

Town of Willington

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BOARD OF FINANCE

Regular Meeting Minutes
Via Public Online Video Conference

July 15, 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
Matt Clark
Lisa Woolf – Alternate

Members Absent:

Christina Mailhos
Brenda Abrams – Alternate

Also Present:

First Selectwoman Erika Wiecenski
Business Manager Donna Latinsics
Chief Alex Moore – Willington Fire Department #1
Katherine Viveiros – Chair, School Building Committee
Members of the Public

Chairman Mike Makuch called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

SEATING OF ALTERNATES

Stef Summers made a motion to seat Lisa Woolf for Christina Mailhos.

Mike Makuch seconded the motion.

**Vote: 5 Yes (M. Clark, P. Tanaka, S. Summers, G. Prusak, M. Makuch), 0 No
Motion passes.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Stef Summers made a motion to approve the special meeting minutes of March 23, 2021.

Geoff Prusak seconded the motion.

**Vote: 5 Yes (P. Tanaka, S. Summers, G. Prusak, L. Woolf, M. Makuch), 0 No, 1 Abstain
(M. Clark)
Motion passes.**

Stef Summers made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of May 20, 2021.

Mike Makuch seconded the motion.

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

Motion passes.

Pete Tanaka made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of June 17, 2021.

Stef Summers seconded the motion.

Vote: 5 Yes (G. Prusak, L. Woolf, P. Tanaka, S. Summers, M. Makuch), 0 No, 1 Abstain (M. Clark)

Motion passes.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

Peter Latincsics of 97 Trask Rd. stated: I wanted to address the board tonight on my concern regarding the school building roofs. These projects were approved quite some time ago and I was pleased when the Superintendent brought on board some professional assistance and was moving that project forward to be completed this summer. I learned at the BOE meeting that this project has now been suspended. The Superintendent also reported at that meeting that the school roofs are both leaking; not surprising with all the rain we've had, and that he would be contacting Manchester's Silktown Roofing for yet additional repairs to both roofs. This does not make a great deal of sense to me when the project was in progress, was scheduled for this summer, and the funds were approved by our town in Capital Projects, BOS, BOF, town approval, and town budget approval. I don't understand why we would not be proceeding and why we would jeopardize the integrity of the town's two biggest assets. I serve on the school building committee; we don't want to jeopardize any option dependent of the final course of action we take with the existing buildings we have, regardless of what they're ultimately used for. I would ask the BOF to review this issue and until it's resolved and we're on track for roofs on these buildings, as committed to by the townspeople, no additional Capital funds be released of any kind.

Jim Bulick of 12 Laurel Dr. stated: I'm echoing the same concerns that Peter had. I was the Chair of the BOF when we appropriated, at that time, funds to fix both roofs. I'm very surprised they haven't been acted upon and if anything that the project was totally put on hold here. I'm also strongly encouraging the board to please look into this, do a little due diligence and see what's going on.

Katherine Viveiros, Chair of the School Building Committee (SBC) stated: I would like to express my support; further down the agenda you'll be voting to appropriate funds for the school building committee, so this would be in direct response to comments about halting any Capital Improvement Project funds. I do not recommend that; I am here tonight to let you know as School Building Committee Chair, our committee has done quite a bit of work so far and we've come to a point where we need some professional assistance to do more research on the schools. In order for us to do that, we need the funding to do that. I ask the committee to please consider the vote that's going to be on the table tonight to appropriate funds for consulting services for the SBC which will allow us to continue our research; tap into the professional experts out there to

help us evaluate the existing schools and evaluate a possible new school. Without the appropriation of that fund, we're dead in the water at this moment. Please consider that tonight.

OLD BUSINESS

1) Public Health Crisis Update

a. General Update

No updated unemployment numbers were available at the time of the meeting.

b. FY21 June 2021 Treasurer's Revenue Report

Attachment #1

The board reviewed the revenue report, noting that the collection rate is statistically over 100%; interest and lien fees were above projected. Revenue that was down for the previous fiscal year included bank interest, licensing fees, and judicial fees. Revenue that was more than projected included permits, building fees, conveyance fees, the COVID grant, and town clerk fees. The result was a net gain on the budget of \$241,800.

c. Update on Federal Funding (American Rescue Plan)

Selectwoman Wiecenski shared that the town has received \$867,727.11. In approximately June 2022 the town will receive the next half. Funds must be encumbered by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026. The topic will be discussed more in specifically farther in the agenda.

2) FY21 Transfer for transfer station – adjustment

Chairman Makuch reviewed the memo: Last month, it was estimated that the Transfer Station budget would be short \$10,000 and the BOF approved a \$10,000 transfer. Now that all the invoices have been received for Bulk Waste Disposal and Trash Removal, the department will need another \$10,000.

- The adjusted budget for Bulk waste, 0351-523, was overspent by \$7,088.
- The adjusted budget for Trash removal, 0351-527, was overspent by \$2,038
- Legal is tracking to be underspent by \$10,000.

Clarification was made on transfer and appropriation statutes and limits.

Stef Summers asked if there would be ongoing problems with the Transfer Station functioning within the set budget amount. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that COVID led to typical trash and bulky waste numbers being at unanticipated levels, and that the same trend is being seen across many municipalities as people and families were home more this year, generating trash at home instead of at offices and at school. The numbers may continue to be different as people continue to work from home next year.

Stef asked if the plan would be to look for transfers to cover increases if the trend continues. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that an increase was applied and approved in the new fiscal year budget, but it's hard to tell what the trends will do.

Mike Makuch made a motion that the Board of Finance approves the transfer of \$10,000 from line item 0141 Town Counsel to line item 0351 Transfer Station.

Matt Clark seconded the motion.

Chairman Makuch asked if this would wrap up Fiscal Year 20-21. Donna Latinesics confirmed.

