

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes
Lower Level Conference Room

October 1, 2018
6:30 P.M.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM with the following in attendance: Selectmen Makuch & Blessington and residents. She then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes:

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of September 17, 2018 with the following edit: *page 4 under Tax Refunds: Chase Auto Finance should read 104.53 (remove the 5 before the 1). ; on page 3 under the TOB holiday party, should say the Selectmen had no objections and under Old Business; page 4 second paragraph under Noise Ordinance should read Statutes not statutes.*

Selectman Makuch seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

Selectman Blessington moved to approve the minutes of September 21, 2018 as written.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Blessington) 0 No 1 Abstain (Makuch)

Present to Speak:

Resident Todd Bissonette of 41 Cosgrove Road stated that he did not see the noise ordinance on the agenda. He stated that he feels as though the State Police do not seem to care about our town, but would rather hand out tickets along I84. He asked what are the police doing? Where can we go? There are Statutes in place and they do not seem to want to come out and enforce when we call them. He added that all he is trying to do is keep this town safe and quiet. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the reason that the noise ordinance is not on the agenda is because we do not have any new information to discuss. We have reached out to the State Police to see if they could come to a future meeting to discuss and help us understand how to progress with the noise ordinance, but we have not heard back from them yet. She added once we have them slated to attend a meeting, it will be added to the agenda and will discuss in detail. She then argued that she does not feel like the police do not care about our town.

Correspondence:

A list of correspondence was available at the meeting and in the Selectman's office.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we received a letter from our insurance carrier, who stated that they received our claim for mold issues and they will be investigating before making a final decision.

First Selectman Status Report

- The Grand List ledgers in the basement have been packed up and will be shipped for cleaning. The vendor believes they will have them back to us sometime in January. Once the books have been cleaned and returned, they will be stored in the vault.
- The front entrance/ramp project is moving along; pending town meeting that will be held tomorrow night.

Public Works

Derek reported that the crew has been busy with the following:

- Mow old landfill
- Sweep chip seal stone at T.O.B and Cosgrove Rd
- Roadside mowing
- Grade various gravel roads due to heavy rains and add some aggregate
- Sweep chip-seal route
- Repair sweeper
- Clean basement at OTH
- Mow Senior Housing Septic leach field and detention pond
- Vehicle/ equipment service

New Business

A. Discussion – Building Fees

First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that the Selectmen received correspondence from the Building Inspector, resulting from discussions at the last Planning and Zoning Commission meeting regarding our building fees. We are one of the lowest charging towns in the State. It has been suggested to increase the fees slightly to help offset the cost of the newly implemented software and salary increases, which have risen over the years.

Town of Willington Building Inspector, Jim Rupert was in attendance. He stated that we are implementing new permitting software and it would be a good time to revisit the fees as they are going to be put in as a formula and calculated when residents apply for permits. Mr. Rupert thanked Randy Belair who compiled information from surrounding towns and their fees associated with building permits. Mr. Rupert added that some of our permitting fees can be complex to calculate. For example, a new construction is different than finishing a basement, or adding a deck, which are all different. He added that putting the current calculations into the formula system is going to be very difficult, if not impossible. Mr. Rupert then stated that he felt increasing the fees slightly will not be too much of a burden on the taxpayers and will also help us get a little closer to our neighboring towns.

Mr. Rupert stated that all of the permits already have a \$35 minimum; however, administrative costs are more than that to process. He is proposing the \$35 across the board for all permit types and a \$12 per thousand fee for residential projects; which is a \$2 increase. He clarified that the smaller permits (additions, finished basements, sheds) can sometimes take as long as the bigger permits to process. In addition, it was suggested changing the commercial permit, which would be a \$35 minimum plus a slightly higher incremental fee (\$14) per thousand costs on those properties; which is a \$4 increase.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski added that there is a .26 cents per thousand education fee that is also included in the \$10 per thousand fee. She noted that all other towns add that on as an additional fee.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that this is not the first time she has heard of such a request to raise fees. Selectman Blessington said he is the reason why it is where it's at now. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that now is the time to revisit as we are going to be implementing this new software. She added that she received an email from Rick Maloney, who serves on the Economic Development Commission, who is in disagreement with raising the fees. She clarified that the fee change is not going to hold up the start date of the new software.

