

**Special Borough Meeting  
July 14, 2012**

The Special Borough Meeting held in accordance with the Borough of Stonington Charter, Chapter 5, Section 2, "Special Borough Meeting by Petition" was called to order in the Firehouse at 9:53 AM by Warden Paul Burgess.

Present were Burgesses Michael Adair, Edward McCreary, Amy Nicholas, Howard Park, Robert Scala, and Clerk- Treasurer Brian Krafjack. Burgess Burchenal was absent.

Approximately 100 Borough Residents, Citizens who are listed on the Official Voters List for the Town of Stonington, and/or Citizens who are listed on the Town of Stonington 2011 Grand List as having taxable property with an assessed value of at least \$1,000 were present, and were qualified as eligible to vote in this Special Borough Meeting.

**Appointment of Moderator:**

A motion to appoint Warden Paul Burgess as moderator for the Special Meeting was made by Burgess Scala and seconded by Thomas Rezendes.

A motion to close nominations for a moderator was made by Donald Maranell and seconded by Burgess Nicholas. This motion passed by unanimous vote.

The motion to appoint Warden Paul Burgess as moderator for the Special Meeting was passed by unanimous vote.

**Motion to repeal Borough Ordinance SBO-02 Bus Ordinance:**

A motion to repeal Borough Ordinance SBO-02 Bus Ordinance was made by Spike Lobdell and seconded by David Purvis.

**Discussion**

1. Wendy Bury representing The Stonington Borough Merchant's Association noted that the Merchants Association has never asked any bus company to bring visitors by tour bus to the Borough, and indicated that the Merchants Association has no intention of doing so in the future. Ms. Bury noted that the Merchants would like to see exceptions to the Ordinance allowing buses for students and other visitors so that they can have access to activities of non-profit organizations.
2. Borough resident Jeffrey Callahan asked that the Board explain the factors leading to the creation of the Bus Ordinance.
  - a. Warden Burgess explained that the original concern was that of tour buses travelling down Water Street and ending up at the Point with no way to turn around. The result was that tour buses have ended up stuck and blocking streets creating a safety concern. The Ordinance was written to restrict tour buses and school buses of a certain size from traveling past Wadawanuck Square without prior approval of the Warden and Burgesses. During Board deliberations, the prior approval clause was eliminated.
  - b. Burgess Park noted that the Ordinance was not intended to restrict all school buses, just buses over a certain size.
3. Borough Resident and former Borough Warden Eileen Jachym noted that, for historical perspective, when serving as Warden she and the Street Commissioner borrowed a full size

school bus to drive around the Borough. Based on that experiment, it was apparent that allowing school buses past Wadawanuck Square was not safe or practical.

4. Borough Resident and President of the Stonington Historical Society David Purvis stated that he supports rescinding the Ordinance. Mr. Purvis noted that there are approximately 8 to 14 buses per year bringing both school children and senior citizens to the Lighthouse Museum at the Point. Mr. Purvis objected to the letter that had been distributed by the “Borough Residents’ Committee” noting that it was spurious and unkind to suggest that the reason the Historical Society was in favor of rescinding the Ordinance was to increase revenue. Mr. Purvis explained that school children do not pay to visit the Lighthouse Museum.
5. Borough Resident and former Warden Michael Blair noted that large fire trucks and trucks delivering produce to the restaurants on a daily basis are able to navigate the borough streets. Mr. Blair stated that he is proud of what the Borough has to offer visitors and feels it is important to allow others to experience the Borough, and does not agree with the exclusionary tone of the “Borough Residents’ Committee” letter. Mr. Blair agrees that large tour buses are a concern and we should work towards establishing control on tour buses rather than school buses.
6. Borough Resident and former Warden Donald Maranell stated that he couldn’t agree with Mr. Blair more and added that he has not seen, for his time living in the Borough, that buses have been an issue. Mr. Maranell suggested that the Board should find out if the Police have any safety concerns about buses in the Borough before an ordinance is enacted. Mr. Maranell expressed concerns that limiting school bus traffic may be in violation of State law, and limiting tour bus traffic may be in violation of Federal Interstate Commerce law.
7. Borough Resident Polly Dyer asked that Warden Burgess clarify whether the Ordinance limit on bus length was 25’ or 35’ as reported in one newspaper.
  - a. Warden Burgess explained that the limit was 25’.
8. Borough resident Maggie Revill asked Mr. Purvis how many people can visit the Lighthouse Museum at one time.
  - a. Mr. Purvis responded that he was unsure of the number.
9. Burgess Edward McCreary explained that he had distributed the “Borough Residents’ Committee” letter as a means to get people to attend the meeting so that enough voices are heard. Burgess McCreary noted that the Borough streets were not built for cars and certainly not for buses. Burgess McCreary noted that he has lived in the Borough since the 1950’s and has seen problems with buses. Burgess McCreary noted that the non-profit organizations do wonderful things, but perhaps at the expense of Borough residents.
10. Borough Resident Mary Gallagher noted that she would like to see exceptions to the Ordinance allowing buses to bring visitors to NESS (New England Science and Sailing) and the Lighthouse Museum, but would like to see tour buses travel restricted past Wadawanuck Square.
  - a. Burgess Park noted that the Ordinance does allow for exceptions since the Ordinance can be temporarily suspended.
11. Jane Simmons, the Executive Director of the La Grua Center stated that she would like the La Grua center to be considered for exceptions along with NESS and the Historical Society