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

3) Ambulance Service to the Town of Union

Attachment #2

Chairman Makuch commented that based on things learned at the last meeting and feedback from the public since that meeting that he thinks the fact that he's associated with one of the fire departments in town is attracting attention and taking some of the attention off the topic. He announced that unless it's a clarification of fact or managing the agenda, he is not going to participate in this discussion tonight.

Pete Tanaka stated that he got the ambulance bullet points, which are all very valid, and has had a chance to talk to Roger Phillips, who is a Selectman in the town of Ashford as well as being a member of the Ashford Volunteer Fire Department. They are giving up the PSA for the Town of Eastford at Eastford's request because they were paying Ashford to hold their PSA and Eastford has since found that their costs have risen dramatically. At the last meeting, the BOF was led to believe Willington would still be the primary responder for Union whether we hold the PSA or not. As it turns out, Ashford is no longer a responder to the town of Eastford.

Pete continued that it seems to him that the economics of holding a PSA are being looked at backwards. The PSA has been presented as an economic good that we wanted to have in order to offset the budget, but it's not our job to collect as many PSAs as possible, it's the Town of Union's job to find someone to take it. A PSA is something that, if you're not providing it yourself, you're going to have to pay someone else to provide it. Pete doesn't see where we should be taking it, thinking we are making revenue from it. He thinks we should seriously consider following up on this and finding out what the true cost of holding a PSA is. It's a cost to hold a PSA, not a payment.

Stef summarized that the cost that the Willington taxpayer is sustaining is quite large; 73% of the cost of operating the ambulance overall, according to numbers provided to the BOF. The trend is skyrocketing costs of ambulance operation in any town and the fact that salaries are going up everywhere. In Willington since 2007, a year before the PSA was entered into, the ambulance payroll has tripled from \$200,000 to \$600,000. There are a lot of factors in all of that and nothing is as simple as it seems when you're looking at total numbers, but she does think there's an issue with what's happening to the Willington taxpayer, because who gets ambulance coverage without paying for it in their town? She looked into the details of ambulance services in Connecticut, and there are very few towns, if any, who hold the PSA over another town; she doesn't think they're unpaid, but she'd like to hear about it if there are. Healthcare and ambulance costs are off the charts for many reasons, but Willington can't just cut the budget, tighten our belts, and be nice about it.

Chief Alex Moore commented that the budget increase is due to the fact that they went from two people working 10-hour days to two people working 24 hours/day, 7 days/week around 2010. The payroll doubled but so did staffing hours, adding holidays.

The board reviewed Attachment 2. Board members thanked Stef for putting the document together, commenting that it was very helpful.

Chief Moore commented, regarding the Eastford PSA, the difference is in the different communication centers. Tolland County Mutual Aid Fire Service is Willington's dispatch center, who dispatches Willington, Union, Stafford, Mansfield, and Ashford. Quinebaug Valley dispatches for Eastford, so they're now using KB Ambulance service, who is covering around 4 towns with one ambulance. Ashford still does go to Eastford, not as often as they used to, but Eastford is now relying on Woodstock, etc. The closest ambulance isn't always going to the call, which isn't beneficial.

Lisa Woolf asked if it was possible that, though Union makes up 10% of calls, the costs to serve those calls could be above 10% of the total ambulance cost due to the fact that they are bigger emergencies, the costs of which they may not be able to recoup. Chief Moore replied that they are legally only allowed to bill to a certain amount.

Lisa asked how they categorize the loss when doing an expensive call, if they are only allowed to bill to a certain rate. Chief Moore replied that it is hard to do, because it takes a month to find out what the bill is, and people take 6-8 months to pay their bills.

Lisa commented that some people don't pay at all because a public service is supposed to rely on tax dollars coming in, which aren't coming in from Union. Chief Moore replied that that does not necessarily have to be the case, but is how it's set up here.

Matt asked if there has been an analysis of the difference in bad debt between Willington and Union. Chief Moore replied that the collection rate in Union is higher than it is in Willington.

Pete commented that the BOF has heard that part of the benefit of having two full-time ambulance staff on duty 24/7 is that they can be first to the scene for fire calls with fire equipment. As a result, part of the cost of those salaries probably should maybe be absorbed by the town fire service, though he recognized there's probably no way to figure out exactly how much. However, he still thinks \$0 from Union doesn't cover it.

Stef replied that the only paid staff Willington has in emergency services is the ambulance crew. They may be doing firefighting work and be first on the scene, but there are no paid fire chiefs.

Wording of the bullet points was discussed.

Chief Moore asked if Chairman Makuch was able to arrange anything with the First Selectman in Union. Chairman Makuch responded that since the item was tabled at the last meeting with no specific direction given, nothing happened in between.

a. CCM research report

Attachment #3

The board reviewed the document.

Matt commented that he didn't see anything reflected in the document like our situation where a town was receiving ambulance service from another town and not paying any portion of it.

Chief Moore commented that the report doesn't reflect anything like Willington or Union where Union has 600 residents; the size of those towns is much larger than what we're dealing with.

Matt brought up the fact that he's seeing other small towns are paying a lot less than \$600,000 for ambulance service and wondered if the BOF should be discussing that.

Lisa agreed and commented that a private ambulance company has to be self-sustaining, so is better at collecting revenue and streamlining their costs. They also cover a lot of businesses besides municipalities and just have a greater hold on the emergency industry.

Stef commented that Union has Bigelow Hollow; between that and the highway, that's half the calls in Union. Bigelow Hollow has seen a lot more activity from people coming in to that state park. She thinks Union gets pilot money for that state park, though not a huge amount. Lisa suggested some of that money could be transferred.

b. Continued Discussion

Stef commented that she thinks the BOF should continue the conversation, because the crucial thing is to get the parties around the table. It should include WFD#1, BOS representative, BOF representative, and the First Selectman of the Town of Union. No-one is concluding anything yet, but it doesn't feel like something that should continue without a good exchange about what is and what should be.

