

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Regular Meeting Minutes
Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

April 5, 2021
6:30 PM

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 6:30PM with the following in attendance; Selectman Boritz, Selectman Blessington and residents.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the BOS Regular minutes of March 15, 2021 as written.

Selectmen Blessington seconded the motion.

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

Motion Carried.

Selectmen Blessington moved to approve the BOS Special minutes of March 19, 2021 with the additional statement. *Selectman Blessington objected to the format of the hybrid meeting on the grounds that it was likely to disenfranchise a number of voters, to wit:*

One of a pair of cohabitating couples who might be sharing a computer, since only one vote may be cast per device, Citizens who own older mobile phones or computers that lack a camera, or Citizens, especially older ones, who may not be up to date on modern technology.

Selectwoman Boritz concurred there was a lot of discussion of planning and troubleshooting.

Selectman Blessington wanted to express that he voted no on the Town Meeting because he objected to the format and not the Town Meeting itself.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Motion Carried.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the BOS Special minutes of March 22, 2021 as written.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Blessington) 0 No, 1 Abstain (Boritz).

Motion Carried.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the BOS Special minutes of March 29, 2021 as written.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Motion Carried.

Present To Speak

Jim Bulick Laurel Drive wanted to speak about two items. There are some Legislative proposals to bring Planning and Zoning decisions to Hartford. These decisions are best made locally. We have already encouraged our local representatives and Senators to oppose these bills. I am asking the Willington Board of Selectmen to support this. Secondly there is a vacancy with in the School Building Committee and I would like to speak in favor of Mr. Ralph Tulis. Mr. Tulis is a longtime resident of our town and I believe his construction and planning and zoning experience will be a welcome addition.

Correspondence

A list of Correspondence was available for the Selectmen to view.

First Selectman's Status Report

First Selectwoman Wiecenski provided a few updates.

Since our last meeting, the Selectmen's office is working with DEEP to develop a contract for the STEAP grant Old Town Hall project which includes a new septic system and interior renovations.

School Building Committee is set to meet Wednesday April 7, 2021. They will be conducting their meeting the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of every month moving forward.

The LOTCIP Grant for the Route 32 project. Our Zoning Agent Mr. D'Amato is working with the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation. Through this process there have been some items that have been taken out due to DOT facilitating the work under a separate standalone project. We are adjusting the scope of the project to reallocate the dollars. The next step would be to submit an RFP for a final design.

Budget update, the budget hearing is scheduled for Tuesday April 6, 2021@ 7:00 PM via Zoom. The Special BOF meeting will immediately follow the budget hearing. At the last BOF meeting the Board made a significant cut to our budget specifically in two areas. In Public Works they cut our budget by \$60,000, from their discussions that represented the new employee we requested as well as a new dump/plow truck that was set to be replaced last year in CIP. While I understand the reservation of adding a new employee the reality is that we are understaffed in this department. The additional employee request was in efforts to bring the staffing level up to a more manageable level. The PW new dump/plow truck was on the CIP plan last year to be replaced and was put on hold due to COVID. Not replacing this necessary truck will only contribute to more maintenance and repair costs. Additionally we will have a bottleneck of trucks that will need to be replaced in the near future. At the very least the PW truck should be put back on the CIP plan. The second area that was cut from the Selectmen's budget was with employee insurance for 1 staff member. It was requested that the Selectmen review the budget to ensure it is accurately reflected.

Selectwoman Boritz asked if the contractor for snow removal was added back into the Selectmen's budget as it was removed in efforts of hiring a new PW staff member to ensure the snow removal function without having to rely on outside resources.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski responded to say that is correct the BOF did not add back the contractor funds for snow removal. We will not receive the same level of snow removal funds as we did this past year with this adjustment. It was expressed that we may have to get creative and move funds around. That may mean that other necessities that we did budget for may not happen to counter balance the large cuts to our budget. The consequences of such cuts may not be fully understood by the BOF. We did not increase our roads budget as was indicated by a member of the BOF. We increased by request for one additional staff member which could replace the need of a snow contractor if approved. Since the additional staff member was not approved and the snow contractor was not added back in there will be consequences to that action. We will have to make adjustments with the dollars we have been given, we will not have enough staff members to plow the routes that we currently have. The budget hearing is Tuesday April 6, 2021 the Selectmen were encouraged to attend and support the Board of Selectmen's budget and put the PW Truck replacement back into CIP.

