

# Town of Willington

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Board of Selectmen  
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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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

January 24, 2022  
5:30 PM

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM with the following in attendance: Selectwoman Boritz, Selectman Bulick, DPW Director Troy Sposato, Human Services Director Jennie Arpin, Animal Control Officer Tina Binheimer, Town Clerk Robin Campbell, and residents via Zoom. Assessor Walter Topliff, Business Manager Donna Latincsics, Tax Collector Janice Clauson were in attendance in person.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the Town's Business Office works incredibly hard all year round, but especially this time of year when both the Board of Education and the Town needs their budgets completed at the same time. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked Business Manager Latincsics for all of her hard work on the budget.

### **Budget Presentation to the Board**

The current presented budget represents a \$584,196.00 increase, which is reflected as a 15.8% increase. The salaries are not all aligned with the contract that is being negotiated currently; these numbers presented are rough estimates. The Town is still waiting to ratify the contract. There will be some discussion on other salaries that show an increase as well.

**-111 Selectmen's:** An overall decrease for the Office Manager salary; as this has been replaced with the Administrative Assistant position. This position would be an increase from part time at 30 hours a week to full time at 35 hours per week with 5 weeks of the year at 40 hours (during budget season). The salary is less than what it was prior to when R. Campbell was in this position but this is an increase from the current budget year. These additional hours would be to continue coordinating the needs of the town office building, as well as helping with CIP, the annual budget, and now the ARPA Commission. This will also reflect a change in the insurance line item from part time to full time. There is also an increase in the advertising budget; averaged the advertising costs in the last 5 years to get to this budget number. This cost includes the legal notices for town meetings, which vary each year. The dues at CCM and CRCOG remain flat again this year; these 2 are invaluable resources to the town. There is an increase in the Memorial Day and Car Show line item; the town supplies flags for Memorial Day and it is expected there will be an increase in the cost this year.

**-130 Accounting Services:** Currently this budget is only representative of the estimated salaries for the finance department. The Assistant Business Manager position has been added to the line item for salary as this position was filled this year.

**-134 Assessor:** There will be an increased cost with QDS and Vision Services, which is listed under computer support. Under assessor supplies, it is noted that there will be an increase in the cost of new pricing books. There is a potential to move some of the books electronically but there is a statutory requirement to keep the hardcopy books for a certain number of years. This current budget that is presented shows the



department staying status quo, as is. Currently the assessor works 10 hours a week. First Selectwoman Wiczenski is proposing an increase in hours and an increase in salary as this department requires more time in the office as there is a need with residents. The Town could split a full time assessor with the Town of Bolton (the same idea as the contract for the service of the Building Official). The 2 towns would share an Assessor for 2.5 days a week in each town. The cost of a full time assessor (\$121,788.00) split between the 2 towns would be significantly different than the part time position now. With the cost split between the two towns, it is estimated to cost roughly \$60,000.00 per year per town.

**-137 Revenue Collector/Tax Collector:** There is no change with the assistant salary. The revenue collector's salary would be an increase in hourly pay (roughly \$28.00/hour). This is more in line with towns that are similar to Willington; asked CCM for a study of similar towns and what is paid. If there is no change in this salary, the revenue collector would be making less per hour than the assistant revenue collector (who is in the office for 18 hours a week). We need to take a look at the needs of staffing and maintaining and retaining our staff.

Discussion was held on the revenue collector obtaining her certification. The revenue collector has passed all of the classes and the final exams; she must be in a tax office for 3 years per the State of Connecticut before she can obtain the certification. As of March/April, the revenue collector will become a certified tax collector. Janice has worked really, really hard at this and aced the classes and exams!

QDS and LexisNexis products have increased their fees. The supplies line item represents an increase due to the need to purchase two new replacement check scanners (this should be a one-time purchase for the next 5 years).

**-141 Legal/Town Council:** No increase.

**-151 Town Clerk:** The salary for the current staff (town clerk & assistant) are reflective of the staff that are in the department now. The current budget year (2021/2022) is not accurate with what the Clerk salary is currently. The Fill-In line item shows an increase, which would cover times where both clerks are out of the office for training or possibly Covid/sick time. The assistant line item has additional hours included (this would be several weeks of 30 hours instead of the normal 25 hours) and would cover for the Clerk's vacation time.

Discussion was held on the town clerk's certification. Currently taking the necessary classes for certification; there is a three year timeline and a total of six chapters in the town clerk handbook. There are only one or two classes a year that are offered; currently the town clerk has taken three classes in less than a year and a half. The certification is not given until all classes are completed.