Matt agreed, commenting that all towns pay something for ambulance service except for Union.

Stef Summers made a motion that the Board of Finance pursue setting up a special meeting with the First Selectman of Union and representatives from Willington Selectmen, WFD#1 officials, and Willington Board of Finance.

Lisa Woolf seconded the motion.

Vote: 5 Yes (G. Prusak, P. Tanaka, L. Woolf, S. Summers, M. Clark), 0 No, 1 Abstain (M. Makuch)

Motion passes.

Logistics of setting up the meeting were discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

1) ARPA Fund Appropriation

Selectwoman Wicewski summarized that the BOS approved to expend certain American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. She recognized that there was an error made in the final amount that the BOS approved, but not in the individual project funds; if approved by BOF tonight, the motion

will be amended at Monday's BOS meeting. The requested appropriation of \$123,500 in ARPA funds will go toward the following projects:

- \$25,500 to completion of meeting room equipment – outfitting upstairs room with microphones and speakers in the event of hybrid meetings
- \$3,000 for additional hybrid meeting equipment for smaller meeting rooms – Owl camera system and possibly some equipment shared with the BOE which will arrive sooner that was purchased with separate funds
- \$57,500 for cleaning of the basement and pouring of the concrete floor – this is in the area where they have had issues with mold and will free up funds in LoCIP
- \$35,000 for air conditioning replacement of all 4 units at the senior center
- \$2,500 for additional air purifiers for the Town Office Building

Mike Makuch made a motion to recommend that the Board of Selectmen call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$123,500 from the American Rescue Plan fund for the purpose of air conditioning replacement at the senior center at \$35,000; remote and hybrid meeting room equipment at \$28,500; Town Office Building cleaning and concrete at \$57,500; Town Office Building purifiers \$2,500.

Stef Summers seconded the motion.

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

2) ARPA Fund Committee Representative

Selectwoman Wiczenski detailed that a working group is being assembled to bring forth projects and potential uses for ARPA funds including revenue loss. She anticipates this group bringing forward larger projects including making sure the priority for the Selectmen is helping individuals and small businesses to begin with. The working group will consist of a member representing the Economic Development and Planning and Zoning Commissions, a Board of Finance representative, the Human Services director, and First Selectwoman Wiczenski.

Pete Tanaka nominated Matt Clark to the ARPA Fund Committee.

Lisa Woolf seconded the nomination.

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

3) School Building Committee – Consultant Funds Appropriation

Katherine Viveiros, Chair of the School Building Committee (SBC), explained that the SBC needs funds to hire professional consultants so that it can take the next steps in the process, whether that is for a new school or evaluating the existing schools. They would hire an Owner's Project Manager and any other consultants that were needed as part of the process. The process is lengthy, has multiple layers, and there are many items that have to happen at the same time. This does not determine that the SBC is going in one direction or the other, but rather to help define what direction to go.

Chairman Makuch shared that, as the BOF representative to the SBC, a time-sensitive example of what this will allow the SBC to do, as it wrestles with multiple layers of what direction this project may go, is to look at whether the land we are on already is appropriate, if there is other

land the town owns that is appropriate, or if there is land that is on the market that is appropriate. One thing that would happen in short order is that a consultant might be brought in to do an initial evaluation of land; e.g. what are the wetland concerns of the lot that HMS is currently on. That is all part of helping the SBC decide what direction to go; regardless of the end option, they need to start studying what can be done.

Stef Summers made a motion that the Board of Finance recommends that the Board of Selectmen call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$100,000 from the Reserve Fund 04-4041 to allow the building committee to hire the necessary consultants to pursue the building of a preschool through eighth-grade school.

Lisa Woolf seconded the motion.

Matt stated that he was extremely disappointed by the SBC meeting as the appropriation of money for consultants was not an agenda item in that meeting. The SBC discussed that it was not an agenda item at the meeting and decided not to move forward with going to the BOF. Then the SBC went into executive session and immediately upon coming out of the executive session, there was a motion to approach the BOF for consultants. He doesn't know what changed in the executive session, but he doesn't think it's appropriate for committees in Willington to be not letting people know when they're going to be making decisions to spend money without the agenda item saying they're going to be discussing it. He urged the SBC to go back, have another meeting, put it on the agenda, and give notice to people that it will be discussed.

Stef noted that these funds were part of the CIP process in the budget that was passed. She doesn't think the issue itself and the nearness of needing to appropriate this money should be a surprise to anyone. It has been discussed in many meetings during the budget process, in CIP, and in other meetings. She understands what Matt is saying in terms of protocol and can't speak to the specific situation as she wasn't at the meeting, but does feel the need to move forward on this. We got a slow start in getting the SBC up and running and doesn't see any reason to put the brakes on the process, especially when a competent Chair has asked them to do this.

Pete echoed Matt's concern over the SBC meeting. He commented that if a committee is going to talk about asking for a \$100,000 appropriation, it has to warn the town before the meeting, not during the meeting. When the initial Town Meeting was held, townspeople were most assured they would have plenty of notification before there was any spending of money, that all that was being done was looking into it at this point and that anything would come to a town vote. He understands that's what's being discussed, but he doesn't think it came to the BOF appropriately.

Chairman Makuch commented that he understands how it appears a little out of order, but having the purview of participating in the executive session as the BOF representative, in an appropriate way of running a meeting, the executive session begot the recommendation to the SBC for the appropriation. He believes that the process is proper.

Pete commented that non-members not having the purview of being in the executive session is exactly the reason for the executive session.

Chairman Makuch further clarified that when the topic came up earlier in the agenda it was deemed to be out of meeting order; it came up because someone was making sure the motion got done. The SBC couldn't make that motion because it wasn't on the agenda because it was something that would potentially derive out of the executive session, which is what happened. As has been discussed with other motions like this one to the BOS, the BOF recommend that the BOS call a Town Meeting so the townspeople can talk about it, the BOF is not spending any money tonight.

