

Town of Willington

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BOARD OF FINANCE

**Special Meeting Minutes
Via Public Online Video Conference**

**March 23, 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
Stephanie Summers
Christina Mailhos
Matt Clark
Lisa Woolf – Alternate
Brenda Abrams – Alternate

Members Absent:

Also Present:

First Selectwoman Erika Wiecewski
Superintendent of Schools Phil Stevens
Business Manager Donna Latinsics
Joe Colangelo – Chair, Recreation Commission
Bethany Cologna – Parks and Recreation Director
Debbie Linares – Library Co-Director
Members of the Public

Chairman Mike Makuch called the meeting to order at 7:07pm.

SEATING OF ALTERNATES

All regular members present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Geoff Prusak made a motion to approve the budget and regular meeting minutes of March 18, 2021.

Stef Summers seconded the motion.

Vote: 4 Yes (C. Mailhos, P. Tanaka, G. Prusak, S. Summers), 0 No, 2 Abstain (M. Clark, M. Makuch)

Motion passes.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

Laurie Semprebon of 271 Turnpike Rd. read the following letter:

Your job on the Board of Finance is to balance the needs of the town with keeping taxes as low as possible. I know that this is a difficult task.

You also have some very vocal folks in the town and on the board who want to see no increases for the sake of no increases; this has been the case for several years. Some of these people find someone whom they value as experts to support their claims, some cut requested budgets by random percentages because they don't like the size of the increase, and some are not doing their research of the processes and function of the Board of Finance.

As far as referencing experts to predict gloom and doom for the town and state, you can find other experts who forecast a more positive picture. For example, in the *Hartford Business Journal's* "HBJ's 2021 Economic Forecast" article, UConn's Professor Lanza predicts a year of moderate recovery, while Patrick J Flaherty, the Assistant Director of Research at the Connecticut Department of Labor, predicts "pent-up demand for services that were delayed or avoided during the pandemic will lead to a spike in employment in late summer or early fall 2021". (<https://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/hbjs-2021-economic-forecast>) Our economy has struggled, but some of us see a positive outlook in the future.

I propose that you consider the actual budgets and the specific increases as whether or not they are needs and not just wants. An example is the budget for WFD#1; at the last meeting, when you cut their increase from 17% to 10%, you are forcing them to make cuts in required equipment or maintenance; how safe or supportive of them is this for our volunteer fire department that everyone on this board purports to appreciate? Another example, in the discussion of the Park & Rec increase last week, some members of this board automatically wanted to reduce the budget because it was higher; either those members did not read the materials presented by the department or they do not understand the math. Half the costs were shifted over from Human Services to make this an entirely Park & Rec budget item, and you wanted to cut just because it was an increase?

This board also nickel and dimes budgets and departments to where it is actually more expensive to function under budget; for example, if PW has two weeks of sweeping scheduled and someone calls in sick, the schedule has to be adjusted for other tasks because there aren't enough people to cover the sweeping and the sweeping drags on into other projects. Also, by not having enough PW employees, we pay more overtime. Another example, if we don't pay the fees for the Microsoft license for the town, and we get fined or taken to court, it's going to cost a LOT more than the software license.

Public Works cannot function without an additional person; they have already explained that they can't find anyone willing to subcontract the plowing. I don't know the reasons we have recently lost TWO PW employees, but it has to be frustrating to not have enough manpower and not be supported by the town. Whenever someone's road isn't plowed fast enough, you can be sure that townspeople will be calling to complain because they want these services. If you keep

expecting our PW employees to be stressed and overworked, then don't be surprised when there's turnover.

My last point is that costs continually go up. By insisting on as close to zero percent increase as possible, you are not considering the actual costs of goods and services. We all see our streaming services, groceries, and gas prices increase; this is just a small sample of personal spending. Much of what the town purchases also increases, and we have not allowed for these increases in several years. PLEASE support our town and its employees by supporting reasonable budgets and actually consider the necessities of these increases. Thank you.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham of 41 Liska Rd. stated: I'd like to support everything Laurie Semprebon just said and call specifically on the BOF to think about what types of investments we can make that will support recovery going forward.

