

Town of Willington

40 Old Farms Road
Willington, CT 06279
(860) 487-3100
(860) 487-3103 Fax
www.willingtonct.org

BOARD OF FINANCE

Regular Meeting Minutes
Via Public Online Video Conference

December 17, 2020
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
Matt Clark
Christina Mailhos
Stephanie Summers
Lisa Woolf – Alternate

Members Absent:

Mike Perry – Alternate

Also Present:

Erika Wiecewski – First Selectwoman
Donna Latinsics – Business Manager
Pete Andersen – Conservation Commission Chair
Kathy Demers – Conservation Commission Vice Chair
Phil Stevens – Superintendent of Schools
Troy Sposato – Director of Public Works
Christine Psathas – Registrar of Voters
Suzanne Chapman – Registrar of Voters
Tammy Nuccio – State Representative-Elect
Members of the Public

Chairman Mike Makuch called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Geoff Prusak made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of November 19, 2020.

Matt Clark seconded the motion.

On pg. 8, Matt noted that the word “announced” should be changed to “said” to more accurately reflect his purpose.

Vote: 6 Yes (G. Prusak, S. Summers, C. Mailhos, M. Clark, P. Tanaka, M. Makuch), 0 No

PRESENT TO SPEAK

Selectwoman Wiecenski asked that the board consider moving the first item of New Business earlier on the agenda as the Public Works director, who was up all night plowing, was present to speak to that item and could then be released.

Mike Makuch made a motion to move Item 1 of New Business directly after the Special Presentation.

Stef Summers seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 Yes (M. Clark, P. Tanaka, S. Summers, C. Mailhos, G. Prusak, M. Makuch), 0 No

Tammy Nuccio was delayed in joining the meeting for her Special Presentation. The board proceeded with the agenda until she was available.

NEW BUSINESS

1) Mold Issues at Town Office Building

Selectwoman Wiecenski provided the history that in 2018, mold was discovered in the front portion of the basement of the Town Office Building (TOB) underneath the vault and in the attic, which had to be remediated. The area contains a dirt floor which contributes to moisture and mold. Remediation included some historic books and documents that must be maintained by the town. At the time, an insurance claim was filed. The following year, Selectwoman Wiecenski brought a request to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee to pour a concrete floor and add a sump pump and dehumidifier to the dirt portion of the basement. The hope was for that project to be in the CIP this year, but the pandemic happened.

Selectwoman Wiecenski continued that a few weeks ago, Land Use Agent Mike D'Amato went to her regarding Land Use documents which were housed in the dirt portion of the basement. The documents were wet and appeared to be moldy, so they brought the documents upstairs to their office to try to dry them out. A staff member had a reaction when handling the documents and immediately stopped. Selectwoman Wiecenski explained that while some documents can be destroyed after a certain number of years, these are documents that must be preserved forever. ServiceMaster was consulted and not only found mold in the boxes of documents but also on the walls past the dirt portion of the basement, which connects to the lower level of the TOB.

Selectwoman Wiecenski shared that they are in the process of claim with Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA) and received a quote for the mitigation of the mold on the walls and the mold on the documents. The cost to mitigate the documents is \$28,050. To remediate the mold in the room is \$9,536.90. She continued that if the mold is only mitigated and the documents are put back in that area as-is, the issue will arise again. The state library isn't pleased to hear we have an issue with mold on important documents again and that we haven't taken care of the underlying concern. She is concerned about a safety issue, knowing there was a reaction with a staff member. They are having air quality tests taken tomorrow in various locations in the building to determine if there is reason for concern. That will cost around \$500, which they will find money for out of the regular budget.

Selectwoman Wiecenski continued that she is here to request funding to take care of the concrete in that area, as there is no room in the approved budget for it. She suggested that there is approximately \$40,000 in savings in the Employee Insurances line item due to assumptions made during the budgeting process, where the money might be appropriated from. Selectwoman Wiecenski shared that the 2018 quote for adding concrete to that area was \$23,449, so the project will cost some amount more than that now. The quote did not include repointing and sealing the stone walls.

Director of Public Works Troy Sposato explained that without repointing and sealing the stone foundation walls, ServiceMaster said that moisture will still get into the basement and the issue will arise again, so both are recommended.

Selectwoman Wiecenski shared that this process will involve a Request for Proposal (RFP). More information will be forthcoming about exactly how many of the documents need to be processed. She continued that they aren't yet sure what insurance will cover in terms of document preservation, or if the state library has any funds in a historic preservation grant that can help, but they are looking at those avenues.