Matt agreed that this has happened before in other situations and commented that the people of Willington should be able to have their say and be warned in every step along the process that money is going to be spent – at the committee level, at the BOF, and at the Town Meeting.

Chairman Makuch noted that townspeople were properly notified of this BOF meeting.

Stef commented that, while Chairman Makuch gave the example of the land, she is sure there are other items that are time sensitive on occasion, which is all the more reason the town shouldn't slow-walk it.

Matt asked about the reason for the executive session. Chairman Makuch replied that the reason can't be shared, which is the reason for an executive session.

Matt commented that there must be a reason for it and that something is being kept from the people of Willington. Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that the item on the SBC agenda was "Executive Session to Review the Site for Potential Land Acquisition". Out of that discussion, which cannot be detailed, led the motion that the BOF received from Katherine to ask the BOF to appropriate the dollars to go to Town Meeting and why those would be used. They can't speak about the potential land acquisition.

She continued, explaining that a motion cannot be made in executive session; that would be hiding everything from the townspeople. There are reasons why certain things are in executive session, and then you come out and can make motions. If the BOF appropriates dollars, the townspeople are called forth to talk about what we would use those funds for, but it still wouldn't talk about what was discussed in executive session, as that is privileged, but it is an opportunity for the townspeople to vote as to whether or not to give that money.

Matt stated that he finds this surreal. He has attended approximately half of the SBC meetings and has given his opinion that the result of the SBC should be two options for the people of Willington to choose between.

Selectwoman Wiczenski replied that these funds will get the SBC to those options to bring to the townspeople. No decision has been made as to how it will be presented. That's the SBC's job and they need assistance with it from these consultants.

Lisa commented that people are appointed to committees because others entrust them because they're all actively involved in the town. At some point, you have to go with that. The other part is that this conversation has been going on all year and there's nothing that's really hidden.

Matt asked who the consultants are and what they'll be doing. Chairman Makuch replied that there has been no opportunity to do a proposal or hiring until there's approval to get the funds. There will be some sort of municipally-compliant purchasing process; some consultants are potentially accessible through preapproved purchasing agreements already and some will have to be put out through some sort of a public bid or proposal process.

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

Pete commented that he would like to see an agenda for the SBC mention that they're going to be voting on \$100,000. He would also like to see a bullet point list on the types of consultants the SBC is considering hiring. If they can't hire consultants without a consultant, then perhaps it can start with a much lower dollar amount. The sunk costs into this project start driving it in one direction or the other and he doesn't think the SBC needs \$100,000 to decide what it needs for consultants.

Chairman Makuch replied that while some of the comments are in order, he is not sure that the BOF has the right to direct another town committee on how they hold their meeting. Pete replied that that is fine, but he is letting them know what they'll have to do to get his 'yes' vote. \$100,000 is a lot of money if we don't even know what we're spending it on and he needs something more solid than "assorted consultants".

Stef commented that the program was submitted to CIP and there are specifics in the program request for that which can be reviewed. The request is not saying the SBC is going to spend \$100,000 out of the chute; rather that it's a pot of money to appropriate for a variety of consultants that may be needed throughout this process. She recalled that this is exactly what the town did for UnWillington – put a certain appropriation aside to hire consultants. There was a steering committee, not all the funds were spent, and it went very smoothly. Committees don't even necessarily know what they'll need expertise for. It's not like this project is unknown, and what's being discussed is a Town Meeting and letting the people of the town vote on whether they think this is a reasonable appropriation.

The role of the BOF was discussed.

Mike Makuch made a motion that the Board of Finance recommends that the Board of Selectmen call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$30,000 from the Reserve Fund 04-4041 to allow the building committee to hire the necessary consultants to pursue the building of a preschool through eighth-grade school.

Stef Summers seconded the motion.

Wording of the motion was clarified, as it legally has to match the defined charge of the School Building Committee and comes directly from the CIP request. Matt expressed that he wished the language was more inclusive of renovation.

Stef asked if Chairman Makuch had a specific reason for proposing \$30,000. Chairman Makuch replied that the amount gives the SBC the opportunity to get started. The SBC had stuff to

discuss in executive session that is about doing some of the early learning about some of the directions that are available, such as wetlands restrictions of the HMS property. If this is pushed off to another school building committee meeting, then back to BOF and out to the town, there are a few weeks of time lost. The SBC is trying to keep moving forward. It will have to present something very detailed to the townspeople and they're going to have to discuss what options they have recommendations for based on some very factual data if they're asking people to spend money, and they want to get moving it. For example, if there was a piece of land that the town decided they were interested in, time is of the essence in how you pursue land or negotiate on property. If the SBC is going to ask people to spend money, they need to tell them why it's a good idea.

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

4) Treasurer position discussion

Chairman Makuch summarized that there has been discussion about how or whether Willington remakes the Treasurer position. He gave his opinion that the Treasurer is critical in the BOF's work.

Pete stated that the town Treasurer and the job they do is vital to this board. There's been a lot of discussion on how the position can and should change. He thinks that a representative is needed to discuss it so that the BOF sees it coming. He asked where the job description is coming from and if the BOF can help inform that.

Selectwoman Wicewski shared that the BOS is still working on creating a new position in the finance office and haven't finalized the job description of the Assistant Business Manager. It will take away the duties that this board has discussed separating from the Treasurer. The new position will also create additional layers to the finance office in the event that someone is out; every position in that office is a single point of failure right now. The new position will help address that as well as helping to address the accounting items that fell under the Treasurer's position which should be separate. They aren't looking at changing, but making sure that the discussion that began some time ago can actually happen and that a finance office position is created to do the finance side. As a result, the Treasurer stipend would be decreased.

