

North Stonington Board of Finance Meeting-Special Meeting  
Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, April 29, 2020  
North Stonington Zoom Meeting @7:00pm  
North Stonington, CT

1. **Call to Order:** 7:02pm, Members present: Chairman Dan Spring, Dan Smith, Paul Simonds, Carolyn Howell, Anne Akin, Michael Anderson, Mustapha Ratib Absent: Chris Hundt
2. **BoF: Review and Budget Preparation:**

BoE presented new budget, removed all tech and added back in literacy specialist to reach 2.14% budget increase. Concerns- 1) Will need to spend extra time in the fall with some students that do not do well with on line teaching to get them caught up and ready to move forward, will need specialists for this. 2) There will be a lot of make-up time needed for the special education students, may have to extend the hours per day for the spec ed teachers to cover this. 3) Many calls on Monday from students and teachers opposed to cutting MS sports. 4) Requesting a liaison from the BoF to attend BoE meetings.

Discussion on presentation by BoE. Comes down to 2.1% increase or 2.85% increase.

Motion by Mike Anderson to put forward a 2.85% increase to the BoE budget. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mustapha Ratib. Vote 3/3/0. Motion does not pass.

Motion by Paul Simonds to put forward a 2.1% increase to the BoE budget. No 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion vacated.

Continued discussion included using the undesignated fund to cover the \$225K shortfall in town revenue.

Motion by Mike Anderson to authorize the BoF to take \$225K from the undesignated fund to cover the revenue gap. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mustapha Ratib. Discussion. Vote 5/1/0. All with caveat that money gets put back in to cover withdrawal. Motion passes.

Continued discussion on the BoE budget.

Motion by Paul Simonds to put forward a 2.1% increase to the BoE budget. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Smith. Discussion. Vote 2/4/0 motion does not pass.

Chairman Dan Spring suggested moving on to other agenda items as we cannot reach consensus on the BoE budget.

3. **Future Strategies:** Need to look into whether a town hearing and a town meeting can reasonably be held remotely. Input from 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman that we have consistently had better attendance at remote meetings than the in person meetings. Some concern that the demographics of a remote meeting/hearing will be different from those of an in person one.
4. **Public Comments and Questions on Non-Agenda Items:**
- a) Brett Mastroianni- How long can BoF delay before approving a budget in order to get it voted on before July 1 deadline? Will BoF push out approval as long as possible while Governor makes changes that will allow the public to vote? MBR (CT School Finance) is an unexpected consequence of Governor's order regarding town budget determinations. What happens if MBR decrease is in budget not voted on by taxpayers?  
BoF and BoS agree that we are going to do everything possible to follow standard town procedures for budget approval including public vote if safely possible.
  - b) Shawn Murphy- If the BoE has \$243 in unspent funds in this year's budget, can we allow them an RISA to avoid "wasteful" spending?  
RISA proposal is currently being reviewed by town attorney.
  - c) Lisa Mizzella- Feels strongly that the BoF should move the BoE forward at a 2.85% increase.
  - d) Pam Potemri- Is there another source of revenue that would make up draw-downs from the undesignated fund other than the BoE and/or incoming students from out of district. Economic development?  
Dan Spring stated that the reval would lift property values which would increase the grand list.  
Brett Mastroianni stated that the Economic Development Commission has businesses coming into town this year.
  - e) Shawn Murphy- encourages the BoF not to put forward a budget until the Governor lifts the mandate on no public referendums. 1 July is not a drop dead date, the town and the state have had referendums later than July 1 in the past. We can hold our town referendum at the same time we hold our primary vote. Does not believe the BoF will get adequate feedback from a budget hearing held in this format, and if we do hold a public hearing, there will then be a push to pass the budget.  
Point of clarification- only time limitation is that there can be no less than 2 weeks after town hearing to go to referendum.  
Peter Nero cautioned that if we wait to Oct to pass the budget, school will already be paying salaries, and if staffing cuts need to be made at that point that will be money that will not be recoverable.
  - f) Joe Cassata- hears school of choice, school, school, school. Still maintains that we need to put 100K back into town budget for per diem fire fighters. If we want to protect the school and the taxpayers, we need to do this.
  - g) Charles Steinhardt V- 1) Congrats to Mustapha on being the next town treasurer. 2) Whatever budget we put to the BoE, it is their decision what cuts to make to meet it. Feels the BoE decides on cuts that will get the greatest rise out of the

- public so they can get the vote out to support the desired BoE budget increase.
- 3) Doesn't think a Zoom meeting is an appropriate format for town hearing since we can't verify attendees and determine if they are actually townspeople. 4) July 1<sup>st</sup> isn't a firm date, we have exceeded this date in the past, and everything has worked out OK. 5) Is miffed about the middle school demolition not happening. Voted against it since he saw were it was going. Kept hearing that they had to move the kids out of the building since it was so bad, but now suddenly, it's not that bad, we can do something with it.
- h) Laura Mello- Wants to support the 2.85% increase to the BoE budget. Students need their teachers. Please put 2.85% forward for a town vote.
- i) Shawn Murphy- The budget brought forward to hearing is a BoF budget. We shouldn't approve a budget just to let it go forward to see what happens. We have to own it and support it.
5. **Previous Minutes:** The minutes for the following meetings were reviewed: !9Feb2020, 26Feb2020, 11Mar2020, 01Apr2020, and 08Apr2020. The meeting minutes from 26Feb2020 were amended to correct a mistake in the public comments section. The meeting minutes from 01Apr2020 were amended to clarify a statement in the BoF: Review and Budget Preparation section. Chairman Dan Spring made a motion to accept: the meeting minutes of 19Feb2020 as presented, the meeting minutes of 26Feb2020 as amended, the meeting minutes of 11Mar2020 as presented, the meeting minutes of 01Apr2020 as amended, and the meeting minutes of 08Apr2020 as presented. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Smith. Approved 6/0/0
6. Chairman Dan Spring announced that Mustapha Ratib has resigned from the BoF in order to assume the position of Treasurer of the great town of N. Stonington. Will approach the Democratic Town Committee for a candidate to fill the vacancy. BoF currently has 2/2/1 make-up. Would like to keep the board balanced, but there is no town ordinance that states that it has to be balanced. Christine Diaz will verify.
7. Motion by Mike Anderson to put forward a 2.85% increase to the BoE budget. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mustapha Ratib. Discussion. Vote 3/3/0. Motion does not pass.
8. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 10:22pm by Chairman Dan Spring, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Smith. Approved 5/1/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin  
BoF Secretary