

Town of Willington

Board of Selectmen
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Budget Workshop Special Meeting Minutes
Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

January 31, 2022
5:30 PM

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM with the following in attendance: Selectwoman Boritz, Selectman Bulick, Assessor Walter Topliff, Business Manager Donna Latincsics, DPW Director Troy Sposato, Human Services Director Jennie Arpin, Tax Collector Janice Clauson, Town Clerk Robin Campbell and residents via Zoom.

Present to Speak

None.

Appointment to American Rescue Plan Act Commission – Christina Mailhos

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Christina Mailhos, a current member of the Willington Board of Finance, as a regular member of the Town of Willington American Rescue Plan Act Commission; effective immediately – expiring once the charge of the Committee has completed.

Selectman Bulick seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Bulick, Boritz & Wiecenski) 0 No. Motion carries.

Appointment to Capital Improvement Program Committee – Jen Goodale

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Jennifer Goodale as a member of the Capital Improvement Program Committee; effective February 1, 2022 to fill a vacancy, expiring December 1, 2024.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Bulick, Boritz & Wiecenski) 0 No. Motion carries.

Budget Workshop

There is still a significant increase in the current budget proposal prior to adding the CIP information/numbers. The only adjustment in this budget is the adjustment of compensated absences fund transfer.

-111 Selectmen's: Currently this department is showing a 3% increase (\$5,071.00), which is subject to change slightly after the union contract is ratified. The notable additions include the increase in the Office Manager Salary/Administrative Assistant Salary from part-time 30 hours a week to full-time 35 hours a week with some additional hours during budget season. In addition to the CIP secretary salary, the school building committee secretary salary is also being paid out of this account (will need to budget for the next fiscal year; was able to find savings for this year's salary to be included). The Memorial Day car show line item has increased due to the cost of flags. There is a slight increase in training and education. The office supplies line item will remain flat. The advertising line item shows an increase because we are close to the budget number this year. This number is currently reflective of a 5-year average; this includes town meeting legal notices, employment advertisements, and any other statutory legal notice requirements.

0311-Public Works: Public Works is currently showing a 35.6% increase (\$432,307.00). The additional salaries requested in DPW would be to add two positions and move the current laborer to a driver position. This would be beneficial to the department, as this laborer is already operating in the driver position when needed. The other two positions proposed are a full time laborer and a full time mechanic. DPW Director Sposato stated that the vehicle maintenance budget is \$70,000.00 annually and roughly \$65,000.00 of that budget has been spent. As of right now, \$21,225.38 has been spent on fixing and repairing equipment and \$13,215.16 has been spent on labor costs. The mechanic that comes to the public work's garage charges \$110.00 per hour plus the cost of the parts, equipment, etc. There is preventative maintenance that always needs to be done: oil changes, fixing of vehicles/equipment on a regular basis, fixing wiring, lights or other items that sometimes need to be fixed on a regular basis (hydraulic hoses failing, etc). Even in the mechanic's position, this employee would still go out and snow plow during storms, and work outside of the garage when needed on other jobs. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that currently if a truck breaks down, a current employee is pulled off of the road to try to fix that vehicle.

DPW Director Sposato stated that a diesel mechanic typically brings their own tools and the town wouldn't provide them. Compared to other towns in the area, the Town of Putnam has a mechanic and has the same amount of road miles as Willington, but they have twelve employees and one full time mechanic. The Town of Bolton has a full time mechanic, the Town of Tolland has two mechanics, the Town of Ashford has a full time mechanic, and the Town of Mansfield has a few mechanics. Canterbury and Brooklyn do not have mechanics but do have an employee in-house who is mechanically inclined, like what Willington does.

Selectman Bulick asked if the mechanic would have a CDL and DPW Director Sposato replied that yes, the mechanic would have a CDL and would need to be air brake certified, etc. in case they need to take the truck for a road test. As of February 7th, the State has changed the rules and the person would need to go to CDL training school instead of training in-house.

Discussion continued on the mechanic position and the cost of the various materials needed throughout the year as well as the workload the mechanic would encounter. First Selectwoman Wiecenski asked if the part time transfer station operator who currently works three days a week, could work an additional two days per week at the garage to be phased in as a full time employee. This employee is currently considered part time with benefits and would move to full time with benefits. It was agreed that there is justification of the need for more staff/labor in the department but it is undecided if a mechanic is the best option to fill that need currently. Selectwoman Boritz stated that the Town may benefit more from a full time laborer position than a full time mechanic position and Selectman Bulick agreed.

DPW Director Sposato is requesting an increase of \$15,000.00 in vehicle maintenance; the cost of oil has gone up, windshield wipers, bolts and the cutting edges for plows have all increased (any steel or petroleum products utilized are showing an increase). The \$1,500.00 increase in the mowing line item is because that is the cost of the current contract for the year. Road maintenance is an increase of \$11,000.00 which is for guardrails instead of the wooden posts that have been destroyed. The tree removal line item is for a request of an additional \$50,000.00. Year to date, an estimated \$70,000.00 has been spent on tree removal.