Pete agreed with Selectwoman Wicewski on the motivation for changing the positions and asked that the BOF have some input prior to the finalization of these job descriptions.

Stef asked for brief background of the issue. Chairman Makuch explained that there has been a lot of discussion in recent years about single points of failure, definition of duties, and creating checks and balances within the finance office. He echoed that the BOF would like Selectwoman Wicewski to return before the job descriptions are released so the BOF can participate and understand what the changes are that are being made.

Selectwoman Wicewski replied that the new position being created will be discussed at the next BOS meeting. They are not creating or changing the Treasurer job description, just making sure the duties are separate, e.g. making sure the person who is entering items isn't the same person

reconciling the accounts, which the current model doesn't allow for. Creating the new position also allows them to be sure that we have someone in that role with the skill set to be doing those jobs. This will minimize the work of the Treasurer to what it should be. The Treasurer job description is determined by state statute, not the town of Willington, so the required items will not change. The new job description will have to go through the union, as it would be a union position in town, so it won't be the BOF or the BOS that has the final say.

Stef asked what the key responsibility or series of responsibilities of the Treasurer as detailed in the statute. Selectwoman Wiczenski replied that she didn't have it readily available, but that Willington's Treasurer is currently doing way more. For years the auditors have been telling us that we should be changing the way this business is conducted. The current setup requires the creation of the additional staff member, which will create additional layers of protection in the finance office in the event that someone is out or injured. The Treasurer will no longer be doing all of the revenue pieces that take place in the finance office.

Geoff commented that the town has had a hard enough time getting people to run in a regular position, and the Treasurer has had to have a specific skillset; as things get complex with municipal finance, it becomes harder and harder to maintain not just a competent person, but a person at all in that position.

Selectwoman Wiczenski agreed and detailed that the Treasurer is a department head of its own separate department and an elected position so there is no requirement of hours, and the town has been asking them to do finance department work. It's important to separate those items out.

Stef asked if there has been any discussion about going to a full professional position instead of an elected Treasurer, as she's seen how hard it's been for parties to find a candidate to run for an office requiring so much professional knowledge. Selectwoman Wiczenski replied that they have discussed that a little bit but that the Selectmen felt it was important to keep the Treasurer as an elected office. Regardless, it is still necessary to have two different individuals for separation of those duties. The overall work they are proposing for the Treasurer will be many fewer hours per week and the stipend would be considerably less to match that amount of time.

Lisa asked if shifting the revenue to the non-elected position allows them to find the talent necessary. Selectwoman Wiczenski confirmed and commented that it is easier to hire someone with the skillset than to find someone in town who has the ability to perform within the financial world.

5) Meeting delivery method

Attachment #4

The Board discussed the options made available in the memo. Board members expressed support for meeting in person again whenever possible, and recognized that online meetings have provided the public with greater options to participate.

Mike Makuch made a motion that the Board of Finance uses the hybrid method for future meetings until further notice.

Stef Summers seconded the motion.

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

The board reached consensus that board members will do their best to attend meetings in person.

Selectwoman Wiecenski commented that the BOF should be able to hold its next meeting in the one hybrid-outfitted room in the TOB. If the funds requested tonight through ARPA pass Town Meeting they will be purchasing items to outfit the smaller rooms.

CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence was forwarded to board members.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

Pete Tanaka requested that a discussion of the roofs at the schools be added to next month's meeting agenda. From what he understands from the BOE meeting, both school roofs are leaking. We have appropriated money for that and he would like a discussion on it.

Selectwoman Wiecenski stated: I am disappointed that this board declined to move forward a discussion to the townspeople and Town Meeting for a CIP project for the SBC so they can work to bring informed choices to the town. I heard members of this board talk about feeling like the public was left out of the discussion. You just took the discussion right away from townspeople and Town Meeting is where they could talk about their uses and their concerns for information on the SBC and what they might be using those funds for.

Elaine Newcomb stated: I concur with what Selectwoman Wiecenski just said, but I come at it from a little different direction. Stef mentioned 'the BOF recommends the BOS to call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$100,000 to pursue building of a K-8 school'. It doesn't seem like there's a broad look. When we had that meeting in January 2020 it was a different world than it is now. Apparently there is some land being considered. It's like when your house isn't working for you anymore and you say "are we going to remodel or are we going to go out and build a new house?" The first thing you assess is the resources and the amount of commitment you're willing to take on. At that meeting, there was more than one opinion. I really would like to feel that if the town is going to spend money looking at the options that it's a fair look at options and people understand what kind of commitment they may be looking at. We're a small town. I've read about the push by the state for regionalizing things. There was a very clear article in the Courant 4-5 months ago about how they weren't going to consider anything for towns less than 25,000 people and with a regionalized approach. We don't have any kind of assurance that we're going to get the kind of reimbursement that some people might be thinking of. The reimbursement, as I understand the presentation that Mr. Acosta did, will not include land. I think we need to have some real thought and discussion as to what track to go down and not spend money that winds up not being productive.

Superintendent Stevens stated: I wanted to echo what Selectwoman Wiecenski said, but I also wanted to add that this went through the BOF and voters already, and went through the voters at a Town Meeting. To not pass something that is an appointed committee's job to do was disappointing. I think the thing that I was most disappointed about, is any time you get something that's passed and then we don't hear feedback about how to move forward, that's frustrating. The taxpayers approved \$100,000 for consultants, you heard tonight some of the examples of what those consultants would be, yet it didn't go to Town Meeting, yet there was no suggestion of where to go. Even though I was disappointed when Chairman Makuch said \$30,000, I thought that would be a no-brainer, and it wasn't. I'm curious to know what you're sending back to the SBC, because you just said no. The questions you had about how the money is going to be spent, you got the list tonight.

