

Board of Education Minutes
Special Meeting
February 3, 2021

A special meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 3, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom meeting platform meeting ID 890 9889 2116. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mrs. Mastroianni, Dr. Potemri, and Mr. Mendolia. Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Martin, Mr. Pont, Mr. Boucher, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. St. Germain, Mrs. Reyes, and Mr. Cillino. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

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

Mrs. Wagner said Senator Somers is helping the Board host a forum on the vaccine and she explained. The goal is to have discussion on the vaccine itself—not the rollout. She elaborated. Mr. Nero said Ledge Light Health District is sponsoring a clinic in the old middle school for those that are eligible. He elaborated.

3. Public Comment with Students Speaking First – Kristi Williams, citizen, thanked the Board for their time and energy and elaborated. She thanked those parents for speaking about the teachers. She asked questions about eliminating the deep clean on Wednesday and why aren't teachers getting vaccinated before a full return. Brett Mastroianni, citizen, was very supportive of distance learning on snow days. He asked if there were any way to get the word out as to when it's a snow day and when it's a virtual day and if that could be communicated better.

4. Old Business – a. 2021-2022 Proposed Education Budget - Mr. Nero said they met today and went over their presentations. The budget was originally presented at 4.3% but it is now at 4.0%. This is with no cuts because of the leanness of the budget. Mrs. St. Germain said there is not much in their budget. She reviewed the process at their school. She explained their dues and membership line and gave examples. School wide instruction has been cut over the past few years so they put money in to replenish it. Other items are for teachers needing items for distance learning and she elaborated. She explained some of the other distance learning line items. She reviewed other increases in instructional supplies and explained. She reviewed items that were put back in the budget. She explained the uniforms that are in the athletic budget as well as the floating JV coach. Mrs. St. Germain said everything either leveled or went down. Questions were asked and answered. Mrs. Wagner spoke of making our curriculum more robust. She elaborated. Mr. Cillino reviewed items that showed an increase in the elementary budget. He spoke of the math programs. He reviewed the increases in instructional supplies and office supplies. He explained the increase in school wide supplies and gave examples of what is in the line. Mrs. Wagner asked about the new grant that we are getting and made suggestions as to what may fall under that grant. Mr. Nero said we have not received the grant application yet and he elaborated. The grant is a two-year grant and he explained. He said we want to be sure it is not supplanting the budget. Mrs. Martin said the supplanting is something we have to be very careful about that. She said once we get assigned a person at the state she will speak with them on this. Mrs. Wagner suggested we should take out anything COVID-related and she had further

explanation. Mr. Nero said one of the things they spoke about was the difference in price of the two types of filters we are using. He explained we won't know the gaps in our students' learning and we should sequester some of that for the future. He had further comment. Mrs. Wagner had comment. Mrs. Costa reviewed the line items in her budget. Many went below or stayed at zero. She explained the increase in the salaries due to contractual obligations. She said tuition did go up. She explained last year's costs were used in the grant and elaborated. She explained the projections and some of that can go into the grant. She explained the costs for transition students, outplacements, and Vo-Ag. She explained other offsets. Questions were asked and answered. Mr. Karpinski had comment on the budget amount versus what the board of finance was looking for. Mr. Pont said most of his budget is replacement costs and he reviewed the items. He said these follow the five-year refresh schedule. Mrs. Wagner asked if the refresh will look different with the Chrome Books. Mr. Pont said these are staff replacements and wouldn't have an impact. Mrs. Wagner said technology could be part of that grant money. Mr. Nero had comment. He gave a history of technology purchases. He talk about labs and said we don't want to end up four years down the line where we are in the same situation we were in this year. He had further comment. He respects the Board's job and wanted to make himself clear that we "kick the can down the road." He didn't want to cut carte blanche in one area. Questions were asked and answered on technology. Further questions were asked and answered. Mrs. Mastroianni asked if we use the computers in the lab long enough to be considered a capital expense. Mr. Nero had comment on that. He felt that yes, some of that would be a capital expense. Questions were asked and answered. Mr. Boucher reviewed the maintenance budget. He said they are still figuring out the new buildings and their contracts and warranties. His numbers are all over the place and a lot are due to contracts. He reviewed the kitchen equipment items. He will be going out to bid on a lot of the contracts. He said some of the smaller ones are for only a year and he elaborated. He had further comment. Questions were asked and answered on the maintenance budget. Mr. Boucher explained what the general building services line is for. Mr. Nero had comment. He said he and Mrs. Martin have been talking and some of their projections may come in lower. He felt we should present this number that we have now. He said as we get closer to the referendum, we may have a more real number. Mrs. Wagner felt we should show them our real need and she had further comment. We do need to be prepared to show what our need is and have a secondary budget to show how we can fund our need. She had further comment. She asked to look and see what may be able to go into the grant. Mrs. Wagner said if we go in and say this is it at 4% they will send us back and we'll go back and forth. Mrs. Mastroianni had comment on the number the board of finance gave us and what our number is. She felt we should remove things we don't need now; we should be clear and transparent. She spoke of going back for an additional appropriation if needed. She felt the closer we can get to that number the more productive we will be. Mrs. Wagner had comment and didn't feel an additional appropriation was the way to go. There was discussion. There was discussion on the number the board of finance gave. Mrs. Wagner said they didn't vote on that number. Ms. Welborn had further comment about the lack of communication on that number. Our contractual amount is almost 2%. Mrs. Wagner said we go through this every year. She had further comment. Her thought is always to take it to the hearing and see what the public says; she said her thought is to go in with the 4%. Questions were asked and answered. There was comment. There was

discussion of contractual obligations. There was further comment. Mr. Nero had comment on the unassigned fund. He said when they took out money to help with our budget, they replaced that and with more money. He elaborated. He commented on the audit. We are going into the budget season and we have been prudent with our budgets. This 4% is a real number and he elaborated. He had further comment. Board members had further comment. The ERISA (non-lapsing) account was mentioned. Mrs. Wagner said the goal of that was to fund things that were considered capital and what they didn't want to make it a permanent part of the bottom line. She had further comment and said it is an emergency fund. She had further comment. Board members had further comment. Dr. Potemri said the line items are very lean. She wanted to talk to the town about at least getting a percentage of that tuition and explained where it can be placed. She wondered what incentive we have to get students. Mrs. Wagner had comment on that and wondered what our incentive is to bring in students if they keep cutting us. Further questions were asked and answered. Mr. Nero asked Mrs. Wagner to reach out to Mr. Spring about what that actual number is. Board members had further comment. Mrs. Mastroianni spoke of that number they gave us and that it was for guidance they spoke of going along with the cost of living increase. She had further comment. Mrs. Wagner had further comment and spoke of the funding that we had this year and won't have next year. She had further comment. Mr. Nero had comment. He said we can anticipate where we may bring it to. He had further comment. Mrs. Wagner said she wants to show the 4% and show a different way that we can fund it. Ms. Welborn said we should look at our resources to see how to shuffle the accounts to make it work. Mr. Nero had comment. Board members had comment. She felt we should let the board of finance know we have an anticipated placement of \$100,000 and do they want it to remain in the budget or take it out. Questions were asked and answered. Possible year-end savings were discussed. Reductions were discussed. Wording on the budget columns was discussed. Mrs. Martin had comment. There was further discussion.

5. Public Comment – Kristi Williams, citizen, was hoping the Board could answer her question about cleaning. Mrs. Wagner said we don't usually answer questions immediately but we get back to them on that.

On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mrs. Mastroianni, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education