

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

March 3, 2011

The regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 7:00 pm in the Community Room of the North Haven Memorial Library, 17 Elm Street, North Haven, CT.

Members Present

First Selectman, Michael J. Freda
Second Selectman, Timothy M. Doheny
Third Selectman, Stephen A. Fontana

Mr. Freda introduced himself and Selectmen Doheny and Fontana, and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Girl Scout Presentation – Mr. Freda welcomed the Girl Scouts to the meeting in recognition of Girl Scout Week and the 99th anniversary of Girl Scouts in the USA. The girls began the meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and the Girl Scout Promise. The girls each introduced themselves to the audience. Mr. Freda then read a proclamation declaring March 6 – 12 Girl Scout Week in North Haven.

Public Comments Relative to the Agenda – none

Mr. Doheny motioned to approve the minutes of the Regular Board of Selectmen's Meeting of February 3, 2011

Voted: Freda – yes, Doheny – yes, Fontana – yes

Selectman's Overview – Mr. Freda provided an overview of the following topics:

Operational

Winter Storms

- Record Snow falls 80 plus inches
- Appreciation to Our Public Works Department
- Tireless efforts
- Hundreds of phone calls
- No outside contractors used for clean up
- Mail Service

Spring clean up and repairs following winter storms:

- Pot Holes
- Curbs
- Storm Drains
- Street Sweeping (beginning in April)
- Parks and Fields

Building Department Update

- Systems are in Place
- All state building codes are being enforced
- Elio has done an outstanding job in monitoring the systems and working with the public and business community
- Working with the State Building Official
- Some results:
 - Building Department Fees Collected

- 8 months from
May – December 2009 \$166,735
- 8 months from
May – December 2010 \$212,720

Health Insurance Update

Anthem has lowered their rate to -2%

- Guaranteed
- We went out to bid
- Results will be back next week

Grant Updates

Small Cities Block Grant ADA Modifications to Town Hall-

- Moving forward with the process
- Architects have been in
- Public Hearing scheduled for March 31, 2011 @ 7:00 pm- Library Community Room
- Public Support – Please write your letters of support and send to the Selectman’s office

Financial Update

Budget Workshop Sessions began on January 18th and concluded on February 16th

Budget Update

- Town
- Board of Education
- Current Fund Balance Status
- Town is financially solid
- State Aid Situation

Important Dates to Remember

- March 20th- Board of Finance Meeting
- April 5th- Public Hearing on the Budget
- April 20th- Board of Finance Meeting
- May 9th- Annual Town Budget Meeting
- May 17th- Budget Referendum

Economic Development

Yale New Haven Hospital

- Informational meetings:
 - Tuesday March 8th with the Quinnipiac Chamber of Commerce
 - Wednesday March 9th with the Sherwood Drive Residents
 - Tuesday April 5th with the Rotary

REX Economic Development Board

- The appointment of Richard LoPresti as our ED Commission Chairman
- Taken a seat on the REX Board representing North Haven in an effort to ensure that we are at the seat of the Regional table for new businesses coming into our town

Grand Openings and New Businesses:

- Find It Here Consignments
- Verizon Wireless
- Famous Footwear – March 19th

Freda’s Focus

- Continue to focus my efforts on moving this town forward in a positive fashion
- Continue to focus on cost efficiencies
- Continue to focus on maintaining a high level of “customer service”
- Continue to focus on new economic development
- Continue to focus on turning problems into solutions
- Continue to focus on answering your questions, helping to educate the public on town government
- Continue to focus on the wonderful attributes and people of this great Town!

Correspondence – none

Resignations/Appointments –

- Appointment of Pamela K. Trepanier (R) 265 Bassett Road, North Haven, CT 06473, to the Cemetery Commission to fill the vacancy, term to expire June 30, 2012.

Mr. Doheny motioned to accept the appointment.

Voted: Freda – yes, Doheny – yes, Fontana – yes

Bond Releases / Reductions – Mr. Doheny read the following bond release and motioned to approved same.

- 3 Horseshoe Hill Road, release the entire bond balance of \$9,000.00 with the recommendation of the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Mr. Doheny motioned to accept the bond release as presented.