Many of you who have worked in business know that you have to spend money to make money, so for example you have to put money in the budget to have a summer camp, but the summer camp recoups some of those costs in parent fees; it's not fully self-sustaining, and shouldn't be, because you want to be able to offer scholarships to parents who cannot pay the full amount, but that's something that invests in the parents' capacity to go back to work and if they aren't able to do so, that doesn't support our well-being in the community as a whole. There are items in the budget that support recovery.

Just cutting the budget to say that we're keeping our taxes lower than neighboring towns is not a smart approach; it's a lazy person's approach of not really doing the research and looking at every single one of these particular requests for what they're worth. I think you need to look very closely. Due to the expertise of our school superintendent and the relationships we've made with some of the contractors, we were able to keep the increase very low this year, which will help to balance the increase from Region 19, which could've been much worse. Because of that I think we really need to consider what can we do to invest in our town?

Some of that would be the library; another example of not making money if you don't invest money. The fact that our library director salary is the lowest in the state is a shame. It should absolutely not be the case. No wonder you can't have someone who wants to come and stay in a position like that if they're not supported by the town. I think we have to be paying attention and look at each request as submitted and think about what they do to bring recovery back to the town. Let's not go with only the most negative responses; let's look at both sides and there are optimistic economic forecasts out there as well.

We've been super conservative in the past and have been very careful with the taxpayer's money, and I don't think that's going to change just because you look at a budget and spend more money this year. What happens after a recession is that government helps to spend its way out of it, that's why there's been such an investment from the federal government, and it's not the time for local government to pull back too strongly; that does not help the situation and will actually make things worse. Please consider this an investment going forward and go deeply into each of these lines and think deeply about what we need. It really can make a big difference in the lives of the families that live here.

Peter Latincsics of 97 Trask Rd. stated: I want to express the viewpoint I've been sharing with the board. I don't believe the economic depression that our town, state, and nation finds itself in is imaginary or exaggerated. There is a fairly strong consensus among all of our state economic forecasters that not only are we in a deep recession, but that we haven't recovered from the last one, as referenced in Professor Carstensen's report from UConn. No-one is suggesting there be any cuts. I haven't heard a single cut yet to our budget. What the townspeople are merely expressing is that there should not be increases in spending on the town level when so many Willington residents have lost their jobs or had their incomes reduced by furloughs or entire businesses closed.

What's especially frustrating is that much of this economic dislocation has been caused by government mandates. It's very hard for townspeople or residents of our state to be told that not only does government spending have to increase, while your income or job is decreasing or being eliminated, but that this is all happening as a result of government mandates. I strongly urge the BOF not to cut, but suggesting at a time when so many of our residents are feeling this kind of pain, that we not increase the budget. I think that's reasonable and that's what the BOF said at the very beginning of its process when it asked for a net zero, excluding, of course, salary increases. No-one in the private sector is getting an increase, and we understand that municipal increases are required and those will happen. We're simply suggesting there not be an increase at a time like this. Thank you.

Jim Bulick of 12 Laurel Dr. stated: I agree with Mr. Latincsics. Many townfolks are not asking for cutting of spending; they're asking for spending to be kept flat or very reasonable. The CPI in our area is a little under 3% and anything over that is unreasonable. We have no growth in our Grand List. Asking for double-digit increases is totally unreasonable and out of touch with the regular workers of our town. No-one is getting large increases; many people had furloughs or time cut and I think we need to be sensitive to those townspeople, particularly those on fixed income who are in this situation. I applaud the BOF, who is doing a great job separating needs from wants from what I've seen so far and I urge you to keep doing that.

Debbie Linares, Library Co-Director stated: I understand this is a hard time for everybody and it puts the library in a really difficult position because there is no way that we can go flat, for a number of reasons. I need to do my job, and what we have asked for will enable me to do that and to give the people in town the library that they have waited for, fought for, and have. I am well aware of how the world is today, both as a family and at large, and I know we're not in a good place, so I feel bad I have to bring this to you like this, but I have to.

I understand that there is a very substantial increase in this year's library budget and it's one like the town has never seen from the library before. The library has a history of presenting budgets with little to no increase over the years, because we were always trying to save the taxpayer money, and were very diligent in that. It's because of our budgets being so low for so long and no-one asking for more money for the library that we're in the position we're in, not to mention needing more money for state mandated items. We continue to try to remain frugal. The last few budgets were incorrect; they were way under and way off. It's hard because it makes this year look even worse with increases that didn't just come out of the sky, but includes things that had

not been met over the last 2-3 years and now have to be addressed. I don't know how else we can meet what needs to be done because those needs weren't addressed for such a very long time.

