

**Board of Warden and Burgesses
Annual Meeting~April 26, 2014**

The 214th Borough and Budget Meeting of the Borough of Stonington was called to order in Borough Hall at 10 AM by Warden Jeff Callahan. Present were Burgesses Michael Blair, Michael Adair, Sibby Lynch, Amy Nicholas, Howard Park, Robert Scala, and Clerk-Treasurer Lisa Coleman. Also present were ten Borough residents.

APPOINTMENT OF MODERATOR:

- A motion to appoint Borough resident Scott Bates as moderator of the Annual Meeting, made by Burgess Adair and seconded by Burgess Park, was unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMINDERS:

- Warden Jeff Callahan asked that Borough residents in attendance turn off their cell phones.
- Warden Jeff Callahan explained that under the Borough Charter only those citizens 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- On a motion by Burgess Adair, seconded by Borough resident Lisa Tepper Bates, acceptance of the minutes from the April 27, 2013 Annual Borough and Budget Meeting, as amended to correct paragraph three of the Administrative Reminders to "...that only those citizens 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 qualified as eligible to vote in this Annual Borough Meeting," was unanimously approved.

WARDEN'S REPORT/BUDGET PRESENTATION:

To paraphrase Garrison Keillor, it's been a quiet year in Stonington Borough. For the first time in several years, there have been no major storms, although the past winter was challenging enough. But beneath the quiet surface, there has been a lot going on. Probably the most significant event has been the reorganization of the Borough fire department, a process that started about two years ago and culminated in the commissioning of the brand new Stonington Borough Volunteer Fire Company on the first of April. This was not a mere administrative change.... It involved disbanding three historic fire companies, the oldest of which dates back to the mid-19th century, and consolidating them in one company. It was not without controversy, but in the end all three of the existing fire companies and the fire police voted overwhelmingly for this change, because they could see that it was necessary in order to maintain a viable department. Like other local volunteer fire departments, the Borough's has experienced

declining membership and participation levels over the last twenty years. We expect that the reorganization, along with some new initiatives included in our budget, will reinvigorate this critical service. I want to congratulate Chief Jeff Hoadley and Fire Commissioner Michael Blair for their leadership in bringing this process to a successful conclusion. And I want to recognize the positive attitude displayed by the members of the traditional fire companies as they worked their way through the last two years.

The second big thing that has been swirling around us over the past year was changes in the National Flood Insurance Program. Over half of Borough residences are in the flood zone, and almost all of them are in the NFIP. As those of us who buy flood insurance through this program know, it is very expensive, and under changes included in the now infamous Biggert-Waters Act of 2012, it was going to become much more so. Flooding and flood insurance are national issues, affecting not only coastal communities like ours but also many river communities. As people across the country became aware of the impact of Biggert-Waters there was an outcry that led Congress, in a rare display of bipartisan cooperation, to pass revisions to the law (with the ironic title, “Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act”) that soften (but don’t eliminate) the impacts of Biggert-Waters. Premiums are still going to increase, but at a slower rate. I don’t pretend to know all the new provisions; I suggest you go online to educate yourself and/or talk to your insurance agent. One thing I do know is that this problem is not going away for those of us who choose to live by the sea. If you doubt me, you might want to take a look at some of the charts on the walls after we adjourn. One bit of good news on this front is that we passed our five-year review for the Community Rating System, so Borough residents will continue to receive a discount on their flood insurance premiums.

The final thing I will mention that has been going on under the surface is planning for the Bicentennial of the great Battle of Stonington. There will be a two-day celebration of this historic event on the weekend of August 9/10. A committee led by Meredith Brown, former president, and Rob Palmer, current president of the Stonington Historical Society, have been working on this once-in-a-lifetime event for months. Stay tuned for details. In closing my report I want to recognize and thank three groups of people that I haven’t mentioned already: First, the volunteers who participate in our boards and commissions—P&Z, led by Julia Roberts; ZBA led by Bob Montgomery; and the Harbor Management Commission, which is a joint commission with the Town; five of the ten members are Borough residents. The second group are the paid staff, full time and part time: Barbara Perry in the Borough Office; Sue and Roger in the Street Dept; Dave Atkinson, our zoning officer; the Fire Department officers, Chief Hoadley, Deputy Chief Teixeira, and Asst. Chief Mitchell; and our Fire Marshal, George Brennan. The third group are elected officials: my colleagues on the Board of Warden and Burgesses, who in their roles as commissioners oversee the streets, sidewalks, parks, fire department, public buildings, and public safety. And we have other elected officials, including our clerk-treasurer, Lisa Coleman, who was appointed by the Board to replace Brian Krafjak. Brian apparently decided that winter here wasn’t severe enough and moved to Maine with his wife last month. Also, Michael Schefers, the Borough tax assessor, and Tom Sanford, our tax collector, who has served for years and steadfastly declined to accept a salary.

Without all these people, the Borough simply couldn't and wouldn't function. I invite other members of the community who are interested in serving on one of these boards or commissions or in the volunteer fire department to contact me.

That concludes my report. Are there any questions?

- Question from Borough resident Tim Love about the flood zone maps and charts. Warden Callahan directed him to the Town of Stonington's GIS site.
- Comment by Borough resident Tim Love that the Historical Society comes out with its report on the Bicentennial celebration on May 1, 2014.

ACT ON PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015:

Introductory comments made by Warden Jeff Callahan.

- The annual audit went smoothly.
- The net worth of \$5 million reflects the frugality and sense of civic responsibility that characterize Stonington Borough.
- There is no change to the mill rate. It is the same as last year.

