

Finance Board Meeting Minutes March 10th, 2014

Attendees: *George McCormack, Steven Dapkiewicz, George Georgountzos, Rachel Meredith-Warren, Russ Wilson, Dava Kilbride, Devon Manchester, Ben Caggiano, Julie Desimone*

Chairman Mr. Georgountzos called the meeting to order at 7:45 PM.

The Board started with the review of the February 24th meeting minutes and approved them unanimously.

Mr. Georgountzos invited the director and board chairwoman from the Council on Aging (CoA) to present. In addition, the senior population is rising and the center needs infrastructure put in place its goals. The chairwoman stated that the budget was underfunded compared to surrounding towns. The Director voiced her need for additional staffing which is why the Council requested an additional \$23,000 compared to last year but the TA's budget only calls for an increase of \$4,000 leaving the senior center short \$19,000. The staffing would allow the director to delegate more day –to – day work and focus on the long term mission.

Mr. Manchester stated that even if provided the additional \$19,000 was there enough to hire the requested 3 PT workers. The Chairwoman and Director said that it would be sufficient for this year and they are cognizant of the town's budgetary concerns.

Mr. McCormack questioned the policy of seniors from other communities using Stoneham's center and if there was something in place to give Stoneham residents first pick on outings and other activities. He also asked what was to prevent an unmanageable increase in usage. Both assured Mr. McCormack that Stoneham residents get first pick and that it's important for Stoneham to offer more services and Stoneham residents also use other towns as well.

Mr. Georgountzos mentioned the great work that CoA does and invited viewers to attend.

The next guest, Paul Rontondi was invited. The first issue proposed was a change to the Finance and Advisory Board (FAB) appointing policy. Under the proposed article the Board would have 3 members selected by the School Committee, 3 members selected by the BOS, and 3 selected by members of the Finance Board which is different than the moderator appointing all.

This proposal was met with harsh criticism. Mr. Wilson stated that it brings politics onto the board and that is not wise. Furthermore, Mr. Wilson has distrust of elected officials. Mr. Rotondi explained that it's political currently because Larry Means, the moderator who is an elected official appoints all members. He continued with a scathing analysis of the FAB's lack of power and respect. Mr. Georgountzos countered that it may only be perceived that way because the FAB is relatively new. Mr. Wilson said he doesn't care if the FAB has power, the FAB does its job and has better resumes than other officials on other boards. Mr. Rotondi said that it gives the two most powerful boards 'skin in the game' thus providing a balance and giving more credibility to the FAB.

Ms. Kilbride disagreed vehemently and explained that having 'skin in the game' is political, you would have FAB member voting in line with the board that elected them. Mr. Rotondi made the point that his proposal makes the policy less political since the appointing is done by 3 different groups and the FAB has more independence. Ms Kilbride stated that it "can't be both ways," have both independence and have 3 boards 'have skin in the game.'

Ms. Meredith- Warren asked if Mr. Rotondi wanted to join the FAB. Mr. Rotondi said he wanted to but Mr. Means appointed someone else on the last allowable day when there was a vacancy thus not allowing him to be a member. Ms. Meredith-Warren then asked if the two, the moderator and Mr. Rotondi could work on their relationship.

With that Mr. Manchester made a motion to vote on the article immediately, Mr. Wilson seconded. A board vote ensued which was 8 FOR and 1 AGAINST. Mr. Manchester made a motion to recommend unfavorable action which was seconded by Mr. Wilson. The board then voted unanimously to recommend unfavorable action.

Next Mr. Rotondi gave a presentation on his proposal to amend the way town meeting is currently proctored. The proposal outlined something very similar to Senate Bill used in NH. Mr. Rotondi said he spoke with many citizens and they are too busy to come to a late and long town meeting and allowing the public to vote via a ballot picked up at town hall over the course of a week would provide more input.

Mr. McCormack state that it is works in NH because people have further to commute to Town Hall in rural communities. Mr. Rotondi refuted the point and his research points to populous districts using.

Mr. Rotondi quoted a Harvard professor who seemed to think that essentially using absentee ballots would increase community participation. Mr. McCormack said that the 45 people currently attending would drop to 10, since only those citizens wanting to speak would show up and there would be a lot of uneducated voters going from the couch to the ballot box. Mr. McCormack concluded that it was Democracy – light. Mr. Rotondi disagreed and claimed that too many voters are being disenfranchised.

Mr. Manchester expressed a concern about stuffing the ballot boxes. Mr. Wilson spoke of a recent incident in voter fraud where there were more ballots than registered voters. Mr. Rotondi dismissed these concerns and said that Stoneham was different.

Mr. Manchester made a motion to vote on the article immediately, which was seconded by Mr. Wilson. The vote came in 5 FOR and 3 AGAINST. Mr. Manchester made a motion to recommend unfavorable action, Mr. Wilson seconded. The board voted unanimously 8-0.

Paul Maisano was then invited to present his 3 articles. The first pertaining to the lack of natural gas infrastructure and the costs that citizens must pay to get nat gas into their homes of \$20 – 50K. The town needs to act now to dictate to nat gas suppliers rather than waiting for them to dictate to the town. He is proposing a committee be formed made up of Mr. Grover the town engineer , a member of FAB, and other appointed citizens.

Mr. Maisano then proposed two zoning changes. The first being the rezoning of the Fallon Rd. development area to become commercial rather than commercial *and* residential leading to the blocking of the Richmond Co. apartments. Mr. McCormack questioned if any mitigation money had been received and if so would the town need to refund that? Mr. Georgountzos said that there had been no other developers since Home Depot was voted down. Mr. Maisano said “good things come to those who wait.”

The second zoning change was an island near the center of town by the old Central School on Pleasant St. He proposed the town move that to a residential zone where he owns property and remove commercial from the zoning. While he admits the commercial tax base is weak this land is not built for commercial property and was left over from the old town square before Main St, RT 28 was built.

Shortly after the presentation Mr. Dapkiewicz made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Wilson seconded and the meeting was unanimously ended.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:45 PM

Respectfully,

George McCormack