

Board of Education Minutes
March 21, 2022
Special Meeting

DRAFT

A special meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Monday, March 21, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom meeting platform meeting ID 839 8111 5322. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Mrs. Mastroianni, Mr. Stefanowicz, and Mr. Mendolia (6:03 p.m.). Also present were Mr. Nero and Mrs. Martin. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – None.
4. Old Business – a. 2022-2023 Proposed Education Budget – Mrs. Wagner commented that most everyone was present at the Board of Finance meeting. She said she sent out some different scenarios and asked for Board comment. Mr. Stefanowicz commented that he was frustrated that they didn't have a chance to look at their budget; they just wanted to get to a certain point. Mr. Karpinski didn't have a problem with the salary changes and didn't agree with the professional development reduction. He had further comment and asked about if we had gotten notice of the retirements. Mr. Nero explained these are veteran teachers. He explained the staff changes and had further comment. He had comment on the professional development. He said the administrators gave them a real number for professional development. As time goes on during the year, we may be able to make that up as we go along. He had further comment. Mr. Stefanowicz asked if we needed to bring in our special education teachers during the summer and Mrs. Wagner said she got word that the state is covering that. Mrs. Wagner talked about the non-lapsing fund and that the Board of Finance wants us to spend it. She had further comment on professional development and said it could be covered under the non-lapsing account. Mr. Karpinski said that wasn't the purpose of the non-lapsing account and had further comment; he doesn't want the non-lapsing account to subsidize education. Mrs. Wagner had comment and said it is very concerning that we are being told to look for the non-lapsing to cover our budget. She had further comment. She would like to discuss the non-lapsing account with the finance committee and the Board. Mr. Nero said there should be an agreement between the Boards on this. He had explanation. There has to be some ground rules as to what the funding is used for and he elaborated. Mrs. Wagner had comment. Mr. Mendolia asked about school wide supplies. Mrs. Mastroianni commented that the Board of Finance cancelled their meeting on Wednesday and she was very disappointed. She had further comment. She didn't like the way it looks to cut the professional development and she also didn't like cutting supplies. She elaborated. She doesn't want it to show as zero and have it come from our non-lapsing account and she had further comment. Mrs. Mastroianni felt we should have gone in with a spending plan for the non-lapsing account and she had explanation. She would rather see technology taken out of non-lapsing than professional development. Mrs. Wagner said she was disappointed and felt they were disrespected as a whole. The value of an education is being overlooked and what the value of education brings to this town. She elaborated. We have worked really hard on this and have put our very best foot forward. She said one of the comments was, "We don't believe you." She had

further comment. She said tech continues to get zeroed out each year and you can't run a school without technology. Mr. Karpinski asked what the contribution from the out-of-district students will be. Mrs. Martin said there are 10 students for a total of \$114,330. There are 5 returning from Voluntown and we have received 13 additional applications but we don't know exactly how many will come. Mr. Nero had further comment. There was discussion. Mr. Stefanowicz said if he was a Preston or Voluntown parent and he heard the tuition doesn't go to the school, he would wonder why he is sending my child there. There was discussion. Mrs. Wagner said the Mrs. St. Germain and Mr. Cillino were concerned that the program supervisors are in the grant but they are critical to the school. There was explanation. Dr. Towle-Weicksel said we need these positions and in order to be optical if we could adjust some items to put some of these stipends in the budget. There was discussion of these stipends being added to the contract. Mrs. Martin explained where the stipends are coming from. Mrs. Wagner said the administrators are concerned about the program supervisors with the exception of the Google Team. Mrs. Martin had comment. There was discussion. Mrs. Wagner clarified that Dr. Towle-Weicksel wanted to move professional development to the grant and move the stipends into the budget. Dr. Towle-Weicksel suggested we just leave it as it is if it is going to be put into the contract. Mrs. Wagner said either way we are committed to it and she elaborated. She is comfortable leaving it as is. There was further discussion. Mrs. Wagner had comment on the requested budget reductions. She said the Board of Finance wanted them to work together with the Board of Selectmen. She had further comment. She said we would have a total reduction of the paving but it would come out of the Board of Selectmen's budget. There was discussion. Mrs. Mastroianni was concerned if we didn't cut the \$106,000 that they will say we didn't do our part. Mrs. Wagner had comment. She reviewed the proposed 1.73% budget and the reductions that were made to get to that point. There was discussion. Ms. Welborn asked to clarify the out-of-town tuitions. She wondered if this was iffy as to where to bank the savings. She had comment about professional development, supplies, and technology and said we should be talking about the tuition money. Mrs. Wagner said we are hopeful we have enough savings this year to purchase supplies; we don't like to rely on that but it may be an avenue. There was discussion on the two budgets. Mrs. Martin explained the reductions and Mrs. Wagner clarified the dollar amount. Mrs. Martin had further explanation. There was discussion as to how to show the reductions. There was discussion. Mr. Nero had comment. He said you are going to have to roll the dice and see what we go with. Mrs. Wagner had comment and said there are always some unknowns. There was discussion. Board members had further comment and questions. Mr. Nero said every year you create a fiscal hole in your budget. He had further comment and said there needs to be some consistency. Mrs. Wagner said we don't want to touch the one-to-one program and explained. She reviewed some of the technology items. Board members had further comment. There was discussion. Mrs. Wagner asked a question on grant funding for professional development that Mrs. Martin explained. She said we can still modify going forward if we need to. Questions were asked and answered. There was discussion. Mrs. Martin said with the reductions and changes, the reduction total is \$108,145 with the total budget of \$14,525,322. Mr. Karpinski asked to put \$2,000 back into supplies and give them the \$106,145 as our reduction. There was discussion. Mrs. Wagner had further comment. There was discussion. Mrs. Martin clarified that she is putting back \$2,145 into supplies. The total is \$14,525,559 with an

increase over the current year of \$248,746 for 1.74% increase. Mrs. Wagner had comment. There was comment on the special education overages. There was further comment. Mrs. Wagner believed we could cover those overages. Mrs. Wagner said taking the overage out of the non-lapsing is the worst case scenario if we can't cover it at year-end. She had further comment. Mrs. Mastroianni made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Karpinski to approve the budget of \$14,525,559. There was discussion. Mrs. Mastroianni withdrew her motion. Mr. Karpinski made a motion that was seconded by Mrs. Mastroianni to accept the revised budget based on the Board of Finance request of March 17th to reduce the budget by \$106,000 for a total budget of \$14,525,559 for a 1.74% increase. Mrs. Martin said with the changes the budget total is \$14,527,467. Mr. Karpinski revised his motion to reflect the budget total of \$14,527,467 for an increase of 1.74%. The motion passed unanimously. There was discussion.

5. Public Comment – None.

6. On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. Stefanowicz, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education