

**TOWN OF STONINGTON**  
**BOARD OF FINANCE MEETING MINUTES**  
**Stonington Police Department Meeting Room**  
**Wednesday, December 06, 2023**  
**7:15 PM**

A meeting of the Board of Finance was held on this date at the Stonington Police Department Meeting Room. Members present were Michael Fauerbach, Deborah Norman, Lynn Young, Chairman Tim O'Brien, Bill Sternberg, Chris Johnson and David Brown.

Mr. O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited

Public Comments:

There were several individuals who spoke in support of funding for the Stonington Middle School air conditioning project:

Katie Quinlin, of 152, Wheeler Rd, Stonington, spoke in favor of the air conditioning in the Middle School, citing how important it is to push the matter through. She also mentioned that it is to be considered for the integrity of the building as well. In her opinion as long as the Town keeps pushing the project further out the costs will only be going up. She also stated that this is the only school in the district that has no AC. Some facts that she mentioned were that on the hottest days the building's temperature could reach up to 90 degrees, causing early dismissal and the kitchen being unable to serve hot lunch.

Meredith Kyle, of 66 Jeremy Hill Rd, Stonington, spoke in favor of the request as well, citing that the main situation was the building reaching high temperatures causing the kids to have half of day at school, parents having to leave work to pick them up, stating that it is really important to keep temperature control. Kids have a hard time focusing therefore it affects the learning process. She also states that she herself does a lot of adult education and makes sure the temperature is also set on the cold settings because it is easier for students to stay awake and focus.

Ashley Tewell, of 113 Whitaker Drive, Stonington, also spoke in favor of the matter. First, she stated that there are no public email addresses for the BOF members, to allow parents and interested parties to make their concerns known to the BOF, without having to come to a meeting which isn't always possible. She said there are many parents that would like to speak in favor of the HVAC at the Middle School but had no means to do so, for the lack of BOF email addresses. She also mentioned that when the matter was brought to the Board years ago, she came forward to speak in favor at the time as well. Ever since then costs have tripled. It is something that has to be done and the Board needs to figure out a way to make it happen. It isn't about only making the classrooms cooler; it is also about providing better quality of air. Right now, we have air conditioning units that move with students who need it for health concerns. Teachers were taking pictures of thermostats that were reaching 90 degrees in the classrooms, causing no hot lunch and early dismissals.

The Chairman stated that he does understand how frustrating it can be, for the public to not be able to reach the Board with its concerns, but he also mentioned that correspondence from concerned parents was received via the Superintendent's office which forwarded to the Board. He also explained that generally the BOF only receives comments at meeting and doesn't go into lengthy discussions with the speakers.

#### Election of Officers:

The Chairman noted that with the re-composition of the Board after the November election it is time to elect a new Chairman and Secretary. The Chairman noted the Term of each appointment will be for the next 2 years. Mr. O'Brien asked the Board Members for nominations for the Chairman position. Ms. Young nominated Mr. O'Brien; Mr. Sternberg seconded. Mr. O'Brien asked if there were any other nominations for Chairman, there were none. Mr. O'Brien called for a motion to elect Mr. O'Brien, as Chairman, Ms. Young motioned; Mr. Sternberg seconded. Mr. O'Brien called for a vote on the motion, the motion passed 6 to 1, with Mr. Johnson voting no.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Board Members for nominations for the Secretary position. Mr. O'Brien nominated Ms. Young; Ms. Norman seconded. Mr. O'Brien asked if there were any other nominations for Secretary, there were none. Mr. O'Brien called for a motion to elect Ms. Young, as Secretary, Ms. Norman motioned, Mr. O'Brien seconded. Mr. O'Brien called for a vote on the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Previous Minutes – The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the October 4, 2023 meeting minutes. Ms. Young motioned and Mr. Fauerbach seconded. The Chairman called for a vote on the motion, the motion passed 6 to 0, with Mr. Sternberg abstaining.

#### Bid Waiver Requests:

1. The Chairman called for a motion to approve a bid waiver request from the Town IT Manager, to purchase 51 HP Workstations, 4 HP Laptops and 3 Microsoft Surface Tablets, along with associated accessories, from CDW-G, for a total of \$93,266.87. The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the request. Mr. Johnson motioned, and Ms. Norman seconded. The Chairman called for discussion, Roger Kizer the Town IT Manager, explained the purpose of the request, which is to refresh computers throughout all Town departments over the next two years. He also noted that the contract pricing is off the Sourcewell bid service.