Chairman Makuch clarified why this is coming before the board now and not going through the CIP process. Selectwoman Wiecenski responded that, while she originally planned on putting it into the CIP process, that would push any work back to July 1 at the earliest, and the need has become greater now because it's a safety issue to have TOB staff working in a building with mold.

Chairman Makuch asked how soon they will be moving forward to update the quote on pouring concrete and sealing the walls. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that it would be done as an RFP and would take a couple of weeks.

Superintendent Stevens added that, if this is considered an emergency situation, they could consider going off the state bid list because it is significantly faster than the RFP process. Selectwoman Wiecenski added that there is potential for a bill every time a contractor is called to give a quote, as companies are looking to get paid for their work. She clarified that she does see this as emergency situation and agreed that they could go off the state bid list.

Chairman Makuch agreed that this project is a priority, but was unsure the board could act without knowing the cost to complete the project, especially if it might exceed the \$40,000 savings in Employee Insurances. He suggested the board could call an emergency meeting once more information is available.

Geoff Prusak inquired if the Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant could be used. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that the STEAP grant application must be completed for a particular project; the deadline has come and gone and a different project was applied for and accepted. Geoff commented that this project was already approved in the CIP.

Matt asked if there is another place these records can be stored. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied not currently, as that would move the mold.

Geoff asked why the boxes were stored in the dirt basement in the first place if this has been a problem. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that there is a lack of storage in the TOB. The boxes have been there since before she was First Selectwoman. Some time ago, the town used to use a storage facility at the Stock & Lock, but moved the documents to the TOB at some point.

Geoff commented that he didn't remember the dirt basement being full. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that there are approximately 30 boxes of Land Use records in that area, so the area is not full, but the high cost of mitigation is due to the intricacy of the freezing procedure.

Geoff clarified that he meant that, for a relatively small number of boxes that don't take up much space, couldn't they be stored somewhere else. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that there is absolutely nowhere else to store them, as there is already too much weight in the attic of the TOB. Fixing the basement would also allow them to better utilize the space there for storage and remove items from the attic.

Timeline to send this item to Town Meeting and sources of funding were discussed.

Peter Tanaka asked for clarification on whether the mold is in the same place and on the same documents as it was 2 years ago. Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that the mitigated mold 2 years ago was in the front room of the basement, not the dirt portion, and the books that were taken care of that time are now stored upstairs in the vault.

Peter commented that he feels this proposal is short-circuiting the CIP process. He understands the purpose is to move the project along, but feels the board is getting a lot of information at this meeting and should have more time to consider. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that she doesn't feel it's responsible to ask staff to continue to work in a building with unmitigated mold until July and that something has to be done.

Chairman Makuch agreed that the issue needs to be addressed, but reiterated that the Board doesn't have enough information on how much money the project will cost, what insurance will cover, and where the funds will come from yet. He repeated his suggestion of calling an emergency meeting once more information was available. Stef agreed that the board would be willing to move very quickly for an emergency meeting around the holidays.

Matt asked where the air quality will be tested; in the areas where people work or in the basement? Troy replied that the 5 tests will be placed around the building in a neutral area, upstairs, and downstairs where the mold is.

Selectwoman Wiecenski and Matt asked Troy Sposato how long the air quality tests will take. Troy replied that the test takes about an hour to run, but he isn't sure how long it takes to get results. Chairman Makuch added it could take a few days depending on lab operation.

Geoff and Peter suggested waiting to move on the issue until after the air quality test results are available, as that will help determine whether this is an emergency situation.

Selectwoman Wiccenski stressed that whether the air quality is acceptable or not, there is mold continuously growing in an area directly connected to the TOB. In her mind, there are two issues here; remediating documents that are required by law to be maintained, and taking care of the issue in the room so this issue doesn't continue to happen, causing more liability.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Tammy Nuccio introduced herself as the soon-to-be representative for the 53rd District. She expressed that she wanted to have a conversation to open the line of communication. She shared that the legislative session starts in January and wanted to know if there are any issues Willington is having that we want focus to be directed toward.

Chairman Makuch shared that the board has wrestled with the state rules and timing around the Board of Education (BOE) Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR); the state typically releases the MBR calculation 3 months into the new fiscal year, once the budget has already been approved, making it a difficult tool to work with. He concluded that if the state is going to hold towns to it, it should be made more user friendly.