Voted: Freda – yes, Doheny – yes, Fontana – yes

Property Tax Refunds – Mr. Doheny motioned to approve the property tax refunds presented below:

- DCFS Trust, Box 685 Roanoke, TX 76262, in the amount of \$207.34
- Guthrie, Bruce C, 511 Elm Stet, 5-4, North Haven, CT 06473, in the amount of \$363.09
- Honda Lease Trust, 600 Kelly Way, Holyoke, MA 01040-9681, in the amount of \$69.90, and in the amount of \$284.49
- Porsche Leasing LTD, 4343 Commerce Court, Lisle, IL 60532, in the amount of \$192.06
- Riether, Carol, 14 Meadow View Drive, North Haven, CT 06473, in the amount of \$85.16
- Southern New England Tele Co, One SBC Center Room 36-M-1, St. Louis, MO 63101, in the amount of \$833.84
- VW Credit Leasing Ltd, 1401 Franklin Blvd, Libertyville, IL 60048, in the amount of \$154.86

Mr. Doheny motioned to accept the property tax refunds as presented.

Voted: Freda – yes, Doheny – yes, Fontana – yes

Mr. Freda advised that the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen is Thursday, April 7, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the Library Community Room.

Public Comment –

Jennie Caldwell, Kimberly Circle, requested that the Town and Board of Education portions of the budget be voted on separately. She also would like the ability for the public to be able to provide feedback on the budget. Currently if the budget is voted up or down, it is assumed that that the public wants less money and that may not be the issue. She also inquired about a previous announcement regarding the opening of a new restaurant. Mr. Freda responded that he is not sure of what the procedure is to change the referendum. Jennie said that she inquired when she first moved to town. She was told that the budgets used to be separated and it came out badly for one side or the other so it was decided to put them back together. Mr. Freda said he will check it out. He also noted that the April 5th Town Hearing is an important meeting providing the public the opportunity to speak out regarding the budget. Tim Doheny noted that he is unsure of the legality of splitting the budget, and personally he is not sure that he is in favor, fearing that one side would be favored over the other. He feels that if enough people in town really wanted that, he would support it. He also noted that when he was on the Board of Finance that when people get up and talk at a town meeting or board meeting, especially after a budget gets voted down, that is important feedback because it is hard for the Board to know what the people really want. He encouraged Jennie and other residents to provide feedback to

the Board. Mr. Fontana said it is his recollection that North Haven has rarely ever separated the budgets. He feels that by separating the budgets it sets one group of residents against another. He feels it would be the Education budget that would be the one most dramatically affected. He does not believe we have the authority as a town, and he personally does not support it for those reasons. Jennie explained that the problem as a voter is if you vote no, the budget automatically goes down. She moved here for the education, but it is a great source of frustration for her. She feels if she votes no, her vote will be misinterpreted. She also feels that many people don't provide feedback because they are not comfortable going in front of a camera or microphone. Mr. Doheny asked Jennie, if the budget was split and the Board of Education got turned down, how will we know better than what we know now, that what that really means is someone wants to spend more. Jennie said that some towns will have a question on the ballot -Board of Education, yes or no, and too high, too low, or other questions. Mr. Freda noted that to answer Jennie's question regarding the restaurant, the landlord at Hollywood Video has raised the rent. We are showing him alternate locations.

Walt Heinig, Spring Road, commented on Jennie's point. Last year he went to the budget meeting and as he was walking in approximately 200 people were walking out. He asked someone if the meeting was over. They replied they just came in to vote on the \$25,000 Education portion that they wanted an increase on. His fear is that Education is part of the town and anytime there is something pertaining to the education portion, there are a number of people that will show up for that.

