

Borough of Stonington
Board of Warden and Burgesses Regular Monthly Meeting
August 21, 2023
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 LaGrua Center. Present, in addition to Warden Schefers were Burgesses Amy Nicholas, Kevin Rogers, Amanda Barnes, and Kevin Bowdler; and Clerk-Treasurer Lisa Coleman. Approximately 125 members of the public were present.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion by Burgess Barnes, seconded by Burgess Nicholas, the minutes of the monthly meeting of July 17, 2023, were unanimously approved.

A motion by Warden Schefers, seconded by Burgess Nicholas, to move Agenda Item 9a to precede the rest of the agenda, was unanimously approved.

Burgess Kevin Rogers presented an update on the Comfort Station. He said he was encouraged to see so many residents here and asked everyone to be thoughtful in their comments. About three years ago the Board of Warden and Burgesses sent out a questionnaire to all residents and 75% returned questionnaires responded that there was/is a need for public restrooms. Months later a committee was formed. For over 20 years the merchants and non-profits have begged for public restrooms. A recent canvas of both merchants and non-profits during In-Season was that 146 requests per days for restrooms and 67 during Off-Season. The Committee guidelines were Borough owned property, conform to ADA guidelines, to not be in a flood zone, centrally located, and with no direct neighbors. At the 2022 Annual Borough meeting the Warden and Burgesses the residents committed to looking at funding with grants and financing options. The Town of Stonington committed to \$50,000. Private individuals as well as non-profits have donated \$66,000. The Board of Warden and Burgesses approved an allocation of \$50,000 of ARPA funds. The total is \$166,500 already earmarked for the Comfort Station. Julia Leeming was chosen as the architect due to her to her background in Comfort Stations as well as being a well-regarded member of our community and our commitment. Thank you, Julia. The Committee was made of two Burgesses, Amy Nicholas and Kevin Rogers, Warden Callahan, Jim Quinn from St. Mary's, Julia Leeming and her assistant, Michaela from the Library, Janet from SVIA, Resident Jean Fiore, Deb Norman from SBMA. The two quotes were very similar. There are many events that attract visitors and residents alike. All of these will benefit from the building of a Comfort Station.

Julia Leeming, architect introduced herself and her architecture background. This is the same presentation made at the October 2021 Board of Warden and Burgesses meeting. She reviewed the locations in the Borough that were considered by the Committee. They had to consider the 100-year floodplains. Nonresidential new building construction and substantial improvement to buildings can only be 50% of the appraised value The playground was looked at but belongs to the Town of Stonington. Due to requirements of ADA, the building would require a 48-foot ramp to the entrance.

The second location was the Borough Hall. The public restrooms would require the bathrooms to be inside the building and there were safety and security issues to be considered. The back of the docks, (the sewerage treatment plant) in which there are already restrooms was looked at. It would require a 48-foot ramp. Security, drainage, visibility, a substantial improvement would be needed. The Point was considered, requiring a 108-foot ramp. Cannon Square, the west side of LaGrava Park, north side of Wimpeimer Park, Wadawanuck Square were considered. The committee decided on Wadawanuck Square because it did not have direct residential neighbors and had parking available. The architect studied the context and symmetry of Wad Square. The design has elements of St. Mary's Church, the Library, and the Post Office. She went on to detail the restrooms, entrances, windows, benches and showed the site plan.

Burgess Kevin Bowdler thanked Julia for her pro-bono work. Due to the number of questions that have been asked over the last several months, the Warden and Burgesses have reached out to the non-profits and businesses to report back on restroom requests that they recorded in July. Each business reported different amounts of requests to use restrooms. The committee reached out to library, restaurants, churches to see if they were interested in being paid by the Borough to use their restrooms. Kevin presented location and use information (see attached)

Warden Schefers met with Julia Leeming right after being elected. He heard from residents and businesses via mail or email regarding the location of the Comfort Station, and has retained printed copies of this correspondence.

Amy Nicholas asked each speaker to stand up, say their name and address, limit to 90 seconds.

Business owner Annette Bienkowski – Cove Ledge Beer Wine and Spirits. As a merchant I see the need for a public bathroom. Because I own an alcohol related business, I cannot allow our bathrooms to be used. It is our elderly community who most often asks.

Former Town of Stonington Tax Collector Linda Camelio, while not a Borough resident, does walk and sometimes is looking for a restroom and feels it is not fair to ask our merchants. She likes the design.