Stef brought up Tolland's Birch Grove Primary School's foundation issues, which were covered at a fairly high reimbursement rate by the state. First, she thinks the state needs to stay on the crumbling foundation issue as far as compensation for homeowners, especially assistance with finding a place to live during the work. So many foundations are being fixed that the available funds are dwindling. Second, Willington has facilities issues where the schools are concerned; at some point we will have to look at renovation or possibly a new building. Aggressive measures have been taken in some parts of the state for reimbursements for new schools, and she would like to see that continue.

Ms. Nuccio detailed that she had a call this morning regarding crumbling foundations, and that they are looking at alternative ways to raise funds outside of the Healthy Homes surcharge, which is down to its last \$20 million in distribution. They are looking to raise \$150-200 million and accelerate the end date to get more houses fixed quicker, which in turn helps the towns because it gets those houses back on tax rolls. She asked for more information regarding school issues in the future.

Ms. Nuccio shared that she will be sworn in on January 6, which is when her legislative e-mail will be available, but that she can be reached at Tammy.nuccio@yahoo.com until then. She encouraged anyone who has anything they'd like to discuss to reach out. Board members thanked Ms. Nuccio for her time.

OLD BUSINESS

1) Public Health Crisis Update-potential effect on municipal budgets

Chairman Makuch detailed that October unemployment as detailed by the Department of Labor (DOL) was 5.8%, which is a little bit of a drop. As Matt pointed out at the last meeting, that number only shows part of the picture, as there are other people who don't fall into that reporting. Economists estimate unemployment is actually around 11%, which is also a slight drop from the previous month. It is encouraging that the number is dropping, but still not great

news, especially as the country enters a new phase of the pandemic and there is potential for more restaurants to shut down.

Chairman Makuch noted that he has seen an increase in his business as of late, but believes it could be due to the end of the calendar year approaching and projects needing to be completed, not an indicator of the economy.

Selectwoman Wiecenski shared that an Executive Order came through last night with no warning. She reminded the Board of the Executive Order in April requiring towns to enroll in one of two programs to help residents with interest on taxes. Executive Order 9R requires towns to offer the same program again. Taxes due January 1, 2021 are given a 3-month grace period and no interest will be charged through April 1. After April 2, interest will revert back to January.

Selectwoman Wiecenski continued that Willington fared pretty well during the last tax collection, so the impact of this Executive Order is unknown. An abundance of folks paid in full in July, but we continue to hear that people are struggling. Whereas the announcement in April was 3 months before tax bills were sent and allowed time for the information to be included with that tax bill, this announcement comes only days before January 1 and the tax bills have already been sent. Had they heard any mention that this announcement was coming they could've held the mailing, but they now need to find a way to communicate the change. The legal notice had already been submitted to the newspaper with the old information, so the Tax Collector was working today to try to change that notice, otherwise a whole new notice will have to be posted as required by law.

2) CIP/Capital funding process: continued discussion

Chairman Makuch shared that the CIP Committee met on December 2 and the process is underway. Submitting organizations are notified and funding requests are due to Selectwoman Wiecenski's secretary by the end of December. The next meeting is on January 6.

3) Monitoring the current FY budget

Chairman Makuch reviewed that the Board was provided with a year-over-year budget comparison by Business Manager Donna Latinesics. As of December 9, the budget is 42.2% spent. Last year on the same date, 42.1% had been spent. He summarized that that is a positive sign that the town isn't spending differently compared to this time in the previous year.

4) Board of Finance manual/policies/etc.

Chairman Makuch suggested the board consider adding policies about attendance and how continued lack of attendance is handled, as well as some sort of professional behavior policy that would allow the Board to set expectations and deal with it if expectations are not met by members. Budget season is a critical thing approaching, but the Board can be chipping away to improve its policies.

Geoff added that other town committees used to do what they could to prepare candidates for what they were running for; have them attend a couple meetings, familiarize them with the

processes and purpose, etc. Chairman Makuch replied that it is worth discussing, though in elected positions, certain things are out of the board's hands.

Matt agreed that the Board should have an attendance policy. He also suggested a policy informing members of the BOF when there are going to be expenditures and setting an expectation of how much notice the Board is given on fund requests. Chairman Makuch noted that the topic of setting a certain number of days of advance notice has come up before and agreed that that should be part of the discussion.

5) Annual reports

Chairman Makuch shared that everything possible has been collected from the previous fiscal year; a draft has been compiled and will be finalized. Clarification was sought on when the Annual Report is approved by the board. Previous years' agendas and minutes will be consulted.

