

North Stonington Board of Finance Meeting
Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, Apr. 7, 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) Joe Gross-1) BoF has a long way to go. 2) Has one main concern, the salary of the 1st Selectman. Has reviewed the salaries for 1st Selectmen for 15 similar towns, highest is Bethany @ 84K with Gen Gov expenses of 243K, lowest is Columbia @12K with Gen Gov expenses of 325K. NS is at 50K with Gen Gov expenses of 164K. Whether we leave it at 50K or put it back to 64K we still have the lowest Gen. Gov. operating budget. We need to increase the salary to attract qualified candidates to work full time for the town. Does not want a thank-you for comment, wants the BoF to discuss it and increase the salary back to 64K.
3. **Correspondence:**
 - a) Chairman submitted letter on behalf of BoF in support of town's submission for federal grant money for rural communities. Grant requests had to be submitted by today. Submission combined demolition of MS with repair to roof and windows of HS as well as creation of a park like area to create campus feel between library and 298NW Rd.
 - b) Carolyn Howell sent a letter to the BoF linking Freedom of Information Act to requests for check runs which have been provided. Requests we review them, compile questions, and ask them all in one session, probably during Future Strategies.
4. **Budget Review/Approval-**
 - a) No changes can be made at this point, must wait until after Public Hearing.
 - b) BoF presentation at public hearing should include path from estimated starting mil rate of 27.4 due to reval through to anticipated mil rate of 29.2 for a balanced budget.
 - c) Presentation to include a slide of items taken out and how we expect to address them.
 - d) Presentation will also include a slide of accomplishments.
 - e) Request for the BoS to present a few slides on American Rescue Plan and Community Earmark Grant and how they have impacted the budget, specifically per diem fire fighter and 298 NW Rd.
 - f) Query on whether it would be possible for people to send in questions ahead of time.
 - g) Discussion on how to work Gen. Gov. and Capital expenses back into the budget going forward.
 - h) Discussion on risks of putting 298NW Rd. in budget vs leaving it out.
5. **Policy Reviews/Approvals:** Balanced Budget and Reconciliation Policy
 - a) Discussion on adding paragraph with state statute from original policy to revised policy.
 - b) Discussion on giving selectmen power to veto specific budget cuts as long as they make an equal value cut somewhere else in budget. Consensus not to add this.
 - c) Appropriations and transfers already covered in separate policy.

- d) Discussion on adding wording clarifying BoF's ultimate control of budget development. Ct's Handbook for BoFs pg. 4 or pg. 8 have appropriate wording.

6. Previous Minutes:

24Mar2021- item 2- add disclaimer that all public comments are opinions of commenter, item 5d- add "draft" in front of "budget w/ tonight's changes".

Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to accept the 24Mar2021 minutes as amended. 2nd Dan Smith. Vote: 6/0/0

31Mar2021-Tabled

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

- a) Keep an eye on budget schedule. Hearing is scheduled for April 19th at 6pm, hybrid meeting online and in person at 297 NW Rd. gymnasium.
- b) Request to add to Future Strategies creating a policy for oversight of Selectmen's expenses.
- c) Request to add to Future Strategies discussion on state statute for freezing increases to senior's taxes.
- d) Nita Kincaid- Request for ideas for notifying as many people as possible about April 19th Town Hearing and May 3rd Town Annual Meeting
 - Notice in NS Quarterly (did not include dates)
 - Adds in papers
 - Notice on town website
 - Mailed card to all residents of town
 - Electronic bulletin board @ 298 NW Rd.

8. Public Comment*:

- a) Joe Gross- Requested where CT Handbook gave BoF authority to change budget line items. Intends to keep reminding BoF and BoS that he voted to approve \$1M to demolish the old MS. He is working on a form so that the BoF would get all the requirements from the BoS and BoE in a manner that would address line items and their justification. All changes that the BoF made to the budget came at the expense of the BoS budget and he does not agree with the comment that the BoS budget came in high and had to be whittled down, it was an honest budget. Takes issue with the fact that only about 100 people voting in a special meeting Tuesday night can change what was voted on in referendum by 1000 people. Feels like a lot of the BoF meetings are shotgun meetings.
- b) Mike Urgo- Expenses at 298NW Rd. would still exist as only the MS part would have been demolished so there would still be expenses for the HS portion.

- 9. Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 9:09 by Chairman Dan Spring, 2nd by Dan Smith. Approved 6/0/0.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin

BoF Secretary