

**TOWN OF WILLINGTON  
SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE**

Regular Meeting Minutes  
Hybrid; TOB, Common Room & Virtual Meeting

August 19, 2023  
6:34 PM

*\*Minutes are not official until approved at the next regular meeting*

Member	Position	Present in Person	Present via Zoom	Absent
Phil Stevens	Superintendent of Schools	X		
Mike Makuch	Board of Selectmen Representative (Chairman)	X		
James Marshall	Board of Finance Representative	X		
Christopher Tillona	Board of Education Staff			X
Ann Grosjean	Board of Education Member			X
Katherine Viveiros	Construction Industry Experience		X	
Peter Latinsics	Member at large	X		
Justin Niderno	Member at large			X
Briana Ross	Member at large			X
Ralph Tulis	Member at large (Vice Chairman)	X		
Erika Wiecewski	Member ExOfficio (non-voting)			X

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Makuch called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

**PRESENT TO SPEAK**

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road: Mr. Tella thanked the SBC for their efforts. He also thanked members who were able to give factual information. He stated he hoped in the future board members were able to speak out publicly.

**CHAIRPERSON REPORT**

Chairman Makuch stated that the goal of the night was to work on the final report. He stated that everyone on the committee seems to agree that their best move is to gather information and create a report for whomever may use it in the future.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Review and discussion of in-progress final report.

Chairman Makuch said that there has been somewhat of a draft sent out and that it is up for suggestion

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and comment.

R. Tulis said page numbers would be helpful for discussion purposes. He stated that some of the lengthy topics in the document should be briefly summarized in the formal text of the report and the meat of that topic added as an appendix. He also noted that he believed all the external links should be taken out of the documents because the links may not function down the road. He stated that the documents should be used instead of links.

P. Stevens suggested doing both.

Chairman Makuch said the link in the document lets you know that there is a supporting document. He also noted he could put the link in the document and add supporting documents to the appendix.

P. Stevens said that it would have to be a PDF and all the documents would merge together so they have to be aware of formatting issues. He said adding all the supporting documents could turn the report into 300-400 pages.

R. Tulis suggested summarizing the report, he said where it stands now at 29 pages may not get the same scrutiny as something shorter.

P. Stevens said if someone in the future wanted to look at the report in an official capacity then they will look up all the documents, so some of the graphs and ad specs could be taken out.

Chairman Makuch questioned if it was a comprehensive all encompassing document or a summary.

R. Tulis said he believed it should be a summary. He said the tables could be taken out and that the ad specs could be summarized in a paragraph or two.

P. Latincsics agreed with the summary and adding a bigger description to the appendix. He also noted he could not read the font of the referendum questions when he printed the document.

K. Viveiros agreed that the report needed to be summarized more. She suggested doing more of a timeline, summarizing events, and then adding data to an appendix.

Chairman Makuch said to keep in mind that the report has two audiences, the people that will read and examine the report right away and the people who would reference the report years from now to see what had happened.

K. Viveiros said that the audience would be the Board of Selectmen and that the report should address the items in the charge and summarize how they worked on and completed the charge.

Chairman Makuch said it would be easy to do a status of the charge, that it could be done in a table. He said that the rest of the document would summarize how they handled different parts of the charge.

K. Viveiros said that they should include recommendations on what would happen to Hall and Center School if a new school was approved.

Chairman Makuch said that they could provide the information that they had, however they do not have

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estimates and other information so a formal recommendation should not be made. He also said that they could include land recommendations.

K. Viveiros asked if the history of facilities would be an appendix as well.

Chairman Makuch said he did not think that it took up too much room and that he believed that issue came up often.

K. Viveiros asked about thoughts on a timeline. She suggested headings and paragraph discussions and if they could utilize that text, or attach Collier's memo.

Chairman Makuch said that he thought they should summarize key points and attach Collier's memo.

K. Viveiros suggested addressing the charge components and then reference that they hired Collier's and then touch on the topics where a lot of progress was made. She said they should possibly include appraisals and estimates that they accomplished. She said project costs and funding should possibly be referenced to the Collier report.

P. Latinsics stated that the site school construction grant information and said that the term renovate as new was not clear. He said he wasn't sure what the definition was and noted that definitions are reported.

Chairman Makuch said that it was the language that the state used and it was the way the terminology needed to be written.

K. Viveiros said that the school building committee recommendations has a pattern of saying what their shortcomings were and that she was not sure they should be included in the report. She stated she was wondering whose opinions were noted.

Chairman Makuch said that it was a contemplation of comments from four members. He said it was assembled and put in so people could see what was bubbling and see how to clean it up. He said he wrestled with some of his comments he put in, but he thought he should put it in so it could be discussed. He stated he was not trying to be negative, but if they could as accurately as possible state what they learned as clearly as possible.

K. Viveiros questioned how the charge was explained and the parts of the charge that said they were not completed.

J. Marshall said that some of the things were added because parts of the charge could not be completed due to the challenges that were encountered with the charge.

R. Tulis stated that because some items were not in the charge, they could not be discussed and that it had a big effect on the outcome of the project.

P. Latinsics stated that he felt that there was a lot of restriction when it came to the charge.

P. Stevens said it is important that the report is to move forward and not to complain. He said that they needed to be very clear about what is in the report.

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Chairman Makuch said that there are things that they could recommend happen at the start of the next process so they do not run into some of the same problems the SBC did. However, he did note that money could be an issue when it came to getting surveys, etc.

