

Borough of Stonington
Board of Warden and Burgesses
Regular Monthly Meeting
January 21, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

Warden Michael Schefers called the monthly meeting of the Borough of Stonington Board of Warden and Burgesses to order at 7:02 p.m. The meeting was held at Borough Hall. Present, in addition to Warden Schefers were Burgesses Kevin Rogers, Amy Nicholas, Amanda Barnes, Kevin Bowdler, and Clerk-Treasurer Lisa Coleman. Approximately 12 members of the public were present.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Warden Michael Schefers called the monthly meeting of the Borough of Stonington Board of Warden and Burgesses to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at Borough Hall. Present, in addition to Warden Schefers were Burgesses Kevin Rogers, Amy Nicholas, Amanda Barnes, Kevin Bowdler, and Clerk-Treasurer Lisa Coleman. Approximately 15 members of the public were present.

On a motion by Burgess Bowdler, seconded by Burgess Nicholas, the minutes of the monthly meeting of November 18, 2024, were approved.

On a motion by Burgess Bowdler, seconded by Burgess Barnes, the minutes of the monthly meeting of December 16, 2024, as amended to correct Wendy Hatch to Wendy Koch, were approved.

MOVE AUDITOR REPORT TO PRECEDE CORRESPONDENCE

On a motion by Burgess Bowdler, seconded by Warden Schefers, to have the auditor report by Katherine of PKF O'Connor Davies before correspondence, was unanimously approved.

Katherine of PKF O'Connor gave the auditor report for the FY June 30, 2024. Following are the items, comments and balance/amounts of the financial statements.

Burgess Bowdler questioned the auditor regarding GASB 103- Compensated Absences, the recommendation is the Borough review if unused vacation leave accrued at year end.

Warden Schefers questioned the auditor regarding GASB 103 and was told we will look at that for FY 2026.

Burgess Bowdler asked a question of what percentage of funds can be moved from one account line to another. The auditor said she would have to look at our by-laws and ordinances.

MOVE STORM RESILIENCE REPORT FROM KEVIN BRAZA TO PRECEDE CORRESPONDENCE

On a motion by Warden Schefers, seconded by Burgess Barnes, to have the repair report to Wayland's Wharf given by Kevin Braza before correspondence, was unanimously approved.

Kevin Braza of Braza Construction gave his recommendations to address erosion at Wayland's Wharf. The issue is not the seawall itself, it is the erosion under the sidewalks. The undermining is going all the way into the grass lawn. The only thing holding it is the buttress of old reinforcement. The first step will be shoring it up. Next step comes forming it up. Third step is repointing the wall. The railing should be pipe rail which gets bolted through the new infrastructure. The timeline is a month for this work. The sidewalk should be barricaded for now.

Resident Frank Tong of 1 Church St. asked the question of how long between Phase One and Phase Two. Warden Schefers replied that Phase One will be this year, Phase 2 next year.

Resident Lisa Tepper Bates of 118 Water Street expressed her gratitude to the Board for taking on this issue and it is heartening that we are moving forward. She expressed her concern about the height. Warden Schefers answered there will be scuppers to lead the water flow back out.

Resident Ed Smith of Main St. mentioned we may have to build up the park area.

Resident Scott Bates of 118 Water Street wondered if the Board should combine Phases 2 and 3 by getting a bond to pay for this or a price break from the Construction Company. If we were to do one part, how does it affect the other parts that need to be done?

Phase Two will be the West facing side.

The estimate proposal will be modified to include scope changes and a new railing.

CORRESPONDENCE

RECEIVED:

Ian Cooke email on Borough Property Plantings

Doug Rice email on location of Sculpture

Request for Borough road use for Feast of Fatima Procession

Alice Despard email on off-leash dog assault

REPORT OF CLERK-TREASURER

Received The Day postings of party caucuses to be held, from the Democratic and Forward Parties. Received the result of caucus endorsements from the Democratic and Forward Parties. Requested dates of Early Voting from SOTS office. That is due from SOTS office on January 24, 2025.

REVIEW OF BILLS/YTD FINANCIAL REPORT; ARPA UPDATE

Bills for the period December 16, 2024, through January 16, 2025, totaled \$159,138.91. Large bills of note were the Length of Service Awards, Fire Chief Vehicle, Sidewalk Repairs, Legal Services for P&Z Actions, Tree Maintenance, and Maintenance of Trucks/Equipment. I&E for July 2024 through December 16, 2024, shows total income to date of \$1,439,768.36; and net income to date of \$454,483.88. Balance of ARPA funds is \$31,608.00.

