

# Town of Willington

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## BOARD OF FINANCE

**Special Budget Meeting Minutes  
Lower Level Conference Room**

**February 6, 2020  
7:00 PM**

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

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

Mike Makuch – Chairman  
Peter Tanaka – Secretary  
Geoff Prusak – Vice Chairman  
Stephanie Summers  
Christina Mailhos – Alternate

Members Absent:

Randy Belair  
Barry Walleth  
Mike Perry – Alternate

Also Present:

Selectwoman Erika Wiczenski  
Business Manager Donna Latincsics  
Director of Human Services Jennie Arpin  
Director of Animal Control Tina Binheimer  
Director of Parks and Recreation Maureen Parsell  
Chairman of Willington Parks and Recreation Joe Colangelo  
Members of the Public

**Chairman Mike Makuch called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.**

### SEATING OF ALTERNATES

**Peter Tanaka made a motion to seat Christina Mailhos for Randy Belair.  
Stephanie Summers seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 4 Yes (M. Makuch, G. Prusak, P. Tanaka, S. Summers), 0 No**

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Peter Tanaka made a motion to approve the minutes of January 16, 2020.  
Stephanie Summers seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 5 Yes (M. Makuch, G. Prusak, P. Tanaka, S. Summers, C. Mailhos), 0 No**

## **PRESENT TO SPEAK**

Selectwoman Wiecenski announced that she received an e-mail from town Treasurer Diane Bulick, who will be resigning due to health issues effective February 28, 2020. Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that a new person can't be appointed until an official signature of resignation is received, which should be in the mail soon. Selectwoman Wiecenski hoped that a resident with the right skillset who can meet the job description steps forward, as it's an important role. Chairman Mike Makuch inquired whether being short a person is creating time management issues and Business Manager Donna Latincsics confirmed.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1) Special Revenue Funds**

#### **a. 0511 Animal Control**

Director of Animal Control Tina Binheimer summarized the reasons for a slight increase in the Animal Control budget. She detailed that the increase is due to the purchase of a state-frequency 800 MHz radio system for access to the added safety and dispatching capabilities of the Tolland Mutual Aid Fire Service. The cost per town is prorated by how many calls each town gets; \$3,500 is the charge for a small town with minimal calls like Willington. Although it is an optional change, she stressed the importance of being able to radio to a dispatcher for help if the Animal Control Officer's personal safety is at risk. Tina noted that the radio itself will cost around \$4,700 and that she is actively searching for grants to help fund that purchase, but if she is unsuccessful, the fund balance could be used. Board members discussed the age of the Animal Control facility. Tina provided the board with written information regarding the specifics of the radio program.

#### **b. 0512 Parks and Recreation**

Director of Parks and Recreation Maureen Parsell summarized that the Parks and Recreation budget reflects a slight increase, mostly due to contractual salary increases for full-time employees. Other expenses under sports and trips are self-funded true program costs. She noted that due to increased revenue, the department has completed a lot of projects in the last 4 years out of their budget or through the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and that some projects remain in CIP. Maureen detailed that the big projects coming up this year funded through the Parks and Recreation budget or fundraising include lighting at River Road Park for the basketball court, volleyball court, flagpole, and the playground; installing an electronic scoreboard for the baseball field at the Town Office Building; lighting for the flag pole at the Town Office Building; purchasing a storage container for Hall Pond to store equipment; and maintenance on the pond water itself due to lily pads encroaching upon the swim area. The installation of a potential Pickleball court at River Road Park has been submitted through CIP. Staff noted that the lights planned for River Road Park will be LED and the cost of the increase in electricity will be minimal.

Maureen continued that one challenge facing the Parks and Recreation department is the struggle to find space to run some programs. The department often relies on the library community room and, depending on the library schedule, sometimes no time is available. In addition, some programs can't be run in the Old Town Hall due to the building being kept at 55 degrees, e.g. Tai

Chi. She commented that having a designated space to hold continuous programs year-round would benefit the department.

Maureen also outlined that a challenge facing the department is the mandated minimum wage increase. From 2020 to 2023 the department will have a substantial \$10,000 increase in wages for seasonal employees. The increase in pay for seasonal employees also necessitates increased wages for supervisors who undergo additional costly trainings and are valued employees to retain, e.g. Aquatic Supervisor. She detailed that some of the options that surrounding towns and the Parks and Recreation Department have considered are to look for grants, running additional fundraising, raising program costs, removing the sibling discount at summer camp, and additional charges for summer camp field trips. The timeline of the wage increase steps was discussed.

Stephanie Summers inquired whether the department-organized trips are going away. Maureen replied that certain trips such as to New York City and James Taylor are filled every year and will continue but that for the most part bus transportation is expensive and the cost ends up prohibitive for families. As a result those trips haven't been popular recently.

### **c. 0513 Family Services**

Director of Willington Human Services Jennie Arpin presented the proposed budget. She summarized that salaries show the 2% increase. She increased Emergency Assistance Youth & Senior, which is the last-resort fund when all else has failed, by \$1000. She elaborated that a couple of situations have come up in the last few years and spoke about the Uniform Relocation Act which mandates that towns are responsible for putting someone up if their home is deemed unsafe for a period of time. Page 2 shows an increase in revenue from grant awards, summer camp, and increased fundraising efforts.

Peter Tanaka inquired whether Human Services runs the food bank, which Jennie confirmed and elaborated that it is usually run by volunteers, although there has been a lot of volunteer turnover. She continued that the food bank is funded entirely by resident donations.

Stephanie Summers asked for more information about the off budget accounts included at the bottom of page 2. Jennie detailed the following points:

- Designated for Childcare Scholarships: used exclusively for sending kids to recreational programs.
- Designated for Drug Education: old line, as there are other line items for drug education; the SERAC grant deals with prevention programs and the Designated for Substance Abuse off budget line is the local prevention council's private funds.
- Designated for Youth Service Leadership: exists due to several earmarked donations over the years, but she doesn't have a specific purpose for it yet.
- Designated for Housing Assistance is not used a lot because the need is much greater than the money that could be brought in.
- Designated for Holiday Assistance: Christmas and Thanksgiving programs that provide food for residents in need.
- Designated for Transportation: unused.
- Designated for Camperships: scholarships with specific parameters.

- Designated for Community Garden: remaining funds from a grant received in 2016.
- Fuel Bank Fund 16: is funded entirely by resident and local business donations.

**d. 0517 Library Board**

No-one present and no information available at the current time.

**Chairman Makuch made a motion to table 0517 Library Board to a future meeting dependent upon when the request is received.**

**Peter Tanaka seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 5 Yes (M. Makuch, G. Prusak, P. Tanaka, S. Summers, C. Mailhos), 0 No**

**OLD BUSINESS**

Chairman Makuch stated that some information on the state budget was shared by Selectwoman Wicenski. It shows that educational cost sharing will be decreased 1.1% and the rest of the items are holding the same. Peter Tanaka inquired whether the decrease in educational cost sharing means the town has the ability to decrease its minimum budget requirement (MBR). Selectwoman Wicenski stated that she wasn't sure educational cost sharing was part of the MBR formula but would defer to the Superintendent Office as to how they reach their number. She continued that the Board should know that the state bond package has not been approved, meaning the numbers are not locked in.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

No additional correspondence.

**GOOD & WELFARE**

No additional items.

**Geoff Prusak moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:38pm.**

**Peter Tanaka seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 5 Yes (M. Makuch, G. Prusak, P. Tanaka, S. Summers, C. Mailhos), 0 No**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Marysa Semprebon*  
Recording Secretary