

Board of Warden and Burgesses
Annual Meeting~April 22, 2017

The 217th Borough and Budget Meeting of the Borough of Stonington was called to order in Borough Hall at 10:00 AM by Warden Jeff Callahan. Present were Burgesses Michael Adair, Robert Scala, Amanda Barnes, Amy Nicholas, Karen von Ruffer Hills and Clerk-Treasurer Lisa Coleman. Burgess Howard Park was absent. Also present were 26 Borough residents.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMINDERS:

- Warden Jeff Callahan asked that residents in attendance turn off their cell phones.
- He pointed out the exits and restrooms.
- Warden Jeff Callahan explained that under the Borough Charter only those citizens over the age of eighteen, who are listed on the official voters list for the Borough of Stonington, and/or citizens who are listed on the Borough of Stonington Grand List as having taxable property with an assessed value of at least \$1,000 are eligible to vote in this Annual Borough Meeting.

APPOINTMENT OF MODERATOR:

- A motion to appoint Borough resident Scott Bates as moderator of the Annual Meeting, made by Burgess Nicholas and seconded by Burgess Barnes, was unanimously approved.
- Moderator Scott Bates asked that we all stand as he led the Pledge of Allegiance.

SELECT TRUSTEES FOR THE WALDRON FUND:

Borough resident and current Waldron Fund trustee Gillian Patrick provided an overview of the Waldron Fund and its activities for the fiscal year 2016/2017.

- Last year we were successful in continuing to further reduce the amount of returned mailings by comparing addresses with Borough voting and motor vehicle/ homeowner tax rolls, as well as physically walking down apartment locations and numbers.
- In late April of last year, we did make two additional Spring gifts in the amount of \$1500.00 after this Annual Meeting.
- In the fall/winter of 2016 we assisted two people in the amount of \$1000.00.
- In the winter/spring of 2017 we assisted two people in the amount of \$2000.00
- The Waldron Fund provides assistance from October thru April so the aforementioned numbers may change given today's date, as it has the last two years.
- The current Borough of Stonington/Waldron Fund Checking account balance is \$50,962.31 as of April 1.
- The Waldron Fund holds \$71,080.47 in two CD's, an increase of \$879.29, earning 0.995% and 1.59%, with maturities in September of 2017.
- Community contributions this year totaled \$1,785.00, up from the \$750.00 we received in 2015/2016.

Resident Richard Easton asked clarification if all applicants were granted funds. Ms. Patrick said that everyone who applied was granted.

- A motion made by Warden Callahan, seconded by Burgess Scala, to accept the Waldron Fund report made by Gillian Patrick and to appoint the slate of three candidates (Amanda Crane Mann, Michael Schefers, and Gillian Patrick), passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- On a motion by Burgess Scala, seconded by Burgess Barnes, acceptance of the minutes from the April 23, 2016 Annual Borough and Budget Meeting, was unanimously approved.

WARDEN'S REPORT/BUDGET PRESENTATION:

OVERVIEW--- The past year was a relatively uneventful one in the Borough..... no major storms, no bank holdups, no scandals (that I'm aware of). And beneath this calm surface, the work of Borough government went along at a steady pace. In the remainder of my report I'll touch on a few highlights.

FIRE DEPARTMENT--- Last year at this meeting I announced that our long serving part time chief, Jeff Hoadley, had decided to retire. I also said that a search committee had been formed, and we were going to upgrade the position to a full-time chief and fire marshal, a move that three of the Town's other five departments already had made. As almost everyone now knows, after both top candidates for the position decided not to take the Borough's offer, Jeff threw his hat in the ring. After interviewing him the search committee unanimously recommended him as the Borough's first full time fire chief, and in short order the fire department membership and the Board of Warden & Burgesses enthusiastically endorsed the committee's decision. Almost immediately after he became chief, Jeff began the State's eight-month fire marshal training course, which he completed just a couple weeks ago. As of May 1st, Jeff also will be the Borough's fire marshal, replacing George Brennan, who will work with Jeff through June in order to have a smooth turnover in this critical position. Fire protection has always been Borough Government's number one responsibility, and I am confident that under Jeff Hoadley's leadership the Borough and nearby districts that we serve will be in great shape for the foreseeable future. For the record, in the past year the department responded to 117 calls.

