

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
TOWN OFFICE BUILDING  
40 OLD FARMS ROAD  
WILLINGTON, CT 06279**

**MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, November 18, 2021

7:00 PM

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

Members Present (a quorum of 4 members is required to conduct business):

Mike Makuch – Chairman

Geoff Prusak – Vice Chairman

Peter Tanaka – Secretary

Christina Mailhos

Joseph Sherrell

Stephanie Summers

Jim Gilligan – Alternate

Lisa Woolf – Alternate

Members Absent: None.

Also Present:

Erika Wiecewski – First Selectwoman

Donna Latincsics – Business Manager

Christine Psathas – Registrar of Voters

Members of the Public

Chairman Mike Makuch called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS:**

Chairman Makuch welcomed back returning board members Christina Mailhos, Geoff Prusak, Stephanie Summers, Peter Tanaka and alternate Lisa Woolf and then introduced new members Joseph Sherrell and alternate Jim Gilligan.

**SEATING OF ALTERNATES:**

As all members were present, no alternates were seated.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

Mike Makuch stated that Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary needed to be elected.

**Peter Tanaka nominated Mike Makuch for Chairman.**

**Christina Mailhos seconded the nomination.**

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

**Stephanie nominated Geoff Prusak for Vice Chairman.**

**Christina Mailhos seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

**Christina Mailhos nominated Peter Tanaka for Secretary.**

**Stephanie Summers seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

Chairman Makuch congratulated the reelected officers. He stated that they got through a lot in the last two years and hopes the next two years are easier.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chairman Makuch stated that although three sets of minutes were sent out, only one set can be approved based on posting deadlines which is the September 16 meeting. Discussion was had on the minutes and it was decided to table all the minutes until the next meeting.

**Chairman Makuch moved to table all minutes needing approval until the next meeting.**

**Stephanie Summers seconded the motion.**

Chairman Makuch stated he will go back through the minutes and make sure all minutes are dated correctly, everyone has the right information, that all minutes are posted to the Town Clerk and then the minutes (August, September and October) can be voted on at the next meeting.

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

**PRESENT TO SPEAK:**

No one was present to speak.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**1. Budget Update -**

- a) General update (unemployment dropped Aug. to Sept. 5.9 to 3.7).

Chairman Makuch noted that the drop in unemployment as mentioned above is a great sign. It is the biggest drop and lowest number in a year.

Chairman Makuch mentioned for the new members that board discussion is encouraged among the members, and although alternates cannot vote, they are welcome to participate in discussion and asking questions. The only thing alternates cannot do if they are not seated is strongly advocate for a position either yes or no on a vote or try to turn the sentiment of the group in a particular direction because by law they would be seen as a seventh or eighth member of the board (by law this is a six member board).

First Selectwoman Wicinski stated that regarding the general budget, within the Public Works budget specifically the tree line item \$50,000.00 was budgeted and is currently overspent by \$11,000.00 (storm damage and unhealthy ash trees needing to come down) and more money will undoubtedly come out of that line item before the end of the fiscal year. The Public Works budget is still in good shape and under budget, but they are keeping watch on this. They may have to come back to the BOF and ask for money if more of the ash trees need to come down and whatever trees may come down during the winter season.

- b) Public Health Crisis Update.

Chairman Makuch stated that he has spoken to some of the local businesses lately and they are still having trouble hiring, however, some places are finding it a little easier to hire with the



larger unemployment compensation ended, employees are getting a little easier to find. Chairman Makuch stated that from an economic standpoint it is good that businesses want to hire, he is hearing good things from local businesses, they are fairly busy and he hopes that continues.

C) Update on federal funding (American Rescue Plan Infrastructure Bill, etc.).

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that they modeled an ordinance after something the Town of Stafford did that would enact an American Rescue Plan Commission which would be made up of 11 members. The ordinance would delegate the spending authority to that group. The BOF would be represented in this commission and projects would go through that group. There would still be public input and public hearings, however, the Town meeting would give the authority to that group for the spending of that money. The BOS are moving forward to take that draft ordinance to a Town meeting.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that there is about \$2,000.00 left from CARES funds. The BOS thought that money had all been spent at the end of 2020, however, FEMA came in and funded 100% and they got funding back. With that money they purchased three new laptop computers for Town employees, two at Public Works and one for the Treasurer. These computers needed to be replaced, and it will also allow employees to work from home if needed. They purchased four new webcams and three new computers with this money.