The library is far behind on things we need to have and should be able to offer the people of Willington and are at a point now where we need to catch up. We are years behind in having a budget that works, meets all the library's needs, and provides capabilities for growth. So much has been neglected or overlooked for so long that now we have no choice but to act and it can't be put off any longer. We've worked very hard on the budget and it is a good, sound, and fair budget which is accurate for a change, which hasn't been the case for a few years.

I love this library and have been here in town for 34 years. When we first moved to town, my family used the library multiple times per day. We are losing people to other libraries because we are unable to meet their needs. We need to be more and we can be more, but it will cost. We are saving now even as we are spending money. That budget would have looked worse, but we have been doing things to meet the needs that we need to meet, but trying to save money wherever possible. The library, as of this year, is trying to be very transparent as far as what we're doing and where and how we're saving money. We just don't want to have the library be less than what it once was. We want it to be more than it is and all that it can be. Like with everything, it's going to take some money. I think the people are expecting more from their library and they're entitled to it. We've all worked so hard to make it what it is today; I don't want to lose it. We are here to serve the needs of every individual in our community.

Debbie Linares read the following letter from KarenAnn Caldwell, Library Chair:

"Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

When I presented the request for the library budget for the next fiscal year, I understand that the library asked for a very large increase in their budget. The hope was that this increase would allow the library to recover from the pandemic shutdown, hire people to bring staffing up to previous levels, and cover some repairs to the building. At the meeting it was brought up that when the library was built, it was the understanding that the library would be self-sustaining. For the last month, members of the library board and staff have done a deep dive into this. Nowhere in the history of the library does any of the paperwork indicate this. If the library were to become self-sustaining, it would, under the definition, no longer be a municipal library but a private one.

It does, however, show that the library board was expected to contribute \$50,000 per year toward expenses from 2006-2009 and then in 2010, \$56,000. That, added to the town contribution, gave the library a total budget of \$206,000; \$10,000-15,000 more than the current budget that the library has been running on for the last 15 years. The problem with this is that the library currently has no revenue beyond the late fees and contributions of the Friends of the Library, unless money is left to the library in a resident's will, for example.

Looking into the past, most of these revenues were to come from rental fees for use of the library by outside parties. Unfortunately, 5 or 6 years ago the director at the time decided to cancel all rental fees, allowing any part of the library to be used for free by outside interests, effectively removing the revenue stream that the library was supposed to contribute."

Debbie noted that this statement is not entirely true; Willington residents and nonprofit organizations from town or out of town are not charged for use of the library.

“It is expected that the increase in the budget would be granted to allow the library to get back on its feet and when the shutdown is over, the hope is that people will return to face-to-face get-togethers and hope to use the library, at which point the library could re-introduce rental fees to contribute to its own budget. It is uncertain how, after 5 or so years of no fees for use, reinstituting this cost will affect the use of the library by groups, but since the number of places available for meetings is limited in Willington, and people seem to be tiring of online meetings, the library board and the current directors are optimistic that we can return to a revenue stream that could contribute approximately 20% or more to our budget’s cost. Thank you.”

Maureen Parsell of 75 Timber Lane stated: I’m here tonight to speak in support of the Parks & Recreation budget. Willington Parks and Recreation provides an essential service to the town of Willington and to all of its residents; youth, adult, seniors, and families. Our Parks and Recreation department stayed open during the COVID crisis, maintaining their facilities and continuing to offer programs while following all COVID guidelines. Despite COVID however, they had an incredibly busy year, finding ways to safely hold their summer concert series, loaning out kayaks every weekend, holding yoga classes, science in the park, projects in the park, and more. They offered a family scavenger hunt over Thanksgiving weekend and joined together with our surrounding communities and offered a tour of holiday lights at Christmas time.

How did they do this with the closure of all of our town’s facilities? They got creative. They thought outside of the box and turned our town’s parks into outdoor classrooms. They held all their programs at River Road Athletic Complex and Fenton Ruby Park. They followed all guidelines and protocols and continued to run programs so they could provide these essential services to our residents. Most importantly, they were able to keep our parks open for those seeking respite, while also supporting the physical and mental health needs of our residents. They worked hard to maintain those spaces and keep them safe and accessible to all.

