

# Town of Willington

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## BOARD OF FINANCE

**Special Meeting Minutes  
Lower Level Conference Room**

**December 23, 2019  
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  
Randy Belair  
Christina Mailhos - Alternate

Members Absent:

Barry Wallett  
Stephanie Summers

Also Present:

Troy Sposato – Director of Public Works  
Members of Willington Public Works Department  
Selectwoman Wiecenski

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

## SEATING OF ALTERNATES

**Peter Tanaka made a motion to seat Christina Mailhos for Barry Wallett.**

**Chairman Makuch seconded the motion.**

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

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

G. Prusak stated that he found it odd that Selectwoman Wiecenski chaired the previous meeting when the former Vice Chair was present. He stated that he read meeting minutes dating to 2003 and that a former officer had always run the meeting after elections. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that she facilitated the beginning of the meeting for the purpose of election of officers because she was asked and then turned it over to the new officers. If it had been her way, the election would've been the first agenda item. Chairman Makuch stated that he had been told that that was the procedure and questioned whether it created a legal problem. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that according to the town attorney, it does not.

**Peter Tanaka made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of November 21, 2019.**

**Randy Belair seconded the motion.**

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

## **PRESENT TO SPEAK**

No-one present to speak.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1) Regular Meeting Calendar for 2020**

**Peter Tanaka made a motion to set the regular meeting calendar for the year 2020 as the third Thursday of each month at 7pm in the Lower Level Conference Room unless otherwise announced.**

**Geoff Prusak seconded the motion.**

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

### **2) Budget Meeting Calendar for 2020**

Attachment #1

**Geoff Prusak made a motion to approve the draft of the budget calendar for the year 2020.**

**Peter Tanaka seconded the motion.**

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

### **3) Request Letter from Public Works**

Attachments #2, #3, #4

Director of Public Works Troy Sposato detailed that due to the absence of a willing second snow plow contractor, the spare truck had to be brought into primary service in order to keep the snow plow routes equal. This 2000 GMC dump truck is 19 years old and needed numerous repairs, a list of which was provided. He stated that this truck being in primary service creates a potential issue if another truck breaks down because there will be no spare to cover that route.

T. Sposato presented the contractor snow budget for this winter season; \$46,530. With the storms so far, \$8,812.50 has been spent with one contractor being paid \$125 per hour, with \$37,717.50 remaining in the budget. Numbers for alternative scenarios were presented as well.

T. Sposato continued that a new base-model Freightliner 114SD truck costs \$160,252.73 and detailed financing costs for a 7-year loan or interest rates to finance through Freightliner for 5, 6, or 7 years. He presented the list of trucks currently owned, data from work needed to clean up after each winter storm so far this year, and the breakdown of each plow route.

T. Sposato and members of Public Works clarified that each route is 15 to 16 miles, which takes 2.5 hours to sand and longer to plow from start to finish. T. Sposato said that to eliminate the second contractor route would mean to add approximately 4 miles to all of the other plow routes, which could compromise public safety. He continued that Public Works would not need

additional staff to operate a new truck, as they already have a licensed driver who has been driving the 2000 GMC. If the town had been able to hire a second contractor as in previous years, that driver would be taking care of parking lots, but the parking lots are being done by transfer station employees in pickup trucks with salt spreaders so they aren't neglected. T. Sposato continued that the staff have been doing a great job and they have been lucky that they haven't had any major equipment malfunction so far this year.

Chairman Makuch clarified that the fact that only one contractor was hired means that Public Works should have half of their contractor budget left at the end of the season that they could put toward this truck purchase, and T. Sposato confirmed. Chairman Makuch inquired about the process of finding and hiring contractors and whether the contractor rate needs to be raised in the future to make the position more attractive. T. Sposato replied that a new truck can be used year-round, not just for plowing, and that he would like to move away from contractors in favor of more manpower in the department, especially as there are fewer contractors willing to take plow jobs. He continued that the current contractor signed a 2-year contract at \$125 per hour, but has said he will be retiring after the 2020-2021 winter. Members of Public Works contributed that most surrounding municipalities have stopped using contractors to plow, and that the insurance that contractors have to carry for snow plowing is extremely expensive. The reason for the rate of pay for contractors being higher for salting than just plowing was clarified, as it takes extra equipment.

Chairman Makuch stated that in his opinion, plow routes are already long and that breaking down the plow route in question to add any mileage to the other routes is invalid for the safety of the plow driver, emergency services, or residents.

Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that there has not been a time this year when any road has gone unplowed, but that there have been various issues with trucks during every storm cleanup. Those issues have been repairable thus far, but the need for a new truck is pressing. She continued that this truck purchase is currently in Year 2 of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and the town would be looking to make the purchase in July of 2020, but that T. Sposato feels the old truck won't last through the winter and the purchase cannot wait.

