

October 8, 2014

The Stonington Board of Selectmen held a special meeting on this date at Stonington High School at 6:00 p.m. Present were First Selectman Edward Haberek, Selectman George Crouse and Selectmen Rob Simmons. Also present were members of the public and press.

(1) **Call to Order**

Mr. Haberek called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

(2) **Approval of the Minutes**

A motion was made by Mr. Crouse, seconded by Mr. Simmons and voted unanimously to approve the September 24, 2014 Board of Selectmen regular meeting minutes.

(3) **Commendation**

Selectman Simmons presented a Commendation to former Selectman Glee McAnanly's family thanking her for her devoted services to the Town of Stonington.

(4) **Comments from the Public**

None

(5) **Correspondence**

- Mr. Haberek took in correspondence from Ray DiPaola expressing his interest in serving on the Police Commission.
- Mr. Haberek took in correspondence from Henri Gourd expressing his interest in serving on the Police Commission.
- Mr. Haberek took in correspondence signed by many of the residents of Edythe K. Richmond Homes requesting that the Board of Selectmen not reappoint Jim Kelley to the Stonington Housing Authority.
- Mr. Haberek took in correspondence from Alisa Morrison expressing her opposition to charging for field use for in-town youth sports.

(6) **Public Hearing – Discussion of proposed athletic field fees**

- Leanne Theodore, Youth and Family Services Administrator gave the Selectmen a breakdown of the usage of the fields by high school sports, town recreation, youth organizations and outside groups. Ms. Theodore stated that outside groups are already paying a fee for usage which will go towards field maintenance.
- Deborah Dempsey asked if Leanne could go over the towns which were used that Joe put together because they were not the surrounding towns. She stated that it did not consist of Groton, it did not consist of Waterford and it did not consist of Ledyard.
- Mike Hallisey, Stonington Soccer Club President also representing Stonington Youth Lacrosse and Youth Football, stated Stonington youth organizations are the recreation program for K-8 and the town doesn't pay for anything. Mr. Hallisey also stated that the public project was voted on by the people and he doesn't understand why K-8 will get penalized for using the fields.
- Ms. Dempsey, President for all of the Girls Stonington Seals Lacrosse teams stated that she is specifically concerned how Stonington Youth Organizations have been pointed out as the organizations that need to pay

for using and maintaining these fields. She stated that Stonington Youth Football, Stonington Seals Lacrosse and the other youth organizations are run by volunteer Stonington parents who work all day and rush home to coach these teams that are made up of Stonington kindergartens through Stonington middle school 8th grade. Ms. Dempsey also stated that we know how important it is to our kids to teach them how to be team players, to give them confidence and to teach respect. Ms. Dempsey further stated that most other towns have Recreation Departments that would manage these teams and offer these sports and Stonington did not so our organizations were established. Ms. Dempsey stated that a fee structure should be for outside non-profit agencies.

- Jan Obrey, Board member for Stonington Youth Football stated that their fear as parents is that if we start adding field fees those organizations that were paying to play already will have to go up because these organizations cannot take on any more financial burden. She stated that as a treasurer of the Stonington Youth Football she has seen more and more kids not being able to play because of the player fees already in place. Ms. Obrey also stated that parents have asked them for scholarship money. She stated that more and more kids are hitting that scholarship fund that they put together. Ms. Obrey further stated that adding additional fees on top of that will only make those fees go higher or less kids are going to play and we're going to have more trouble in town because these kids are not going to have anything to do.
- Bill Sternberg stated that he is a member of the Fields Task Force but is speaking on his own opinions. Mr. Sternberg stated that the current proposal has some significant flaws. He also stated that the proposed sliding fee structure makes no sense to him. He stated that the price goes up as the volume goes up. Mr. Sternberg also stated that administering the proposed sliding fee scale or any sliding fee scale is going to be burdensome and it is inevitably going to lead to gaming the fee schedule. He stated if there are going to be fees, you should stick with a simple hourly rate. Mr. Sternberg further stated that for the outside organizations, clearly we should be charging fees. He stated that in any event, for Community Youth Sports Organizations, an exemption from fees is going to turn out to be the simplest solution.
- Paul Sartor, Chairman of the Athletic Fields Task Force but speaking as a private citizen, stated that the task force never recommended these fees. He stated that we have a community that relies heavily on volunteers and there is a tremendous value that parent volunteers provide. Mr. Sartor stated that we need to look at the fee schedule as a library model more than a yellow bag model. He stated there should be fees for outside organizations and for-profit organizations and everyone should pay a little bit for the lights if they use them, other than that, let the kids play.
- Mr. Simmons stated that he spent 2 hours being brought up to date on the fields. Mr. Simmons stated that he thinks it's important to address the issue of how we maintain these so they don't deteriorate 4, 5 or 6 years from now. Mr. Simmons stated that he was curious about the minutes of the July 17, 2014 Athletic Task Force meeting. He stated that on the