Mr. Tanaka stated last week that he believes that recreation is necessary but that he does not believe it falls into the word “essential” and that “they were able to close”. I don’t agree with that statement; I believe that Parks and Recreation is essential. It is essential to the health and well-being of our community. It’s what brings our community together; our youths, adults, seniors, and families. Parks and Recreation is essential to the overall health of our community.

It is the mission of the Parks and Recreation department to always commit its resources to expand and adapt to the recreational needs of every resident in Willington. Our parks are essential and recreation is essential. It is my hope that the BOF will support the Parks and Recreation department’s budget request for FY 21-22 so they can continue to meet the needs of our community. Thank you for your time.

Joanne Taraskiewicz of the Library Board stated: I’m very conservative for the most part. When we went in to do the budget, it was my attitude that we shouldn’t increase the budget, and then I heard what was going on. Everybody in town deserves a slap on the wrist on this one. We have

not paid attention to what's been going on for years. Nobody has done the nitty gritty, and I don't know how you would. I don't know that any one individual could have done it. We all were complicit in this. This last year we've had Debbie and Hope as the co-directors and they have done a phenomenal job going through all of the paperwork, finances; nothing that was very tightly controlled by a director. That's really where the rub lies is in the director.

When we got to the budget I saw what they said about every single item, and everything was thoroughly discussed. What it amounts to, it has been underfunded. It's like an old house – when you don't do the work, pretty soon things start to fall apart and you wind up spending twice as much as you wanted to repair it. There are problems with the propane tank which had to be repaired, the elevator was not maintained and almost got closed down, we've had problems with windows that need to be readjusted and doors that are leaking and these things that happen when the maintenance isn't done well.

We've seen a tremendous turnaround this year in the attitude and facilities and so, although the increase in the budget shocked me at first, and I sat down and went through the notes, I realized that sometimes it just costs to do business. If you don't take care of it as it happens, you're going to belly up to the bar sometime and just pay it. Unfortunately, I need to support this big budget.

I would like to speak to Parks and Rec; it has been shown time and time again that it is exercise and outdoor activity that really cause better brain growth and brain maturation in all ages, even us elderly folks. They really deserve whatever they can get. I'm very, very proud of Willington supporting this in the past and I brag to a lot of people about it. Thank you very much and I appreciate all of the comments today.

Brenda Abrams of 63 Schofield Rd. stated: as a recreation therapist, of course I'm all about recreation therapy and people getting out and doing things, but I feel like right now in the pandemic we really need to do responsible spending and we need to be really careful of where we put our money. There are a lot of people that are on unemployment in the town and a lot of people with businesses that aren't doing well. I'm definitely for recreation and I'm definitely for responsible spending, especially at this time with the pandemic. With the elevator, I feel like things have not been taken care of through the years and now we're stuck with all this big spending because things weren't done when they should have been done. I'm for responsible spending. Thank you.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Makuch spoke to the challenging nature of the BOF's role to consider all sides of the financial situation. UConn indicates they'd like to return to full-capacity in-person instruction as much as possible, but the timeline for that is unclear; the real estate market is still strong; local contractors are busy; vacation demand, which doesn't affect Willington very much, is an economic indicator and many places are fully reserved already; campgrounds are filling, and we do have two in Willington who are employers as well as taxpayers; daycare demand is very high and has been going up every month to well above pre-pandemic levels. We can hope that some of the negatives we know are happening are also balanced by these positives. The BOF's job is

to find the right balance to keep this town operating and keep the impact on the taxpayers reasonable, but keep our services reasonable. He recognized the cost of services increasing.

To/From Other Fund

Motion to accept the budget request for 0512 Recreation Commission for \$83,534 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Christina Mailhos.

Chairman Makuch recalled that this is a \$14,000 increase, or 21%. Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that the increase is due mostly to the increase of field maintenance, not the movement of summer camp funds.

Chairman Makuch inquired what part of the school fields Parks & Rec is responsible for mowing. Superintendent Stevens clarified that P&R mows the lower soccer field and the softball soccer field at Hall School and the Little League field at Center School, while the mowing around the rest of the school buildings is paid for through the education budget.

