contain enough detail that the reader can follow the train of thought leading to decisions that are made.

c) Town meeting scheduled for Monday April 5th at 6:00 pm.

9. **Public Comment*:**

a) Brian Rathbun- Asks if the town hearing is for public comment on proposed budget. Suggests BoF have available the mil rate required to balance proposed budget. Agrees that assessor should look at properties that significantly decreased in value due to reval.

b) Joe Gross- Wants the BoF to reinstate 1st Selectman's salary to what was initially proposed in BoS budget. Thinks town should publish list of names of people that refuse to pay taxes, many from as far back as 2008, thinks this would incentivize those people to pay. BoF has not made any cuts to BoE budget, but have cut BoS budget 4 times. Cannot find anywhere in handbook or state statute that the BoF has the authority to cut or alter line items in budgets presented to them. BoS budget is now

BoF budget due to all the changes BoF made to it. Thinks BoF should not have taken items out of budget tonight just based on 1st Selectman's comments, should have had weigh in from other two Selectmen. Does not support the budget as it currently is. Thinks his comments are falling on deaf ears, feels whenever he makes suggestions or comments there is no support or discussion, he is thanked and then forgotten.

c) Pam Potemri- To remove something from a general line item in the budget that we know we have to pay is termed supplanting. If we do this with the rescue funds it is very likely to be caught during audit. Advises that we budget for some of the expected expense, but not all of it, as there is plenty of recorded conversation to prove that we know about the expenses for 298NW Rd.

d) Joe Gross- Wants to remind everyone that he voted as a taxpayer to spend \$1M to demo the one story wing of the HS/MS.

10. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 9:24 by Chairman Dan Spring, 2nd by Dan Smith.

Approved 6/0/0.

***All public comments are opinions of the commenter**

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin

BoF Secretary