

**TOWN OF STAMFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
July 8, 2020
(UNAPPROVED)**

Present: Selectboard: Nancy L. Bushika, Chair, Christopher Warren, Carol A. Fachini, Michael G. Denault and Daniel J. Potvin.
Visitors: Erika Bailey, Barbara Malinowski, Helen Fields, and Jessica Tatro, School Directors, Richard Cristofolini, Janice Farinon, Cynthia Lamore, William Levine, Jen Ryan, Tyna Senecal, Pat Sullivan and Pamela Tworig.
Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

Nancy Bushika called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Nancy Bushika led with the Pledge of Allegiance and welcomed everyone. In her opening remarks she recommended making no changes to the policy and stated that for the past 50 years there has been cooperation between the school and the town. She suggested events continue to be scheduled through the principal's office and the School Board.

Helen Fields said it is very difficult to hear the discussion and noted an email she sent to the Selectboard, School Directors, and others stating that everyone who participates, whether by phone, video or in person, should be able to hear what is discussed at the meeting. She noted a pending lawsuit against the Town of Pownal for violations of the open meeting law among other things. Nancy Bushika had not read the email. Pat Sullivan asked if visitors cannot hear what is taking place at the meeting if there is a violation. Helen Fields said this is an important issue that she would like to have come before the town so that townspeople won't have to go through getting a petition and 40 signatures. Nancy Bushika feels the board is elected by the people to make decisions based on what is best for the town. Pam Tworig agreed that this is a big decision and it shouldn't be made too fast without town input. Mike Denault believes the townspeople should have a voice, but this issue was raised two to three years ago. He has received twenty emails from concerned citizens but none of them are participating tonight.

Erika Bailey stated that the merger with Clarksburg is postponed for over a year so the boards have plenty of time to discuss this issue.

Cindy Lamore and Pat Sullivan also agreed it has been very difficult to follow the discussion when calling in. Chris Warren said it was too expensive to buy a proper system. The costs could be over \$10,000.00.

MOTION by Mike Denault to postpone this subject matter for a certain amount of time. Without a second, the motion failed.

Chris Warren would like discussions to continue about who has authority over the use of the building and grounds. Cindy Lamore said the use of the building comes right from state law. Janice Farinon agreed that the authority to manage the building is with the school. Dan Potvin disagreed. The town office is in the building and has never been under the direction of the School Board.

Pam Tworig read the information from the attorneys and has a lot of questions such as what parts of the building constitute the school and when. She wants to see both boards work toward what is best for the town.

Dan Potvin said when people demand total control, it can start trouble.

Mike Denault used the Readsboro Town Clerk's office as an example. She was told when school starts she cannot use the bathroom in the school and may have to rent a port-a-potty in the parking lot. He realizes that will not happen here in Stamford, but it shows how easy problems can start.

Mike Denault said in the 1940s when the building was built, it called for a multi-purpose room (the gym), classrooms, a town office and a library.

Janice Farinon stated that the school has spent a lot of money to make it secure. There should be one central point for decision-making. Mike Denault said no one is suggesting that security change during school time. We've already had situations where some groups come to the Selectboard for permission to use the grounds, but other groups go to the School Directors. The principal even came to the Selectboard to ask about installing the fence.

The question was asked whether we could create a different lock system on the doors so we are not closing off the gym.

Jen Ryan noted that the conversation moved from how to negotiate meeting participation to specific issues. She asked if the boards planned to set up workgroup meetings or discuss the issues in open meetings. She also asked whether it will be a town vote or board vote. Bill Levine said the boards have an opportunity to define these things, whether it's a 99-year lease or a different use of building form. Jen Ryan would like to see discussion continue and see the two boards work together in open meetings and would like to see it ultimately become a town vote.

Mike Denault recognized the communication problems and felt the boards should not move fast to reach a decision because they are not getting full input from the town.

MOTION by Chris Warren that no binding decision will be made on the authority or control of the building and grounds before a town meeting on the topic. SECONDED by Dan Potvin. 4 in favor, 1 opposed (Nancy Bushika). Motion APPROVED.