Chairman Makuch clarified that it would take 15 or more days to call a Town Meeting to approve these funds and asked about the timeline of receiving the truck. T. Sposato replied that the truck is being held by the company and could be here in as little as one day. Selectwoman Wiecenski added that entering into a lease involves public hearing in order to share information about the lease as well. Chairman Makuch inquired whether an additional contractor could be hired in less time than a new truck purchase would take, to which T. Sposato replied that he has not been able to find anyone willing to take the contract and that if a contractor was available, they would not be asking for this purchase now.

Selectwoman Wiecenski made the point that this purchase requires unbudgeted funds and while the spare truck is still working, the frequent repairs to get it on the road again have been unbudgeted as well. Members of Public Works added that there are still many pieces on the truck that need repair or replacement, but because the truck is so old, the parts are obsolete.

C. Mailhos inquired whether an additional truck would fit in the garage, which T. Sposato confirmed. The configuration of drivers and trucks was discussed; this purchase is for an internal truck to replace what used to be a contractor on a plow route, and the 2000 GMC would be retained as a spare. T. Sposato detailed that Freightliner is on the state bid list and built 5 of these base model plow trucks this year just for towns to purchase. Discussion was had on the timeline of purchase and replacement of trucks and whether another truck purchase would remain in CIP. Clarification was made that the purchase discussed tonight would be an additional truck, and the truck currently in Year 1 of CIP would remain. Members of Public Works pointed to the wear and tear that local roads put on the trucks and the amount of corrosion caused by carrying and spreading salt to make the point that many of the trucks are in poor shape even though they may not seem like they have high mileage for diesel vehicles.

Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that there is not enough money for this purchase in the operating budget, although there may be some savings due to two contractors budgeted but only one hired. She stated that she believes the town would only need to make one lease payment now as opposed to two. T. Sposato added that Business Manager D. Latincsics mentioned the possibility of a payment in arrears going to next year, and therefore no impact on this year's budget, but that he didn't have time to follow up on that.

C. Mailhos inquired about the staff budget and whether it would cost less to have a Public Works employee drive the new truck than a contractor. Selectwoman Wiecenski replied that cost is affected by the timing of the storm and reiterated that there isn't a contractor available; they would go that direction if they could. Chairman Makuch inquired whether the staffing schedules have been fully mapped out to put an additional vehicle on the road, and T. Sposato confirmed. R. Belair mentioned that the cost of insurance may go up with a new truck. G. Prusak inquired whether buying a used truck was an option, to which T. Sposato said it is not.

The Board of Finance asked for clarification on when a payment would be due, the total cost of the truck and annual payments, and from where the funds would be coming. Chairman Makuch thanked T. Sposato for providing all of the information and cost comparisons.

#### **4) Update from Assessor Re: Open Space**

Chairman Makuch brought attention to an e-mail from the Assessor's office indicating the effect of the 68 properties in town that will be coming off of the open space designation. He stated that he asked about how to approach the fact that there may be some residents who didn't know about this, but now that attention has been brought to it, may apply. He stated that they replied that it is not an easy number to calculate. The 68 properties mentioned have less than 5 acres and will be coming off of the list, which will have a positive impact on the budget, although some are very minimal additions.

Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that there were some individuals who took steps to combine parcels knowing this adjustment was a possibility, so the number of properties going back to regular assessing may be less than 68. She continued that the application period is over and that the effect on the budget will be known once the Grand List has been filed.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **1) Request for Funds to Repair the Roofs at Center and Hall Schools (updates)**

Discussion was held regarding the roof projects and location of the funding. Chairman Makuch reminded the board that the patching jobs were approved and are moving forward to scheduling around the weather. The remaining questions surround the next steps with the million dollar roof replacement project. Selectwoman Wiecenski added that she and Superintendent Stevens met with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and learned that if they know a town is looking at a potential school project, they'd look very differently at a reimbursement application for a new roof and most likely wouldn't approve it. Further discussion was tabled to a later meeting.

### **2) Annual report for the period of July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019 is due**

- a. Reports outstanding:
  - i. Board of Assessment Appeals
  - ii. Economic Development Commission
  - iii. Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission
  - iv. Library
  - v. Planning and Zoning Commission
  - vi. Zoning Board of Appeals

### **3) Accounting Software Update**

Approved at Town Meeting, currently working on setting up implementation meeting date to hopefully be up and running by July 1.

### **4) Encumbrance Policy**

Waiting on Business Manager availability and will stay on the agenda until after budget season.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence.

## **GOOD & WELFARE**

Members of the board wished Happy Holidays to all.

**Peter Tanaka made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:02pm.**

**Geoff Prusak seconded the motion.**

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

Respectfully submitted,  
*Marysa Semprebon*

Recording Secretary