

Town of
North Stonington
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
MINUTES
April 5, 2021

A Special Town Meeting of electors and citizens qualified to vote in Town Meetings of the Town of North Stonington, Connecticut was held at North Stonington Wheeler School Gymnatorium, 297 Norwich-Westerly Road, North Stonington, Connecticut on Monday, April 5, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. and online through Zoom.

Present: First Selectman Michael Urgo, Selectman Robert Carlson, and Selectwoman Nita Kincaid. Also present at the meeting were Planning, Development & Zoning Official Juliet Hodge, Administration & Finance Officer Christine Dias, IT Manager Jim Russell, Town Attorney Nick Kepple, Assessor Darryl DelGrosso, Republican Registrar of Voters Amy French, and Democratic Registrar of Voters Constance Berardi.

First Selectman Urgo called the meeting to order and then asked for a **MOTION** from the floor to elect a Moderator. A **MOTION** made by Dan Spring, seconded by Nicole Porter to elect Bill Ricker as the Moderator. A **MOTION** made by Dan Spring, seconded by Kathy Bond to close all nominations. **MOTION TO CLOSE ALL NOMINATIONS CARRIED. MOTION TO ELECT BILL RICKER AS MODERATOR CARRIED.**

Moderator Bill Ricker stated the rules of the meeting regarding both in-person and virtual participation. He noted that IT Manager Jim Russell will be recognizing those individuals participating from the virtual community audience who wish to speak at the meeting. Moderator Ricker also indicated that the method of voting will be a paper ballot vote on each question for in-person voting and one vote per electronic device from the virtual community audience.

Moderator Ricker 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 a Special Town 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 Wheeler School Gymnatorium, 297 Norwich Westerly Road &
via Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VLADRun4TIWBEycSVv_sgg
Webinar ID: 831 9131 9575
Date: April 5, 2021
Time: 6 PM

For the purpose of verifying registered voters, those wishing to attend the meeting online and vote online will need to pre-register through the link provided by 12 pm on April 5. Those who have the capability for online access are encouraged to attend virtually. In person attendance will be available following COVID-19 guidelines.

1. Shall the Town of North Stonington adopt ordinance as petitioned: “Sec. 2-62 Votes for the Board of Selectmen. In accordance with CGS 9-188, commencing with the regular town election of November 2, 2021 and at each regular town election thereafter, Electors may vote for the full number to be elected to the Board of Selectmen, one person for the Office of First Selectman and two persons for The Board of Selectmen” and for the Town Clerk to be allowed to publish an abbreviated version of the legal ad regarding the Notice of Passage of the ordinance?

There were questions regarding the language of the call and the language of the petition regarding this ordinance. It was requested that the Town Clerk read the language of the petition that was submitted. Shawn Murphy also felt that the second part of the call regarding the Town Clerk being able to publish an abbreviated version of the Notice of Ordinance Passage legal ad should be a separate question because he did not want the motion to fail because someone did not like an abbreviated version to be published. A **MOTION TO AMEND** the call to have the entire petition read as the call made by Bob Carlson, seconded by Lou Steinbrecher. Vote by a show of hands and via computer: **MOTION carried.** Town Clerk Antoinette Pancaro read the full language of the petition:

“We the undersigned hereby petition the North Stonington Board of Selectmen to warn a Town meeting for the purpose of considering and acting on the following question:

Shall an ordinance be adopted concerning votes for the Board of Selectman as follows:

In accordance with CGS 9-188, commencing with the regular Town election of November 2, 2021 and at each regular town election thereafter, Electors may vote for the full number to be elected to the Board of Selectmen, one person for the office of First Selectman and two persons for the office of Selectman.

Due to the rule of minority representation, § 9-167a of the Connecticut General Statutes, no more than two members of the Board of Selectmen may be members of the same political party. In the event that members of the same party receive the higher number of votes for both First Selectman and two Selectman positions, one Selectman position will be filled by the highest vote getter who is not a member of the majority party.”

Brett Mastroianni represented the petitioners in giving background information regarding this matter. Discussion and questions followed. There was a question regarding whether it was legal to change the petition as to what was presented. First Selectman Mike Uργο explained that this matter was discussed in great detail and that the Town Attorney would not have allowed the change if it was not legal. Town Attorney Nick Kepple clarified that it was legal to change the question and that the majority of the last section of the petition just states the law, specifically that Connecticut General Statutes Section 9-167a must be incorporated into the decision. More discussion followed. Vote by paper ballot was 70 YES, 52 NO, 2 ABSECTIONS. **MOTION carried.**

2. Shall the Town of North Stonington adopt the following ordinance: “Sec. 2-3 - Required Number of Signatures for Petition. The required number of signatures for a petition will increase to a minimum of 50 in all cases unless more signatures are required per State Statute.” and for the Town Clerk to be allowed to publish an abbreviated version of the legal ad regarding the Notice of Passage of the ordinance?