Chairman Makuch asked if there was any guidance on the infrastructure bill or if First Selectwoman Wiecenski has any idea what might affect Willington. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that it looks like the grants will be competitive. There was a presentation on them at CRCOG that she attended this week and she doesn't know how much would trickle down to municipalities if any at all.

Chairman Makuch asked First Selectwoman Wiecenski if she had any idea if railroad improvements would affect the railroad running through town or is it just passenger railroads. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that right now it sounds like passenger railroads, but nothing should be ruled out; not all of the money has been accounted for, so there is still room for discussion.

Geoff Prusak pointed out that the ARPA Committee has no current BOF representative. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that they are holding off on meeting until the Town meeting (for the ordinance) and then the BOS would appoint new members if it gets approved. She stated that the BOF can think about who they might want to represent them. Stephanie Summers asked First Selectwoman Wiecenski other than passing or failing the ordinance itself, what role does the typical voter have in deciding how that money is spent. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the average towns person is giving the authority to spend the money to the commission. She stated that part of the charge of the commission is "the Commission shall encourage, facilitate and solicit input from the community, they shall educate the public via hosted presentations and ARPA Fund updates". They try to put in place that which makes sure that the community is involved and it is in writing. They have to hold updates so presentations can come from individuals or groups. The Commission will consist of 11 members including the Human Services Director, Emergency Management Director, Town Business Manager, Town Zoning Agent, First Selectman, a representative from the Recreation Commission, BOF representative, Public Health community representative, an Economic Development representative and those individuals will make up the Commission that would ultimately vote



on spending the money, but the public's input survey work, public hearings, talking with the public to see that the Commission is spending the money the way the townspeople want to see it spent. A discussion was had on including people other than those in the Town Government on this Commission.

2) Ambulance Service to the Town of Union – Meeting Report.

Chairman Makuch brought the new BOF members up to date on this subject. Chairman Makuch stated that the BOF is trying to figure out the right thing to do for the taxpayers regarding this subject. Chief Moore, First Selectwoman Wicewski, the First Selectman from the Town of Union and Chairman Makuch did meet and the Town of Union feels that their relationship is not with the Town of Willington, it is with WFD 1 and if there were any funds provided in return for the service, there would likely be an understanding between the Town of Union and WFD 1. The taxpayers are paying close to \$700,000.00 for the ambulance service and they are getting back \$100,000.00 to \$200,000.00 depending on the year for billing and 10% of the service is being provided in the Town of Union. Chairman Makuch stated that WFD 1 is going pursue better detail of what these costs are for providing the service in Union so they can come back to the board and discuss what it is really costing the taxpayers and WFD 1 to provide that service to Union. Chairman Makuch stated that WFD 1 Chief Moore was unable to attend this meeting tonight due to another commitment and Chairman Makuch told him there would just be discussion and no action taken. Chief Moore would like to come to the BOF as soon as possible either for a special meeting or their next meeting with the report on what the actuals costs are. Chairman Makuch stated this leads into conversation under New Business where WFD 1 is looking to increase hourly rates because the job market has become so difficult, and they are having problems with getting equipment and the condition of the ambulance is a concern.

3) FY 19 Annual Report.

Chairman Makuch explained that because of changing of staffing on the board, changing the Chairman two years ago, changing secretaries and then COVID, the FY 19 year Annual report was compiled and then sat. He stated that it has been sent out to the board members and he feels it is pretty well put together and he would like to board's permission to put a cover letter on it that the report was delayed.

**Peter Tanaka moved to put simple cover letter on the FY 19 Annual Report explaining the delay of the report.**

**Geoff Prusak seconded the motion.**

Chairman Makuch stated that the FY 20 and FY 21 reports will be following this report soon.