WARDEN'S REPORT

Met with First Selectman Danielle Chesebrough on shared local items of interest.

Attended SCCOG Legislature Meeting on Current Legislative Session priorities.

Attended SCCOG December Meeting.

Attended SEAT December Board Meeting.

Received "CT Main Street" findings on our current Borough economy, commerce/ Storefronts, events and cultural activities and related practices. Meeting with SBMA in February.

Attended FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants Program Seminar for Orchard, High, Meadow Streets and other storm water concerns around the Borough.

Discussed Elm Street Pedestrian Footbridge and Sidewalk Project with CT DOT and CLA Engineers.

The viaduct work is now likely scheduled for 2029.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Streets & Sidewalks (Schefers)

Conducted monthly brush pickup.

Continued Park maintenance.

Completed leaf street cleaning.

Conducted Christmas Tree pickups.

Flushed stormwater drains on Church and Main Streets.

Installed new Sand Spreader vibrator on 2024 Borough

Fire & Emergency Management (Nicholas/Hoadley)

SBFD responded to 9 alarms in December 2024, they were as follows:

- 1) 12-2-24 6:14am Water emergency 6 Stonington Commons (fitting on a water line)
- 2) 12-6-24 2:31am Fire Alarm Activation 22 Quarry Path L.P. (faulty detector)
- 3) 12-8-24 1:44pm Odor of gas 190 Water St., (nothing found, tanks 10%)
- 4) 12-10-24 9:20pm Odor of gas 77 Main St., (gas can tipped over in basement)
- 5) 12-22-24 8:34pm Fire Alarm Activation 279 Flanders Rd. (nothing found)
- 6) 12-23-24 8:59am Furnace problem 24 Main St., (water leak)
- 7) 12-24-24 6:15am Furnace problem 24 Main St., (high heat in residence)
- 8) 12-26-24 6:01am Fire Alarm Activation 13 E Grand St., (humidifier?)
- 9) 12-27-24 2:33pm Structure Fire 23 Elm St., (garage, wood stove pipe)

Yearly Reports

SBFD responded to 117 Alarms in 2024, breakdown is as follows:

Stonington Borough.....55 Alarms
Stonington Fire District.....47 Alarms
Lords Point.....8 Alarms
Wamphassuc Point.....6 Alarms
Mutual Aid.....1 Alarm

Also, FYI

2023.....131 Alarms

2022.....136 Alarms

2021.....124 Alarms

2020.....140 Alarms

2019.....128 Alarms

2018.....152 Alarms

If the Board plans to put the Ukrainian statue on the island near the entrance to the Firehouse, St. Mary's owns half of that island so you will need to get permission from Fr. Perkins.

December Police Incident Report (Nicholas)

Michael and I attended the meeting with Police Board, and we have permission to put the overnight parking signs up. Wording to be given to the Warden by Burgess Nicholas. Forming a subcommittee regarding Townwide special events and I have joined it as a representative for the Borough.

Parks, Trees & Rights of Way (Barnes)

None

Public Buildings (Rogers)

Borough Hall

Front Door Lock – one of the final parts of the public restroom is the new Boro Hall locking mechanism. It was ordered and will be installed once it comes in. The new locking mechanism will have a fob and keypad that will allow access to the building beyond normal business hours. The oil gauge on our oil tank is not functioning properly. A ticket has been created to check it out. A new design for the Boro Hall meeting room furniture was put into place while the building was closed. We believe this new setup will create a more “intimate” setting between the audience and the Board during our meetings (and people to hear others more clearly).

Public Restroom

Sue C noticed the sink in the ADA bathroom had a leak. We have fixed that issue.

Firehouse

Secondary bids have come in for the A/C project.

We have also received a bid from the electrician for their part of the A/C project.

Jesse Diggs has volunteered his expertise and will be included in meetings moving forward.

Utilities & Sanitation (Bowdler)

Issued six warning citations for trash this month.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Resident Ed Smith of Main Street concerned with parking with proposed water taxi out of the dock behind the Commons. Do they have to go through Zoning. If they don't get parking, cars using that service will be parking from Cannon Square and South. Consider Residential Parking stickers.

Resident Alice Despard of 3 Main Street had an incident happen at Dime Bank where her dog was attacked by another dog not on leash. She has talked to other residents, and they reported the same dog has attacked other dogs. She reported to Animal Control.