A **MOTION** made by Lou Steinbrecher, seconded by Kathy Bond to move the call. **MOTION carried.** A brief overview was given by First Selectman Mike Uργο. He stated that the purpose of this ordinance was to increase the minimum number of signatures for a petition to make it more meaningful to move a petition forward and not to take away anyone's rights. This increase in signatures was allowed per State statute, and this matter was voted on by the Board of Selectmen. A **MOTION** made by Dave McCord, seconded by Dan Spring to move the discussion forward. Discussion and questions followed. Vote by paper ballot was 60 YES, 55 NO. **MOTION carried.**

3. Shall the Town of North Stonington approve amendments to the local ordinances 2-60 Municipal Building Committee and 2-76 Finance Board as presented and made available at the Town Clerk's office at 40 Main Street, North Stonington, CT and for the Town Clerk to be allowed to publish an abbreviated version of the legal ad regarding the Notice of Passage of the amendments?

A **MOTION** made by Lou Steinbrecher, seconded by Dave McCord to move the call. **MOTION carried.** A **MOTION** made by Dave McCord, seconded by Kathy Bond to accept the call for discussion. **MOTION carried.** First Selectman Mike Uργο gave a background overview of the ordinance amendments. He explained that it was just clean-up language for the first ordinance regarding the Municipal Building Committee. For the second ordinance regarding the Finance Board, the amendment deals with balancing the Alternates on the Board of Finance, so that the Alternates are not the same political party. He clarified that it was already voted on that the Alternates will serve four-year terms and the amendment just cleans up the language in the ordinance. First Selectman Uργο also indicated that the ordinance amendment dictates that if there is an Alternate vacancy, the successor should be of the same political party as the vacating Alternate member, so that it continues the balance on the Board of Finance. Discussion and questions followed. Vote by paper ballot on the question was 25 YES, 81 NO, 1 ABSTENTION. **MOTION failed.**

4. Shall the Town sell the 1993 Peterbilt Tanker/Pumper used by the North Stonington Volunteer Fire Company?

A **MOTION** made by Dan Spring, seconded by Dave McCord to move the call. **MOTION carried.** First Selectman Mike Uργο gave background information and welcomed discussion on this matter. Discussion and questions followed. Fire Chief Steinhart gave background information about the fire truck. More discussion followed. Vote by paper ballot on the question was 79 YES, 25 NO, 1 ABSTENTION. **MOTION carried.**

5. Shall the Town approve the fee schedules for the Building Department as presented?

A **MOTION** made by Lou Steinbrecher, seconded by Shawn Murphy to move the call. **MOTION carried unanimously.** Planning, Development & Zoning Official Juliet Hodge gave background information regarding the proposed changes to the current building fees. She explained that there has been no fee increase in 26 years. She noted that the increase in building fees would impact the larger commercial industrial projects rather than small projects involving residential homeowners and small businesses. She indicated that the user pays for the service rather than all taxpayers.

Discussion and questions followed. Vote by paper ballot on the question was 75 YES, 29 NO, 1 ABSENTION. **MOTION carried.**

6. Shall the Town of North Stonington approve an additional appropriation in the amount of \$35,000 for the radios for the North Stonington Volunteer Fire Company as recommended by the Board of Finance?

A **MOTION** made by Dan Spring, seconded by Nicole Porter to move the call. **MOTION carried.** First Selectman Mike Urgo gave background information and explained that this item and the next item were items that the Board of Selectmen moved forward through the additional appropriation process to the Board of Finance to end up at the Town Meeting. First Selectman Urgo explained that the funds would be paid for out of the undesignated fund, otherwise known as the “rainy day” fund. He clarified that the reason this item came through this process rather than going through the budget process is that the fire department needs the radios now and that there is a very good possibility the Town may receive grant funding for this expenditure. First Selectman Urgo explained that this expenditure was brought forward by the Board of Selectmen as recommended by the Board of Finance. Discussion and questions followed. Vote by paper ballot on the question was 83 YES, 24 NO. **MOTION carried.**

7. Shall the Town approve an additional appropriation in the amount of \$60,325 for financial software as recommended by the Board of Finance?

A **MOTION** made by Lou Steinbrecher and seconded to move the call. First Selectman Mike Urgo gave background information about the financial software regarding its features, expenses, and cost savings to the Town. Discussion and questions followed. Administration & Finance Officer Christine Dias explained that this software will help to streamline financial and human resource functions and it will save a lot of time in not having to do things manually. More discussion followed. Vote by paper ballot to approve the question was 47 YES, 54 NO. **MOTION failed.**

A **MOTION** made by Kathy Bond, seconded by Lou Steinbrecher to adjourn the meeting. **MOTION carried.** Moderator Bill Ricker adjourned the Special Town Meeting at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Antoinette Pancaro
Town Clerk
Town of North Stonington