second page it said the task force agrees with the recreation commission's recommendation for the field fees and made a recommendation for their approval. Mr. Simmons further stated it sounds to me as if there has been something of a change of heart. He asked if this is accurate.

- Mr. Sartor stated that is not accurate.
- Mr. Simmons asked if what is reflected here did not reflect accurately of the decision of the Task Force.
- Mr. Sartor stated that they did not move and they did not motion.
- Mike Crowley stated he appreciates the work these people do. He stated that the Recreation Commission was tasked to get a fee schedule together and this was the fairest thing they could come up with. He stated it wouldn't kill parents to pay \$20.00 per kid, per season. Mr. Crowley stated everyone should pay their fair share.
- Mr. Hallisey asked if \$20.00 per kid was K-12.
- Chris Deveau, Stonington Youth Football Vice President, stated that as a league, he would be more than happy to show them their books. He stated that they are a sport that needs lights 3 times per week. Mr. Deveau asked if they would be looking at field fees on top of light fees.
- Mr. Simmons stated that this is a hearing this is not the last stage of the process it's just part of the process. He stated the process began with the Recreation Commission and the Task Force putting their heads together to try and figure out how we can generate some revenue over and above what is normally appropriated by the Board of Finance for the long term maintenance of these fields. He stated if we don't engage in a long-term maintenance of the fields they will deteriorate, we will have to pay later so if we don't pay now, we'll have to pay later. Mr. Simmons also stated that if 95% of users are Stonington kids, maybe we need to look at the Board of Finance opening a revenue stream for long term maintenance and care for the fields. He stated that if we're trying to fund it through 5% of outsiders, that is not going to get the job done. Mr. Simmons further stated that we are not ready for town meeting yet and if there is a concern among the people who worked together then the matter should be tabled.
- Mr. Crouse stated that he thought the lights should be paid for.
A motion was made by Mr. Simmons and seconded by Mr. Crouse to table this matter. Discussion: Mr. Simmons stated that everyone has done a good job bringing this forward and this will give us some time to figure this out. Mr. Crouse stated that both viewpoints have merit. The vote was 3-0 in favor of tabling the matter.

(7) **Appointments**

Stonington Housing Authority

A motion was made by Mr. Simmons, seconded by Mr. Crouse and voted unanimously to appoint Janice Bogue as a tenant commissioner on the Stonington Housing Authority.

(8) **New Business**

Exemption for Horses and Ponies Resolution

A motion was made by Mr. Crouse and seconded by Mr. Simmons to adopt the Resolution. Discussion: Mr. Simmons stated this is a classic case of where we spend a huge amount of time and effort to harass a whole bunch of

horse and pony owners for \$212.00. He stated that for the time that the tax collector, the assessor and the town hall staff spends finding the horses and ponies, checking them out, assessing them and collecting \$212.00 it costs us \$2,012.00. The vote was 3-0 in favor of adopting the resolution.

K-12 School Building Committee Recommendation to Hire Architect

Rob Marseglia, Chairman of the K-12 School Building Committee, stated that over the summer they put together a Request for Proposal. He stated that they submitted that out to bid and 9 architects responded. He stated of those 9, 5 were interviewed and reference checks were done on 2 of them. Mr. Marseglia further stated that Drummery, for technical reasons, was far superior than any other architects they interviewed or did reference checks on. A motion was made by Mr. Crouse, seconded by Mr. Simmons and voted unanimously for Drummery Rosane Anderson, LLC to enter a contract for school modernization services.

(9) **Comments from the Public**

Mr. Sternberg stated that he believes that the Board of Finance already has a funding line for field maintenance.

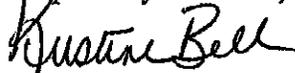
(10) **Comments from the Selectmen**

None

(11) **Adjourn**

There being no further business to come before this Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kristine Bell

Recording Secretary