Mike Denault does not think it should become a town meeting vote; the boards still have authority to decide, but it should be made with full voter participation. Rich Cristofolini felt if a town meeting is called in the near future, a lot of people won't come because of the virus.

Chris Warren stated even if it takes a while to have a town meeting, the issue can be brought forward at that time. The current school policy will remain in effect until then. Chris Warren felt this will assure people that the boards are not trying to push anything through. Dan Potvin felt it is important for the board to be transparent with all decisions.

Pam Tworig feels the taxpayers have control of the school building and these grounds are the property of the community. If the taxpayers want to build a gazebo in back of the school, they should be able to. It seems like we are in a power struggle against each other. Erika Bailey said a gazebo would not be allowed in the middle of the children's playground. Chris Warren said the taxpayers don't have full authority insomuch as prior taxpayers have granted certain rights, like the designation of the playground, so we don't actually have the right to change it. Bill Levine agreed.

Mike Denault feels that both boards are in agreement with most of the property. He said the front door, foyer and bathroom are mutual areas. They will not be disinfected every time someone comes in to register their dog or pay their taxes. They are parts of the building that are not part of the school. If we give 100% of the authority to the school, then what if the school says the town can't use the bathroom. The gym has been used for so many things like the vets dinner, and pickle ball. Mike Denault said he does not have a personal agenda, he will vote for what the people want. Others on the board agreed.

Mike Denault asked if grants were available because of the virus to buy additional laptops so that everyone can hear well and participate. Chris Warren agreed there are ways if each board member had a laptop. Rich Cristofolini said the school has run meetings with many people and everyone could hear. He offered to talk to his son and one of the teachers to see how they were set up.

In moving forward, Chris Warren would like to see the boards agree as to what is school space. It may be best to work out all that is agreed before the exceptions. When considering space, Cindy Lamore noted that in the 1960's, the library was where the town office is now and the decision was made to move the library down back. Tyna Senecal said the library board has a liaison from the school board that attends their meetings.

Bill Levine said this is an opportunity for the boards to memorialize how we conduct business, what is working, collect town input and get everything on paper. Chris Warren agreed that the Selectboard is not trying to change all the policies, just get everything written down. Cindy Lamore said if you try to define too much and you miss something, you end up creating a loophole.

Nancy Bushika suggested that when people are given a school use form, they should also be given a copy of the school use policy. She would also like a clause added saying no animals are permitted on school grounds. There is also no alcohol or tobacco allowed on school grounds.

Mike Denault agreed that all school events should take priority when scheduling other events. Erika Bailey said it will be hard to define school use because sometimes it might be 3:30 p.m. and other days a school event like basketball might last until 6 p.m. Pam Tworig asked if it was the board's position that the property is off limits to the townspeople, even after school hours. Jessica Tatro said if the public is at a school event, there is nothing to prevent someone from snagging a child. Pam Tworig said this building is our community center. Someone was hanging around outside waiting for a ride and they were asked to leave because they were making the children nervous. Pam Tworig felt this was a problem. Chris Warren asked how the school would be handling the public on election day. He asked if the gym could be isolated and separated from the rest of the school. The school board said no because there are two classrooms off the gym and the kitchen. The School Directors will look into handling the election and get back to the board.

Rich Cristofolini said he doesn't want to see keys signed out to people. Current key owners often leave and forget to lock the door or alarm the building. The alarm company calls him at 10 p.m. and he has to get out of bed to set the alarm at the school. If there's a problem after hours, the police are dispatched.

The School Board said no one will be allowed in the building when school starts so they can protect the children and staff because of the virus. The board discussed where Selectboard meetings will be held when school begins if they cannot use the gym. Dan Potvin suggested the tent by K's Creamery on Main Road. Bill Levine offered the firehouse.

Jessica Tatro will have a draft of the school use policy available for the next meeting. The next joint meeting between the Selectboard and School Directors will be Wednesday, July 22, 2020 at 6 p.m. in the gym.

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to adjourn. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Carol A. Fachini
Clerk

CAF/las