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

4) Reports of Representatives to Other Committees, etc.

a) School Building Committee

Chairman Makuch stated that this committee met last night and things have been moving forward on multiple fronts. They are around the time the PO is or has been issued for the enrollment study (one of the first requirements of this process). The committee is almost done with the RFP to be sent out to solicit proposals for an owners project manager which would assist the committee with walking through the process which makes sure they do things right to access the State funding and make sure they put the right pieces together (enrollment study, looking at property, assessing the current buildings, etc.). The land acquisition subcommittee was renamed the land assessment subcommittee so it was more appropriate to it's responsibly



to look at all of the property including what the Town already owns. Both that subcommittee and the full committee have been preparing a matrix to use to assess property including the property the Town already owns. The subcommittee will probably meet next week and move forward with finishing that assessment tool and then move forward with probably the Town owned property including the property the schools are on. This will allow them to test the assessment tool and also to always document how they have evaluated each piece of property. The public will be able to see at any time how the process is going.

b) Town Employee Bargaining Agreement

Peter Tanaka reported that they have been in communication with the Union through the First Selectwoman. They have their first meeting scheduled for next Monday. The Union side had issues with finding representation and what they want to do.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1) WFD 1 Request for Additional Funding of Ambulance Payroll and Repair/Replacement. Chairman Makuch stated that Chief Moore requested to have a meeting between Chairman Makuch, First Selectwoman Wicewski and himself to discuss current impact on WFD 1 (the pandemic and the rollout effect of that). It is getting difficult to hire EMT's at the rate of pay WFD 1 is paying. EMT's are going to other towns that pay more. Chairman Makuch stated that Chief Moore needs to elevate the rate of pay for EMT's. Chief Moore would like to meet with the board to talk about where they could access funding from. Chairman Makuch stated this will just be a discussion tonight and he will take questions from the members, but will wait until Chief Moore can attend a meeting to take action on anything.

Stephanie Summers asked what the difference was between this town's pay and the towns that were paying more. Chairman Makuch stated that the other towns were paying at least \$2.00 more per hour for the entry level (part-timers) EMTs. WFD 1 pays about \$15.00 an hour with other towns paying at least \$17.00 to some as high as \$20.00 per hour. President Gantick of WFD 1 stated that WFD 1 has been consistently about the lowest paid department in the area with Tolland and Mansfield paying \$4-5.00 more an hour and other departments such as Stafford and Vernon also paying more. President Gantick stated that WFD 1 is paying just above minimum wage and they need to start bumping up the entry level EMTs as well as the full time staff that has been there to make the pay scale fair to all. Chairman Makuch stated that Chief Moore was estimating an additional \$17,000.00 for this year, and the budget that they would be requesting for next fiscal year would be an additional \$30,000.00 for a full year. Stephanie Summers stated it would help to have some data presented on comparison with towns around Willington that Chief Moore could bring to the meeting and also how he came to the figures of \$17,000.00 and \$30,000.00.

Peter Tanaka stated that Donna Latincsics should be given a heads up on where to look for this money and the board should have a comprehensive list of all of the surrounding towns and what they are paying (not just a few). First Selectwoman Wicewski stated that after Chief Moore met with Chairman Makuch and herself, they did have this conversation with Donna Latincsics and Chairman Makuch has the information on where the money would come from when the board gets to a point where they start discussing that.

Christina Mailhos asked if the salaries from a private ambulance service would be available to look at. Chairman Makuch stated that it would probably be easy to find that with a lot of them advertising right now. Chief Moore through his connections might be able to access that



information also. Chairman Makuch will send Chief Moore an email after this meeting in regards to what the BOF is asking for.

Lisa Woolf asked if WFD 1 did get a wage increase on their Medicaid rate to justify the increase to be competitive in like sized fire departments across the state, and are there any additional benefits to the full time workers who work a 24 hour shift meaning shift differential for any work time after a normal day shift. Lisa Woolf also asked if the wage scale is increased for the entry level EMT, what is the percentage to increase the rest of pay scale, and what would the pay be if they hire someone with 15 years' experience; do they get the same pay as an entry level or at the pay for their experience. Lisa does not think it is clear and it does need to be clear. Chairman Makuch stated he would add her concerns to his email to Chief Moore.