Resident Chuck Hartman, 13 Elm St, thanked the W&B for their work on the Comfort Station. Prefers it not to be on Wad. Square. He questioned the 2024 construction costs,

Resident Al Razzano, 25 Main St. In favor of a comfort station but not at Wad Square. There is a petition that has over 100 signatures of people who do not support the Wad. Square location. He feels the Board should take another year to study this.

Co-President of Stonington Garden Club, Laura Metzger – The SGC has pledged money to help with landscaping. The Garden Tour brings in 2,500 people every three years. We see a need for a public restroom.

Resident Jesse Diggs, School St. – In favor of a Comfort Station. Thinks that the criteria of ADA compliance, out of a flood zone, Borough property should not hold the project back. Feels it should be at the Town Dock. Form a committee again.

Merchant Tim Crabb, 119 Water Street – He is a new merchant and has noticed the need for restrooms. It has been well thought out. Essex has the same issue and has comfort stations, and it has been successful.

Lisa Tepper Bates, 118 Water Street – Thank you to Julia Leeming. Merchants are asked often and have expressed the need. Has welcomed people into her home. Human necessity and dignity should be important to us.

Pam Mola, 2 Church St. Not opposed to Comfort Station but not to be placed at Wad Square. Let's better utilize the Library and LaGrua Center. Please preserve Wad. Square.

Sarael Sargent, 73 Main – Opposed to the construction of a Comfort Station at only one location.

Tom Sargent, 73 Main – "I am opposed to the construction of a Comfort Station at Wadawanuck Square" was the wording of a petition circulating. He has never seen such an overwhelming response. He was struck by the intensity of people who were opposed. Not opposed to a comfort station.

Julie Toulmin, 83 Main St – Asks the community to think outside the box. Appreciates government. Wadawanuck Square should be preserved.

Greg Palmer – Likes Wad Square the way it is.

Merchant Andrew Field, Noah's – There is a giant need for a comfort station.

Lindsey Dean, 119 Alpha Ave. Friends who own businesses in the Borough. Feels strongly that having public bathrooms is a matter of human decency and dignity. We have a community of elders. Proponent of the design and location.

Paul Janssens, Harmony Street – Opposed to location because it will take parking spots in front of Post Office.

Kevin Halter, Has a two-year-old and runs and walks and participates in community activities. Most walk/runs begin at Wad. Square. Was told by an employee at a downtown business to go behind the church across the street. Encourages residents to support a comfort station.

Jane Lahr Crites, 4 Omega St. - We need a C.S. but not at Wad. Square. The size is not just the red-roped area. It is larger. It upstages the public park.

Chuck Tallman, Main St – Supports all the work that has gone into the C.S. Concerned for financial, environmental, and aesthetic issues. Would like to hear figures to have Borough Hall bathrooms be made available. We have other expenses coming up. Asked Warden and Burgesses to come up to a non-divisive solution.

Janie Lewis, 5 Trumbull St. We have well over the 100 signatures collected on the petition of people who support the C.S. There are people equally passionate in supporting,

Don Maranell, Bayview Ave. – Measure the quality of a community by what you do for those most in need. Appreciates restrooms being available. We can afford it.

Tim Olson, 9 Northwest St. – Appreciates the work that has gone into this already. It will impact someone. We do need a C.S.

Rebecca Higgins, 149 Water St. – The area it is taking up is small. When people have to go, they go.

Joe Larkin, 131 Elm St. – Upgrade restrooms at Borough Hall. Owned by Borough, tied into sewer system, accessibility ramp may or may not be needed, Centrally located.

Sandy Alexander, SBMA – Strong advocate for the merchants. Thanked Julia Leeming. Wad Square is the center of the Borough and attracts many people.

Merchant and resident Carolyn Yost – The restaurants get the burden of having no public restrooms.

Resident Janet McClendon, 102 Water St. – Does not feel it will ruin Wadawanuck Square.

Scott Mueller, Water Street – Public restrooms have been needed for over 25 years. There is no perfect solution. The longer we wait the more expensive the building will be.

Resident Jamie Fowler, Elm St – This is tending between progress and conservation. Implore people to look at their hearts and their heads. Wadawanuck might be considered a sacred place. We are clever people and might come up with another different solution.

Deb Blanchard, 125 Elm – Thank you Julia Leeming, thank you to Kevin Rogers for entertaining our questions.

Jane Keener, 7 Harmony – Perhaps several locations, upgrading the library, Borough Hall, look at the locations that already exist.

Betsy O'Brien Luchars, 14 Wall St. – Asked what the next steps are and how the W&B tally all of what they are hearing tonight.

A resident asked if the B&W could work together with residents rather than writing an ordinance.

Resident Jesse Diggs suggested that a new committee be formed with more residents on it.

