

**Board of Warden and Burgesses**  
**Borough of Stonington Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget Public Hearing~ April 2, 2012**

The Borough of Stonington Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget Public Hearing was called to order in Borough Hall at 7:33 PM by Warden Paul Burgess. Present were Burgesses Michael Adair, Kathryn Burchenal, Amy Nicholas, Howard Park, and Clerk- Treasurer Brian Krajack. Burgesses Edward McCreary and Robert Scala were absent.

**Open Public Hearing:**

1. On a motion by Warden Burgess, seconded by Burgess Nicholas, opening the proceedings for The Borough of Stonington Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget Public Hearing was unanimously approved.

**Draft Highway Department Capital Improvement Plan- Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2013**

1. Warden Burgess presented a draft of the Highway Department Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2012-2013.
  - a. Public Comment: Betty Richards asked if the roads scheduled for repair are to be entirely rebuilt. Warden Burgess explained that roads are rebuilt by pavement reclamation for sub-base and new pavement surface.
  - b. Burgess Burchenal asked whether the roads proposed for improvement were noted as requiring attention on the prior pavement study list. Warden Burgess confirmed this to be the case.
  - c. Warden Burgess noted that sidewalks are generally not included in road projects as they are the homeowner's responsibility, saving the Borough money.

**Draft Budget Presentation and Discussion- Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2013**

1. Warden Burgess presented a draft of the Borough Budget for FY 2012-2013.
  - a. Warden Burgess noted that line item #1 on the income side has been reduced by approximately \$14,000 to reflect the reduction in income received from the Town for road repairs based on a formula approved and negotiated several years ago. The formula is based on the number of miles of Town roads vs. Borough roads and other capital expenditures; if the Town spends less money on these items, the Borough receives less funding from the Town.
  - b. Public Comment: Betty Richards asked if the formula could be renegotiated. Warden Burgess responded that he will investigate.
2. Warden Burgess noted a \$4,000 reduction in Property Tax income as a result of the Stonington Harbor Yacht Club's Sailing Foundation, a non-profit entity, acquiring the building housing their organization.
  - a. Public Comment: Betty Richards asked if the Borough is able to ask for anything back from non-profits. Burgess Park and Burgess Adair noted that non-profits are not required to pay property taxes and that it is probably not feasible to ask them to pay taxes.
  - b. Public Comment: Michael Roberts asked who determines that non-profits are exempt from paying property taxes. Warden Burgess noted that the Connecticut General Statutes cover this exemption.
3. Warden Burgess noted that last Fiscal Year the Board had allocated \$47,000 from the reserve account to income. The Borough's Reserve Account is currently approximately

8% of the budget, a number that the Borough's accountant is comfortable with. No allocations from the reserve fund are proposed in this draft of the Budget.

4. Warden Burgess noted that line item #105 for Professional Services has been reduced by approximately \$5,000 based on expenditures to date. Warden Burgess has been helping with road repair and improvement design/ oversight, eliminating some design expenses
5. Warden Burgess noted that line items #108 and #109 representing Borough Employee's Health Insurance costs have been reduced by pursuing a High Deductible Health Savings Account Insurance Plan. The plan will reduce premiums while providing the same coverage for the employees. Warden Burgess explained that the Borough has historically paid all premiums as well as co-pays.
  - a. Public Comment: Betty Richards asked how many employees are covered by the plan; Warden Burgess responded that three Borough employees are covered by the plan.
  - b. Public Comment: Julia Roberts questioned whether a schedule listing all the Borough employees, showing job descriptions, years of service, annual hours worked, salaries, and benefits could be developed. Ms. Roberts indicated she feels it would be helpful to see "all-in" costs, including payroll taxes, for each employee. More discussion is recorded under the heading of "Additional Discussion" in these minutes.
  - c. Public Comment: Betty Richards asked why a separate position for Clerk-Treasurer is necessary if the Borough has a full-time Administrative Assistant.
    - i. Warden Burgess noted that this is more of a Charter discussion than a budget discussion and can be explored by a subcommittee currently reviewing the Charter.
    - ii. Public Comment: Jeffrey Callahan noted that the salary of the Clerk-Treasurer had been significantly reduced to account for the reduced workload on account of having a full-time Administrative Assistant.
    - iii. Burgess Adair noted that the responsibilities of the Clerk-Treasurer are very different than that of the Administrative Assistant.
    - iv. Public Comment: Julia Roberts noted that she feels the current arrangement works well; it's helpful to have a second set of eyes for a system of checks and balances.
6. Warden Burgess noted that a line item has been added under #165 for Employee Bonuses rather than increasing employees' salaries this year.
7. Warden Burgess explained that line item #168 Payroll Taxes has been consolidated into one line item for payroll taxes of all Borough Departments.
8. Warden Burgess noted that line item #204 Secretary/ Typist for Planning and Zoning has been reduced to \$0 since this separate position has not been used for a few years.
9. Warden Burgess noted that the Fire Department budget remains consistent with last FY's budget with very few changes.
  - a. Burgess Nicholas noted that line items #321 and #324 are determined by actuarial figures.
  - b. Burgess Nicholas noted that fuel costs have increased compared to what we have budgeted for this year.