## 2) CY 2022 Board Calendars.

Chairman Makuch presented the board calendar for 2022. He stated it is very simple, as it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month with February and March overlapping with budget meetings.

**Stephanie Summers moved to accept the calendar as the 2022 regular meeting calendar.**

**Geoff Prusak seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

Chairman Makuch presented the budget season calendar. Chairman Makuch stated that the last three dates on the budget season calendar are Tuesdays which has caused a problem in the past for member availability. A discussion was had on moving the budget hearing and/or Town meeting could be on another night other than Tuesday for people that have commitments on Tuesday nights. Chairman Makuch stated that this calendar could be tabled until the next meeting so everyone has time to look at it. The calendar does not take effect until February.

**Peter Tanaka moved to table approving the budget season calendar until the next meeting.**

**Stephanie Summers seconded the motion.**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski encouraged all members to look at the information Donna Latincsics shared with them. There are statutes and time frames involved and the referendum, Town meeting and budget hearing all have to be warned in the newspaper, there is a lot of preparation. If the time frames are shortened, it will make it a real problem to get things done. She stated that is why you work from the referendum which is set by State statute on a Tuesday and work your way back. More discussion was had on the dates of those three items. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that each date affects the next date for those three items.

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

Chairman Makuch asked all board members to review all of the email material from the last couple of days, especially the information he sent from Donna Latincsics because it explains those date brackets in detail, so everyone will be ready for this conversation when it comes back up.

## 3) FY 2023 Budget Request Guidance.

Chairman Makuch stated that he sent the board members the guidance letter that was used last year, which was deliberated on extensively. Chairman Makuch stated that one of the items that should be discussed is whether they should request everyone to bring in a zero budget, no more than 2% or what should they ask people to do. He feels that is one of their most critical

decisions and maybe not put a percentage in there and have them justify any changes in their budget for the year and be clear on how it should be justified.

**Peter Tanaka moved to have Chairman Makuch write a draft letter send it to the board members and vote on it at the next meeting.**

**Stephanie Summers seconded the motion.**

Christina Mailhos stated that one of the things CIP does is have all departments fill out the form for their requests, and she thinks that a check off sheet would be great to make sure the BOF has the information it needs. A discussion was had on this and Donna Latincsics stated that she used to send out a spreadsheet to all the departments and she could include a guidance form that would include over and above what their normal budget is (i.e. adding staff with fringe benefits, adding programs, etc.). After more discussion on the guidance forms, Chairman Makuch asked the board members if they had any further suggestions for the form, email them to him.

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

Chairman Makuch stated that any correspondence he has, the board members have as well.

**PRESENT TO SPEAK:**

No one was present to speak.

**GOOD AND WELFARE:**

Chairman Makuch stated at the last meeting they thanked the outgoing board members; he welcomes the new board members and congratulations to the reelected board members. He looks forward to these two years to make the board even better. He thinks they have done very well over a couple of very challenging years, and the reason they did so well is because they all worked together regardless of political affiliation or differences. Chairman Makuch pointed out that over the past two years almost all of their motions percentage wise were unanimous. He thinks that shows a lot of effort to come to consensus and unified vision for trying to try to do a good thing with taxpayers' money. He hopes that they can continue to try to a good job with this responsibility of the taxpayers' money.

Chairman Makuch stated with Thanksgiving next week, please enjoy the holiday, keep an eye on what is happening with COVID resurgence and keep yourselves healthy.

Stephanie Summers thanked Eileen Smith for stepping in to do the minutes. First Selectwoman Wiczenski reminded the board members that the still need a regular recording secretary. Chairman Makuch stated they are working on finding a regular recording secretary.

**Peter Tanaka moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m.**

**Stef Summers seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 6 Yes (Mailhos, Makuch, Prusak, Sherrell, Summers and Tanaka) 0 No.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Eileen Smith*

Eileen Smith

Recording Secretary

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*K. [Signature]*  
TOWN CLERK