ZONING --- Second only to fire protection, planning and zoning are very important functions of your government. Last fall, just after we completed the search for a new fire chief, Dave Atkinson, who had been the Borough's part time zoning officer for 18 years, informed me that he was stepping down in order to take on greater responsibilities at his day job. Another search committee was formed and two highly qualified candidates were interviewed. In the end we selected Tom Zanarini, who works as a planner for the Town of Groton. Tom stepped into a very busy zoning environment. Over the last year, activity has increased significantly for both the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals. The so-called Dog Park and the Historical Society's Lighthouse renovation get most of the headlines, but there have been a number of other applications to be dealt with as well. I should add here that discussions continue in an effort to resolve the lawsuits and appeals related to the dog park.

ADMINISTRATIVE/REGULATORY ACTIVITY--- A lot of what goes on in Borough Hall is just keeping up with the administrative and regulatory demands of what is known these days as the "Deep State", i.e., higher level government bureaucracies. In the fall, the Borough again passed its annual FEMA review and maintained the 10 percent discount we receive on flood policies. We joined forces with the Town and submitted a joint stormwater management plan as mandated by the new state-wide stormwater management permit issued by DEEP. We successfully completed our audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016. And following the Town's lead, the Board of Warden & Burgesses voted to join the Ledge Light Health District, which will save taxpayers in the Town and Borough approximately \$50,000 compared with the cost of maintaining our own health department. Also, we are starting to receive queries from the US Census Bureau in preparation for the 2020 census.

INFRASTRUCTURE -- Orchard Street was repaved, new drainage was installed in Hancox Street, and about a dozen abandoned utility poles were removed.

SEA LEVEL RISE--- Despite what you might hear out of Washington, those of us who live near the ocean know that sea level is rising. Last year I announced that the Town had been awarded a grant to develop a coastal resiliency plan, and I am pleased to inform you that the plan is nearing completion. On May 4th there will be a presentation of interim results by the engineering consultants at Mystic Seaport. The presentation is open to the public.

Those of you who have followed the stories in the papers about the old breakwater behind Stonington Commons will know that for a couple years the question of who owned the breakwater blocked any

action to repair it. That matter has finally been resolved, thanks to assistance from Joe Courtney and our state's two senators. The federal government has relinquished ownership, and it now belongs to the State of CT. With that decision, a small group, including Jesse Diggs, myself, and Town Hall staff, have prepared and submitted a grant request for funds to develop detailed specifications and drawings in order to engage a construction firm to restore the breakwater as an effective barrier.

POKEMON – A new feature of life in the Borough appeared last summer in the form of groups of mostly young people wandering through the village while staring at their cell phones. They tended to congregate in a few specific spots, for example, Cannon Square, and this caused some upset among people who lived nearby. I received quite a few calls from residents who were alarmed by these groups, and I also received some well-meaning suggestions as to how I should deal with them. The fact is that unless the Pokemon hunters encroach on private property or damage public property or cause a disturbance, they aren't breaking the law. I was successful in getting the software company that created the game to delete Cannon Square, but it took several months and I can't promise that it will remain deleted. As weather improves, we can probably anticipate a return of the gamers and resumption of the digital battle of Stonington.

RECOGNITION – Keeping the Borough going as an independent municipality is a team effort involving a few paid staff and lots of volunteers. Our 2016 estimated population is 910. That's not a big pool from which to draw volunteers for our boards and commissions as well as people willing to run for elective office. I want to give a big thank you to the citizens who serve on Planning & Zoning, chaired by Doug Lyons; the Zoning Board of Appeals, chaired by Bob Montgomery; and the Harbor Management Commission, a joint commission with the Town. Our small paid staff includes Barbara Perry in the office; and Sue and Roger, who keep our streets clear of leaves and snow, as well as maintaining our six parks and responding to fallen tree limbs and other situations of all sorts. By the way, Sue is now in her 36th year of service in the Borough Street Department; Roger has worked for us for 15 years. Another important group of volunteers are the fire fighters, who respond not only to fires but also to floods and other emergencies. Finally, I want to thank my colleagues on the Board of Warden & Burgesses for their service to the community.

