

Joint Meeting
Town of North Stonington
Board of Selectmen Board of Education Board of Finance
Wheeler High School Shaw Media Center
February 11, 2015
6:00 p.m.

DRAFT

A joint meeting of the Boards of Selectmen, Education, and Finance was held on Wednesday, February 22, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. in the Wheeler High School Shaw Media Center. Present for the Board of Selectmen was Mr. Mullane; present for the Board of Education was Mr. Carlson, Mrs. Buzzee, Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Nero, and Mrs. Allen; and present for the Board of Finance was Mr. Spring, Mr. Steinhart, and Mr. Pavlovics.

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m. by Mr. Mullane.

Opening Remarks –Senator Andrew Maynard – Mr. Mullane explained that Senator Maynard is back to fulfilling his duties but is curtailing his activities.

Representative Urban –Representative Urban spoke of Senator Maynard. She said they don't get the Governor's budget message until next Wednesday. She said they are hoping that no aid to municipalities or the ECS money is cut. She spoke of additional monies always being given to other towns. She spoke of requests for money but it just isn't there. She didn't want to put the municipalities in a bad position. She had further comment. She wanted to hear what the Boards had to say this evening.

Board of Selectmen – Current Year Revenues Estimates vs. Actual, Projected Revenues Fiscal Year 2015-2016, and Budget Projections Fiscal Year 2015-2016 – Mr. Mullane said any aid that was cut would lead to tax increases and that message seems to have gotten across. He spoke of the very slight increase in the grand list. There has been a little activity with building permits. A statistical revaluation has begun. A Bill is being submitted to delay that. The present profile of the town is flat. We have gotten to a stable point. The Selectmen are working on their budget. He spoke of the \$75,000 line item. He elaborated. There are some numbers that will be higher with the revenues. Mr. Mullane said they are looking forward to a flat year with the budget and the revenues.

Board of Education

1. Current Year Performance to Budget – Mr. Carlson, acting chair, spoke that the budget is right on track. There were some savings with new hires which allowed us to cover unforeseen costs such as the grubs.
2. Grant Revenues and Outlook – Monies were expended for the technology grant. He spoke of the new technology grant. He spoke of the security grant we have received and elaborated. Mr. Carlson said we are level-funded in special education grants.
3. Budget Projections Fiscal Year 2015-2016 – Mr. Carlson said we are looking at coming in at .3% but that could change depending on the insurance rates.

Mr. Mullane said the fuel oil and heating oil had been coming down but seems to be on the rise again. He elaborated.

Board of Finance – Mr. Spring explained what he would be speaking on this evening. At the close of the audit the auditor had praise for the financial status of the Town. He elaborated and spoke of the debt management and the credit rating. He spoke of the emergency management building. The debt payment on that should be debt-neutral. Debt has been coming off the books. There are a number of pieces to the budget to pay attention to. Expenditures are always a focal point. Mr. Spring said the growth in the grand list has been nominal. He elaborated. What we receive in revenues from the state is important. The state is in terrible fiscal condition. We are going to stay within our resources. He said in the budget as they talked about expenditures, they tried to bring priority to the budget items. He had further comment. He spoke of the small rise in the grant list. He spoke of finances. He spoke of the fall in energy and elaborated. He said the Town retains a very high credit rating. We have made priority commitments to move us into the future. He spoke of an economic summit. We need to widen our thinking about what we can do for ourselves to improve our grand list. We have extraordinary attributes and he expanded on that. He spoke of taking advantage of our high traffic corridor. He spoke of action steps. We have come out in very good shape. We have done a good job as a town with the resources we have. He had further comment. The town is at a tipping point and he elaborated. He had further comment.

Mrs. Wagner asked Representative Urban where the money is and wondered about entitlement programs. Representative Urban said Connecticut has the biggest achievement gap in the United States. Five of our cities are on the list of the poorest cities and she elaborated. She said the money keeps going to things that don't work and that has to change. There was comment. Mr. Mullane said we are at a point that Hartford as a whole is realizing what we have been doing doesn't work. He elaborated. All the formulas are geared to per capita income and he explained. He had further comment. He spoke of attracting business to the State. He said Hartford has to stop paying for failure. Representative Urban had comment and spoke of accountability. She spoke of getting funds released.

Public Comments and Questions – Mr. Bill Ricker asked about the Board of Education budget and if that was acceptable. Mr. Spring said they would like to keep budgets at a zero percent increase. Mr. Ricker had questions that Mr. Nero answered. He explained they do a zero-based budget. He said this year we are able to do this because of our vigilance with healthcare. He praised the teachers, administrators, and non-certified staff for moving to the HDHP which resulted in savings. He elaborated. He spoke of the Affordable Health Care Plan. He had further comment. Mr. Nero said we have been fortunate with getting grants. He explained the grants. Between healthcare, staff turnover, and grant money we have done very well. Mr. Ricker asked about a hotel room tax and he elaborated. Representative Urban commented on a Bill she had put in regarding that and that the Southeastern Connecticut delegation was behind it. There was discussion.

Mr. Mullane thanked everyone for coming. The meeting ended at 6:55 p.m.

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