Public Works

Mr. Sposato reported the following that has been done by Public Works

- Continuation of trash pickup at park.
- Grading dirt roads
- Started street sweeping
- Cut tree down at the Senior Center
- Installed water tank and new pump for the water truck
- Patched holes
- Painted truck body
- Installed/replaced stop sign and road sign on Batty Rd.
- Roadside mowing
- Cleaned up Halls Pond and chipped brush

First Selectwoman Wiecenski commented that we had 2 resignations with in PW, Laborer Technician & Assistant Transfer Station Operator. With a staff that needs to be increased we are now down 1 full time and 1 part time staff members in the Public Works Department.

Troy Sposato discussed that we will open the swap shed starting Saturday April 10th 2021. We will mandate masks and socially distancing. We will only allow 2 residents in the shed at a time for a five minute intervals to give everyone a chance to leave and or take items from the swap shed. We will ask residents to be patient, if this becomes problematic we will have to close the swap shed again.

New Business

A. Discussion of Treasurer Position

First Selectwoman Wiecenski started the discussion. Currently the Treasurer is an elected position. Ms. Semprebon has expressed that she does not wish to run for reelection. We have seen a large turnover in the Treasurer Position in the last 4 years. This has caused some significant issues, with an elected position we do not know what their skill set will be. It has been increasingly problematic in getting individuals up to speed with proper training for this function. We currently have a very small finance office, the work often falls on the Finance Manager. This is a concern with the new finance system that was put in place mid COVID. It isn't feasible that our Finance Manager take on one more role nor do we have the extra staff to train a new Treasurer. It is incorrect to assume that the Treasurer position is 10-15 hours per week which is misleading. There is significantly more work and functions that needs to be done. I would like to

investigate the possibility of making this an appointed position opposed to an elected position. We reached out to CCM to facilitate some research for us on elected vs. appointed Treasurer Positions and job descriptions from Towns equal to ours. Based on the research it appears to be remotely different when the Treasurer works in the Finance office vs. as an appointed official. We will share this research information with the Selectmen to review for further discussion. The Treasurer Position is a very important job and we have some time to be strategic in our planning to secure the best solution that will serve our Town staff and our community.

Selectwoman Boritz concurred it is a necessary discussion. Having the research of other like Towns will be key in moving forward. This change will likely be a hurdle similar to our discussion with the Town Clerk in moving from an Elected to an Appointed position. With the right information we can have the discussion to move forward in the near future.

Selectmen Blessington would prefer to remain the same as with all other positions be a citizen of the Town of Willington. The only way we can guarantee that is if we keep the position as an elected position. It is his believe that we keep it the same as in previous years. He mentioned a lot of Towns the Treasurer and the Chief Financial Officer are the same person. That was the way the Town of Willington was structured 20 some years ago when the decision was made to split the roles. That is an option that we can discuss going forward. This is not a political position like the BOF or the BOE, it his believe that each party can come up with a reasonable candidate that is honest and can do the job. Selectmen Blessington would like the position to remain the same.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski appreciates Selectmen Blessingtons optimism however he is aware of the difficulty that we have had just in the last four years in finding someone. We have had three different Treasurers just in our time here. There is a lot involved to ensure this position is trained and well versed in the expectations of the role. We do not currently have extra staff to facilitate that properly. Our current Business Manager has her hands full and would be a disservice to our staff to transfer responsibility and ownership to an already over loaded position. We can discuss other options of having an Assistant Finance Manager with the potential of having the Treasurers position be less intensive than it is now and can still be an elected position. Similar to what Selectman Blessington spoke of, having the Assistant Finance Manager oversee vs. the Business Manager. There are options that we can take a look at for further discussion. Our current Treasurer is thankfully staying to the end of the term so we are fortunate for the time to discuss, plan and strategize.

