

Joint Meeting
Town of North Stonington
Board of Selectmen Board of Education Board of Finance
Wheeler High School Shaw Media Center
January 11, 2017
6:00 p.m.

DRAFT

A joint meeting of the Boards of Selectmen, Education, and Finance was held on Wednesday, January 11, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. in the Wheeler High School Shaw Media Center. Present for the Board of Selectmen was Mr. Donahue, Mr. Mullane, and Mr. Murphy; present for the Board of Education was Mr. Carlson, Dr. Robert, Mr. McCord, Mr. Mathwich, and Mrs. Wagner (6:57 p.m.); and present for the Board of Finance was Mrs. Howell, Mr. Pelland, Mr. Main, Mr. Steinhart, Mr. Ratib, and Mr. Testa (6:13 p.m.).

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Mr. Main.

2. The Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

On motion by Mr. Steinhart, seconded by Mr. Pelland, the Board of Finance voted unanimously to move Agenda item 4 to Agenda item 3.

3. Town Grand List Update and Anticipated Changes – a. Tax Assessor DelGrosso – Mr. DelGrosso said the grand list is not done yet; he commented that February would be a better month for this meeting. There was a mix up with motor vehicles regarding the school busses that took some time to get straightened out. The money went to Old Saybrook instead; the money just came in today for them. The grand list went up approximately 1% or about five million dollars. We are starting to get some commercial properties on Route 2 and he explained. Some residential properties are going up near Lake of Isles with affordable housing. Questions were asked and answered. Mr. DelGrosso had further comment. He said the real estate market is improving. There was further discussion. Further questions were asked and answered. There was discussion.

Mr. Murphy said there are some companies that have chosen North Stonington to locate to bringing in hundreds of employees. These announcements will be forthcoming from the companies themselves. He explained there are programs in place for tax abatements and he explained. He had further comment. Questions were asked and answered.

On a motion by Mr. Steinhart, seconded by Mr. Pelland, the Board voted unanimously to move Item 7 to Item 4.

4. Board of Selectmen - a. Current Year Performance – Mr. Murphy spoke of some capital items. Mr. Murphy said we have lost \$33,770 from ECS funding for this current fiscal year as well as roughly \$48,000 in LOCIP funding. He said about \$96,000 was lost in projects as well. He said there are towns that are in worse shape than we are. Mr. Murphy explained that although you get an allocation for LOCIP, it sits in Hartford and

reimbursement is made when you make the expense. He had further explanation. Questions were asked and answered.

b. Grant Revenue Outlook – He has some concerns about our water line project and elaborated.

c. Anticipated Changes – Mr. Murphy anticipates a significant increase in the ambulance association budget to provide full service to the town. He had further explanation.

On a motion by Mr. Main, seconded by Mr. Ratib, the Board voted unanimously to move Item 8 to Item 5.

Mr. Carlson said he appreciated the courtesy from the Boards over the last year.

5. Board of Education – a. Current Year Performance – Mr. Nero spoke of the first budget he inherited when he arrived and the cuts he had to make. The things that helped our budget have been going into the consortium for our health insurance. He elaborated. He spoke of the increase in our insurance this past year and what it would have been had we not been in the consortium. He had further comment. Right now, we are right on track with our budget.

b. Grant Revenue Outlook – Mr. Nero said our Title I funding is a little less than we have been getting. Title II is also under what we have been getting. He had further comment. Private schools in town are able to allocate grant funds. He met with the administrators today to speak about next year's budget. He had further explanation.

c. Anticipated Changes – Mr. Nero had comment. We have invested a lot in our staff; you can see that in our test scores. He had further comment. He feels that is all going to change with the new administration coming in. Mr. Nero said we have invested in this track and would hate to see funding cut. He elaborated. We are doing very well. Questions were asked and answered. There was further comment.

On a motion by Mr. Steinhart, seconded by Mrs. Howell, the Board voted unanimously to move Item 3, Legislative Outlook, to Item 6.

