

North Stonington Board of Finance Meeting
Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2020
Zoom Meeting @7:00pm
North Stonington, CT

1. **Call to Order:** 7:01pm, Members present: Chairman Dan Spring, Paul Simonds, Anne Akin, Dan Smith, Carolyn Howell, Sarah Nelson for Mike Anderson, Brett Mastroianni (7:10)
2. **Public Comments:**
 - a) Bill Ricker – on the agenda item of election of officers – wants to give his support to what the BOF has been able to do with the bond rating with Dan Spring and his leadership. Gives his support to Dan and the rest of the committee.
 - b) Toula Balestracci – on election of officers – thinks it's odd timing but also thinks it's a great opportunity for healthy public discussion. She is happy with the current leadership, thinks Dan Spring has done a great job of putting the town's needs first and there have been a lot of great accomplishments. Town is on a good path and would like to maintain that trajectory. Thanks Dan for his commitment to the town.
 - c) Marianne Ricker – under leadership of Dan Spring BoF has done a wonderful job, and is doing positive things and is making positive investments in the town and for the future of the town. Supports Dan Spring's re-election as Chairman.
 - d) Marti & John Bradshaw - Would like to speak to the leadership of Dan Spring and support his re-election as Chairman.
 - e) Nita Kincaid – Remembers when she first met Dan Spring, has seen all the things he's done, remembers what happened when he took time off for a while, and hopes he will be sticking with it. Thinks he's a terrific person.
 - f) Margaret Leonard– Wanted to chime in and thank Dan Spring for his guidance of the BoF over the past few years, has learned a lot in the past year about everything he has done. Came to understand what a precarious position the town was in, and how he took town from close to the verge of bankruptcy to having a strong rainy day fund that we actually had to tap into this past year. Is very appreciative of Dan being so fiscally responsible, and this is what she would expect from the Chair of the BoF.
 - g) Joe Potemri – Over the years he has been in town, and working with various boards and commissions, and paying attention to what has been going on around town and in meetings, have had some lively and heated discussions and situations and circumstances come up. Has seen a significant increase in town participation which has shown a lot of growth in town with information readily available and out there. through Zoom meetings. Dan Spring as a leader is always level headed, is committed to facts and improvement and trying to get the best out of the people in NS, and that doesn't go unseen.
 - h) Chris Nelson – Wants to echo Joe and Margaret's comments. Has been attending most of the BoF meetings since the pandemic happened, and thanks board for moving meetings to a Zoom format, it has improved availability to

people who for whatever reason were unable to participate when meetings were in person, transparency has been very helpful. The board overall, under Dan Spring's leadership, building the rainy day fund, has been a huge step forward for this town and the availability to understand that we have options when unforeseen costs come up. And as Joe said you can't underestimate the value of a calm demeanor in your leadership especially when it comes to finances which always tends to be a heated topic, it's always very helpful when you can bring that calm demeanor to the table which makes it not feel like there a sense of urgency or panic around many of these topics where that may not be the case around other BoFs . Thanks Dan Spring for his leadership.

i) Dan Spring thinks town has come a long way in 10 years.

3. **BoF Re-election of Officers:** Added to agenda for good cause due to email sent to BoF. Dan Spring states that he has been honored to chair the BoF, but if the board wants a new chairman he is happy to step aside. Election would have to happen at a special meeting. Consensus is that Dan Spring should remain as chair, but that there are some issues that need to be resolved:

- a) Need to improve communication.
- b) Need agenda item covering correspondence between BoF members and other boards.
- c) Need more timely development and distribution of agenda.
- d) Correspondence between boards should be written to insure accuracy of information.

4. **ReVal 2020 Update:** Darryl del Grosso-

- a) Reval complete, company needs one more week to finish hearings, 40 of 3200 assessments have requested a hearing.
- b) Looking at approximately an 8% increase on grand list on real estate. We met state standards and are good.
- c) Overall median ratio for all properties is 0.653 (standard is 0.63-0.77). Strive to be around 70% of face market value, but skewed to be below 70% for legal reasons. Can't have 50% of properties over 70%.
- d) Unsold property is at 1.027 (standard is 0.95-1.05).
- e) Coefficient of dispersion is 0.066 (standard <0.15).
- f) Other towns around state that had revals at some time as us are showing 1-3% increase. Higher number for NS reflects investments town made to infrastructure and desirability of housing location borne out by market values
- g) Doesn't put grand list back to 2010 level, before great depression reduced it by nearly \$100M.
- h) Lower tiered homes (\$150-250K) increased by a larger percentage than houses in the \$350-450K range because they are more desirable according to housing market, more affordable. Houses at \$490K and above, appraisals went down 5-10%, not as much data on houses in that bracket, so make conservative revalue.
- i) Darryl will go over grand list with BoF on Jan. 20th.

