

Joint Meeting
Town of North Stonington
Board of Selectmen Board of Education Board of Finance
North Stonington Elementary Library
March 6, 2013
7:00 p.m.

A joint meeting of the Boards of Selectmen, Education, and Finance was held on Wednesday, March 6, 2013, at 7:00 p.m. in the North Stonington Elementary School Library. Present were Mr. Testa, Mr. McCord, Mr. Karpinski, Mr. Hundt, Dr. Robert, Mr. Mathwich, and Mrs. Dame from the Board of Education; Mr. Spring, Mr. Pavlovics, Mr. Urgo, Mr. Woodward and Mr. Ratib from the Board of Finance; and Mr. Mullane, Mr. Donahue, and Mr. Murphy from the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Mullane called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. and thanked everyone for coming. He said he invited Senator Maynard and Representative Urban but they were unavailable to be here.

Opening Remarks –Senator Andrew Maynard – Not Present.

Representative Urban – Not Present.

Status of the State Budget; including Town Aids and Grants – Not covered due to State Legislators not being in attendance

Board of Selectmen – Mr. Mullane said the grand taxable list actually went down by over \$44,000. He explained.

1. Current Year Revenues Estimates vs. Actual – Income is as Projected– Mr. Mullane explained there have been some additional revenues but the net balance is negative \$55,000. If the car tax cut goes into effect, the Town would lose over 1 million dollars which would be equivalent to 2 mils. He had further comment.

2. Projected Revenues Fiscal Year 2013-2014 – Mr. Mullane said there is a loss between revenues and expenses. There was \$1,451,802 as a balance in undesignated funds. He reviewed the number that was used to balance the budget leaving \$1,054,071 in undesignated funds at the end of the year. He had further comment. He spoke of the Governor's budget. He reviewed the numbers from the governor's budget. Mr. Mullane said the bottom line total is \$11,000 overall which means the revenue is flat. He said he had spoken to our representatives and he elaborated.

3. Budget Projections Fiscal Year 2013-2014 – Mr. Mullane spoke of upcoming labor negotiations and that a new union wants to form at Town Hall. He explained they are covered under the Steel Workers insurance and elaborated. The general government budget had nothing new added. Mr. Mullane said the bridge is in the closeout stage and the amount is under budget. He elaborated. Mr. Mullane spoke of some of the equipment that is needed. The biggest focus is storm damage and he listed some of the projects they are hoping to complete. He elaborated. He explained what was happening with the Boom Bridge Road bridge. North Stonington would be responsible for about 10% and he elaborated. The Town had a couple of additional appropriations totaling \$170,000. Mr. Mullane said the capital continues to decrease and explained. He said the general government budget is basically flat. They

have had some trouble maintaining the services and equipment at a zero budget and he explained. He explained that through the grants they have been able to make improvements to the recreation area and he listed those. A water study is currently going on near Exit 92 and explained. Mr. Mullane said the Town is trying to concentrate on economic development. He explained the joint venture with Stonington.

Board of Education

1. Current Year Performance to Budget – Mr. Testa said we are in the third year of level funded budgets and commended the administrators and staff for doing what they do with the budgets. He said we are running an approximate \$42,000 deficit and he explained. Mr. Testa said the Board always tried to let the budget play out but there is the boiler issue going on right now and the Board will be looking at an additional appropriation for that because we cannot absorb the cost. Mr. Nero explained when he started in July he had to cut \$380,000. When the budget finally passed there was only an additional \$14,000. He said the items that he cut were not put in next year's budget.

2. Grant Revenues and Outlook – Mr. Nero said not much was going to change from this year unless sequestration happens and then special education could get impacted.

3. Budget Projections Fiscal Year 2013-2014 – Mr. Nero explained where the budget started and what they started to reduce. It went down from 7.4% to 6.93% to 6.41% to 5.81%. He explained the insurance increase which caused a significant increase to the budget. He explained the insurance consortium. He said we are ready to join and the lawyers are working on the final details. Mr. Nero explained the \$190,000 savings by joining the consortium. He had further comment. He said there is a \$635,000 increase in fixed costs. He elaborated. He explained the transportation freeze for the current year. The increase for the upcoming year is what would have been the current year's increase had the company not frozen the rates. Mr. Nero said all that is being asked for in new dollars is \$135,754. Programs were slashed from the budget including Family and Consumer Sciences. He explained. A math coach is needed at the elementary school and a literacy coach is needed at the high school and he explained. An art position was cut .2 as well. Mr. Nero explained to get the two positions he needs, he had to cut 1.2 positions. He explained there is a net increase of .8. He reviewed the history of the budgets beginning with the 06-07 budget. He spoke of other towns around us being in the same position. He had further comment. He spoke of teacher evaluation and testing. Mr. Nero talked about level funding our budget and therefore, putting our students in jeopardy. He elaborated. He said he understands the Town's issues but he would have to cripple programs and more if he has to cut further. Questions were asked and answered.

