

Town of
North Stonington
ANNUAL TOWN/BUDGET MEETING
MINUTES
May 1, 2023

The Annual Town/Budget Meeting of electors and citizens qualified to vote in Town Meetings of the Town of North Stonington, Connecticut was held at the North Stonington Education Center Media Center, 298 Norwich-Westerly Road, North Stonington, Connecticut on Monday, May 1, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. and online through Zoom.

Present: First Selectman Robert Carlson, Selectman Brett Mastroianni, and Selectwoman Nicole Porter. Also present at the meeting were Superintendent of Schools Troy Hopkins, Board of Education Vice Chairman Alex Karpinski, Administration & Finance Officer Christine Dias, Assessor Darryl DelGrosso, and Registrars of Voters Connie Berardi and Emily Lewis.

First Selectman Robert Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. He introduced the Town officials and gave a brief overview of the items to be discussed at the meeting. He stated that there are ten questions on this call for this meeting. The Board of Selectmen would like the first three questions to go to referendum, with the date and time of the referendum to be discussed later in the meeting. He also indicated that the rest of the questions on the call will be voted on only in person at the meeting. First Selectman Carlson then asked for a **MOTION** from the floor to elect a Moderator. A **MOTION** made by Carl Johnston, seconded by Nick Mullane to elect Lisa Mazzella as the Moderator. A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Nick Mullane to close all nominations. **MOTION TO CLOSE ALL NOMINATIONS CARRIED. MOTION TO ELECT LISA MAZZELLA AS THE MODERATOR CARRIED.**

Moderator Lisa Mazzella stated the rules and the protocol of the meeting. Moderator Mazzella asked Town Clerk Antoinette Pancaro to read the call of the meeting.

Warning is hereby given to the electors and those entitled to vote at town meetings of the Town of North Stonington that the Annual Town/Budget Meeting shall be held at the following location on the date and time indicated for the purposes of transacting the business set forth below:

Location: North Stonington Education Center Media Center, 298 Norwich Westerly Road &
via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81957566293>
Meeting ID: 819 5756 6293
Date: May 1, 2023
Time: 6:30 PM

Only those attending the meeting in person will be able to vote. The meeting will be available for comment and viewing through Zoom at the link above, but those attending virtually will not be able to vote.

1. Shall the Town of North Stonington approve the estimates and recommendations of the Board of Finance with respect to the Annual Budget including General Government Operating: \$5,552,383; Redemption of Debt: \$1,382,949; and Capital: \$415,420; for fiscal year July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, in the total amount of \$7,350,752?

A **MOTION** made by Nick Mullane, seconded by Sarah Nelson to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

First Selectman Robert Carlson gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the proposed General Government budget, which contains a 4.38% increase from the current fiscal year budget, and the Capital budget, which contains a 1.66% increase from the current fiscal year budget. He emphasized that no funds were taken from the undesignated fund to balance the budget. First Selectman Carlson went through the Expense and Capital accounts in detail. Discussion and questions followed.

A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Mustapha Ratib to close discussion. **MOTION carried.**

2. Shall the Town of North Stonington approve the estimates and recommendations of the Board of Finance with respect to the annual Board of Education budget for fiscal year July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 in the amount of \$15,168,084?

A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Carl Johnston to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

Superintendent of Schools Troy Hopkins gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the upcoming fiscal year Board of Education budget, which is increasing by 4.41%. He indicated that school enrollment has not been declining. He noted that there will be an increase of students attending from other towns, with currently 18 out-of-district students increasing to 25 students in the next school year. Superintendent Hopkins discussed the achievements of students and staff and the three district goals for the North Stonington Public Schools that were adopted by the Board of Education: Safe, Valued, and Sense of Belonging; Innovative Instruction; and Transparent and Efficient. Discussion, questions, and comments followed.

A **MOTION** made by Nick Mullane, seconded by Shawn Murphy to close discussion. **MOTION carried.**

3. Shall the Town adopt the ordinance: “Sec. 19-24 Connecticut Homeowners Program Local Option” expanding the state program?

Assessor Darryl DelGrosso presented information about the municipal property tax relief program for homeowners mostly aged sixty-five years and over that meet the income requirements. He stated that there are currently 61 people on the program. Tax Relief Committee Chairman Louis Gingerella discussed the work of the committee in coming up with the proposed local option for the State program. Discussion and questions followed.

A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Nick Mullane to close discussion. **MOTION carried.**

4. Shall the Town adopt the ordinance: “Sec. 19-4 Waiver of Certain Taxes Due. The Town of North Stonington's tax collector is authorized to waive all taxes due in the amount of \$5 or less, provided the original tax bill did not exceed \$5 pursuant to G.S. § 12-144c.”?

A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Nick Mullane to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

There were no questions or comments.

A **MOTION** made by Carl Johnston, seconded by Shawn Murphy to close discussion. **MOTION carried.**

Moderator Lisa Mazzella asked Town Clerk Antoinette Pancaro to again read the question:

4. Shall the Town adopt the ordinance: “Sec. 19-4 Waiver of Certain Taxes Due. The Town of North Stonington's tax collector is authorized to waive all taxes due in the amount of \$5 or less, provided the original tax bill did not exceed \$5 pursuant to G.S. § 12-144c.”?