Mr. Rupert agreed and noted that we are going to have ongoing software fees and will be using it for various things, other than permits; such as all Planning and Zoning activities, wetlands permits and the Recreation Department will also be using for some of their program sign ups. He added that we will be maximizing this system and the ongoing licensing is going to cost us about \$8,000 per year, so it only makes sense to think about how we are going to cover those costs.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she does not think we are ready to act on this tonight; as she would like to let the Board review the data. She then noted that it is the Board of Selectmen's responsibility to set the fees.

Selectman Blessington said he has a problem when we require people to do something and then we charge them for it. If he had his way, the whole thing would be run and paid for from the General Fund, that way the taxpayer would know how much it is costing rather than hit the individual. We have these fees in place and he doesn't see them going away; however he does not want to see them increased – he would like to keep them where they are.

Selectwoman Makuch said our General Fund is not in surplus and we don't have a lot of money in there. The people who are utilizing the service would be paying one way or another – it is not a question of if they are going to pay, but rather how they are going to pay. She would rather see the individuals who are using the service pay, rather than having everyone pay for it as a whole. She then asked Selectman Blessington if it would be palatable for him to see everyone pay more taxes because we can't run our Building Department anymore – because we don't have any money? She added at some point we need to pay in one way or another for this town to exist and we can't just not charge people for things because we don't like to. First Selectwoman Wiecenski asked when the last time the fees had been changed? Mr. Rupert stated that they haven't been increased since he has been here, and it has been quite a few years. Selectman Blessington said he does not know; but the subject was brought up a few years ago at a Selectmen's meeting and he was dead set against raising them. Selectman Blessington then suggested perhaps the Land Use regulations have become overbearing.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she would not like to see anything taken from the General Fund; and it is nice that we can offer such a low fee for the services but at some point it becomes a disservice to our homeowners. If we ever find we have to raise the fees to be where other towns are, they could potentially see a large increase which is not favorable. This would be a way to start to get there with a small incremental increase and at the very least collecting the state educational fee which is currently built into the fees. She added that she would like to research a bit more.

Randy Belair stated that the last annual report (16/17) showed 282 permits pulled, generating \$46,655; which averages to be \$168 per permit. He suspects that the ratio is 2/3 to 1/3 residential/commercial. He noted that the commercial permit is getting the same deal as the resident who is putting a deck on his home. Mr. Belair stated that the year prior (15/16) is more interesting – 330 permits were let; which generated \$101,885. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that was probably the year that Fed Ex had put a new roof on. Mr. Belair stated that the Fed Ex project was probably a good portion of the revenue – he feels that Fed Ex still would have done the roofing project, no matter the permit fee.

Mr. Belair then said that we know that we have about 80 bad foundations in town and only 6 have been repaired thus far. The fees are going to be waived for those who will be replacing the foundations – and there are several inspections involved with such a project. He then stated that \$2 more doesn't seem to be a very big change –

especially when you look at Mansfield and Tolland's fees. He then stated that he would like to advocate for Mr. Rupert's recommendation.

Todd Bissonnette was in agreement and said that is the way the world is -- there are permits and fees in place and you have to pay for what you get.

The Selectmen will discuss further at the next meeting. Randy Belair suggested to look at last years numbers and then figure out what they would be with the proposed \$2 increase so they would have an idea of what they are looking at.

B. Discussion – Planning Zoning/Wetlands Agent

First Selectwoman Wiecenski was hopeful that she was going to be able to tell the Selectmen that we were ready to move forward, but it is not the case at the moment. She recapped stating that the position has been vacant since August 11th and we have gone through 2 separate searches. During that time, we received 22 applications and the top 5 applications have varying experience, but not one of them have met all of our qualifications.