At this time last year, DPW Director Sposato bought two 55-gallon drums of hydraulic oil and one 55-gallon drum of motor oil for \$1,500.00. These same three drums this year just cost \$4,700.00.

The first two line items in the snow portion of the budget represent an average of 5-years. The current snow plow contractor is at a higher hourly rate than in previous years. The state will eventually make it mandatory for the Town to use pure salt and not sand. Salt prices have gone up \$30.00/ton from last year, even with utilizing the state contract bid list.

Lastly, it is suggested that the Chip Seal program be renamed Road Maintenance and program category. The earlier reductions seen in the budget for asphalt and crack seal are now reflected under the road maintenance program. This will reflect crack sealing, chip sealing, road shimming, paving, asphalt reclaiming, etc.

As a recap thus far, the budget will be reduced by one full time mechanic position.

13-0513 Transfer Out Human Services:

The Human Services budget is within the Selectman's budget but is presented to the Board of Finance separately and this will occur on Thursday night. The two major increases in this budget is the increase in the Director's salary, as well as the increase in the assistant hours and salary.

An increase in salary for the director represents a need to bring that salary in line with the work that is done and COVID has also increased the amount of work, as well as the seniors/vulnerable population that have increased in size and need. The volunteer who ran the senior center did invaluable work but there will now be a gap with this individual retiring. There is nobody currently working on behalf of the seniors. The human services assistant would work 25 hours at the Senior Center and 5 hours a week within human services. This would include answering the phone, helping people when they come into the Center, developing and implementing new programs with the seniors, having people come out and do clinics, working towards a senior health fair, creating an invigorating atmosphere for the seniors and creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and is excited to be a part of.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the senior center is managed by Willington Seniors, Inc. (which is an independent organization) but this position is under the Human Services budget because that person would need to answer someone and that would be best supervised by the Human Services Director.

Selectwoman Boritz asked to which degree the pandemic has influenced the work hours of Human Services. Would it be possible to consider using ARPA funds for current increased staffing needs and whether this level of work will be sustained well beyond the pandemic.

Human Services Director Arpin stated there is a possible long term economic fallout that may just keep going. People have depleted their savings; some have nothing left. Some who have never been in the system before, are now in it. It takes time and resources and information to help the residents.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that maybe this could be an ask for ARPA funding to fund three-quarters of the position this year and then half of the position next year to slowly work this into the human services budget.

Selectman Bulick stated he is not denying the need for funding but asked if ARPA funding is the right money to use as there are other needs in the town to weigh; the FD needs an additional ambulance, etc. Look at all of the needs, prioritize and fund them from there.

Selectman Bulick asked what the certifications were for the Human Services Director position and Director Arpin replied that she has an undergraduate degree in social and criminal justice, a master's degree in public administration, and she has worked in social services since 2006.

Discussion continued on the salary increase and the impact on the general fund. The salary increase for the Director's salary would start to bring this position in line with the likeliness of the pay in other towns. This position is currently meeting the needs of the department and hours may fluctuate depending if there is a Saturday activity.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski suggested supporting this increase in pay for this position with a portion of ARPA funding. This could help in incrementally building this salary increase into the general budget.

Human Services Director Arpin stated this was a hard thing to ask for, but it is greatly appreciated.

-137 Revenue Collector/Tax Collector: Discussion was held on the increase in the department head salary. Currently the department head is making less per hour than the assistant revenue collector. The union has steps for compensation each year whereas the nonunion department heads are not moving at the same rate of increase in pay. In April the current revenue collector will become a certified municipal collector (per the State time requirements). This salary increase would still be considered on the lower end of pay compared to other surrounding towns.

Selectman Bulick stated that this increase is reasonable with the certification and the experience that the current revenue collector has. Employees should be paid what they are worth. It would cost the town money to rehire for this position and that is something that we don't want.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated the current revenue collector could have taken a downgrade in position and moved into the Finance Office and would have made more per hour.

Selectwoman Boritz stated that the Town is behind in terms of the salary scale for most positions compared to neighboring towns of size and scope.

Discussion was held on the salaries for departments and the need to compensate current employees on a higher scale.

-151 Town Clerk: The Town Clerk's budget is reflective of the true salaries to reflect the actual people in the office. The one significant increase is in purchasing services to purchase the grantor/grantee book which is necessary in the vault. Town Clerk Campbell stated that if this needs to be cut from the budget, the Department may be able to obtain the preservation grant funding for this in the fall.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:00PM.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Bulick, Boritz & Wiecenski) 0 No. Motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,
Kelsey Allard
Recording Secretary
Town of Willington

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TOWN CLERK