In the purchased services line item the increase is for \$3,525.00 for the grantee/grantor land recording binder for 2010 to present for permanent records that need to be kept. There is an increase in office supplies and miscellaneous supplies. There is also an increase in the legal notice funding line item because several of the legal notices come from their office during the calendar year.

**0181-Town Office Operations:** In the maintenance and miscellaneous line item, there is \$14,900.00 for replacing the mini-split in the vault in the town clerk's office. This is required to keep the records maintained in a certain temperature. The vault was repaired last spring and it was recommended that it needed to be replaced. The additional funding in this line item is to install additional lighting in the back parking lot. There are not any lights in the back parking lot and it's completely dark at night when staff leave, which creates a safety hazard. There is a possibility of trying to utilize budget dollars this fiscal year for these projects, but that is to be determined. Both of these costs are under the CIP inclusion threshold.



Computer Expense/IT: Novus, the IT company, is expecting an increase of 3%, as well as the cost of hosting services such as Microsoft Office. This is a shared service with the schools (the town is responsible for 53% and the schools are responsible for 47%).

TOB Heating Oil: This line item is an increase; currently the Town is paying \$1.63/\$1.64 for heating oil/diesel fuel. Superintendent Stevens & First Selectwoman Wiczenski were able to lock in this price prior to COVID. New pricing will need to get into effect. Currently estimating \$2.50/gallon. The Town has not yet locked in a price for next fiscal year; there is not an obligation to lock in at a certain date.

**0182-OTH Maintenance**: The only increase in this line item could possibly be a slight increase for heating oil. This building is not typically utilized during the winter.

**0185-Senior Center Operations**: The senior center maintenance/miscellaneous line item is an increase of roughly \$11,500.00. A portion of this funding is replacing the dishwasher in the kitchen (it is a requirement for a commercial dishwasher in order to continue using the facility); the rest of the funding will be used for line striping and resurfacing of the parking lot.

**0233-Eastern Highlands Health District**: The town population has decreased and EHHD is on a per capita basis.

**0235-Fire Main and Hydrants**: No increase is anticipated.

**02-41 Building Official**: The building permit system support increase is the Viewpoint software. There will be a 3% increase in the purchased services contract with the Town of Bolton for the upcoming new contract. The current contract period ends June 2022. This would represent a 3% increase over the current year. This will also decrease the building official travel expense which will be paid per quarter for a vehicle to be used from Bolton.

**0311-Public Works**: Start with the line item that is 0311-133; asking that the current FT Laborer position become a full time Driver position. Currently there is 1 contract plow driver; when we utilize the current laborer to drive a truck, we pay an upgrade in salary for that position. The department would be best served with another Driver. In addition, DPW is asking for 2 additional positions (one additional full time laborer and one mechanic). There has been discussion in the past that if there is a mechanic employed by the Town then more maintenance can be performed in house (saving time that vehicles are out of service). This would bring the Town more in line with other departments (such as Ashford) who have 6 individuals on their DPW staff.

For road maintenance there is a request of an additional \$11,000.000 for replacing driveway aprons, repairing catch basins, repairing around catch basins, putting in curbing, and repair of guardrails. Currently road maintenance is significantly lacking in the current budget.

For public works vehicle maintenance there is a request of an additional \$15,000.000. This could partially be a savings if some of the maintenance was performed in house. Currently there are not the tools to be able to fix some of the maintenance issues.

The tree removal service line item covers the removal of damaged trees from storms, trees that have been taken down due to other accidents, weather related issues, the mitigation of the emerald ash borer and/or issues with gypsy moths). This line item is a request for an additional \$50,000.00. Currently \$62,000.00 has been spent this fiscal year (the Department cannot not take down hazardous trees).

The diesel fuel line item is showing an increase for both fire departments and the public works.

In the parts and supplies line item there is an increase of \$6,000.00 due to the increased cost from vendors for parts and supplies.

There is a decrease in the asphalt and crack seal line item which will be discussed shortly.

For equipment purchase, there is an increase of \$10,000.00 for the purchase of an additional connex box (currently have one for storage) but this second box would be helpful for use with evictions. If there is an eviction in town, the town is liable to hold the property for 15 days at the DPW Garage. If the owner makes good on the money they owe, they can reclaim their property. In other cases, these items are held until auction. Currently the town has been seeing more evictions this year due to the ending of the rental moratorium.

In the snow line item, there is an increase in the snow removal contractor portion. Used an estimate of the 5-year average that has been spent to estimate the upcoming fiscal year costs.

The salt line item represents an increase of \$30,000.00 which is the increase in the cost of treated salt.

