

North Stonington Board of Finance Special Meeting
Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, May 26, 2021
Zoom Meeting @7:00pm
North Stonington, CT

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MINUTES

1. **Call to Order:** 7:02pm, Board of Finance members present: Vice-Chair Paul Simonds, Dan Smith, Carolyn Howell, Mike Anderson, Anne Akin Alternates Brett Mastroianni seated for Dan Spring and Sarah Nelson
2. **Public Comments*:**
 - a) Brian Rathbun- Feels that the proposed \$10 fee for a transfer station sticker is a way of sneaking in a new tax. Feels there wasn't enough discussion and that there should be a lot more discussion before approving the implementation of this fee.
 - b) Joe Gross- 1) Voter turnout for the referendum was dismal and turnout for the town hearing was a poor showing as well. There were clear voices for and against both budgets 2) Cuts made to salaries, safety and capital this year will need to be addressed in the next few years. 3) BoF are administrators of town on decisions related to the budget, and should administrate based on facts. The BoE budget as presented initially should be returned for referendum vote, and the BoS budget should be returned for referendum vote with the selectmen's salaries reinstated.
 - c) Shawn Murphy- 1) Didn't hear overwhelming feedback at town hearing to reverse changes to 1st Selectman's salary, 2 for, 1 against. 2) Regarding transfer station sticker fee- this has been tried before, and subsequently reversed. Doesn't believe the \$10 fee will be enough to cover the cost of administering sticker hand-out and monitoring compliance. Same with bulky waste fee. These actions are going to take manpower that town does not have, they will require overtime to cover and this isn't covered in BoS budget. 3) Both budgets failed, both need to be reduced, prefers a proposed 28 mil rate for 2021/2022 FY, with the understanding that it will take longer to bring the undesignated fund back to even.
3. **Budget Discussion:**
 - a) BoS made adjustments to budget last night- 2.08% proposed budget increase reduced to 2.03% increase, approx. reduction of \$11K. Changes include:
 - Increase in revenue of \$68K due to new transfer station fees- stickers and bulky waste
 - An expense increase of \$15K for cyber security insurance
 - A Social Security and Medical Ins. increase of only 5% rather than 6.8% initially proposed
 - A \$2.8K decrease of 911 fees
 - A \$1K decrease in funding for cemetery support
 - A \$5K decrease in funding for Wheeler Library
 - A \$16K increase for Lake Association funding (to be covered by grant)
 - A \$20K increase for Hewitt Farm funding (to be covered by grant)
 - Elimination of Zoning Enforcement position
 - b) Discussion on BoS budget

- Concern about adding in revenue from transfer station sticker fees and bulky waste fees when we have no solid evidence for expected revenue generation
 - Concern about deciding budget before we have clear idea of impact of American Rescue Funds
 - Concern on not having complete picture of cost to maintain 298NW Rd. for 1 year. And allocation of only \$15K for town building maintenance.
 - Discussion on drop dead date for mailing out tax bills and need to set mil rate within the next week to meet this date.
- c) BoE- 1.7% proposed budget increase reduced to 1.13% increase. Revised budget has not been approved by the BoE. Change is due to 1 retirement and 1 resignation leading to a decrease in salary of \$65K, and approx. a \$20K savings in medical insurance and social security.
- d) Discussion on BoE budget-
- Failure of budget to pass could be due to low voter turnout. Discussed a number of methods to increase voter turnout for next budget vote
 - BoF could not reach consensus on advising to BoE to push for 1.13% proposed budget increase or the 1.3% increase guidance given to the BoE back at the start of the budget preparation cycle.
4. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 8:53 by Brett Mastroianni, 2nd by Mike Anderson. Approved 6/0/0.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin
BoF Secretary