Chairman Makuch turned the conversation to the FY19-20 Annual Report and what guidance the board feels should be provided to organizations. Matt clarified that the purpose of the annual report is to inform the taxpayers of Willington what was done, what was spent, and the plans for the future.

Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that compiling the annual report is a statutory requirement of the Board of Finance to put together, including all town organizations who receive funds. She outlined the typical timeline of the report.

Matt asked if the Annual Report gets posted somewhere for people to access. Chairman Makuch replied that hard copies are made available in multiple locations at the Town Office Building and it is also posted online.

Geoff recalled from last month's conversation that an important item to communicate to organizations is to have the reports submitted in an easy-to-compile format so it's easy to compile into one document.

The wide range of length of submissions was brought up. Geoff noted that some organizations have more information to include than others, ranging due to the size of their budget.

6) Status of M Perry alternate seat

Chairman Makuch summarized that, as of yet, this situation is unresolved. Those on the board saw a series of unfortunate emails in communication with Mr. Perry. He does not appear to want to be contacted anymore, but has not said he wants to leave the board and has not completed any of the procedures that would allow him to be released from the board, so he is still a member at this point. Chairman Makuch and Town Clerk Robin Campbell have been working together to find ways to help him provide an answer. Mike Perry still an alternate until further notice.

Matt asked if Mr. Perry has indicated to anyone on the board that he no longer wants to serve on the board. Chairman Makuch replied no, that he just replied to one e-mail saying 'please stop sending me emails'.

Geoff commented that the situation has just been escalating into more derogatory comments; there are 10 months left on that term and he doesn't think it's worth troubling the Board over anymore.

Matt Clark made a motion to honor Mr. Perry's request not to send him any more communications regarding the Board of Finance.

Chairman Makuch explained that that can't be done. While he is a member, there is no legal way that Chairman Makuch can not communicate Board information to a member of the Board. Mr. Perry has been repeatedly asked if he wants to leave the board and offered steps to do so, but he does not reply. There is no legal recourse to remove him from the board, and as long as he's a legal member, it could create a legal issue to leave a member off of Board communications.

Peter Tanaka asked if Mr. Perry responded to a recent Board communication inquiring about preferred e-mail addresses. Chairman Makuch replied that he did not respond, but his personal e-mail address has been removed from the mailing group. Any board communications will only go to his town e-mail from now on, but he will continue to get Board communications there as an official member of this board until his status changes.

Selectwoman Wiczenski shared that the guidance that Robin Campbell is sharing with Chairman Makuch is coming from the staff attorney at the Secretary of State's office. Robin has contacted Mr. Perry in a very professional manner; he is choosing what to respond to and what not to.

7) Conservation Commission: potential Talmadge property purchase

Conservation Commission Chair Pete Andersen thanked the board for their support at the last meeting and explained that the Conservation Commission (CC) is concerned about meeting timelines for the state grant for which they plan to apply.

Conservation Commission Vice Chair Kathy Demers explained that the BOS decided to hold off on a Town Meeting due a delay in STEAP Grant paperwork and a desire to combine multiple items into one Town Meeting. The CC is concerned about the effect this may have on them making the May deadline for the Open Space Grant application. The appraisal can take 4-8 weeks and then must be forwarded to another appraiser for review, which takes an additional 1-2 weeks. Appraisers have told the CC that they're going to get very busy after the holidays once the grant has officially been announced. With that in mind, the CC contacted Selectwoman Wiczenski and Donna Latinsics for an alternative funding source, to tide them over for the appraisal, that wouldn't require a Town Meeting. They were told that there may be some extra money in the Employee Insurances line item. Then residents could approve reimbursing that cost to the General Fund from the Open Space Fund when the Town Meeting is held.

Stef Summers made a motion to approve the Conservation Commission's request to transfer \$5,000 from 0831 Employee Insurances to 0161 Conservation Commission for the purposes of appraisal of the Talmadge Property on Mason Rd.

Christina Mailhos seconded the motion.

Vote: 5 Yes (G. Prusak, C. Mailhos, S. Summers, P. Tanaka, M. Makuch), 1 No (M. Clark)

8) Clarification of issue discussed in Present to Speak last month

Chairman Makuch reviewed that at the end of the second Present to Speak section of the November meeting, a sentiment was expressed by a member of the public that the Board had circumvented the public's opportunity to participate by adding an item to the agenda and authorizing spending. Chairman Makuch clarified that the Board of Finance did not authorize spending on that motion, it authorized sending it to the Board of Selectmen to call a Town Meeting, which puts the topic to the townspeople with notice.