Chairman Makuch made a clarifying comment; I think there is a misunderstanding about the land. State reimbursement money will reimburse, within their parameters and what they will review and approve, for land costs. It's not true that they won't reimburse land costs, it's just something they review. If you want to buy a huge piece, they may say they'll only reimburse on a portion they feel is reasonable.

Pete Tanaka clarified that in order to vote yes on the request from the SBC, he would like it announced they'd be asking for money on an agenda, and he wants to have a clearer understanding of where the money is going because "assorted consultants" is not clear enough.

Stef Summers stated: I feel there has been quite a bit of process on this SBC decision, and I do feel they're working hard to consider all options. I am really disappointed because the discussion on that was mostly about the sum being asked for and the process of a certain meeting. The sum seemed to be the sticking point and I feel like it would've been good faith and a positive message to the people on the SBC and to the townspeople that we don't just want to be obstructionists and to keep the process moving ahead by going with a much smaller amount.

GOOD & WELFARE

Chairman Makuch thanked people for participating and working hard to try to do good things for the town. He hoped everybody is well and no-one's basements are flooded.

Stef commented that they may have broken ground on the Love's Truck Stop. Chairman Makuch responded that he saw signs going up, but hadn't heard about groundbreaking yet.

Pete Tanaka made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:10pm.

Matt Clark seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Marysa Semprebon
Recording Secretary

TOWN OF WILLINGTON
STATEMENT OF REVENUES - GENERAL FUND
For the Month Ending June 30, 2021

month with changing MTD column formula on this page month letter from next page (ie, Z35 to AA35)	thru 6/30/2021	Month 12		Variance	% Received
	*MTD	YTD	TOTAL	Favorable	
	Actual	Actual	Budget	(Unfavorable)	
PROPERTY TAXES					
Taxes	17,752	13,221,825	13,212,171	9,654	100%
Interest and lien fees	2,750	62,593	30,000	32,593	209%
Total property taxes	\$ 20,501.45	\$ 13,284,418	\$ 13,242,171	\$ 42,247	100%
INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVENUES					
Education					
Education cost sharing	-	3,460,285	3,273,419	186,866	106%
Noneducation					
State property reimbursement	-	24,965	24,965	-	100%
Disability reimbursement	-	763	700	63	109%
Pequot funds	5,800	17,399	17,399	-	100%
Additional veteran's exemption	-	660	500	160	132%
COVID Grants	-	12,913	-	12,913	#DIV/0!
FEMA Planning Grant	-	-	3,000	(3,000)	0%
Judicial fines	-	2,670	15,000	(12,330)	18%
Town aid roads: improved & unimproved	-	258,989	258,347	642	100%
MRSA Municipal Projects	20,018	20,018	20,018	-	100%
Total intergovernmental revenues	\$ 25,818	\$ 3,798,662	\$ 3,613,348	\$ 185,314	105%
INVESTMENT INCOME	\$ 458	\$ 7,231	\$ 75,000	\$ (67,769)	10%
LICENSES, FEES AND PERMITS					
Building fees and permits	7,496	236,354	50,000	186,354	473%
Zoning fees and permits	235	4,228	10,000	(5,772)	42%
Zoning board of appeals	-	-	500	(500)	0%
Inland/wetland fees	-	1,606	3,500	(1,894)	46%
Conveyance tax	4,481	52,051	29,000	23,051	179%
Permits - bingo, pistol, etc.	350	6,610	2,000	4,610	331%
Town clerk fees	4,751	36,925	22,000	14,925	168%
Town clerk LOCIP fees	303	1,692	1,500	192	113%
Transfer station fees	1,016	9,191	9,000	191	102%
Reimbursement - recycling	136	4,122	3,500	622	118%
Total licenses, fees and permits	\$ 18,768	\$ 352,778	\$ 131,000	\$ 221,778	269%
MISCELLANEOUS					
Telecommunications grant	-	8,654	8,000	654	108%
Other (includes FY21-22 Advanced)	2,697	45,078	30,000	15,078	150%
Total miscellaneous	\$ 2,697	\$ 53,732	\$ 38,000	\$ 15,732	141%
DESIGNATION OF FUND BALANCE	\$ -	-	673,000	-	
Subtotal Revenue	\$ 68,242.43	\$ 17,496,821.21	\$ 17,772,519	\$ 397,302	98%
Minus Advanced Collection (FY 21-22) (in "Other")	(1,745)	(10,811)		(10,811)	
FY 20-21 Revenue	66,497	17,486,010		386,491	

Compiled by Stephanie Summers

Ambulance Service to Union bullet points

ISSUE SUMMARY: In 2008, Willington Fire Department No. 1 and the town of Union entered into a state Primary Service Area agreement committing the Willington Ambulance to be the primary responder to all emergency medical calls in Union. The result was also to commit Willington taxpayers to cover the cost of the service not covered by individual health insurance, roughly three-fourths of the total cost. The taxpayers of Union have not contributed to this cost but have received ambulance coverage gratis from Willington for 13 years.

Background

- The Willington fire departments and ambulance participate in a mutual aid program with all local towns providing service, inbound and/or outbound, as needed. There is no exchange of funds as it is a reasonably fair "give and take" from department to department.
- Willington Fire Department (aka Willington Fire Department No. 1 or WFD1) provides the ambulance service to the entire town of Willington, via a State of Connecticut designation of responsibility, often referred to as a "PSA" or Primary Service Area.
- Uniquely, Willington Fire Dept. No. 1 also provides the ambulance service to the entire town of Union via a State of Connecticut designation of primary responsibility under the PSA pact. Ten percent of WFD1's ambulance calls go to Union.
- This is not by mutual aid since Union doesn't have an ambulance, but by primary obligation for Willington to cover Union.
- The PSA agreement was made in 2008, by the then Fire Chief of WFD1 without input by town officials.
- Union, which includes Bigelow Hollow State Park and Mashapaug Lake, is a 15-minute drive from Willington and is abutted by Stafford, Willington's northeast tip, Ashford, Eastford and Woodstock. It is 12 miles from Harrington Hospital in Southbridge and 20 from Johnson Memorial in Stafford.
- As allowed by state law, ambulance transports – regardless of where they originate – prompt a bill to the patient seeking some recovery of costs not covered by insurance. This happens in both mutual aid and PSA scenarios.
- Ambulance costs have been rising sharply everywhere due to reduced Medicare/Medicaid payouts that also drive down insurance coverage rates; increased payrolls; more expensive equipment, such as hydraulic cots and mechanical heart-resuscitation devices; vehicle purchase, repairs and maintenance; and required supplies such as EpiPens and drug overdose antidotes that need regular replacement.

