

North Stonington Board of Finance Meeting

Draft Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2020

North Stonington Media Center "Old" M/H School/Zoom Meeting @7:00pm

North Stonington, CT

DRAFT MINUTES

1. **Call to Order:** 7:00pm, Members present: Vice Chair Paul Simonds, Dan Smith, Anne Akin, Carolyn Howell, Chairman Dan Spring (7:15), Michael Anderson (7:15)
Alternate Brett Mastroianni
2. **Public Comments:** none
3. Motion by Dan Smith to move agenda item 3, BoS Appropriation Request, to between items 4 and 5. 2nd Anne Akin
Vote: 4/0/0 Motion passes
4. **Reports: Profit/Loss BoS, Tax Report, Tax Suspense List:**
 - a) June2020 Tax Report- 1.6% of taxes remain uncollected. 15 real estate accounts are in foreclosure, 7 are on a payment plan. Last year at this time 1.8% of taxes remained uncollected.
 - b) July2020 Tax Report- Tax collection is only at 40%, but this does not reflect those that came in after July 31st, deadline was August 3rd. Also, there are more taxes that are being mailed in this time due to COVID, and there is an increase in online payment of taxes. Profit/Loss BoS July2019-June2020- No comments or discussion
 - c) Profit/Loss BoS July2020- Most payments are made quarterly, but some such as insurance for FD and ambulance are made as a single payment in July. Also have overtime on the books already due to Isaias, but will get 75% reimbursement from FEMA. Also, COVID expenses will be covered at 100% through September, 75% from FEMA and 25% from state.
 - d) Suspense List- This must be signed by the BoF by August 31st. \$6736.77 is owed by 3 businesses, all listed as out of business. Have exhausted avenues of contacting owners, some going back to 2012.
Motion by Chairman Dan Spring to approve the suspense list in the amount of \$6736.77 presented by the Tax Collector for FY 2019-2021. 2nd Michael Anderson
Vote: 6/0/0 Motion passes
3. **BoS: Appropriation Request, Closeout 2019-2020:**
 - a) Mike Urgo, Bob Carlson, Nita Kinkaid, Christine Dias, and Juliette Hodge spoke in favor of contracting with an outside company specializing in evaluating government bodies with a view to improving efficiency and cost effectiveness of town hall and public works. Evaluation to focus on day to day operational aspect not governance, processes and procedures. Fresh eyes are unbiased and may see things we can't. Urgency to do this now since it is a three month process and want results available in time for next year's budget season which starts in December.

- b) Concerns brought forward by BoF- Proposed firm has experience with BoE in small towns like NS, no experience w/ town hall and public works, their ignorance of us may lead to this being a waste of money. Government Structure Committee did a good job, we know our town best, we have plenty of experienced and knowledgeable people, we can do this internally without spending the money. Undesignated fund took a big hit when budget was passed, concerned about taking more from it w/o assurance that there are funds coming back into it soon. Concerns that w/o letting townspeople vote on the budget, adding another appropriation that they aren't given a chance to vote on is adding insult to injury. Concerned that suggestions generated by firm will be "cherry picked" and not followed in full.

Motion by Mike Anderson to grant appropriation request for \$19K for Evergreen Solutions to do consulting work. 2nd Dan Spring

Vote: 3/3/0 Motion does not pass

5. **ReVal 2020 Update:** Team is out finishing batch 5. Land transactions have been happening in a positive way with sales at listing price or better.

6. **BoF Policies Review:**

- a) Undesignated Fund Balance Policy- Chairman Dan Spring has researched similar policies in other towns. Consensus that lower limit should be equivalent to 1 month's operating expenses and the upper limit should be equivalent to 2-3 months operating expenses. Sweet spot for favorable loan interest rates from bond market is 2 months.
- b) 2017-1 Loss of Outside Revenues Policy: Chairman Dan Spring believes there is consensus that this policy is not what we want. Vice-Chair Paul Simonds disagrees.
- c) Chairman Dan Spring also suggested we need a policy on having a balanced budget
- d) Brett Mastroianni suggested that we also need a set of bylaws that discusses how things are run and how information is put out.
- e) Chairman Dan Spring suggested a guide on how we operate.
- f) Consensus that we should have a workshop to sit down and hash out updating the policies
- g) Need for Ethics Policy rework has been brought to attention of BoS

7. **Future Strategies, Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Closeout, Audit:**

- a) Profit/Loss statement from BoE suggests giveback this year will be substantial. Using RISA account to buy chromebooks for remote learning, hopefully getting some assist with this from state. Not known if they are looking for any big ticket items to address COVID remediation.
- b) Ambulance and FD are working with Emergency Services Operator on PPE, and state they are all set, no need for assist at this time.
- c) Audit- auditors have sent COVID questionnaire. Audit is being done remotely meaning it is more involved than previously. Files must be scanned and sent rather than viewed in person. Susan is doing most of this work. Also FEMA reimbursement means we will need a federal audit as well. There will be additional cost for this work, but don't think it will be as much as estimated by the auditors.

- d) Position for part time secretary and per diem grant writer is actually for two people. Have grant writer but not secretary. Grant writer meets with 1st Selectman, Christine, and Juliette for details needed to write grants and then writes them. Also looks for potential grants they may not be aware of. 6 grants currently out for approval.
 - e) Suggestion by Chairman Dan Spring that any requests for information should be brought to the board and discussed. If board agrees that information is needed it will be requested.
 - f) Ordinance change to add a third alternate position to the BoF has been brought to the attention of the Town Clerk. From a cost perspective, try to do ordinance changes only once a year.
8. **Public Comment:** Brian Rathbun- with COVID, meetings will be happening in person for board members but public must still view by ZOOM. It is very difficult to hear board members speaking. Must find a way to address this so that public can stay informed.
9. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 9:15pm by Mike Anderson, 2nd by Dan Smith. Approved 6/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Akin
BoF Secretary