

**Board of Warden and Burgesses
Annual Meeting~April 18, 2015**

The 215th 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, and Clerk-Treasurer Lisa Coleman. Burgess Robert Scala was absent. Also present were 25 Borough residents.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMINDERS:

- Warden Jeff Callahan asked that 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.

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.
- Moderator Scott Bates thanked the Warden and Burgesses for their work on behalf of the Borough of Stonington. He welcomed and thanked the residents of the Borough of Stonington in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- On a motion by Borough resident Carla Stebbins, seconded by Borough resident Charles Harding acceptance of the minutes from the April 26, 2014 Annual Borough and Budget Meeting, was unanimously approved.

WARDEN'S REPORT/BUDGET PRESENTATION:

Unlike last year's report, which I began by paraphrasing Garrison Keillor, this has not been a quiet year in Stonington Borough. Last summer was peaceful enough from a meteorological point of view, but August saw a noisy celebration of the bicentennial of the Battle of Stonington, attended by hundreds of citizens, including the Governor, both senators, and other elected officials. Then, after a mild and pleasant fall and holiday season, winter came charging in with a blizzard in late January. That ushered in one of the coldest and snowiest winters in living memory, with the Borough remaining blanketed in snow until mid-March. Finally, another first in living memory --- perhaps in the Borough's entire history -- a bank robbery just eleven days ago.

One of the activities I mentioned in my report last year was the ongoing and nearly completed reorganization of the fire department. That process now has been completed, and the three historic fire companies have been consolidated into one, known as the Stonington Borough Volunteer Fire Company, led by Captain Theresa Hersh. I again want to congratulate Fire Commissioner Michael Blair and Chief Jeff Hoadley, as well as all the members of the department, for bringing this process to a successful conclusion.

Once the fire department reorganization was wrapped up, the department leaders and the Board of Warden & Burgesses turned their attention to the matter of replacing two aging fire engines. The department formed a committee that worked with Pierce Manufacturing, Inc. to design two engines that work as a team. While either one can be used alone, together they bring much greater capabilities than the two 30-year old units

we now have. After much discussion, two public information sessions, and several procedural votes, the Board made the decision to proceed with a nine-year, approximately 1.2 million dollar, lease-purchase agreement with Pierce. That decision is reflected in the budget that we will discuss and vote on later this morning. During that discussion, if anyone has questions about the new engines we have representatives from the Department who can address them.

Another subject that I mentioned last year was the federal flood insurance program, which had seen a lot of change and confusion, as Congress attempted to “fix” the program. I mentioned then that one piece of good news was that the Borough had passed its five-year FEMA review and residents would continue to receive a discount on their flood insurance policies. It turns out that the news was even better than I thought. I was notified in November that we accumulated enough points in the review process that we now get a 10 percent discount rather than the 5 percent we previously enjoyed.

OTHER ACTIVITIES SINCE LAST ANNUAL MEETING — Water mains were replaced by Aquarion on Wall and east Broad Streets, and then those streets were repaved. A new steam boiler was installed in Borough Hall, replacing the old one that was pushing as much steam up the chimney as it was through the radiators. And the Planning & Zoning Commission completed an update of the P&Z regulations. This was a big job. The Fire Department responded to 99 calls, including a number of broken water pipes during the coldest days of February. And under the watchful eye of Tree Commissioner Sibby Lynch, the electric company (formerly CL&P, now known as EverSource) completed its tree trimming operation without inflicting excessive damage on the Borough’s trees. The annual Borough audit for the year ending 30 June 2014 showed another increase in net assets to 5.1 million dollars. Our cash reserve currently stands at about 217 thousand dollars, which is equivalent to three months operating costs. The auditors recommend two month’s reserve.

PLANS FOR COMING YEAR – Highlights for the coming year include concluding the lease agreement for the new fire engines and receiving them here in the firehouse; and repairing and repaving several Borough streets.

WILLIAMS FUND – The Borough is fortunate to have two funds created by generous former Borough citizens that can be used to help out current residents in need. One is the Waldron Fund, which will be discussed later in the meeting. The other is the William Williams Fund, which was established in 1917 with a bequest of some \$5,500. It is overseen by the Warden and the Clerk-Treasurer. Over the past year the Williams Fund has assisted four residents and disbursed a total of \$4,390. The current balance is about \$85,000.

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 Chris Errichetti; 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 our other elected officials: clerk-treasurer, Lisa Coleman, Borough tax assessor, Michael Schefers, and our tax collector, Tom Sanford, who has served for years and steadfastly declines 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. And I should mention that on Monday May 4th the Borough will hold elections for the warden, burgesses, and other positions. I encourage you to come out and vote. If you won't be here, absentee ballots are available in the Borough Office.

That concludes my report. Are there any questions?

Resident Lisa Tepper Bates thanked the Warden and Burgesses for their work and dedication to the Borough of Stonington. She also thanked the Warden for his hard work towards the discounts for Flood Insurance.

ACT ON PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2016:

Introductory comments made by Warden Jeff Callahan.

Warden Jeffrey Callahan reviewed the FY 2015-2016 draft budget, copies of which were distributed and are available at Borough Hall. The major features of the proposed budget are an increase of 8 percent in the mil rate and allocation of \$100,000 to the truck fund in order to cover the annual lease payment for two new fire engines.

On a motion by Warden Callahan, seconded by Borough Resident Charles Harding to accept the proposed annual budget (for which a public hearing was held on March 30, 2015) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, 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 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 some eight years ago.

