

North Stonington Board of Finance Meeting
Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, May 6, 2020
North Stonington Zoom Meeting @7:00pm
North Stonington, CT

1. **Call to Order:** 7:01pm, Members present: Chairman Dan Spring, Dan Smith, Paul Simonds, Carolyn Howell, Anne Akin, Michael Anderson Absent: Chris Hundt
2. **Public Comments:**
 - a) Brett Mastroianni- 1) RISA account-old meeting minutes show this has been under discussion since 2012. In July 2012 and Dec 2012 it was stated that the proposal was being reviewed by the town attorney. There was still no resolution by Dec 2013. Can we please discuss this, vote on it, and put this issue to bed. This is a year that it makes sense to put this into place. 2) Meeting minutes from Feb 2019 show that the town was going to look into per diem fire fighters, but nothing was done about it until just recently.
 - b) Shawn Murphy-1) State budget shortfalls will trickle down to us. We are lucky to get LOCIP and state road funds this year. Are also not likely to get casino funds. Should keep town's budget increase to 0%. 2) State is showing 20% unemployment, 10% more than last recession. N. Stonington is not immune. Therefore it is likely that revenue projected in budget is not likely to be realized. 3) Should not use undesignated funds to cover budget shortfall.
3. **BoF: Review and Budget Preparation:**

BoE presented new budget, at 2.5% increase which will allow them to keep middle school sports and the two specialists. Discussion followed. Carolyn Howell volunteered to be a liaison between the BoF and the BoE with Mike Anderson as a substitute.

Motion by Chairman Dan Spring for the BoF to approve the BoE budget at a 2.5% increase over last year's budget. 2nd by Mike Anderson. After discussion, it was agreed that several issues needed to be addresses before the BoE budget could be voted on. The motion was tabled. Issues:

- a) Replenishing \$225K taken from undesignated fund to cover budget shortfall. Discussion on where money would come from- BoE or BoS budget savings from this year's budget, school of choice revenue? What is time frame for repayment? BoE currently has 243K in savings from this year's budget, but indicated that it would most likely be spent pre-buying supplies and equipment for next year to offset decrease in proposed budget increase from 4.9% to 2.5%.
- b) Per Diem fire fighter proposal. Discussion on whether to add 1 per diem to BoS budget, add per diems as a separate line item on referendum, hold adding per diem until the Emergency Services Operation Committee finishes researching the situations and provides recommendations. With the BoE increase at 2.5%, adding 1 per diem would go from 0.8 to 0.89mil increase needed to balance budget. Chairman Dan Spring agreed to invite the committee to present at our meeting next week to see what data they have collected so far.

Motion by Dan Smith that any money generated by the school of choice initiative be earmarked to cover withdrawal of \$225K from undesignated fund until all of the money is repaid. 2nd by Paul Simonds. Discussion. Motion tabled.

Motion by Dan Smith to state that the undesignated fund can't be used further until the \$225,232 is repaid in full unless there is unanimous agreement by the BoF. 2nd by Mike Anderson. Discussion- there is some question as to the legality of this motion, need to check with the town attorney on specific wording. Motion tabled.

Chairman Dan Spring tabled further discussion on budget review pending reply from town attorney.

4. **Future Strategies:** Tabled until next week. Vice-chair Paul Simonds called for a special meeting to be called to fill the vacancy on the BoF before next week's meeting. Chairman Dan Spring refused to call a special meeting since the BoF has not yet put out a request for candidates to fill the vacancy.
5. **Previous Minutes:** Tabled until next meeting.
6. **Public Comments and Questions on Non-Agenda Items:**
 - a) Laura Mello-we are in the middle of a pandemic, students realize this as much as anyone, and cutting support is not what is needed now. Not in favor of holding students' futures hostage to the unknown. Specialists are needed. Simple math that salary increases and inflation are going to require budget increase. Please pass the one that helps the kids the most, either the 2.5% or the 2.85% increase.
 - b) Brian Rathbun- Sent a letter with his concerns about a budget increase to the BoF and the BoS. Appears that only 4 people received the letter. Encourages all board members to reach out to one of the 4 for a copy and please read it.
 - c) Brett Mastroianni- In regards to filling vacancy on the BoF, does not believe BoF Chairman is correct in saying that 4 republicans cannot be seated in quorum. Also, the BoF does not have a history of filling vacancies with same party affiliation as that of vacating member, cited three examples. Concerned that rules are only followed when convenient.
 - d) Carolyn Howell- Sent letter to BoF supporting Anne Akin to fill BoF vacancy.
 - e) Sarah Nelson- This is her first town meeting, and she is really impressed with the work being done. Picked this town for the schools and appreciates the town's investment in the new schools. Recognizes monumental work done to prepare budget. Believes that the money approval for the BoE should stay with the BoE. Also asks the BoF to keep in mind the time taken to deliberate on a budget to put forward as there is a lot of anxiety on both sides of the issue.
 - f) Pam Potemri- Before deciding on building new schools looked at options- sending students out of district and/or supporting homeschooling. Was concerned that out of district option gave control of budget increases and mil rate to someone outside of town. Now we sit here in a position to approve a budget that presents the only chance to generate revenue and tax breaks. It's the responsibility of the BoE and every board in town to protect and enhance

what we value which is our community as a whole, and education is a huge income generator. Need to think about how we are going to replace money taken from undesignated fund. Want to refocus the BoF on overall community goal of supporting town, to generate revenue and income to town, to trust fellow board members to fiscally, responsibly, commit to budgeting process that supports all members of community. If we don't support the BoE budget, we can't in good faith put forth the school of choice option when we cut essential programs. It's not about cutting, it's about generating income and revenue.

- g) Brett Mastroianni - 1) Supports 2.5% increase to BoE budget and per diem fire fighter. 2) Since we are going to town attorney for decision on wording of motion, can we also get a response on RISA request as well since he has had it for two weeks?

Christine Diaz will follow up on this. Query on where RISA wording came from. Proposed RISA wording given to town attorney by BoE attorney. Modeled after wording on RISA from town of Sterling.

7. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 10:0pm by Chairman Dan Spring, 2nd by Paul Simonds. Approved 6/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin
BoF Secretary