Cost Analysis

- WFD1 ambulance service is anticipated to cost about \$657,000 in FY22, minus \$175,000 offset (\$145,000 in estimated revenue from billing and \$30,000 from cellphone tower rental of town-owned land at WFD1). This leaves a net cost of \$482,000 (73% of the total) to be covered by taxpayers.
- The vast majority of skyrocketing ambulance costs in Willington are due to payroll. Several years ago, WFD1 increased its ambulance staff from 2 to 4. Since 2007, the town's ambulance payroll has almost tripled (\$209,400 -> \$591,035).
- The town's emergency services payroll is largely due to ambulance service. (The Fire Marshal and Emergency Management Director receive preset amounts.) Willington Hill FD and WFD1 draw on unpaid volunteers only for fire calls and to augment on emergency medical calls.
- The ambulance responds to about 800 ambulance calls per year, with about 80 being calls to Union.
- The 10% of calls to Union produces about 10% of the billing revenue, leaving 10% of the projected net cost – about \$48,200 annually – to the Willington taxpayers.

— Willington Board of Finance
July 15, 2021

Municipal Ambulance Services Survey Update 2021

Municipality	Response
Ansonia	Ambulance is a city department. City pays all fees and collects all revenue.
Plainville	The Town of Plainville continues to work with AMR. For FY22 the Town budgeted and paid \$15,956.
Bloomfield	Town pays American Medical Response (AMR) one set fee via contract. Town collects all ambulance fees and revenue throughout the year.
Berlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Berlin has a contract with Hunter Ambulance service. • Our EMS contract with Hunters for 21-22 is \$359,557.00. • Current year EMS contract is \$349,084. • No capital expenditures."

2016 responses from Towns that did not respond to 2021 survey:

Municipality	Response
East Haven	"We do not operate an ambulance service but we do respond as the sole town medical responder supplemented by a commercial ambulance vendor to perform the transport function. Thus we do not have a direct avenue to invoice for services rendered as would a town that provides transport with a town fire department staffed and equipped vehicle. We do respond as the first responder with both career firefighter staff supplemented by members from the volunteer portion of our combination department. Our personnel costs are shared

	<p>between fire department duties and medical response duties with most career firefighters trained to EMT level at a minimum. We also respond at the ALS level which is a considerable additional expenditure in personnel costs as well as equipment and supplies. We operate 2 ALS rescue units which at a minimum are staffed with one paramedic and one EMT. The training costs to maintain the paramedics licenses entail over 40 hours of pay per year, \$150 per annual license, in our case > \$5,000 annual stipend per paramedic. We currently operate with 16 paramedics in the field. Our annual medical supply budget is currently \$30,000 and this does not usually suffice. Every medication change dictated to sponsor hospital and protocol change usually requires a different drug, device, or training often beyond the standard training hours. There are required medications and equipment that need to be carried on every ALS unit, all which have expiration dates and need to be kept current even when not frequently utilized.</p> <p>Base pay for a firefighter/medic in our region is approximately \$60k annually and with health/benefit rates at 70% additional cost on that base pay.</p> <p>Our annual call volume for medical calls is 4500 to 5000.</p> <p>If an ambulance system set up for billing you can figure 8-10% in billing costs, licensing, etc.</p> <p>In order to defray some our costs for our operation we participate in a "bundle billing agreement" with our transport vendor which nets us about \$ 70 per call when we assist in to the hospitals with a Medicare patient as Medicare will pay only one pre-hospital provider.</p> <p>We have another billing system where we employ our own vendor that bills for paramedic assist to the hospital fees when</p>
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	<p>the commercial ambulance arrives on scene minus a paramedic which if an ALS call requires the treating medic from the FD to continue ALS service until delivery of the patient to the hospital. This is a fee that would normally be charged to the patient or patients insurance by the transport provider who still bills for the BLS ambulance service but the difference to an ALS transport is now billed by us when our personnel are utilized. We had to get town approval at all levels and become licensed with the state in order to do this. It does net in excess of \$20k average annually. “</p>
Ridgefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire and Ambulance are combined and the Fire Dept staff performs both functions. • The cost of the Fire Dept is about \$4.2M per year (not counting benefits), and we generate about \$800K in ambulance revenues. • Capital requests for things like new ambulances go through the normal capital budget process, like any other departmental request.
Wethersfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide a building for the volunteer ambulance company in Wethersfield, which is maintained with funds from rent payments. • The WVAA also reimburses the Town for utilities and other maintenance items (exterminator, etc.) • We budget \$23,000 in our operating budget for the \$1,000 stipends paid to volunteers annually.
South Windsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On January 13, 2014 the South Windsor Town Council approved a resolution to have the Ambulance Service of Manchester, LLC (ASM) be

	<p>the advanced life support and basic life support provider for the Town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This service is provided at no cost to the town. • ASM bills the service recipient or their insurance company for the service. • The vehicles are not housed in the town, • South Windsor is not responsible for replacement/payment for any equipment.
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2009 responses from Towns that did not respond to 2021 survey:

Municipality	Response
Monroe	Bid out, but they do not have their last request for proposal. Monroe pays AMR an intercept fee and pays for two employees 6 days a week. Monroe collects all revenue for ambulance services.
Killingly	Killingly does not bid out. Town pays an annual appropriation to a private ambulance company, but the company pays its own fees and collects its own revenue for ambulance services.
Montville	No bid. Private ambulance company handles its own fees and revenue.