Highway Department Capital Improvement Program

2015/16	Gold, Cross & Orchard Streets	\$100,000
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
2019/20	Water Street	\$250,000

A motion by resident Lisa Tepper Bates, seconded by resident Charles Harding, to adopt the highway department capital improvement program, was unanimously accepted.

SELECT TRUSTEES FOR THE WALDRON FUND:

Borough resident and current Waldron Fund trustee Amanda Mann provided an overview of the Waldron Fund and its activities for the fiscal year 2014-2015:

- Our mailing last fall with the Williams Fund was combined with the Warden's letter to

homeowners concerning Flood Insurance and all other Borough residents were sent individual post cards. It is the Warden's intent to again place the Waldron/Williams post cards in any fall Borough homeowner communications.

- Last year we were successful in reducing the amount of returned mailings by comparing addresses with Borough voting and motor vehicle/homeowner tax rolls.
- In the fall/winter we assisted two people in the amount of \$1,800. In the winter/spring we assisted three people in the amount of \$2,000.
- As you may know, the Waldron Fund provides assistance from October thru April so the aforementioned numbers many change given today's date.
- The current Borough of Stonington/Waldron Fund checking account balance is \$6,900.00.
- The Waldron Fund hold \$121,750.00 in four CD's earning from 0.75% to 1.59% with maturities through September of 2017. Upon the maturity of the CD's it has been decided to place our principal funds with the Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut where it is anticipated that we will earn interest far exceeding the average 1.131% we are now realizing.
- Community contributions this year totaled \$250.00.
- On a motion made by Borough Resident Lisa Tepper Bates, seconded by Peyton Horne, to accept the Waldron Fund report made by Amanda Mann and the slate of three candidates including Amanda Crane Mann, Michael Schefers, and Gillian Patrick, passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Fire Chief Hoadley thanked the Borough Community for their support. He thanked residents who attended two public information sessions. After several procedural votes, the Board made the decision to proceed with a nine-year, approximately 1.2 million dollar, lease-purchase agreement with Pierce.

Karen McGee of 22 Diving Street, Borough Resident and Convener of the Coalition for the Management of Seaweed in Stonington CT (September 2014 through April 2015) gave a report.

- The Coalition was formed at the suggestion of Jeff Callahan, Borough Warden for the purpose of involving the residents affected by or interested in the ongoing accumulation of seaweed at the end of Ash Street.
- The Coalition met 4 times as a result of the generous offer of NESS.
- The following residents reported being affected by the fumes: Leamon, Scrugg, Lyons, Despard, Jones, Ashley, McCreary, Stevenson, Kunath, McGee. Other residents have indicated their desire for removal of the seaweed.
- The following organizations have attended meetings and presented their roles in understanding the problem: Jeff Callahan (Borough Warden) Mike Smith (NESS), Sally Cogan and Claire Gavin (CUSH) David Prescott(Save the Bay) David Thurman(Eastern Community Gardens) Micheal Grzywinski (DEEP) Bill Rutherford (SVIA) Jamie Vaudry (UCONN Marine Biologist) Keith Neilson (DOCKO) Tristan Kading (UCONN)
- The problem is complex and is the result of wind, tides and water, cladaphora and other dynamic issues. The cladaphora destroys the eel grass and the flow from Pawcatuck River and around Sandy Point brings the dead eel grass to shore where the topography

stops the deposit at certain low points. Most of those present agree that a flow study is in order for long term fixing of the problem.

- Studies were presented from CUSH and UCONN and Nature Conservancy. The results pointed toward nitrogen pollution, from sewage, fertilizers and the atmosphere and warming water as the biggest threat.
- Stonington Borough funded a study by DOCKO. The report offered several solutions to changing the topography and /or blockage of the seaweed onto the beach. The Borough is unable to budget the proposed solutions at this time.
- The fumes contain Hydrogen sulfide a toxic flammable gas generated by bacterial decomposition of organic matter in the absence of oxygen. Concentrations below 2 parts per million can cause eye irritation, fatigue, nausea, dizziness and respiratory distress. The closest study of hydrogen sulfide levels is from in Warwick, Rhode Island. The measure in Warwick is 90 parts per billion.
- Solutions discussed have included both long term environmental solutions for prevention and short term management of the seaweed on the beach.
- Long term solutions include campaigns to decrease nitrogen use for fertilizer, continue to measure and monitor Cladophora, study water flow, and measure other areas with similar problems.
- Short term solutions include following recommendations from DOCKO as follows: 1. initiate sweeping and maintenance programs to remove dead and decaying eel grass, 2. create a tidal deflector, 3. install netting to trap the eel grass, or 4. make beach modifications.
- The short term recommendation from this group is to create a maintenance plan to remove seaweed and supply to Coogan Farm who will take all that we want to give them.

Resident Jesse Diggs inquired about the vendors at the Point. Warden Callahan said we passed a revised vendor ordinance this year and updated the application.

Resident Stuart Schwartzstein had a question about public lavatories in the Borough. Warden Callahan answered that two years ago we had looked into renovating the toilets at the water treatment plant. The design phase is happening in the current year. The building phase will follow. The Town of Stonington will do the work. As it stands now, if the Town Budget passes the work will move ahead.

Moderator Scott Bates acknowledged Sibby Lynch who is retiring her post as a Burgess and will not be running for reelection, reminded residents to vote on May 4th, and thanked the trustees of the Waldron Fund.

ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion by Burgess Nicholas, seconded by Burgess Park, adjournment of the meeting at 10:42 AM was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa M. Coleman, Clerk-Treasurer
April 20, 2015