9) Budget Meetings: calendar

Chairman Makuch recalled that the Board asked for clarification on the ability to adjust the dates on the calendar that are not on Thursdays, as some members of the BOF will not be able to attend.

Selectwoman Wiczenski explained that, due to the time it takes to organize and publish legal notices complete with documents from the finance office, there was only flexibility of one day or so. The referendum date is dictated by Region 19. While Willington could have a separate date for its own referendum, combining the two creates a cost savings. The recommendation from the Town Clerk, after her research, is that the Budget Hearing, Annual Town meeting, and the Referendum remain on the scheduled Tuesdays.

Matt shared that he will not be able to attend those meetings and expressed his disbelief that the process can't be started earlier and pushed out a few days. Chairman Makuch commented that that would compress the budget process, and that there is certain budget information that isn't available until the Board has the Region 19 information, and reviewed the legal notice timing requirements.

Mike Makuch made a motion to accept the 2020-2021 budget season calendar as presented. Peter Tanaka seconded the motion.

Vote: 5 Yes (S. Summers, C. Mailhos, P. Tanaka, G. Prusak, M. Makuch), 1 No (M. Clark)

NEW BUSINESS

2) Regular Meetings: calendar

Mike Makuch made a motion to accept the 2020-2021 regular meeting calendar as presented.

Stef Summers seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 Yes (M. Clark, P. Tanaka, G. Prusak, C. Mailhos, S. Summers, M. Makuch), 0 No

CORRESPONDENCE

No new correspondence.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

Registrar of Voters Christine Psathas stated that the registrars would welcome any guidance that the board has concerning the annual reports. She and Suzanne work on those and are only in the office 1-2 days per week, so they feel they have very little time to get that report to the BOF.

They would appreciate any guidance on what type of information the board is looking for as soon as possible.

GOOD & WELFARE

Chairman Makuch cautioned everyone to be careful and take care of themselves, knowing that the public health situation is significant right now. He wished all Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

Stef commented that, while there has been some negativity on e-mail, she wants everyone on the board to know she thinks they're all articulate and well-spoken and whether they agree or not, she's happy to be serving with them all on this board.

Peter Tanaka made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:29pm.

Geoff Prusak seconded the motion.

Vote: 6 Yes (P. Tanaka, G. Prusak, C. Mailhos, S. Summers, M. Clark, M. Makuch), 0 No

Respectfully submitted,
Marysa Semprebon
Recording Secretary

**WILLINGTON BOARD OF FINANCE
2021-2022 BUDGET CALENDAR
Approved BOF xx/xx/20**

DRAFT

Attachment #1

February 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May 2021

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Thurs 2/4/2021

SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS

0511 Animal Control
0512 Parks and Recreation
0513 Family Services
0517 Library Board

Thurs 2/11/2021

EMERGENCY SERVICES

0518 Emergency Preparedness
0221 Ambulance Payroll
0231 Fire Marshal
0232 WFD#1, WHFD
0234 Emergency Management Director Stipend

Thurs 2/18/2021

ELECTED OFFICIALS AND COMMISSIONS

0121 Tolland-Mansfield Probate District
0126 Registrar of Voters
0131 Board of Finance
0132 Treasurer
0135 Board of Assessment Appeals
0161 Conservation Commission
0171, 0172, 0176 Planning & Zoning, ZBA, IW
0175 Economic Development

Thurs 2/25/2021

BOE PRESENTATION

Thurs 3/4/2021

**SELECTMEN'S BUDGET
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN
REVENUE PRESENTATION**

Thurs 3/11/2021

BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

Thurs 3/18/2021

BUDGET APPROPRIATION MEETING

Tues 4/6/2021

BUDGET HEARING

Tues 4/20/2021

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Tues 5/4/2021

REFERENDUM

Town of Willington
Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Calendar - 2021
Regular meetings are scheduled for the third Thursday of each month
Meetings will be conducted at 7 PM
Town Office Building, 40 Old Farms Rd.

-or-

Via public online video conference platform as approved and required by COVID-19 safety
protocol

January	21
February	18
March	18
April	15
May	20
June	17
July	15
August	19
September	16
October	21
November	18
December	16

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT
Received for record Dec. 22 2020
At 9:15 am RFM:ATC