Mr. Brown had a question about the "split purchase", a term Mr. Kizer had used when explaining his request. Mr. Kizer explained that the purchases will be split across two fiscal years so the amount for the financial burden to the Town is not too heavy in any one year. He also, explained that it makes more sense to fund it over two years because to replace all computers in one fiscal year would be a huge strain on the IT department. Mr. Brown asked how long computers last, and how old the current computers are. Mr. Kizer responded the computers should last 6 to 7 years, and that the current computers are 8 years old.

The Chairman called for a vote to approve the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

2. The Chairman called for a motion to approve a bid waiver request from the Director of Public

Works, for a bid waiver to purchase road salt from Morton Salt Inc, for \$99.88 per ton. Ms. Norman motioned and Mr. Fauerbach seconded. Deputy Public Works Direct, Tom Curioso, explained that the product is not just rock salt, it is salt treated with sodium chloride so that it continues to be effective at melting ice at below 32 degrees, down to about 17 degrees, it is also treated with molasses to help stop the bounce and scatter over the roads. It is a great anti icer. The \$99.88 per ton was the lowest price that was available to the Town, which includes delivery to the salt shed.

The Chairman called for a vote to approve the motion; motion passed unanimously.

3. The Chairman called for a motion to approve the bid waiver request from the Recreation Administrator to purchase a robot for field painting from TinyMobileRobots US, LLC for \$38,630.00. Mr. Sternberg motioned; Ms. Young seconded. Tom Curioso and Steve McNair, the Fields Supervisor spoke to the merits and capabilities of the machine. The Board Members asked several questions about the functionality and reliability of the robot, that Mr. Curioso, and Mr. McNair were able to address. The machine is extremely efficient, and will save approximately 250-man hours in labor per year. Mr. Curioso also noted that the Recreation Department has the funds to purchase the robot, that will come from the revenue generated from participation fees in the Recreation Activities special revenue fund.

The Chairman called for a vote to approve the motion; motion passed unanimously.

Requests for Additional Appropriations: (none)

Line-item Transfer Requests:

Request from the BOE Director of Finance to transfer \$254,000.00 from a/c #4022023-88290, SMS Ductless AC, to a/c #4022023-88118, Boiler Replacement. The Chairman called for a motion to approve the request, Ms. Young motioned, Mr. Fauerbach seconded. Alisha Strickling, the BOE Director of Finance, explained the request is for the High School boilers. It was explained that the boilers are 20 years old. The average life of a boiler is between 18 to 20. There was a major issue with one of the boilers last year which cost \$103,000.00 to replace the outer jacket, and it took almost 3 months for the parts to come in. This is something that we can't afford to be down. This matter is of the highest priority. The boilers being considered are highly efficient ones, meaning that their lifespan is shorter, somewhere between 15-18 years.

The Chairman called for a vote in favor of the line transfer request, the request passed unanimously.

Discussion/Request for Board of Finance funding for the SMS Air Conditioning project:

Ms. Stripling, the BOE Director of Finance, and Mary Anne Butler, the Superintendent, explained that the Town has an opportunity to apply for a grant to help fund the air conditioning project at the Stonington Middle School, and explained that the Town is eligible for 31.78% grant reimbursement from the State of the total cost of the project. However, they further explained that the BOF would have to commit to the funding of the entire project immediately, because the grant application has to be submitted to the State by December 31, 2023, with the commitment from the Town to fund the project. The application came out in September and the education department has been working on the application since then. The Education Department has been directed by

the BOE, to bring a professional proposal to the BOF for its consideration. Ms. Butler noted that they are still waiting on the final budget figures from the engineers, but believes the final cost will range from 7.6 to 8 million dollars. Ms. Stripling, Ms. Butler, and Mr. Anderson, the BOE Facilities Director explained some of the finer points of the grant and the project to the Board. One of the things noted during the presentation is that the CT Department of Public Health will be setting new guidelines about temperature requirements in school buildings, and that without the new HVAC system the school will not be able to meet those requirements, which could possibly result in the Town being fined. The Chairman acknowledged the importance of the project, but explained that, at this late date there is no possibility of approving the project by December 31<sup>st</sup>. A project of this magnitude would have to be funded by a bond issuance, which would have to go to Town Meeting, which wouldn't be possible in less than two months at the minimum. Mr. Fauerbach asked if the BOE could submit a "partial" application with funding being contingent on the Town being able to bond for the project. Ms. Strickling responded that it was all or nothing, that the CT Department of Education won't even review an incomplete and final application. The Chairman also noted that, the Town needs to pay down more debt before it can bond another project, because the Town doesn't currently have \$10 million in bonding capacity. He also noted, that even if the BOE applies for the grant, there are no guarantees that it will be awarded any funding. In the meantime, what can be done is to use portable units but being careful not to hit the capacity of the building, in regards to the power. Right at this time the Town does not have the capacity to fund the project, but the BOF will continue to dialogue with the BOE regarding the matter to see what can be done in the future. As of today, there are simply no funds available. The Chairman stated that this was a good discussion about the matter.