P. Stevens said he believed it was the committee's job to say what they agreed with when referencing older reports. He said the report should be looking for points of clarity for what was learned. He noted that he thought grids and a lot of the information should be left in the report because it was important to show what work was done.

R. Tulis said that there were a couple paragraphs in the recommendations that he strongly objected to.

Chairman Makuch responded saying he felt like the reason R. Tulis did not like the paragraphs because he was the only one that did not agree with some of the conclusions. He said people in the future need to be aware that some of the disagreement is understood. He said that the majority point of view should be promoted because the committee's work was a unified effort.

P. Latinsics said he rejected that idea. He also stated he believed the minority ideas were not being represented and were being silenced. He agreed with Ralph that the paragraphs should not be included.

J. Marshall said that the first two sentences that stated a lack of uniform support were very critical. He said projects get approved with a supportive committee. He stated that there was not a productive work environment.

Chairman Makuch said that he would work to find new words and that they could comment on that and decide where to go from there.

P. Latinsics questioned the social media part of that paragraph.

Chairman Makuch said that one of the things he believed he and the committee failed to do was understand the role social media was playing and that they failed to participate in it. He said that many fabrications on social media became fact to many members of the community. He said they needed to recognize that social media was powerful.

K. Viveiros said she agreed with the paragraph and that they struggled getting community involvement, however it was not due to lack of effort. She said that the struggle was the way to get community involvement. She noted that the technical expertise area is spot on. She said that having the technical expertise earlier on in the process would have been helpful.

Chairman Makuch said that he believed at the beginning there was a lack of community involvement and that it got larger as it got closer to the referendum.

K. Viveiros said that it is important to have a group that is growing in the same direction so work can be accomplished. She said the committee needs to work directly on the purpose of the charge that is assigned and that work between members need to be uniformed and that this was important feedback to include.

P. Latinsics said that the notion of a committee controlling social media seems far-reaching.

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Chairman Makuch said that he never said that they were trying to control social media and that things needed to be addressed more properly. He said that they need to understand where people are talking and making sure they get the correct information.

P. Latincsics said that he does not understand the social media part but he did say that the residents voiced that they were not happy with the lack of FAQ, however he did say that it was something a future committee could agree on.

R. Tulis stated that he did not think there was a lack of community involvement. He said he believed there was community involvement just possibly not enough. He also voiced that there was an ad spec sentence that he did not like.

P. Stevens said that the goal of his report was to write what should be done in the future. He said that getting residents in the room and communicating with the public was an issue.

J. Marshall said that building support for a big referendum happens early and that people need to get excited about the idea.

P. Stevens said that the focus should not be on public participation and that it should be about the committee. He said that the idea is how to get the public more engaged in the future. He said that it would need to be the focus of a future committee. He said that they need to focus on what the committee could have done differently.

J. Marshall said that smaller issues that became bigger issues could be better addressed early on and that they would get better feedback and be able to work with the public more if engagement happened early on.

K. Viveiros said that hearing out the public and what they want may be a better idea.

P. Stevens said that in general he is really focused on community involvement and making it a priority of the committee to spend future time and dollars on. He said that getting people's feedback early is the piece that they missed. He said he wasn't sure of the way to do it, but in the future getting people engaged should be a priority in the future.

R. Tulis said it was important to capture all town residents and that just posting information on the school website was not an effective way to communicate with the public.

Chairman Makuch said that he agreed that there were clear failures with engaging with the right people and that he believed everyone was in agreement that it was an issue.

R. Tulis and P. Latincsics voiced large disagreement with saying that they failed to reach the "right" group of people and they said it made it sound like the people who were involved were the wrong people. They both said that they should be careful with that language.

P. Stevens said that they should include a recommendation to hire a marketing firm to engage taxpayers.

J. Marshall said that it is not marketing that they were looking for. He said that they should look for technical expertise on how to guide the advancement of community guides and wants.

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K. Viveiros asked if they should suggest hiring a community outreach expert.

P. Stevens said that the point in the community involvement was to say what the committee should do differently and not say that people were not engaged.

K. Viveiros said that regarding community involvement is getting more people involved and that they need to stay involved. She said they should look into ways to get people up to speed quickly when they do get involved.

R. Tulis said that a link is fine when it brings you directly to the information, however when a link brings you just to a landing site there is frustration when it comes to finding the specific information they are looking for. He stated that people had difficulties finding information. He said that a key to communicating is getting the people the information quickly and easily.

P. Latinesics said that one thing he found very troubling was that there was no public hearing prior to the referendum and not having a town meeting before the referendum. He stated that he believed they were large shortcomings and that it should be suggested that public hearings and town meetings be held in the future.

Chairman Makuch said he agreed that on the part of the town meeting, it did not work the way it should have worked. He did say that there was no ill intent, but in anticipation of a lot of speakers there were time limits, however there was a large part of negative feedback. He said that they could recommend a town meeting in the future with better community engagement.

P. Latinesics said that there is a difference between a public hearing and the community engagement that were held. He said that there needs to be a hearing where a moderator ran public comments and questions.

Chairman Makuch said that it was a distinction without a difference and that the public events they had did allow people to comment. He did say it was important to note in the report how to improve communications with the public in the future. He asked that any more comments be sent to them in the next few days so that a new version could be sent out.

### ADJOURNMENT

*Motion by R. Tukus to ADJOURN meeting.*

*Seconded by Chairman Makuch*

*All in favor, motion carried unanimously.*

*Meeting adjourned at 8:24 PM.*

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT  
Received for record November 20, 2013  
At 11:30 PM Rhina  
CET