- c. Burgess Nicholas noted that line item #342 Medical has been reduced by \$2,500 as costs are historically low as claims have been covered by the individual's insurance plans.
  - d. Public Comment: Julia Roberts asked to whom the Borough pays rent for the fire hydrants and pipes. Chief Hoadley responded that we rent the hydrants and pipes from Aquarion. Chief Hoadley noted that the Fire Department is not charged for water directly related to firefighting.
  - e. Public Comment: Julia Roberts asked what line item #341 Fire Companies and Departments was for. Burgess Nicholas responded that this was a stipend paid to each of the Borough's five Fire Companies for things such as scholarships, extra equipment, food, etc.
    - i. Chief Hoadley mentioned that other towns pay a "per call fee" of \$10-\$15 per call to the firefighters to retain and bring in volunteers. The Borough instead offers this stipend and a pension program.
  - f. Public Comment: Julia Roberts asked if it was a fair assessment to subtract the approximately \$240,000 worth of Fire Department expenses from the approximately \$107,000 worth of income for Fire Protection fees from the other three districts served by the department as a way of determining what it costs to operate a Fire Department in the Borough. Ms. Roberts noted it would be interesting to compare the cost per building with other districts.
    - i. Warden Burgess concurred that that is one way to analyze the costs, and that he is currently in the process of negotiating contracts with the Fire Districts.
    - ii. Burgess Burchenal noted that the Borough is a very challenging area for the Fire Department to serve and with all the apartments, a cost per building might not provide an accurate comparison. Burgess Burchenal stated that having a Fire Department right in the Borough is of great benefit to its residents.
  - g. Public Comment: Michael Roberts, noting that it was not a budget question, indicated that neighbors were upset about the response time of the Ambulance Corp to a recent incident on the Lawn of the Lighthouse.
    - i. Chief Hoadley explained that because the Ambulance Corp is comprised of volunteers, it's quite possible that personnel may have been at work or out of town when the call came in. Chief Hoadley noted that the Fire Department arrived after being called by the Ambulance Corp.
10. Warden Burgess explained that Street Department line item #602 Equipment R&M/ Upgrading had been reduced by approximately \$7,000 based on actual expenses and line item #604 Street Repairs has been increased by \$6,000 due to anticipated curb repairs.
  11. Warden Burgess explained that line item #610 Snow Removal has been reduced by \$4,000 in part due to the tractor purchased by the Borough two years ago being able to reduce some of the Borough's subcontracted expenses for snow removal.
  12. Warden Burgess explained that the increase in line item #656 Labor- Regular is due to a reallocation of funds, and not to salary increases.
  13. Warden Burgess explained that line item #802 Tree Maintenance has been reduced by \$5,300 to \$7,000 based on actual expenditures to date of \$5,700.