Warden Schefers closed the public comment at 8:53 p.m. Having heard all the input Warden Schefers indicated that the Board will either table or act on the existing proposal at the September meeting. Burgess Rogers heard everything that was said and needs more time to think. Bowdler asked if anyone would like to be on a larger committee to keep working on this issue. Warden Schefers requested that if so, people should email him to express their interest. Burgess Nicholas said there is a parking issue at Borough Hall.

CORRESPONDENCE

RECEIVED:

- a) Application for The Annual Feast of Holy Ghost
- b) PKF Connor auditors' paperwork for the Board
- c) Request for Hazard and Climate Adoption Plan(email)
- d) Application form for Junior Firefighter
- e) Brooke Elmgren, concerned with abandoned cable and phone wires (email)

REPORT OF CLERK-TREASURER

I will be unable to attend the November Warden and Burgesses meeting since I will be in Mexico for my mother's memorial service. Perhaps we can do the meeting via Zoom so I can attend or arrange for someone else to do the minutes.

REVIEW OF BILLS/YTD FINANCIAL REPORT; ARPA UPDATE

Bills for the period July 15, 2023 through August 18, 2023 totaled \$157,566.79. Large bills of note were for Maintenance of a Fire Department truck and Worker's Comp and Liability Insurance. I&E through August 18, 2023 shows total revenue to date of \$925,740.80; and net income to date of \$464,838.64. Balance of ARPA funds is \$30,538.

WARDEN'S REPORT

1. Met with CT DOT, First Selectman, Amy Nicholas, Chief Hoadley, Chief DelGrosso, Public Works Director and Deputy, and Town Engineer concerning a new viaduct replacement option #5 proposed and approved by Danielle and myself with all stakeholders concurring.
2. Attended monthly Town Department Head meeting.
3. Attended Monthly COG meeting.
4. Met with COMO Director Matthew Haugen and Ops Director Liz Theodore to discuss Tennis Pavilion and Handicap Parking Spaces.
5. Met with Lori Dyer of Farmers Market concerning constituent feedback.
6. Attended Police Commission Mtg. with Amy Nicholas regarding reduce speed sign on town side of the viaduct, which was approved.
7. Attended Mtg with Emergency Planning Director Capt. Schneider, Chief Hoadley and Amy Nicholas regarding Town-Borough Emergency Planning efforts.
8. Met with Nick Kepple and Congressional Delegation representatives concerning funding for Elm Street foot bridge project.

BOROUGH CLOCK –

None

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Streets & Sidewalks (Schefers)

1. Conducted monthly brush pickup.
2. Continued Work on painting/repainting Road Stop Signs and Cross Walks
3. Continued road-sweeping and lawn maintenance
4. Cleaned Bradley Street run-off drain.
5. Cleaned debris from Harbor Edge storm water drain outflow.

Fire & Emergency Management (Nicholas/Hoadley)

July Police Incident Report

In June, the police responded to 84 calls in the borough including 12 Fire Related calls, 11 Parking/Motor Vehicle Complaints, 7 Medical Assists, 7 Assist Citizen, 5 Burglar Alarms 3 of which were false, 5 911 Misdiagnoses/Hang ups, 5 Nuisance, 4 Harassment, 3 Found Items, 3 Domestic Disturbances, 2 Disturbances, 2 Lost Items, 2 Suspicious Activity, 2 Animal Control, 2 Check Building and 2 Bank Alarms both of which were false. There was one incident each Threatening, Recovered Property, Assist Other Agency, Accident, Vandalism, Welfare Check, Minor Traffic Service, Open Door/Window, Transport and Larceny.

There was one arrest related to a Domestic Disturbance.

Asked by Warden to write a letter to Police Commission to get on the agenda regarding speeding in the Borough.

At the Board of Police Commissioners, the sign for reduced speed ahead on the town side of the viaduct was approved.

The Warden and I met with Chief Hoadley and Captain Schneider to discuss Emergency Operations for the Borough.

July Fire Report

In July, SBFD responded to 24 calls of which 14 were in the Borough.

- 1) 7-2-23 9:50am Wires down 209 N Water St. (moving truck)
- 2) 7-3-23 9:20pm Structure Fire Whewell Circle (shed fire, Weq. Fire district)
- 3) 7-3-23 11:47pm Odor of sewer gas 12 Trumbull St. (nothing found)
- 4) 7-4-23 10:46pm Porta Potty fire Stonington Point (fireworks)
- 5) 7-5-23 3:21pm Fire Alarm Activation Dog Watch Rest. (faulty heat sensor, kitchen)
- 6) 7-6-23 10:23am Smoke in area of 5 James St. LP (illegal burn 8 James St.)
- 7) 7-8-23 11:17pm Odor of propane 17 Hancox St. (faulty gas hot water heater)
- 8) 7-9-23 6:46pm Odor of electrical burning 149 Elm St. (refrigerator)
- 9) 7-9-23 8:00pm Odor of gas Grand & Gold St. (nothing found, seaweed, low tide?)