Resident Camille Cunningham of 37 Orchard St. was attacked by the same brown dog on Sept 21, 2024, on Front St. The dog came running out of the house and jumped on her dog. The owner/resident asked if I was ok. The dog got loose again. She did not report the incident.

Resident Dean Anderson of Water Street said we don't have a Borough slogan. He suggested “No amount of planning will replace dumb luck.” Burgess Rogers said we do have one “We don't care what you do, as long as we know about it.”

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Public Restroom Update

See Public Buildings Report

Storm resilience and mitigation; Wayland's Wharf and Omega

See Kevin Braza report above under Storm Resilience

NEW BUSINESS

Ian Cooke Request

Ian Cooke of 69 Main Street has asked for permission to do flower planting no higher than the back of a chair or 24 inches, in the grassy area between the sidewalk and the curb in front of his house on Borough property. It will be at his expense, with him maintaining the area. There can be no fencing. Concerns by Warden Schefers and Burgess Barnes about setting a precedent.

Tabled.

Burgess Barnes will work with Ian Cooke about the details for his application.

R. Douglass Rice Request

On a motion by Burgess Barnes, seconded by Burgess Nicholas, to approve the request by R. Douglass Rice for relocation of "Standing with the Women and Children of Ukraine" Sculpture to the grass area by the Firehouse Driveway, subject to approval by St. Mary's Church, was unanimously approved.

St. Michael's Request for Our Lady of Fatima Procession use of Borough Property

On a motion by Burgess Bowdler, seconded by Burgess Nicholas, to approve the request by St. Michael's Parish to use Borough Streets for Our Lady of Fatima Feast Procession from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm on May 18th, 2025, subject to approval of insurance, was unanimously approved.

Dog Leash Incident

Warden Schefers will include in his Annual Warden's letter that there is a leash law, we must adhere to this, report any incidents to animal control, and the dog owner will be issued a warning, then a citation.

Warden Schefers will speak to Erin and Liz Wood of Stonington Historical Society who rent the building to Dime Bank.

A citation will be issued to the dog that attacked Alice Despard's dog.

A note of the ordinance will be put on the doggie poop containers. Citations will be given to Burgesses.

OTHER BUSINESS and Discussion

On a motion by Warden Schefers, seconded by Burgess Bowdler, to add an item to our agenda "Settlement Agreement and Release" signed by Dime Bank and Warden Schefers, was unanimously approved.

Warden Schefers read the following statement approved by the two entities

"In late November the Borough of Stonington's mail was hacked and the hackers used the stolen email to make substantial unauthorized transfers out of the Borough's investments accounts at Dime Bank totaling \$299,454.00. (Corrected this in a motion later during Reconvene Meeting.) Dime Bank has worked closely with Borough, state, local and federal enforcement and successfully recovered the majority of the funds and the Borough account will be made whole for its temporary losses. The Borough has implemented additional measures to protect itself from such activity in the future. Both the Borough and Dime Bank are appreciative of the cooperation and commitment to securing the return of these funds demonstrated by both organizations."

Attorney Kepple passed copies of the "Settlement Agreement and Release" to Board members so they could read it.

On a motion by Burgess Nicholas, seconded by Burgess Bowdler, to authorize Warden Michael Schefers, on behalf of the Borough, to sign a "Settlement Agreement and Release" regarding the restoration of funds in full to the Borough's investment account pursuant to unauthorized wire transfers from said account, was unanimously approved.

"Settlement Agreement and Release" was signed by Warden Schefers on January 21, 2025, the Dime will sign January 22, 2025.

Warden thanked Dime Bank, Attorney Kepple, Dime Bank's attorney, and Ann Fiore for their work in identifying the issue, and closing this matter.

Firehouse Airconditioning Update

Dunklee proposal came out at \$64,773. 72 Degrees proposal came in at \$62,000. The electric bill is \$10,445.79. Project manager Chris Curran will be \$10,800. Have Jesse Diggs review the proposals. Have Chris Curran come to February or March 2025 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Burgess Barnes, seconded by Burgess Nicholas, adjournment of the meeting at 9:08 pm, was unanimously approved.

RECONVENE MEETING

On a motion by Burgess Nicholas, seconded by Burgess Bowdler, to reconvene the meeting at 9:09 pm, was unanimously approved.

On a motion by Burgess Nicholas, seconded by Burgess Bowdler, to correct Warden Schefers settlement statement dollar amount to reflect \$349,454, was unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Burgess Nicholas, seconded by Burgess Bowdler, adjournment of the meeting at 9:13 pm, was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa M. Coleman
January 29, 2025