#### Discussion/Approval of BOF regular meeting schedule and time for 2024:

The Chairman explained to the two new members, that at the conclusion of each calendar year, every Town Board has to approve a meeting day and time for their regular monthly meetings in the succeeding year. He mentioned that there were discussions before about the matter in a previous meeting but that he wanted to wait for the new members to be seated before deciding on a day and time for calendar 2024. The Chairman explained that for 2023 the meeting time is the first Wednesday of each month at 7:15pm, but that for 2024 he wanted to open the matter up to discussion. The Chairman inquired if the Board would like to continue to meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month and at what time. The consensus of the Board was that the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month, at 7:00, at the police meeting room would be the meeting time for calendar 2024.

The Chairman called for a motion to approve the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month, at 7:00, at the police meeting room to be the meeting time for calendar 2024. Ms. Young motioned; Mr. Johnson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The Chairman also noted that the January 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting will have to be a special meeting because the meeting calendar has to be approved 30 days before the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, which this was not.

#### Discussion/Approval of fiscal 24/25 budget meeting calendar dates and times:

The Chairman called for a motion to approve the fiscal 24/25 budget meeting calendar as presented by the Director of Finance. Ms. Young motioned; Mr. Johnson seconded. The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. Mr. Fauerbach commented that he will be out of the country on the

first deliberation date. The Chairman noted that there are three days calendared for deliberations, so we may be able to move dates later on, but for now he suggested leaving it as is. The Chairman called for a vote to approve the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Discussion of Current Debt Service Ratios:

In anticipation of the earlier discussion surrounding possible bonding for the SMS air conditioning project, the Director of Finance had prepared, and included in the BOF meeting packet, a current analysis of the Town's bonded debt ratios for the BOF Member's consideration. The Chairman asked all the members to review the ratios, and opined that in the next 2- or 3-years outstanding debt should decrease to a point where the Town can consider bonding for another project without effecting the Town's AAA bond rating, or violating the Town's internal debt policy. One of the members inquired as to what a "debt refunding" is, the Director of Finance explained it's when a Town refinances current outstanding debt at more advantageous interest rate, reducing total debt service going forward, sort of like refinancing a home mortgage.

#### Correspondence:

- Memo from Assessor updating members on Supplemental Motor Vehicle assessment.
- The Chairman mentioned that he received a letter that was submitted to the Board in favor of the SMS air conditioning project. It was received right before this meeting. The Chairman called to motion to add the item to the agenda. Ms. Young motioned; Ms. Norman seconded. The Chairman called for a vote on the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

#### Appointment of Departmental Liaison Assignments for calendar 2024:

The Chairman called for a motion to add liaison assignments for 2024 to the agenda. Ms. Young motioned; Ms. Norman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### The Liaison roles were assigned as follow:

Education: Lynn Young

Police: Bill Sternberg

WPCA: Lynn Young

General Government: Michael Fauerbach

Highway (DPW): Deborah Norman

Technology: Chris Jonhson

Retirement Board/Pension: Tim O'Brien

Capital Improvement Program (CIP): Lynn Young

Human Services/Non-profits: Deborah Norman

Mystic River Boathouse Park: David Brown

The Chairman called for the Liaison reports:

CIP: Ms. Young informed the Board that there is a CIP committee meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss 2024/25 CIP budget requests.

WPCA: Nothing to report

BOE: The BOE Facilities Director is leaving the Town for a different position, so the BOE is currently recruiting to fulfill the position.

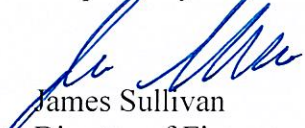
Retirement Board: The Chairman reported that defined benefit pension plan is funded now at about 83.2%, somewhere in that range. It is down from 85% in prior year due to the decline in stock market, but the Town is still in the top third of Towns in the State of Connecticut for funded ratios.

General Gov't: Collections for real estate are at 55.1%, almost exactly where we were this time last year.

There were no more liaison reports.

The Chairman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Young motioned; Ms. Norman seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



James Sullivan  
Director of Finance