5. **BoF Policies Review/Approval:**

- a) Transfers and Appropriations Policy (2016-001).

Chairman Dan Spring moves to approve the policy for Appropriation Requests and Transfers as submitted. 2nd Dan Smith. No discussion.

Vote: 6/0/0 Policy approved

- b) Undesignated Fund Balance Policy- Consensus to change upper and lower limits to percentages. Discussion on whether an upper limit is needed or desired. Discussion on what to do with overage, options are 1) use it to lower mil rate 2) use it to lower debt redemption 3) use it towards a capital project. Dan Smith will redraft for next meeting.
 - c) Template of what the BoF wants to see from departments during budget request presentations drafted by Sarah Nelson. Consensus is that template is helpful. Discussion of adding section to highlight transfers of funds made in previous FY, where it was moved from, where it was moved to, and rational. Discussion of clarifying "other income" category to include grants and things like Covid reimbursements. Discussion of adding a section for unexpected costs encountered in previous FY. Sarah will make edits and resubmit.
 - d) Budget Reconciliation Policy- Not ready for review.
 - e) Agreement that remaining policies will be reviewed at our next meeting
 - f) Discussion of creating bylaws for BoF so that people don't have to hunt down state statutes. Could also include things like schedule of meetings. Have to be mindful not to exceed state statutes.
6. **Reports:** Tax report- \$420K yet to be collected has been reduced to \$296K.
7. **Previous Minutes:**
- a) Minutes of 16Sep2020- Section 3C-missing verbiage from parts 4 and 5 read out in meeting. Section 3A part 1-Remove verbiage starting from "Bulk of surplus" until the end of section 3A part 1.
Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to approve the BoF meeting minutes dated 16Sep2020 as amended. 2nd- Paul Simonds No discussion Vote 6/0/0
motion passes
 - b) Minutes of 18Nov2020- No changes.
Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to approve the BoF meeting minutes dated 18Nov2020 as presented. 2nd- Sarah Nelson No discussion Vote 6/0/0
motion passes
 - c) Minutes of 02Dec2020- Section 1- spelling of Mastroianni is correct here, needs to be corrected in remainder of document. Section 1-Clarify that Sarah Nelson steps back to allow Mike Anderson to be seated. Section 6-Remove term "underwater" and clarify that \$440K was used to mitigate mil rate increase.
Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to approve the BoF meeting minutes dated 02Dec2020 as amended. 2nd- Dan Smith No discussion Vote 6/0/0 motion passes
 - d) Minutes of 09Dec2020- Pg3 last bullet- change of to off
Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to approve the BoF meeting minutes dated 09Dec2020 as amended. 2nd- Dan Smith No discussion Vote 6/0/0 motion passes
8. **Future Strategies, Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Planning, Annual Report, Meeting Schedule:**

- a) Draft budget schedule sent out to all board members
 - Consensus that the BoS and BoE presentations to the BoF should be done at separate meetings since there is a lot to cover in each of these budget presentations.
 - Christine Dias and Nita Kincaid will put a skeleton schedule together and pass it on to board members.
 - b) Annual Audit- Approved audit is available if anyone wants a copy
 - c) Annual reports- Chairman Dan Spring has submitted the BoF annual report. Still some departments that have not submitted their annual reports.
9. **Public Comment:**
- a) Anne Akin- concerned with use of funds on old middle school/high school. No money budgeted for maintenance of old MS/HS but money has been spent from Highway Maintenance for repairs and there have been no transfer or appropriation requests put forth to the BoF for approval for use of those funds. Clarification from Mike Urgo and Christine Dias - Funds being used are B27.10 Town Property Maintenance which is part of Public Works department and is commonly referred to as Highway Maintenance.
10. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 8:38pm by Chairman Dan Spring, 2nd by Paul Simonds. Approved 6/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin
BoF Secretary