- a. Public Comment: Jeffrey Callahan asked if maintenance in preparation for a hurricane would warrant an increase in costs. Burgess Park noted that we have been proactive with a great deal of preventative trimming already having taken place.
  - b. Warden Burgess noted that approximately \$14,000 is included under income line item #2 State of Connecticut for FEMA reimbursements from damage caused by Hurricane Irene.
  - c. Public Comment: Jeffrey Callahan asked if there was a separate budget for tree planting and what those costs might be. Burgess Park noted that new tree planting is part of the overall Tree Maintenance budget and that costs vary depending on what types of trees and how many are planted.
  - d. Public Comment: Betty Richards asked what became of the repairs necessary to the Seawalls. Warden Burgess explained that the repairs had been complete last year.
14. In summary, Warden Burgess noted that the Draft Budget represents, in approximate terms, an \$18,000 reduction in expenditures and a \$5,000 reduction in contingencies. \$190,000 will be allocated to other funds; \$160,000 to the Infrastructure Reserve Fund, \$10,000 to the Sidewalk Fund, and \$20,000 to the Fire Department and Highway Department Truck Fund.
- a. Warden Burgess explained that in past years the annual bond payments for the Fire House were previously approximately \$150,000. This year the payments will total approximately \$37,000 and will be paid off in the following year.

#### **Additional Discussion**

- 1. Public Comment: Julia Roberts requested an overview of the William's Fund.
  - a. Warden Burgess explained that the "William Williams Fund" was created in 1912 through 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.
  - b. Warden Burgess noted that there is a similar fund, the Waldron Fund established in 1837 through a bequest from Jonathan C. Waldron. This fund can provide modest sums of financial assistance to Borough residents who need help with the costs of food, fuel, and clothing during the winter months, October through April. There are three Trustees of the fund elected at the Annual Meeting. Current Trustees are Lisa Tepper Bates, Burgess Kathryn Burchenal, and Elizabeth Tobin Brown.
- 2. Public Comment: Julia Roberts asked if the Borough had any plans for a public restroom. Warden Burgess noted that discussions are currently underway with the Town about the possibility of using the public restroom at the Sewage Treatment Facility that has been closed for years.
- 3. Public Comment: Betty Richards noted that the condition of the streets in the Borough look so much improved. Ms. Richards stated that Cannon Square looks very good and that the grass in the Square looks better than ever; the piles of sand, normal for this time of the year are not present, and she has never recalled it looking so attractive.
- 4. Public Comment: Julia Roberts expressed a concern over a lack of transparency in the Draft Budget with respect to the cost to the taxpayers of Borough employees. Ms. Roberts

requested that line item # 656 Labor- Regular, representing two Highway Department employees be broken out by individual employee.

- a. Burgess Adair expressed his concern over breaking out people's salaries in a public forum.
- b. Burgess Burchenal noted that dedication and the number of years of service provided to the Borough by each employee is very important and cannot be expressed by a salary line item.
- c. Burgess Nicholas noted that the Board has reviewed the salaries of the Borough employees and find them to be in keeping with salaries for similar positions in other towns.
- d. Public Comment: Betty Richards noted that knowing the cost of the Street Department employees would be beneficial; perhaps listing them by position rather than by name.
- e. Public Comment: Jeffrey Callahan noted that the Town, the State, and the Federal Government do not make this kind of information available at public hearings and it would not be appropriate for the Borough to do so.

**Close Public Hearing:**

1. On a motion by Warden Burgess, seconded by Burgess Burchenal, closing the proceedings for The Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget Public Hearing was unanimously approved.

**Board Deliberations**

1. Warden Burgess suggested we do not include a breakdown of Borough employee salaries within the budget but rather prepare a schedule showing job descriptions, years of service, annual hours worked, salaries, benefits, and payroll taxes. The schedule would be made available to interested tax payers.
  - a. Burgess Nicholas will work with the Administrative Assistant to prepare this schedule.
2. Warden Burgess recommended, based on input from members of the community present at this public hearing, that we present the Draft Budget "as-is" being prepared to discuss aspects of Budget in more detail at the Annual Meeting.

**Presentation of Budget at Annual Meeting:**

1. On a motion by Warden Burgess, seconded by Burgess Park, presentation of the Borough of Stonington Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget to the Annual Meeting on April 21, 2012 was unanimously approved with the following stipulations:
  - a. The Budget will be presented "as-is".
  - b. Detailed information regarding Borough employees' salaries, benefits, and length of service will be available for interested parties.

**Adjournment:** On a motion by Burgess Park, seconded by Burgess Adair, adjournment of the meeting at 8:50 PM was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Krafjack  
Clerk- Treasurer