B. Transfer Station Fees

A discussion was held regarding the propane tanks received at the Transfer Station.

Mr. Sposato summarized the process. Currently the Town does not charge for propane tanks at the Transfer Station. Mighty Flame who takes the Transfer Station tanks for disposal charges the Town \$2.00 for a 20 lb. tank that is determined to be a bad tanks and will pay the Town \$2.00 for 20 lb. tank if the tank is good. Currently Mighty Flame takes the tanks and determines whether the tank is good or bad offsite. Then the reconciling takes place, if the Town owes Mighty Flame or if they pay the Town for the good tanks. We have no way of knowing if a tank is good or bad until they take the tanks are taken offsite to their facility. For example recently we had 100 tanks picked up by Mighty Flame, after all the credits and debits occurred we made \$4.00. There are times that we break even and other times we owe them. We currently do not charge residents for propane tank disposal, the Town is absorbing the cost. We are proposing that we charge for Propane Tanks disposal to have a disposal fee similar to other transfer station fees. The proposed fees would be \$3.00 for each 20 lb. tank, \$10.00 for each 30 lb. tank & \$15.00 for each 40 lb. tank. Mighty Flame currently charges the Town \$8.00 for the disposal of a 30 lb. tank in any condition & \$12.00 for a 40 lb. tank in any condition.

Selectman Blessington asked if the Town ever come out ahead when picking up tanks.

Mr. Sposato expressed that sometimes we come out ahead and sometimes we owe, it is dependent on the condition of the tanks and visually it cannot be determined whether it's a good tank or bad. As previously stated in our last batch of 100 tanks the Town made \$4.00.

Selectwoman Boritz asked Mr. Sposato if there is annual statistics that he could provide that will show how much the Town owed or received related to propane tanks.

Mr. Sposato advised he does not have that information available at the moment however he will pull together that information for the Selectmen.

Selectwoman Boritz advised it would be helpful to know if we are losing or are typically ahead. If we are losing money year after year it would be helpful to justify the additional fee.

First Selectwoman moved to table the discussion, the Board will continue the discussion at the next Board of Selectmen's meeting.

Selectman Blessington Seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Blessington, Boritz & Wiecenski)

C. School Building Committee Appointment

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Erica Bushoir as a member representative from the Board of Education Staff on the School Building Committee; effective April 6, 2021; expiring once the charge of the committee has completed.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Selectman Blessington aired his grievances that he didn't hear about this vacancy until he received his packet on Friday. He believes the Board member should be a Willington resident and wants to endorse Ralph Tulis.

Selectwoman Boritz stated that the position to be filled is a BOE Staff member and being a Willington resident is irrelevant.

Selectman Blessington expressed that there are plenty of educators on Committee.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski advised that there is a Board of Education Member and a BOE Staff member. This position is to fill the role of the BOE Staff.

Selectman Blessington believes there is another teacher on the Committee, there are too many educators on the Committee. Additionally he wanted to know where Ms. Bushior lives.

Selectwoman Boritz stated again where she lives doesn't matter. She is filling the role of a BOE staff member. This position was specifically allocated for a staff member from the Willington School system.

Selectman Blessington stated that it has already been determined your building a new school.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski encouraged Selectman Blessington to attend the School Building Committee meeting so that he is informed of the work that is being conducted.

Selectman Blessington stated that you are choosing someone who is not even a tax payer of the Town who is not registered to vote in Town. How do we know her qualifications?