Joe Colangelo elaborated that the field at River Road Athletic Complex (RRAC) is coming apart. It needs topsoil and care, and we have to take care of it or we are going to lose it. RRAC gets used a lot and will hopefully be used a lot this summer. The lighting project is going on and P&R is trying to keep people busy in the pandemic. The town budget only pays for payroll, payroll taxes, and field maintenances, none of which can be taken away. This department is supported by money raised from programs.

Pete Tanaka stated that, regarding his comments at the last meeting, his definition of essential services is extremely high. While he understands the need for towns to come together and recreate, if that doesn't happen, we don't have a collapse of civilization. This is a rather high budget request. It sounds like most of it is based on field maintenance, but the discussion last meeting sounded like it was due to summer camp. Brenda agreed that the budget increase was high.

Bethany Cologna clarified that summer camp supports itself. Chairman Makuch noted the shown increase in both the cost to run summer camp and summer camp revenue lines.

Stef Summers commented regarding essential services and public safety vs. Parks and Rec; in the life of a community, Parks and Rec and the services the town offers are preventative for other things that put people at risk and fall into the extreme measures of public safety, so it really seems essential.

Christina agreed with Stef and commented that the Board approved the budget for the increase at the transfer station, which is basically the same because it's all contractual increases that made a function more expensive this year. She doesn't see how we can cut it or what would give, because it's not like they can stop mowing the fields.

Lisa commented that she and many Willington residents go to neighboring communities to access the recreation services they want, and should be able to access those within their own town.

Vote: 4 Yes (G. Prusak, S. Summers, C. Mailhos, M. Makuch), 2 No (M. Clark, P. Tanaka)
Motion passes.

Motion to accept a budget request for 0517 Library for \$282,246 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Stef Summers.

Board members recognized the importance of the library and its role in the town, but spoke to the 48.2% increase being too large to do in one year while being mindful of taxpayer money. A smaller increase to enable the library to take steps to move forward was suggested.

Stef asked, in the case of the acting co-directors, if the Assistant Director position would be absorbed or filled with another person once the library opens in full again. Debbie replied that there are a couple scenarios, but that they feel the Director's amount of work shouldn't fall on one person. In the case of co-directing, they are hoping those co-directors can also absorb the duties outlined in the role of the Programmer.

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

The Board discussed possible alternate funding scenarios. It was noted that the Board asked the Library to present what incremental steps forward would look like, which has not been done, so it's difficult to know what numbers might work. The importance of planning for more than one year was stressed.

Pete commented that he would like to see the internet and computers brought current as a first step, and that he'd like to see improvement before a big jump is made, though he recognizes that that is asking a lot.

Debbie – commented that they are trying to resolve the fact that they have been putting band-aids on issues. One thing they've been working on is initiating a new contract with Otis elevator. The work that needs to be done was going to cost \$10,000, but they are getting it done this year for a savings of \$3,000, so that can be removed from the building maintenance line for next year. They are continuing to work on those types of things.

Motion to adopt a budget for 0517 Library for \$204,636 was made by Matt Clark and seconded by Peter Tanaka.

Donna clarified that is a \$14,200 or 7.45% increase over the current year.

Chairman Makuch commented that he feels the number is too drastically removed from the request and would hamper the library.

Christina asked about the possibility of making another appropriation later in the year if progress is shown. Chairman Makuch replied that that tool has been used in the past as a way to complete a budget and give not only the board, but the taxpayers and the requesting agency a chance to take a new look at things. The challenge is whether there is money in the future or an appetite to approve it. In that case, any additional appropriation would go through the Town Meeting process for taxpayers to vote on.

Vote: 3 Yes (P. Tanaka, M. Clark, G. Prusak), 3 No (C. Mailhos, S. Summers, M. Makuch)
Motion fails.

Motion to adopt a budget for 0517 Library for \$225,000 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Stef Summers.

Stef clarified that that is an 18% increase.

Pete asked for clarification on how Mike reached that number. Chairman Makuch replied that he thought another \$10,000 over Pete's number would give room to support items that were in the letter from the library such as extra hours to attempt to get neglected management under control, etc. Christina commented that getting management under control is key to getting the library stabilized.

Vote: 4 Yes (S. Summers, C. Mailhos, G. Prusak, M. Makuch), 2 No (M. Clark, P. Tanaka)
Motion passes.

Board of Selectmen

Motion to accept a budget request for 0181 Town Office Operations for \$269,082 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Christina Mailhos.