12. Borough resident Robert Montgomery asked Warden Burgess how the Ordinance would be enforced. Mr. Montgomery suggested that perhaps if illegal parking at the point was regulated, buses would be able to turn around at the point.
  - a. Warden Burgess noted that there are currently no fines established and that it may be possible for the Stonington Police to enforce the Ordinance. Warden Burgess explained that signs enforcing parking at the point were stolen the first night they were put up, and stolen again immediately upon their replacement.
13. Borough resident Ann Adair asked Mr. Lobdell, NESS Foundation President, how many school children visit NESS in a year.
  - a. Mr. Lobdell explained that about 1,000 students will visit NESS during the summer months, and they would like to see another 800 students visit NESS in the off-season. Mr. Lobdell noted that the buses do not hold up traffic when loading and unloading students in front of NESS.
  - b. Burgess Amy Nicholas noted that when a bus stops, it does hold up traffic, by law. Burgess Nicholas noted that the intent of the Ordinance was not to restrict small buses for people with ambulatory issues, and that the Ordinance was passed with the safety of Borough residents in mind.
14. Borough Resident Harriet Crane noted that tour buses have a tendency to park on the side of the street and leave their engines idling creating pollution issues.
15. A letter written by Ed Sweeney of the Bennie Dover Jackson School in New London in support of NESS programs was read by Mike Smiles. The letter noted the positive influence NESS programs have had on their school children. The letter stated that the Ordinance would have a negative impact on the ability of the school to participate in NESS programs.
16. Borough resident Henri Gourd noted that the Board has demonstrated open-mindedness by allowing for exceptions in the Ordinance, and stated that he would like to see permanent exceptions for NESS, the Historical Society, and the La Grua Center.
  - a. Borough resident and member of the Board of Directors of the SVIA (Stonington Village Improvement Association) James Wightman stated that SVIA has no programs that currently use school buses, and the SVIA has no plans for future programs that would use school buses, but would like for the SVIA to be on a list of organizations considered for exceptions as well.
17. Borough resident Rita McCreary stated that the quality of the services provided by the non-profit organizations has never been an issue, but rather the safety of Borough residents. Ms. McCreary suggested that if exceptions are granted, the exceptions should be limited to a term of one year so that the impact can be evaluated.
18. Borough resident Michael Roberts noted that he believes the Ordinance is poorly written. If the intent was to provide for exceptions for certain organizations, the Ordinance as written does not do that, rather it provides for complete suspension of all the provisions in the Ordinance.

19. Borough resident Dean Anderson noted that he has lived in the Borough for 34 years and has yet to hear of an accident involving a bus. Mr. Anderson suggested that the real issue is congestion and inconvenience to Borough residents. Mr. Anderson stated that he believes the Ordinance should be repealed, and the larger issue of congestion should be addressed.
20. Borough resident Charles Peterson noted that he is not for allowing exceptions for individual organizations.
  - a. Borough resident and former Warden Donald Maranell stated that he also believes exceptions for non-profit organizations is not a good idea. Mr. Maranell suggested that the Board should consult with an attorney about whether the Ordinance as written is legal.

A motion to close discussion was made by Donald Maranell and seconded by Jeffrey Callahan. The motion passed by majority vote.

A motion to proceed with a hand vote on the motion to repeal Borough Ordinance SBO-02 Bus Ordinance was made by Thomas Rezendes and seconded by James Wightman. This motion passed by majority vote.

The motion to repeal Borough Ordinance SBO-02 Bus Ordinance was passed by the required two-thirds vote.

**Adjournment:**

A motion to adjourn the Special Borough Meeting was made by Don Maranell and was seconded by Burgess Park. The motion passed by unanimous vote and the Special Borough Meeting was adjourned at 10:33.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Krafjack  
Clerk- Treasurer