**Town of Willington
40 Old Farms Rd
Willington, CT 06279**

Memo

To: All Willington Town Boards, via Chairs and Vice-Chairs

From: Erika G Wiczenski, First Selectman and Robin Campbell Town Clerk 

cc: Philip Stevens, Superintendent of Public Schools,
Department Heads and Administrative Staff the support Town Boards

Date: June 23, 2021

Re: Executive Order 7B Expiration, and subsequent Implementer Bill Provisions

Background

We have been operating remote public meetings under the Governor's Executive Order (EO) 7B for 15 months now, and the Town of Willington has been able to successfully adapt to this method during this time. However, EO 7B is set to expire on June 30, 2021, and we now find ourselves with decisions on how best to conduct public meetings moving forward.

July 1, 2021

With the expiring 7B EO, the initial thought was that the Town would revert back to pre-COVID-19 "in-person" public meetings, being held in public venues; and we were not sure whether remote meetings would be permissible after June 30.

However, last week, State Senate Bill 1202, also known as the "Implementer Bill", passed the Legislature and today was signed by the Governor. This new law does in fact give public agencies, beginning July 1, 2021 and **until April 30, 2022**, and the ability to hold meetings accessible to the public by means of electronic equipment or hybrid, meaning in-person and by means of electronic equipment. The Implementer Bill can be viewed at the following link, with relevant sections around lines 6650 and 7006:

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/TOB/S/PDF/2021SB-01202-R00-SB.PDF>

After consultation with the Town Attorney, it was determined that the Town, The Board of Selectmen nor the First Selectman can mandate to any other Town Board in which manner it will conduct its meetings, so long as it complies with FOIA and the measures in the new Implementer Bill.

Thus, each Town Board/Commission will have to post a meeting to decide which way it wishes to conduct its business for the time period of July 1, 2021 through at least April 30, 2022 when the Implementer Bill initially expires. **I would recommend that all Town Boards post a remote meeting using Zoom sometime in the next few weeks to gather virtually, and discuss what it would prefer to do.** Again, the three choices are 1) holding a meeting in person (like pre-COVID), 2) Fully remote (solely by electronic means), or 3) Hybrid (combined in-person and remote).

A few items to note as Boards look to make their decisions:

1. Per the Implementer Bill: In the event a regular meeting is being held solely by electronic means, if a member of the public makes a written request to the agency not less than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting, the agency must make available to that member of the public a physical location and the electronic equipment necessary to allow them to attend in real time and the same opportunity to participate and comment, as applicable, if the meeting were held in person. However, the agency is not required to adjourn or postpone the meeting if the member of the public loses their connection to the meeting, or it otherwise becomes degraded or interrupted.

What this means: If a Board is having a purely remote meeting and someone requests to be accommodated; the Board would have to make arrangements to find a location and equipment to view and participate in the remote meeting. This option would most likely have a cost impact, whether it be for the technology used to view the meeting or the staff time to oversee the location the accommodation is taking place.

2. Any agency that conducts an in-person only meeting shall provide members of the agency the opportunity to participate by means of electronic equipment. However, the agency is not required to adjourn or postpone the meeting if the member of the agency loses their connection to the meeting or it otherwise becomes degraded or interrupted, unless the presence of such member is required to maintain a quorum

What this means: If you are holding an in-person meeting, a member of that board may request an electronic accommodation to that that meeting and if the member has technology issues and becomes interrupted, the board may continue the meeting without that member unless needed for a quorum. This does not extend to members of the public, but just to those on the board to participate remotely and it does not intend to make the meeting hybrid. There is no language in the law that stipulates this but it would be helpful to have a policy in place to have a timeframe by which this request can be made so proper arrangements can be prepared.

Currently, The Town Office Building only has one room with a TV screen/computer/camera set up in the upstairs Common Room that can accommodate remote participants. We anticipate that there will be conflicts with use of this room, no doubt, and procuring the funds to outfit the downstairs room or additional spaces (once identified) will take some time. Additionally, there would be a learning curve for board members and staff who will need training on how to use this technology.

I have seen firsthand the time that is needed to get individuals up to speed with this technology and can foresee issues if not trained properly. I do don't want to see an important budget meeting get delayed or cancelled due to technical issues that could have been mitigated.

3. Lastly, there is the hybrid option, which is where Boards and public are meeting in person AND remotely in one meeting. There are many factors involved with this option, such as, who will facilitate the electronic portion for the remote participants while people are physically in the room; keeping in mind cyber security and Zoom-Bombing being more difficult to track during hybrid meetings. Believe it or not, we have seen other Towns with Zoom Bomb issues even in their controlled environment. Boards who do not have hired staff on hand will have to figure out the technology, and be responsible for the meeting happening, doing both without interruption.

Because of the cost involved with the hybrid system (and the uncertainty of the Implementer Bill's longevity after April, 2022); outfitting other rooms are a possibility, but not definite. Having one room will undoubtedly pose scheduling conflicts from time to time. For example, PZC and BOS are slated to meet simultaneously on July 7th; but we are only able to accommodate one meeting in the Common Room.

I would like to have all Boards/Commissions to be prepared and have a plan in place to accommodate your meetings during the timeframe of this Bill. **Once your Board makes its decision regarding the method it will be using after July 1, 2021, please contact the Town Clerks office with the result.**

This memo will be released with a Zoom link to a meeting taking place on Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 6pm at which anyone on this distribution list is encouraged to participate. It will not be a public meeting as it will be limited to how administratively we are going to make decisions to conduct public meetings going forward beginning July 1.

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TOWN CLERK