- 10) 7-12-23 2:32pm Power line down IFO 530 Stonington Rd. (Moving truck)
- 11) 7-13-23 6:07pm Fire Alarm Activation 25 Palmer St. (burnt food)
- 12) 7-15-23 2:57am Wires down, Arcing 106 Elm St. (nothing found)
- 13) 7-17-23 3:04pm Fire Alarm Activation 13 Bayview Ave. (cobwebs, detector)
- 14) 7-17-23 5:56pm CO detector activation 27 Elm St. (faulty activation)
- 15) 7-18-23 8:59am CO detector activation 21 Northwest St. (nothing found)
- 16) 7-19-23 8:05am CO detector activation 5 Hampton St. LP (nothing found)
- 17) 7-21-23 12:11pm CO detector activation 21 Northwest St. (nothing found)
- 18) 7-21-23 7:11pm Fire Alarm Activation 19 Wall St. (cleaned out smoke/CO)
- 19) 7-21-23 7:25pm Fire Alarm Activation 113 Water St., Noah's (nothing found)
- 20) 7-23-23 8:53pm Outside fire 22 Shawondassee Dr. (illegal burn, put out)
- 21) 7-24-23 00:21am CO detector activation 31 Elm St. (faulty detector)
- 22) 7-25-23 7:42pm Mutual Aid to Weq. FD (pump water to mulch pile, Town landfill)
- 23) 7-28-23 4:56pm Smoke in area of Rt. 1 @ Cemetery Lane (nothing found)
- 24) 7-28-23 5:22pm Medical Assist with SAC 72 Water St. NESS (lift assist off boat)

Parks, Trees & Rights of Way (Barnes)

Tree on Water Street will be removed right after Labor Day. Roots of trees between High and Broad are causing trip hazard.

Public Buildings (Rogers)

Fire Escape project is completed. We have a 25-year warranty.

Fire House was weeded and completely blown free of leaves, dead weeds, and said in preparation of the Twin Lobster Firehouse fundraising dinner.

It was agreed by the Burgesses and Warden to plant an arborvitae tree to the left side of the front door of Borough Hall. Late fall is the perfect planting season for arborvitae.

Looking into painting more "Pull Over" painted signs on Water Street between Omega and the Point. Complaints have been made about cars not pulling over.

Utilities & Sanitation (Bowdler)

Four sanitation citations on yellow bags left out overnight. Have received complaints about big, coiled utility wires. Frontier is the hold up. Regarding charging stations, our current copper wires will not support EV.

PUBLIC COMMENT

See above.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Comfort Station Update

See above.

Viaduct update

See above.

Draft Vendor Ordinance

The Board has to apply for a variance to Planning and Zoning, and have asked to be on the September agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

Consider requests to use Borough property.

Consider request for the Annual Feast of Holy Ghost

A motion by Burgess Nicholas, seconded by Burgess Barnes, to approve the request by the Portuguese Holy Ghost Society to use Main, Broad, Water, High, Northwest, Grand Streets for the Annual Feast of the Holy Ghost from 5:30 to 6:30 pm on Saturday, September 2, 2023 and from 10 am to 12:15 pm on Sunday, September 3, 2023, was unanimously approved.

Request for Hazard and Climate Adoption

A motion by Burgess Nicholas, seconded by Burgess Rogers to adopt the Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan updated, 2023-2028, was unanimously approved.

Application for Junior Firefighter

A motion by Burgess Nicholas seconded by Burgess Barnes, to approve the request by Archer Watson to be a Junior Firefighter, was unanimously approved.

Abandoned cable and phone wires

See above.

Update on Water Street Flooding Project

Warden Schefers will report on next month.

Establish a Comfort Station committee.

A motion by Burgess Bowdler, seconded by Burgess Barnes, to establish a Comfort Station committee including Burgesses Bowdler and Rogers and residents/neighbors, with a report to be made each month and a recommendation by the November 2023 Warden and Burgesses meeting, was unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS AND DISCUSSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Burgess Rogers, seconded by Burgess Nicholas, adjournment of the meeting at 9:30 pm, was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa M. Coleman
September 5, 2023