Which reminds me. Monday May 1st is election day in the Borough. The polls open at the fire house at 6 am. I urge you to come out and vote and show that you care about the Borough.

PASSINGS-- The past year has seen the passing of several important members of the community, people who gave in various ways to make this a better place to live for all. Among those we have lost are Shirley Beal, Juan O'Callahan, Colin Revill, Charles Storrow, Anne Thacher, Shelley White, and Jim Wightman.

OUTLOOK-- In the coming year we will begin implementing the new stormwater management plan and, with luck, finalize design work on the old breakwater. I would like to continue the discussion we started last summer about the future of the Borough. We plan to make repairs to several streets and investigate the potential benefits of installing LED streetlights.

ACT ON PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2018:

Introductory comments made by Warden Jeff Callahan. He reviewed the FY 2017-2018 proposed budget, copies of which were distributed and are available at Borough Hall. On the revenue side, the totals are \$1,183,665. There will be a .00285 mill increase (1.8% increase) in our property taxes. On the expenditure side, the most significant increases were in legal/professional services (lines 105 and 205) and a new line 612 for storm water management expenses. The total expenditures are \$1,183,666.

Resident Tom Sanford asked about Line 144. Warden Callahan explained that he keeps the expense listed even though the current tax collector does not accept the pay.

Resident Richard Easton asked for clarification on funds moved from accumulated revenue to the general fund. Warden Callahan stated that he moved funds from accumulated reserve to minimize the property tax increase required to balance the budget.

Resident Stuart Schwartzstein asked if shrubs are included in tree maintenance. He has suggestions for the tree commissioner.

- A motion by Burgess Scala, seconded by Borough resident Tom Sanford, to accept the proposed annual budget (for which a public hearing was held on March 20, 2017) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, passed unanimously.

CONSIDER A HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM:

In order to receive funding under the state's Local Capital Improvement Program, the Borough must apply for assistance on a project that is part of a current approved five-year capital improvement program. Each project is reviewed by the Board prior to initiation.

Following is a summary of the Street Commissioner's five-year proposal for infrastructure, major roadway, curbing, and sidewalk improvements.

Highway Department Capital Improvement Program

2017/18	Replace Summit and Bayview crosswalks; Rebuild Cross St.; Patch Front St	\$75,000;
2018/19	Pave Bayview and install curbs; evaluate Elm St footbridge	\$100,000
2019/20	Repair Elm St. footbridge; Pave Main St between High & Broad	\$100,000
2020/21	Pave Denison Ave. and Front St.	\$150,000
2021/22	Pave Pearl, Diving, and Upper Cliff Streets	\$150,000

- A motion by Borough resident Tom Sanford, seconded by Burgess Nicholas to approve the highway department capital improvement program, passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Report on William Williams Fund

The William Williams fund was created in 1912 with a bequest from William Williams. The purpose of this fund to annually distribute money to the poor residing in the Borough. The fund is administered by the Warden and Clerk-Treasurer. Donations were \$5675, disbursements were \$4,750. The balance is \$77,141.13.

Resident Richard Easton asked how many applications there were and if all were granted. Clerk-Treasurer Lisa Coleman replied there were eight disbursements. Two requests were duplicates from the same year and were not granted.

Resident Tom Sanford asked Moderator Scott Bates to lead everyone in applause for our Warden and Burgesses.

Resident Beth Harding asked for more signage for Borough meetings and elections.

ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion by resident Tom Sanford, seconded by Burgess Scala, adjournment of the annual meeting at 10:33 AM was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa M. Coleman, Clerk-Treasurer
June 30, 2017