Board of Finance

Mr. Spring thanked members of the Boards and community members for being in attendance. He said the Board of Finance is the steward of the Town and he elaborated. He spoke of the grand list not increasing and the drop in the grand list the previous year. Mr. Spring commented on the uncollected tax revenues climbing as part of the economic conditions. He talked about looking at the revenue side of the budget and commented that we need to take it upon ourselves to build our grand list and he elaborated. He spoke of what is being worked on in Town for

this. Mr. Spring told those present that the Town's financial status maintains an A1 credit rating meaning we have been totally fiscally responsible to our debt. He said in order to maintain that credit rating it means holding the line and being tough where necessary for expenditures. He said the Board of Finance strongly believes in education—strong education builds strong communities. He elaborated. Mr. Spring commented that he had listened closely to what is being asked by the Board of Education and they still have to take into consideration the Town Government's budget. He explained. He spoke of unexpected expenditures. He explained the FEMA reimbursement. Mr. Spring applauded Mr. Mullane as the adjunct project manager on the bridge and keeping track of everything. Mr. Spring had further comment. He spoke of seeing some increase as they go through the debate on the budget. He spoke of being in an environment of low interest rates and there is opportunity there. He said we cannot stay status quo forever and that it doesn't work to our benefit and he elaborated. He spoke of being fiscally responsible and bringing it to the taxpayers in a way they understand and hope they understand that investing in the community is to their benefit.

Mr. Mullane said he hoped people would take interest in what is going on in Hartford. Mr. Mullane asked Mr. Nero about the cost of teacher evaluation. Mr. Nero said he is fortunate that he is able to use Title II money and elaborated on additional costs associated with teacher evaluation. He had further comment. Mr. Nero explained that in the long run it may cost \$20,000 to \$30,000. Board members had comment and explanation. Mr. Mullane spoke of revenue in lieu of taxes, the grants, LOCIP, etc. and said there is a shell game with these and explained. He spoke of unfunded mandates being consumed by administrative requirement. He spoke of binding arbitration and elaborated. Mr. Mullane said we have to continue to solicit to our legislators that enough is enough. Mr. Nero had comment on some unfunded mandates. He elaborated. Mr. Mullane commented that many of these mandates are being made based on larger districts and that does not mean they should apply to other districts. Many are not working or are of no value and they need to be discontinued. He had further comment. Questions were asked and answered. Board members had comment. Mr. Mullane spoke of the planning and development vision meeting. Mr. Nero said the school department will be having their own community meeting and he explained. He had further comment. Mrs. Ann Nalwalk, citizen, said we need to look at the general public at large instead of pointing fingers and said not enough people come out to support the budget. Mr. Spring spoke of the four budget referenda. He said a good thing came out of that was that it engaged people. He spoke of the ICONS (Informed Citizens of North Stonington) group and applauded them. He said there have been many ways to get the word out. It takes a bit of effort on the part of the townspeople and he elaborated. Mr. Spring had further comment on the budget that was passed. He spoke of undesignated funds and elaborated. Mr. Nero had further comment. Board members had further comment. Mr. Joe Gross, citizen, had comment on community input and spoke of the many surveys that have been done over the years and elaborated. He had further comment. He asked to give the public direction. He had further comment. Mrs. Kerri Perez, citizen, asked about the budget and when the Board of Finance decides on that. Mr. Spring answered her question. He said he believes in budgeting priorities and defending those priorities. Mrs. Lisa Mazzella, citizen, said she didn't see a debate with the Board of Education's budget with the items they need in the budget. She elaborated and had further comment. She spoke of trying to engage the 75% of the people

that don't go out and vote. Mr. Testa had comment. Mr. Hundt had comment about what would happen if we don't get the money we need. Mr. Spring said we are the ambassadors of what we would like to happen. Various Board members had further comment. Members of the public had and board members had further comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education