On the income side, Borough resident Richard Easton asked for clarification on negotiations with the other fire districts. Warden Callahan explained the new formula that was put in place last year.

Borough resident Richard Easton stated his concern that we don't continue to transfer reserve funds to the operating fund every year in the future. Warden Callahan assured him that the Board agrees with him.

Warden Jeff Callahan highlighted two new line items under "Contributions", a one-time contribution to the Battle of Stonington Bicentennial committee, and one to the Stonington Community Center.

Warden Jeff Callahan highlighted two new items in the Fire Department budget, the pay-per-call incentive program and the small annual stipends to the company captain and two lieutenants.

Borough resident Richard Easton asked for clarification on the fire hydrants painting. Fire Chief Jeff Hoadley remarked that many fire hydrants have been replaced and that Aquarion is responsible for their maintenance. Aquarion is scheduled to replace water mains on Broad Street and Wall Street in 2014.

Warden Jeff Callahan highlighted the increase in the Public Buildings budget due to having an elevator in Borough Hall requiring maintenance and inspection fees as well as repairs and replacement of gutters on Borough Hall.

Warden Jeff Callahan pointed out that the sidewalk repair fund has become part of the operating budget. A new line has been added to account for summer temporary help for the Street Department.

There is a small increase in Parks and Trees

There is a small increase in Sanitation budget.

Warden Jeff Callahan pointed out that for the first time in ten years we have no debt.

On a motion by Burgess Scala, seconded by Borough Resident Lisa Tepper Bates, to accept the proposed annual budget (for which a public hearing was held on April 7, 2014) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, was unanimously accepted.

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 (or longer) 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. This is based on an assessment of need done by an engineer eight years ago.

Highway Department
Capital Improvement Program

2014/15	Broad (east side) & Wall Streets	\$ 50,000
2015/16	Gold, Cross & Orchard Streets	\$150,000
2016/17	Front & Diving Streets	\$150,000
2017/18	Pearl, Denison & Cliff (north end) Streets	\$160,000
2018/19	Church (east of Main) Street	\$160,000

On a motion by Burgess Nicholas, seconded by Burgess Park, to adopt the highway department capital improvement program, was unanimously accepted.

SELECT TRUSTEES FOR THE WALDRON FUND:

Borough resident and current Waldron Fund trustee Lisa Tepper Bates provided an overview of the Waldron Fund and its activities for the fiscal year 2013-2014:

- In 1837, the Borough received a bequest from Jonathan C. Waldron, the interest to be used between the months of October and April to furnish poor families of

the Borough with fuel, food, and raiment. Over the years, the fund has received other contributions and has grown to \$136,232.54. Last year \$8,223.70 was distributed in assistance. There are three trustees of the Fund, and they are chosen by the Borough voters at the Annual Meeting. Current trustees are Lisa Tepper Bates, Kathryn Burchenal, and Elizabeth Tobin Brown.

- During the 2013-14 Waldron season, the Trustees again sent a postcard to all Borough addresses to raise awareness about the existence of the Waldron Fund, and the separate Williams Fund, and to encourage inquiries from those in need. We recommend that this mailing should be an annual exercise.
- The Waldron Fund remains open to referrals and cooperative work to serve Borough residents in need from local partner agencies, as well, including from the Borough churches, Stonington School System, as well as Stonington's Human Services Department.
- During the 2013-2014 Waldron "season" to date, we have provided assistance to nine (9) Borough residents, including both families and single adult households. The support ranges from grocery gift cards and funds for clothing to substantial assistance with heating costs.
- As in the past, several life-long Borough residents are among those we have helped this year. Our commitment to those who approach us for assistance is to maintain the utmost confidentiality with regard to any information shared to explain their needs to us.
- As in Jonathan Waldron's lifetime, the high cost of heating remains one of the greatest challenges for those facing economic hardship. The resources of the Waldron Fund are particularly helpful in this area, as heating costs in our state and community are extremely high, and this past winter was long and particularly cold.
- The Waldron Fund plays an important role in the lives of those Borough residents struggling to make ends meet, especially in these challenging economic times. We are fortunate to have such a resource. The spirit of the fund is one of "neighbors helping neighbors." We encourage Borough residents to refer to the Fund for assistance anyone they might know who is a Borough resident in need.
- The current Trustees (Kathryn Nason Burchenal, Elizabeth Tobin Brown, and Lisa Tepper Bates) are honored to have served the Borough government and the citizens of the Borough through our work with the Waldron Fund. We are stepping down this year, after five years of service (Lisa and Kathryn) and four years (Elizabeth).

On a motion made by Borough Resident Richard Easton, seconded by Burgess Scala, to accept the Waldron Fund report made by Lisa Tepper Bates and the slate of three

candidates including Amanda Crane Mann, Michael Scheffers, and Gillian Patrick proposed by the current retiring trustees (Lisa Tepper Bates, Kathryn Burchenal, and Elizabeth Tobin Brown), was unanimously accepted.

Borough resident Richard Easton thanked the retiring trustees. He wanted to confirm there were no issues in the decision of all three trustees resigning at the same time. Lisa Tepper Bates said no, and the current trustees are willing to coordinate with the new slate of trustees.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Moderator Scott Bates thanked the Warden and Burgesses, congratulated all involved in the modernization of the fire department and thanked the trustees of the Waldron Fund.

ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion by Burgess Scala, seconded by Burgess Park, adjournment of the meeting at 10:45 AM was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa M. Coleman
Clerk-Treasurer
May 14, 2014