Selectwoman Boritz reiterated again that this position on the School Building Committee represents and was set aside specifically for representation for the staff that teach our children. Whether or not she is a resident is irrelevant. She is representing the voice of our teachers. Whether they live in town or not they are still teaching our children who do live in town. This is the specific vacancy for which we are voting on right now. The residency status is not what's important. Her fitting the qualifications of being a staff member with the Willington Public School system is the qualification.

Selectman Blessington wished we has some representatives for the people in town.

The discussion continued that there is representation of residents. The Committee is an eleven member Committee.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 1 No (Blessington).
Motion Carried.

D. MS4 – Illicit Discharge & Connection, Storm Water Ordinance

First Selectwoman Wiecenski started the discussion regarding a proposed ordinance. There was a consensus with the group that the Board doesn't agree with or like the proposed ordinance. Determining who's going to enforce such an ordinance if it would to become an ordinance is problematic at best. In order for us to become compliant with the MS4 we have to at least put forth an ordinance to be voted on. The MS4 cannot require the Town to have an ordinance and we cannot require folks to be in favor of. However with that said we have yet to put this item to a Town vote and that is where we are at today. To be compliant in the current process of the MS4 we need to put forth an ordinance. It is unlikely that something so convoluted would pass. Typically when we as a Board put something forward it's for something that we believe in and are in support of. If I were to vote in favor of moving this to a Town Meeting, it would simply be to put it to a Town vote for the Townspeople to decide. This is the ordinance that would fill the requirement of the MS4 but not necessarily one we would wholeheartedly support.

Selectman Blessington wanted to know the ramifications if we did not bring this to a Town Meeting?

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated we would still be in compliance with the MS4 because again we cannot control the outcome of a vote of the people. They have given us a blanket ordinance in order to put forth. The documents would need to be reworked, the compliance is in the attempt to pass an ordinance. We are being told very clearly that in order to remain in compliance we have to at least attempt to pass an ordinance.

Selectman Blessington reviewed the document and has a lot of recommendations for alteration. He is personally against the ordinance simply because it is a bureaucratic nightmare. It is his believe that the ordinance is better suited for Venezuela or North Korea. What would happen if this was brought to the BOS and the BOS voted against bringing to a Town Meeting?

First Selectwoman Wiecenski doesn't know the answer to that and we are all in agreement this is not favorable. Pre Covid when we had our last in person meetings we spoke about this specifically the only way to remain compliant is to be working on an ordinance. We have not been working on the ordinance therefore we are out of compliance. First Selectwoman Wiecenski encouraged Selectman Blessington to send his proposed revisions the Selectman's administrative Assistant to update based on your recommendations. From that point we can review the document as a Board. In the interim we will investigate area towns that fall under the MS4 to see if any have adopted an ordinance and what that looks like.

E. American Rescue Plan Funding

First Selectwoman Wiecenski provided an update on the Federal American Rescue Plan that was passed last week. Willington is set to get at least \$578,970 in non-entitlement money and \$1,137,287 our portion of the county fund for a total of \$1,716,56. We have seen broad acceptable use information but not detailed specific use. We anticipate that guidance will come from the Treasury sometime in the coming weeks. The money will be allocated in 2 tranches: one with ninety days and the 2nd one a year from now. The Treasury has 60 days to send to the State and they will be the pass through for non-entitlement cities and they have thirty days to disperse. It was advised that the funds must be spent by the end of calendar year 2024.

F. Tax Refunds

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski Moved to refund \$9.11 to Sheila N. Sauer on an overpayment.
Selectman Blessington Seconded the motion.
Vote: 3 Yes (Blessington, Boritz & Wiecenski)**

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski Moved to refund \$457.41 to Jessica Gaul on an overpayment.
Selectwoman Boritz Seconded the motion.
Vote: 3 Yes (Blessington, Boritz & Wiecenski)**

Old Business

A. 21-22 Budget update

First Selectwoman Wiecenski provided an update in the Selectmen's status report referenced above. Tuesday April 6, 2021 is the Budget hearing, and encouraged the Selectmen to attend and defend the Selectmen's budget. The Town meeting will be April 20th, 2021. We would then move to budget referendum which is scheduled for Tuesday May 4th, 2021.