6. State Legislative Outlook for Fiscal Year 2017-2018, Including Town Aid and Grants – a. Representative Urban – Representative Urban apologized because she didn't know the time was changed. She said the recent budget rescissions were done by the governor, not the legislature. She explained. She said he was sending a message. She elaborated. She explained the pension funding payments. She said they are pushing it out to get rid of the balloon payment. She explained about the DCF funding not going under 8 million dollars and getting out from under the six degrees. She elaborated. That will become another fixed part of the budget. She had further explanation. Representative Urban said the Supreme Court decision is being challenged. She said she cannot explain the cut to North Stonington and explained what it is supposed to be based on. The formula over the years changed depending on who is in power. She elaborated. She feels that they need to change the ECS. They need to make an ECS that people understand and that is fair. Not being able to tell why the cut is a specific number is not

right. She said there is a big push to change the formula. She commented further that they are going to go after the ECS; we are not in a good position because we are a small school. She elaborated. When they compare North Stonington to Hartford, Waterbury, and New Britain and she is trying to muscle her way in, you try your best. Representative Urban said she was being really honest. She said she feels that because we passed the new school, we want to pay for it. School construction money is safe right now and she said she got us the preferred rate. She doesn't know if she can hold on to it. She had further comment. Her biggest fear is the school and the ECS. She is afraid that we build the school and then we get hammered on the ECS. She had further comment. It worked well last session and she was able to do a lot but we are looking at a deficit of 8 billion dollars. There was discussion. Representative Urban had further comment. Mr. Testa commented that in all the years she has been coming here, that he can tell from her that the state is in bad shape. He asked if the emergency services project is still a go and she said it is as safe as safe can be. She doesn't see getting more money. She said we are on track for reimbursement for the school. Mr. Murphy said even if they cut funding, we are okay. Mr. Testa asked if she was comfortable that we would get that funding and she said yes. Mr. Testa questioned if they would give us the money but she said they would not single out one place; all construction money would have to be cut. Questions were asked and answered. Casino money was brought up. Mr. Steinhart questioned the school money again and whether they would fund larger school districts and not the smaller ones. Representative Urban said there would be huge pushback on that. She had further comment. Mr. Mullane asked if the state was going to do something to fix the business climate. He had further comment on wage issues. He said our town is not a burden to the state; we don't get our share of money back from them. He hopes she would argue for no more cuts. He had further comment. There was discussion. Mr. Testa asked if she anticipated more cuts. Representative Urban said even in her position, there will be a struggle. She can keep us informed as to when things get bad and would need pushback from the towns. Mrs. Urban said she is looking forward to the budget that comes out because of the equality in the legislature. She had further comment. Mr. Mullane had further comment. There was discussion. Mr. Murphy commented on the ECS formula. He said he hoped she would fight for North Stonington. He had further comment on various items. Mr. Mullane spoke of prevailing wage and Representative Urban had comment. Mr. Mullane had further comment. Questions were asked and answered. Mrs. Howell asked about having state computer systems "talk to each other" and there was comment. Mr. Donahue had a question on the casino funding and if they were going to change the formula. Representative Urban said a lot depends on the third casino and she elaborated. She said nobody wants the compact open – that would change the formula. Mr. Testa asked what she would need from town officials to help. Mrs. Urban said the more she knows, the more she can keep an eye on what is going on at the state. It's the information she gets from us that would help her. She said the best way to get her is to text her. She elaborated. She suggested more input from the town. Mr. Main thanked her for coming. Ms. Urban suggested getting Senator Somers in. There was further comment and discussion. Mr. Urgo, Building Committee chairman, had comment on the school project. He said based on his research, he doesn't see us not getting the funding. He was disappointed at the nonchalance that we don't matter and she doesn't fight for us. Representative Urban said she fights for us all the time. She had further comment. Mr. Urgo had further comment and so did Representative Urban. She said she is worried because she has never seen it like this before in Hartford.

b. Senator Somers – Not present.

On a motion by Mr. Steinhart, seconded by Mr. Ratib, the Board voted unanimously to move Item 5 to Item 7.

7. Board of Finance – a. Expectations for 2017-2018 Fiscal Year – Mr. Main said they sent out their expectations for next year’s budget. He said to strive for zero but will listen to cases as they come in. We lost \$33,000 from ECS and money from LOCIP. Mr. Main said their goal with that was to maintain what we had and see if we can make it through. Mr. Steinhart said this was a surprise at mid-year. He said both groups need to be aware that we can’t keep raising the mil rate. There are going to be tough decisions. The groups need to consider the losses. There was discussion and comment. There was discussion on the budget and living within the budget. There was discussion on showing the revenues.

b. Loss of Revenues – Covered above.

c. Interview Schedule – Mr. Main said they need to know as soon as possible when boards are ready to go in front of the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance will be meeting every Wednesday in March but only twice in February. There was discussion on scheduling.

d. Communication Policy – No discussion.

8. Public Comments – Mr. Urgo thought it was in 2013 that the Plan of Conservation and Development was put forth. He hopes that is always on everyone’s minds. He elaborated.

On a motion by Mr. Steinhart, seconded by Mr. Ratib, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education