Brian Testa, Maple Avenue, stated that he would like to back up what Jennie said. He agrees with her. He also noted that he took part in the energy audit. The technician asked him if he knew how to dispose of the CFLs (compact florescent lights). He knew, but was wondering what North Haven does. The bulbs should not go into the trash or recycling because they have mercury in them. Mr. Freda said that he believes the way it works is that we pay a fee to New Haven every year, for disposal of hazardous waste. We do not have a depository here in North Haven, but utilize New Haven's and pay a fee for that. Jonathan noted that it has to go to the South Central Regional Water Authority. Mr. Testa's second question asked if the insurance decrease will go to all of the various departments within the town including Board of Ed. Mr. Freda replied yes. Mr. Testa asked who is coming up this year for union contract renewal, and does Mr. Freda expect a smooth process. Mr. Freda stated that we are in the middle of negotiations with three, the Library, the Supervisor's Union and Fire. He can't tell him that we are making great progress. He can't share any of the details right now. He does not expect it to go smoothly but does expect good professional discourse back and forth. Mr. Testa then brought up the topic of the new Superintendent and thought that perhaps there could be a town meeting where the parents can come in and ask Mr. Cronin questions to open up new communication. Mr. Freda replied that he would be happy to recommend and support that and believes it is a good idea, even though the Board has no authority over the Board of Ed. Mr. Testa also asked Mr. Freda to comment on the misinformation circulating about the boilers at the high school. Mr. Freda stated that the boiler issues started long before this Board of Selectmen, we are in litigation with the boiler manufacturer, we switched from oil to gas based on the recommendation of the real experts who came in to inspect the boilers, and we are saving money. The boilers are running smoothly with minimal repairs. We have from 3 to 7 years; they are inspected regularly by experts.

Mr. Leahy, Regency Drive asked Mr. Fontana if he was correct that State law was such that you can't give the Board of Education less money than you did the previous year. Mr. Fontana, responded that he is not an expert in that area, but there may be an element to that because it is a condition of your State ECS grant. Mr. Leahy feels it is unfortunate that the tax payers of North Haven have little say over the expense side of our Education Budget and the only recourse we have is to vote out those people who are on the Board of Education for not doing a good job. Regarding getting feedback from the public, he mentioned the North Haven Way blog

which covers state and local issues with spirited debate. He feels social media may be helpful for getting information from the public. He supports having questions on the budget, too high, too low. He also stated that he feels that Public Works has done a great job. He emailed Lynn a question and she got right back to him regarding street lights on Route 22 being out. He called UI, and it is a State issue. Mr. Freda stated that he thinks Jim's suggestion on social media is a good one and he has utilized it in the past on the New Haven Register with a live video chat, North Haven Patch, local newspapers and will continue to support the various media forms. Mr. Leahy went on to state that he feels North Haven is a success story that may not be appreciated. We have a surplus, and are a shining example of good government.

Karen Abbott, Barnett Drive stated that it's her first meeting. She noted that she has watched the public access channel and was appalled at the some of the comments from the public focusing on issues in the past. She feels if you keep going backward, you can never move forward. She sees economic growth and new business and sees Yale coming to town. She is surprised that people are allowed so much time to comment. She advocates for disabled people every day in her work and if we were able to get a grant that would be helpful to those who have difficulty and is in favor of moving forward with the process.

Sherman Katz, Sherwood Drive noted that regarding the ADA situation there is a city that had recently been sued by an employee who was disabled and could not do his job because the buildings he was required to go into were not ADA compliant. He thinks Mr. Freda is heading in the right direction with our pursuit of the ADA grant. He likes a lot of the positive things that Mr. Freda is doing in town, and feels we are moving forward. Regarding the budget about 30 some odd years ago there was a budget that was turned down because the people felt not enough money was going to education. Feedback to the Board of Finance was that the Board understood that without social media. He was once an advocate for splitting the budget. He feels there are enough people in town that can get their opinions across and that we don't need to do that. Lastly he agrees that the public works does a fine job, but felt that we did need some outside contractors to help with the plowing. He feels we need to be prepared with outside help when it gets this big. We do not have the people or resources to handle that much snow.

Mr. Sonazzaro, Elm Street stated that he does not feel the Board of Education should have the power that they do, and it's unfortunate that Mr. Freda has no control over them. The hiring of the new superintendent at \$165,000 a year salary is obscene and outrageous. Even Mr. Freda doesn't make that much and he thinks he is worth it. Mr. Freda explained that according to state law, no Mayor or First Selectman in the State has any control over the Board of Education or superintendent. Through the Board of Finance they can determine the aggregate number that the Board of Education can spend, but we can't tell the Board of Ed what to spend. Mr. Freda also explained that Connecticut had 17 vacancies at the superintendent level. The same people that we interviewed were being interviewed in other cities. The market rate across the state ranges from \$150,000 to \$240,000 per year. He went on to explain the situation in more detail.

Adjournment – Mr. Freda asked for additional questions, and seeing none and hearing none Mr. Doheny motioned to adjourn at 8:00 pm.