Stef noted the 17.4% increase.

Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that there is no staffing in this item; it relates to maintenance, computer and IT services, various computer programs, heating fuel, and postage for Town Office Building (TOB) which may increase with changes at USPS. The biggest driver of the increase is the one-time Microsoft Office project, which accounts for \$38,000 of the \$39,824 increase. There will be annual costs for licensing moving forward, but this line should see a decrease next year after the work on the project is complete.

Matt noted the importance of running in the norm with licensing software. Selectwoman Wiczenski agreed, and spoke to how invaluable the IT service is at taking care of all of the town's needs, not only with these types of things, but also cyber-attacks.

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

The budget as a whole, general fund, and mill rate was reviewed, as currently appropriated and requested. Discussion was held on whether it is helpful to look at the budget as a whole at this point, or whether more beneficial to hold off.

Motion to accept a budget request for 0311 Public Works for \$1,273,194 was made by Mike Makuch.

Motion fails due to no second.

Pete stated that, in his opinion, now is not the time to add people to payroll, and that maybe next year will be the time if there's a clearer picture of where the economy is headed.

Discussion was held on the specific amount attributed to the added position across all budget departments.

Stef recalled that the amount for snow removal contractors was decreased assuming an additional employee available to plow and pointed out that the entire salary of the position should not be cut, to allow funds for hiring two plow contractors.

Selectwoman Wiecenski elaborated that the budget would need \$66,150 for 2 contractors, so it is actually slightly more expensive to hire two contractors than to hire a new employee, and that she doesn't recommend this avenue because of the amount of work that needs to be done in Public Works outside of snow removal. She continued that the BOF asked the Library to work to implement changes incrementally, and that that's exactly what Public Works is doing by adding one position instead of the multiple that they feel they need. Hiring another Public Works employee would bring the staff size in line with other towns of our size. In her opinion, taxpayer dollars would be better spent with a regular employee than with a snow contractor.

Selectwoman Wiecenski reviewed the increases included in the submitted budget. Chairman Makuch reviewed the lease payments for trucks included in the submitted budget.

Selectwoman Wiecenski spoke to the poor condition and the necessity of replacing the Public Works vehicles schedule this year. She commented that if the full \$48,000 for salary was cut, the budget would have to be adjusted to allow for snow contractors, or the Public Works employees would have to travel significantly longer routes, which is unsustainable. Therefore they'd have to look at cutting items like tree removal, where work needs to be done due to the condition of the trees. She stressed that a decrease to this department would be detrimental.

Chairman Makuch commented on the liability and public safety aspect of leaving dangerous dead trees hanging, making tree trimming essential in his mind. He asked what the impact would be if replacement of the big dump truck was pushed one year out, while still replacing the F350 and the F450. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that that was already pushed out last year and she believes it's necessary to replace because the vehicle needed significant repairs this year. Chairman Makuch responded that the town also bought a dump truck last year.

Motion to adopt a budget for 0311 Public Works for \$1,213,194 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Pete Tanaka.

Christina commented that the number doesn't include salary increases which may come out of the union negotiations; that will likely increase next year's budget request.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for 0513 Human Services for \$53,488 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Pete Tanaka.

Christina asked if cutting funding from camp affects the bottom line here. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that the dollars that are allocated here are covering administrative costs and that the camp typically funds itself.

Pete voiced support for the 7.9% increase, as now is the time if there ever was a time. Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the dollar amount here doesn't even cover the administrative costs, even with the increase.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for 0831 Employee Insurances for \$265,160 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Stef Summers.

Chairman Makuch noted that the number is different from the amount requested due to an insurance change for the PW employee. He subtracted \$28,473, as provided by Selectwoman Wiecenski, from the original request.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for 0841 Pension for \$55,478 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Pete Tanaka.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for 0851 Insurances for \$93,715 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Stef Summers.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for 0871 Miscellaneous for \$1,750 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Geoff Prusak.

Selectwoman Wiecenski explained that this line is used for Good and Welfare items such as sending flowers and similar items.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for 0910 Debt Services for \$204,408 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Geoff Prusak.

Donna explained that this line is for bond payment and interest payment for the library, lease payments for the dog warden truck, and lease payments for the self-contained breathing apparatus for fire departments.