There is a recommendation to rename the chip seal line item to road maintenance line item. The town would no longer spend money on a truck rental and oil roller and chipper. This line item would consist of three items: chip seal, asphalt, crack seal. Small increases in this line item over the next few years are significant because they are necessary to allow for better investment and maintenance of the current infrastructure.

Currently in the CIP submission, there is a database system to help in planning of road maintenance and to give data on the current status of roads and the current capacity of what repairs are needed.

**0342-Cemetery:** No increase.

**0351-Transfer Station:** There is a projected increase of \$29,625.00. There is an increase within the temporary help line item to assist with covering of time off with either of the current transfer station operators; this figure was based on a 5-year average. There is an increase of \$5,000.00 in bulky waste disposal and \$20,000.00 in trash removal.

**0811-Social Security:** This line item represents a 5% increase.

**0821-Unemployment:** No increase.

**0831-Employee Insurances:** Health insurance is not anticipating a net increase. There is a 0% increase with medical insurance and a 5% increase in dental and life insurance.

**0841-Pension Fund:** Slight decrease.

**0851-Insurance:** LAP will be a 3% increase.

**0871-Miscellaneous:** This line item is a small increase; would like to begin to recognize our staff and those who have been here a significant amount of time and recognizing their accomplishments. Example of use would be: A selectman retired from the BOS and the Town purchased a plaque to recognize his years of service; a staff member falls ill or experiences a significant loss, we would send flowers.

**0910-Debt Services:** This includes the ACO truck and the SCBA gear for the fire department, the bond on the library and interest. That is listed as a decrease going into the next fiscal year.

**0930-Capital Expenditures:** This number is a placeholder as CIP is currently meeting.



**04-0504 Transfer Out Capital Reserve:** Placeholder for CIP based on Year 2 of the current plan. This will have fluctuations depending on the CIP plan this year.

**03-0507 Transfer Out Housing Authority:** No increase.

**10-0510 Transfer Out Compensated Absences:** No increase.

**11-0511 Transfer Out Dog Fund:** (ACO Budget). This is currently not an increase but their salary does follow the union so there could be a slight increase.

**13-0513 Transfer Out Human Services:** There is an increase of \$19,912.00. Currently this department has a director and an assistant. The assistant works 8 hours a week and is a non-union position. The senior center has had a volunteer since they opened; this incredibly hardworking dedicated individual has decided to retire. The town was very lucky to have a volunteer to work in the senior center daily. Willington Seniors, Inc. is asking for the town to increase the hours of the assistant and to work in the senior center, as well as to still help in the human services department. This current non-union position would most likely need to become a union position. This will also require a job description of this position. The increase for the director's salary is to meet the current needs of the department and to bring this pay more in line with the same size towns. A stipend for a cell phone is also included in this budget because the Director does use her personal cell phone at times for work; but not on a day to day basis.

The increase with this budget is significant; currently it is at 15.8% or \$584,196.00

### **Discussion**

Selectwoman Boritz stated that there is no doubt that all of these things are important and should be happening but there is a need to prioritize. There may be a need to do an unofficial 5-year plan with the department heads that show longer term increases. What are the definite priorities in each department? It may be needed to stagger some of these increases for next year and the year after that.

Selectman Bulick stated that this current budget contains a lot of information to digest and there is a lot of need from all departments. He agreed that Selectwoman Boritz made a good point about the long term goal and where the Town wants to be. He stated that all residents are feeling the pinch, particularly the taxpayers of Willington.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski asked if either of the Selectmen needed any further guidance or information moving forward from any of the departments.

Discussion followed on the hiring of a mechanic for the public works department. Most things that need to be repaired are sent out for that repair. A DPW employee does some of the mechanical work now, but does not have the capacity to do as much as is needed if there was a mechanic. Discussion followed on possibly prioritizing the staffing needs but also continuing with the costs of tree removal and road maintenance operations.

The Board of Selectmen will meet again next Monday at 5:30pm to continue budget discussions. If there are specific questions that need clarifications, department heads can provide those answers.

Selectman Boritz thanked all of the department heads for all of their hard work. Budget season is stressful and hard work and department heads are putting their needs/numbers on paper and concerned about any backlash/frustration that comes along with asking for increased funding but the work is appreciated and it's always advocated for staff putting forth a proposal for what they think they need to run their department optimally. This doesn't mean we can afford it but it does mean we want to hear what that number would be

in an ideal world so that when decisions are being made on what to actually push forward, it is known what is being done. She stated that she really appreciates the work and thank you for taking the time to be thoughtful and put this on paper.

Selectman Bulick moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:29 PM.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Kelsey Allard

Recording Secretary

Town of Willington

RECEIVED  
WILLINGTON, CT.

2022 JAN 28 P 1:04

  
TOWN CLERK