In addition to the applications, we received a proposal from CME Associates. CME is an Engineering Firm in neighboring Storrs that offers all of the services we need on a contracted basis. The interview panel, which is made up of the First Selectwoman, PZC Chairman, Building Inspector, Vice Chairmen of the IWWC and an EDC member were all in agreement that CME was the best option and most cost effective for the Town. The obstacle that First Selectwoman Wiecenski is facing right now is that the union is not willing to let the Town contract the work. She is trying to work with them on it and is an ongoing process.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the going rate for a position like this with the certifications is around \$80,000, where the Towns salary range is about \$53,000. She then noted if we went with CME, would be the less expensive option as there is approximately a \$6,000 salary savings and the Town would not have to cover benefits. Everyone on the interview panel was happy with this option as CME is more than qualified to do the work and currently perform the same work in other towns. She then noted that this does not have to be a permanent solution – we can see how it goes and can sever the contract at any time if we feel it is not working out. Selectman Blessington agreed that this seems to be a good option. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she is trying to do what is best for the town and will keep the Selectmen in the loop as things progress.

C. Tax Refunds

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$121.69 to Marek Stopa on a Certificate of Correction. Selectwoman Makuch seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$63.79 to Daniel or Karen Donaghy on a Certificate of Correction.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$27.24 to John or Susan Davies on a Certificate of Correction.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

Good & Welfare

First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked the Garden Club for all of their work over the summer and most recently, moving the plantings from the front where the ramp will be demolished. They will move everything back in the spring.

An email was sent to First Selectwoman Wiecenski in regards to the St. Jude property that is for sale. The Real Estate Agent stated that they are approaching the Diocese on a reduction of the properties (both are listed separately for sale, a residential and commercial; however the Town's records show it as one residential property with a special exception). The reduced rate will be at \$475,000 and they were asking if the Town or Fire Department were interested.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she received a letter commending recent work of the Public Works' crews who installed curbing along Tinkerville Road. The resident was quite happy, stating that the curbing will improve drainage along his front yard and stone wall. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that this is just one example of residents commending the crews work over the summer. *A copy of the letter is attached to the minutes.

The 16th annual car show will be held on the Town Green this coming Saturday, October 6th from 10AM – 3PM and rain date of October 7th. All proceeds go towards the Marine Corps-Law Enforcement Foundation. Show Car entrance fees are \$10 and they will have trophies and give-aways.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski extended condolences on behalf of the Town to the Beebe family on the passing of Lena Beebe last week. Ms. Beebe was the mother of former First Selectman Christina Mailhos. Our thoughts go out to the family.

Selectman Blessington reminded everyone of tomorrow night's Town Meeting which will be held at the Old Town Hall at 7PM. The Planning and Zoning meeting will be held at 7:30 PM.

Todd Bissonnette asked if anything is being done with the traffic back ups near the TA on Route 320? First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she does not have any information on that. Robin Campbell stated that the former First Selectman had requested to have a study done in that area (a few years ago) in anticipation of the Loves Truck stop which at the time was thought to be moving along quicker. OSTA had responded back and said that they thought the set up in that area was sufficient.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 P.M.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Campbell
Administrative Assistant

Attachment: Letter – Resident on Tinkerville Road

Town of Willington – First Selectman
40 Old Farms Road
Willington, CT 06279



Dear First Selectman Wiecenski

I am writing to express my appreciation for recent work that was done by the Town of Willington Public Works department. I have lived in town for the past 14 years after building our home on Tinkerville Road. During that time I have worked hard to restore the stonewall that once ran along the front of my property and re-establish a lawn along the roadway. Over time, the poor drainage along the roadway has continually caused erosion of the lawn area and breakdown of the asphalt on the edge of the road. I had approached the former public works director years ago to see if it would be possible to install curbing and was told that it wasn't feasible due to budget restrictions. Since that time I have done my best to maintain my property and manage the erosion. Last year I approached the public works crews who were doing roadside work and made them aware of the deterioration and breakdown of the edge of the road/asphalt in front of my property. The follow up response was great and the crews came through and installed some re-claimed asphalt as a temporary fix.

Recently, all of Tinkerville road was repaved and it looks great. Last week, much to my surprise, I came home from work to see that curbing had been installed. I was not only pleased to see that my longstanding issue was addressed, but also that the public works staff understood the need to protect the taxpayer's investment of the new roadway for the future.

In closing, I wanted to express my appreciation and commend the staff at public works for their efforts.

Fran Raiola
68 Tinkerville Road

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT
Received for record October 2, 2018
At 12:00pm Olivia B. Bennett