Matt asked for clarification on how many years were left on the library bond payments. Chairman Makuch provided the information that they will end in 2027 and that the payments decrease slightly each year.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for 0930 Capital Expenditures for \$228,864 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Stef Summers.

Chairman Makuch clarified that this line was \$63,565 last year, and that the reason for the change is that the town went into austerity mode due to COVID and redlined all capital programs that were not already committed with the exception of a couple, so there was a dip down year during the current fiscal year but the level is being returned to normal.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for 0861 Board of Finance Contingency for \$0 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Stef Summers.

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

Motion to accept the budget request for the Board of Education for \$8,962,009 was made by Mike Makuch and seconded by Pete Tanaka.

Pete commented that he would like to thank Superintendent Stevens and the BOE for taking seriously the BOF's request to come in as close to 0 as possible, since 1.1% is a phenomenal number. He asked if there is some way to fund that slightly differently by bringing that to 0 and replacing the funds with the non-lapsing funds that were returned last year, because he believes there is money there to do that and that would cause the MBR not to increase.

Superintendent Stevens confirmed with Donna that the BOE has to request funds from the non-lapsing fund. Donna confirmed and clarified that there has to be a Town Meeting to spend out of that fund and she's not sure you can use money from that fund on operating costs; it has to be used on Capital and Special Education.

Pete replied that a large part of the budget is Special Education and he doesn't see where \$100,000 is going to make a huge dent. He doesn't see the town not approving that money for Special Education and knows it's an extra step, but would like to see it to protect the town's finances.

Selectwoman Wiczenski commented that it's a slippery slope and is essentially using that money to offset a budget. Pete agreed, but gave the opinion that it's reasonable to do for one year using returned money from busses not running and other costs saved during the pandemic. Chairman Makuch expressed support for the goal, but wished the idea had come up in previous weeks of budget discussion.

Selectwoman Wiczenski recognized the concern for MBR and commented that there are things in the budget that are directly related to COVID. She shared that there is a bill that she testified in favor of that would prevent COVID expenses from being subject to MBR and increasing it, and there has been some bipartisan support on that. Nothing is finalized yet, but there is some momentum toward not making those expenses relatable to MBR. Pete replied that he appreciated that sentiment, but recalled the MBR being effected for previous situations such as the teacher's retirement after being told it wouldn't be.

Vote: 4 Yes (S. Summers, G. Prusak, C. Mailhos, M. Makuch), 2 No (M. Clark, P. Tanaka)
Motion passes.

Discussion was held on budget, applied fund balance, and mill rate scenarios. Chairman Makuch reviewed that the total budget of \$18,550,547 is a \$778,028, or 4.38%, increase over the current fiscal year, including the \$400,000 increase in Region 19. A proposed applied fund balance of \$700,000 would bring the reserve fund to 10.4% of the total budget.

CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence was forwarded to board members.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

Peter Latincsics of 97 Trask Rd. asked two questions: 1) what efforts are we making to have the public hearing and Town Meeting as in-person meetings, and 2) whether they are in-person or on zoom, can we have a budget presenter to present each budget, general government and education, formally, as that was helpful in the past to help townspeople understand the budget. He thinks it would be helpful to have more rather than less information and a comprehensive review of each budget at both meetings.

Chairman Makuch commented, regarding mode of meetings; we are anxiously awaiting Governor's directives. He feels we want to have this meeting in as many modes as possible because we want the broadest access for the taxpayer.

Superintendent Stevens stated: thank you for the support for the education budget. Shout-out to Donna, who has been down a person in her office and working very hard. During this time of all the extra work that she's done for COVID, she's not recognized for all the work she's done with all of the grants. I know how challenging it is to update all the numbers live. Kudos to Donna for keeping up, for all your work, and thank you for your support.

Ann Grosjean stated: I want to echo Superintendent Stevens's thanks for your support of our budget; we tried really hard to keep it down and really support that it was able to work.

GOOD & WELFARE

Chairman Makuch stated: I'd like to echo the thanks to Donna and everyone who has contributed – all budget submitters, all the members of the BOF. This is a difficult process. We're doing it a lot smoother than the past year because we've had a year of practice. A lot of thought went into all of this from all parties.

Pete Tanaka made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:53pm.

Geoff Prusak seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Marysa Semprebon
Recording Secretary

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WILLINGTON, CT.

2021 JUL 14 P 2:36


TOWN CLERK