

June 3, 2020

The Stonington Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and WPCA held a joint special virtual meeting on this date at 5:00 p.m. This meeting was also streamed on Facebook live and was available via audio on a conference line. Board of Selectmen members in attendance included First Selectman Danielle Chesebrough, Selectwoman June Strunk and Selectwoman Debbie Motycka Downie. WPCA members in attendance included Lynn Young, Peter Balestracci, James Petrosky and Charles Sheehan. Board of Finance members in attendance included. Tim O'Brien, Glenn Frishman, Lynn Young, Deborah Norman, Bob Statchen and David Motherway. Public and press were able to view via Facebook live as well as audio through a conference call.

- Mr. Pete Balestracci, WPCA Acting Chairperson, called the meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m.
- Mr. Tim O'Brien, Board of Finance Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.
- Ms. Chesebrough, First Selectman, called meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

Mr. Balestracci made opening comments and point of order that after the summary by the Director, Board Members of the WPCA would have the opportunity to make additional comments.

Executive Director Doug Nettleton presented the request by the WPCA to the BOF and the BOS to support the WPCA's request that the Town of Stonington secure a Bond in the amount of \$10,000,000 to be used to for Improvements at the Wastewater Treatment Facilities and Collection System.

WPCA Board Members Lynn Young, Chuck Sheehan, and James Petrosky all offer comments in support of the request.

Ms. Chesebrough made the following statement:

Before making a motion for the Board of Selectmen to consider, I would like note that while no one wants to be in this position, it is the situation we are in. The sewers are a time sensitive critical need that impact residents' daily lives, our ability to attract new investments, and play an important role in keeping our waterways clean-which is important for both recreations, as well as our local fishing community. It's difficult for representatives in a town having a town meeting form of government to deal confidently, and comfortably, with the new procedures at our disposal. I don't believe anyone here takes this discussion or decision lightly. The taxpayers in Stonington themselves did not vote us in with the understanding we would be making such decisions, but as elected leaders on both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance we have a responsibility to conduct business and protect our community during an emergency of unique character and of uncertain duration. The Governor put these rules into place to be used where there is a matter of public importance. With them, he put also into place procedures that are designed to be substitutes for the way action is taken at town meeting and the way people participate. Through a public hearing we will still be able to consult with the electorate and receive their comments before acting.

A motion was made by Ms. Downie, seconded by Ms. Strunk and voted unanimously to support the WPCA recommendation to hold a public hearing on the 10-million-dollar sewer infrastructure bond.

In discussion, Ms. Strunk noted that an analysis of the cost per household is around \$53.00 per \$310,000 home. Ms. Downie stated that the upgrades are not just for those who are sewer users but it also benefits the environmental quality. With no further discussion, the motion carried.

Finance Board Member Ms. Young commented that if the bond can be done, the WPCA can finally get proactive, something in her 10 years on the WPCA board has not been able to be accomplished. Ms. Young noted that emergencies are responded to as they occur, and many of the systems that are supposed to be run in duplicate are not, and basically temporary solutions address emergencies on three plants, 17 pumping stations and an antiquated collection system.

Ms. Young also spoke of the 2010 \$18.3 million bond to upgrade the Town's three plants, including major upgrades to the equipment in the Mystic plant. However, the State of CT reduced the amount of flow that was permitted to go into the Mystic plant which brought on having to redo the diversion to the Borough. Ms. Young noted that from the time you get approval, to the time you bond and get a shovel in the ground is years. In that period of time the groundwater table rose significantly and the plants started to get flows that could not have been anticipated and that is the reason the bond money didn't last for a particularly long time. Ms. Young also addressed the lead times of equipment which can be upwards of six months or more and in an emergency situation this could be critical, all the more reason to act now. Additionally, Ms. Young mentioned the nearly \$1 million set aside in the Capital Improvement Budget for the WPCA which could be returned if the bond were to be done.

It was Mr. Frishman's opinion that building one plant to serve all the needs is a conversation that needs to take place but right now passing the bond is absolutely imperative.

Mr. Fauerbach commented that he was hearing two things from the WPCA Representatives, one is they are backed up against a wall with infrastructure that's failing and will continue fail, therefore inaction is not an option at this point. The other issue is the three facilities the Town has at present is not sustainable nor efficient and that too needs to be addressed. Mr. Fauerbach questioned whether there was any money in this proposed allocation to hire an external firm to come in and lay out plant consolidation options? Ms. Young felt that was something that money would have to be spent on.

Mr. Statchen commented that he was supportive of the bond and appreciated all the work everyone had done, his concern is with the fact that if it does get approved it won't go to the voters and this increases the responsibility for due diligence as far as understanding the transaction and the exact amount. Mr. Statchen inquired if this was all an internal assessment or if an outside report was available. Ms. Young replied that it is very expensive to perform that sort of analysis and the bond is needed to even get to do that, adding that the information has been collected from constant discussions with the operators of the plant and Director Nettleton. Ms. Young asked Director Nettleton what additional information he might be able provide for the hearing. Director Nettleton stated he would present as clear a picture as possible.

Chairman O'Brien added that for the years he has been on the Board of Finance and Mr. Frishman could attest as well, this has been an ongoing concern addressed every year. It is a question of when the Town had enough flexibility to get a bond together, as the schools did take priority there. This internal assessment has been an ongoing study that has been done by the WPCA and Director Nettleton to continually identify what is needed. While the Town has tried to band aid the situation with CIP funds, the time has come to need to do something soon.

Mr. Statchen motioned to support the WPCA recommendations to hold a virtual public hearing on the \$10 million sewer infrastructure bond that was discussed. Mr. Frishman seconded. All members were in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Balestracci requested a motion from the WPCA Board to conduct a Public Hearing on June 16, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. Motion by Chuck Sheehan, second by Jim Petrosky. Vote 4-0 Motion passes.

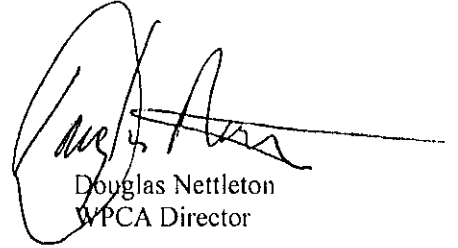
The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Balestracci, Ms. Chesebrough and Mr. O'Brien at 6:13 p.m.



Stacey Haskell
Recording Secretary



Jill A Senior
Recording Secretary Board of Finance



Douglas Nettleton
WPCA Director