A **MOTION** made to approve the question by Brett Mastroianni, seconded by Nick Mullane. **MOTION to approve question carried.**

5. Shall the Town adopt the ordinance: “Sec. 19-5 Motor Vehicle Tax Delinquencies” creating an administrative fee for each delinquency?

A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Shawn Murphy to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

Administration & Finance Officer Christine Dias gave a brief explanation about the proposed ordinance.

A **MOTION** made to approve the question by Carl Johnston, seconded by Paula Woodward. **MOTION to approve question carried (with 1 opposed).**

6. Shall the Town adopt the ordinance: “Chapter 21 – CANNABIS. Article I. – PROHIBITION OF USE ON TOWN PROPERTY” including all sections and subsections?

A **MOTION** made by Sarah Nelson, seconded by Carl Johnston to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

Discussion and questions followed, with Administration & Finance Officer Christine Dias and First Selectman Robert Carlson answering questions and clarifying information. There were questions regarding exactly what types of products would be prohibited under this ordinance, and it was felt that more study and discussion were needed before this ordinance could be brought before the Town Meeting for a vote.

A **MOTION** made to table this item to the next Town Meeting by Shawn Murphy, seconded Bill Ricker.

Moderator Lisa Mazzella brought up a **Point of Order** regarding a motion to close discussion of this item.

A **MOTION** made to close discussion of this item by Nick Mullane, seconded by Carl Johnston. **MOTION carried. MOTION to table the question carried.**

7. Shall the Town approve amendments to the local ordinances Businesses: Vendors, Hawkers and Solicitors 6-192, 6-193 and 6-195 and Chapter 15: Peddlers and Solicitors as presented and made available at the Town Clerk's office at 40 Main Street, North Stonington, CT?

A **MOTION** made by Carl Johnston, seconded by Nick Mullane to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

Discussion and questions followed, with Administration & Finance Officer Christine Dias and Selectman Brett Mastroianni answering questions and clarifying information.

A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Sarah Nelson to close discussion. **MOTION carried.**

A **MOTION** made to approve the question by Bill Ricker, seconded by Nick Mullane. **MOTION to approve question carried (with 3 opposed).**

8. Shall the Town Clerk be allowed to publish an abbreviated version of the legal ad regarding the Notice of Passage of these ordinances?

A **MOTION** made by Carl Johnston, seconded by Bill Ricker to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

Town Clerk Antoinette Pancaro explained that the purpose of this item was to allow her in the case of long ordinances to publish a summary of the ordinances in the Notice of Passage newspaper legal ad, which will save the Town money in publishing costs.

A **MOTION** made by Carl Johnston, seconded by Will Mason to close discussion. **MOTION carried.**

A **MOTION** made to approve the question by Carl Johnson, seconded by Sarah Nelson. **MOTION to approve question carried.**

9. Shall the Town deobligate the Capital Project Funds Animal Control Vehicle in the amount of \$4,929.91, NSAA Ambulance/Stretcher Lease in the amount of \$954.49, NSVFC Breathing Apparatus Lease in the amount of \$0.74 and NSVFC Radio Replacement in the amount of \$1,456.88?

A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Carl Johnston to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

Administration & Finance Officer Christine Dias gave background information regarding this item.

A **MOTION** made by Sarah Nelson, seconded by Carl Johnston to close discussion. **MOTION carried.**

A **MOTION** made to approve the question by Carl Johnston, seconded by Will Mason. **MOTION to approve question carried.**

10. Shall the Town deobligate the Capital Project Fund Walking Floor Trailer in the amount of \$46,000?

A **MOTION** made by Bill Ricker, seconded by Brett Mastroianni to discuss the question. **MOTION carried.**

Administration & Finance Officer Christine Dias gave background information regarding this item and stated that this equipment was no longer needed.

A **MOTION** made to approve the question by Nick Mullane, seconded by Carl Johnston. **MOTION to approve question carried.**

Moderator Lisa Mazzella asked Town Clerk Antoinette Pancaro to read the Notice of Referendum at the end of the call of the meeting.

Notice of Referendum

Resolved, the Board of Selectmen, pursuant to its authority under Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-7, hereby removes questions 1, 2, & 3 to be considered at the May 1, 2023 Annual Town Meeting cited in the prior resolution, to a referendum to be held on May 15, 2023, the hours for voting at said referendum shall be established by vote at the May 1, 2023 Town Meeting, said hours are recommended by the Board of Selectmen to be 8:00 am-8:00 pm.

A **MOTION** made by Mustapha Ratib, seconded by Phil Mendolia to accept the hours of voting at the May 15, 2023 Referendum as recommended by the Board of Selectmen to be 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. **MOTION carried.**

A **MOTION** made by Nick Mullane, seconded by Shawn Murphy to adjourn the meeting. **MOTION carried.** Moderator Lisa Mazzella adjourned the Town Meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Antoinette Pancaro
Town Clerk
Town of North Stonington