Selectwoman Boritz inquired if the BOF is aware of the ARP funds Willington is set to receive.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski responded to say she has not formally notified the BOF as information is still coming in on this topic. We are waiting for the formal document from the Federal American Rescue plan then the information will be passed along.

B. COVID-19 Update

First Selectwoman Wiecenski provided an update Willington has had cumulative 228 COVID cases, 3 deaths and 19 probable cases which is an increase of 8 cases since our last meeting on March 15, 2021.

As of Thursday we are in the yellow alert level which equates to 8.5 cases per 100,000. Organizations, families and individuals must continue to be vigilant with practicing basic COVID precautions. Wear a mask, wash your hands and stay socially distanced.

As of April 1, 2021 residents 16 years of age and older are now eligible to receive a COVID19 vaccine. WPS has their 2nd dose clinic on April 6, 2021.

Willington vaccine data as of March 8th 2021 is : 1,765 or (30.1%) total has received 1st doses; (111.40) 1st does for 65+ and (93.19%) 75+. The numbers for these 2 groups are over the State average. We do not have reported date for Willington specifically for other data sets.

We current emergency declaration extension has been extended to May 20th 2021.

We held a Hybrid Town Meeting with 1 resident in attendance in person. Virtually we had 24 participants. A thank you to Heather for taking the lead to make this a successful endeavor.

After much discussion regarding a reopen plan it was decided to remain open by appointment only and continue our Board and Commission meetings in a virtual capacity. At this point in time we are still seeing spikes and vaccines are just becoming available to a large group. This includes our staff as well. We are looking at mid-June as the next point by which to move to look at a broader opening of our offices. The Library is open and the Senior Center remains closed. The swap shed at the transfer station will be opening on Saturday April 10th, 2021.

We will be sharing a guide to Municipal Operations for residents in the coming weeks. This will detail all Town services and the changes in place.

Present to Speak

No one was present to speak

Good & Welfare

First Selectwoman Wiczenski provided some updates.

We have had several brush fires over the last week. I encourage residents to be cautious and note the fire danger. This information can be found on the DEEP website or by calling our Fire Departments daily prior to any burning. In addition if you are planning on burning brush up to 3 inches in diameter you will need a valid signed permit from the open burn official prior to burning.

You can find COVID information from <https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus>

Mobile Food Share will be here at the TOB this Wednesday April 7, 2021 and April 28th 2021 from 11AM to 11:30 AM. Contact Human Services with any questions. We are currently using a drive through model and is open to everyone. First Selectwoman Wiczenski wanted to thank the core volunteers many of who are from the Senior Center.

Farmers to families' food boxes will be distributed Friday April 9th, 2021 at 12:30 PM. 50 boxes will be distributed. Our Human Services department in conjunction with the Mansfield Lions collaborated for this distribution. This is open to any and all with a drive through model and will be first come first serve until the boxes have all been distributed.

Please if you can support our small businesses and restaurants.

Organizations, families and individuals must continue to be vigilant with practicing basic COVID precautions. Wear a mask, wash your hands and stay socially distanced.

The Budget hearing is April 6th, the Annual Town Meeting is April 20th & the Referendum is May 4th.

Reminder that all of the Town's Meetings are still being held virtually and can be viewed live or on the Town's YouTube page. There is a link on the Town Website on the left hand that states Online Boards and Commissions Meetings. Inside that page will be a link to the Willington You Tube channel.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to go into Executive Session at 7:39 PM

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to exit the Executive Session at 8:04 PM

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to deny grievance.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Selectwoman Boritz moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 PM

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Sharpley
Administrative Assistant
Town of Willington

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WILLINGTON, CT.

2021 APR -8 P 12:17


TOWN CLERK