

# Town of Willington

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Board of Selectmen  
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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SPECIAL Meeting Minutes

In person; TOB, Downstairs Room & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

March 21, 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 and Selectman Bulick and residents in person and via Zoom.

### Pledge of Allegiance

### Approval of Minutes

Selectman Bulick moved to approve the budget meeting minutes of February 22, 2022, as written.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski seconded the motion.

3 Yes (Boritz, Bulick & Wiecenski) 0 No. Motion carried.

Selectman Bulick moved to approve the regular meeting minutes of March 7, 2022, as written.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski seconded the motion.

3 Yes (Boritz, Bulick & Wiecenski) 0 No. Motion carried.

### Present To Speak

None.

### Correspondence

Correspondence list presented to the BOS; all correspondence is on file in the First Selectwoman's Office.

### First Selectwoman's Status Report

- A. **STEAP Grant:** No new update; still working with the State contract specialist.
- B. **School Building Committee:** The School Building Committee met on March 16th and discussed the process of the Ed specs. The Board of Education determines the Ed specs for any given project; the BOE should be meeting on April 5th for this discussion. The next meeting for the SBC will be Wednesday, April 5th at 6:30pm.
- C. **LOTICIP:** This is for the work from Hall School down to the Mills that involves work with the sidewalks. The RFP is being finalized to go out to bid on the design work.
- D. **Truck Lease:** Still awaiting the F-350; no new information available.
- E. **ARPA:** There is a meeting tonight at 6:30pm for a public hearing for items that have been brought to the ARPA Commission for consideration. There could be actions on these items this evening.

- F. Union Negotiations:** As of late this afternoon, the documents are being prepared and hopefully there will be a final document by the end of this week.
- G. Staffing:** Regretfully, the Public Works Director has submitted his resignation effective April 8th. The Town will need to begin the search process for his replacement.
- H. COVID-19 Update:** The case rates per 100,000 have slightly increased so the town is back in the Yellow Category; still encouraging residents to be cautious at this time. As of 03/17/2022, the Town has a 64.0% fully vaccinated rate.

### **Public Works**

DPW Director Sposato reported a list of the items performed at Public Works recently:

- Emptied the trash at the RRAC;
- Finished the drainage project on Mirtl Road;
- Washed the trucks;
- Cleaned the public works garage;
- Picked up the curbing around the Town that was broken by the plows this Winter;
- Serviced the wood chipper;
- Chipped brush around town (had some trees fall during the most recent wind storm);
- Started to grade the gravel roads, weather permitting;
- Cleaned off catch basins again;
- Roadside mowing is still occurring around town;
- Installed the speed monitoring sign on Village Hill and the fastest speed recorded was 74mph around 4:30pm; and,
- Picked up the trash on Spak Road that someone had dumped.

### **Old Business**

#### **A. Approve Board of Selectmen's Budget for submission to the BOF**

The previously agreed upon budget has now changed due to three reasons. The first change is that the fuel prices have now officially been locked into contract; these prices are \$2.94 for heating oil and \$2.97 for diesel fuel instead of the projected \$2.50 that was budgeted previously. The second change was a \$3.00 change for Eastern Highlands Health District. And the third change was the funding of the Human Services Director increase, as well as the Human Services Assistant position increase, which is to be submitted/requested for ARPA funding. Prior to the Board of Finance meeting, the budget was updated to reflect these changes so that the BOF received the most up to date information with the current budget of \$4,078,821.00.

**First Selectwoman Wiczenski moved that the Board of Selectmen approve the current number that's before the Board of Finance at \$4,078,821.00.**  
**Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.**

**Discussion:** Selectman Bulick stated that the Board of Finance seemed concerned about the increase in funding/spending of 10%. Selectwoman Boritz stated that there have been numerous budget workshops and extensive conversations in regards to the budget over the last three months; there is concern that the number of the percentage is being looked at instead of looking at what each percentage actually reflects and what it would mean the town is losing if those parts of the budget is cut. Selectwoman Boritz stated that all three selectmen had agreed to the budget during the BOS meeting but then not all three supported the budget in front of the BOF meeting. First Selectwoman Wiecenski agreed that the BOF needs to look at what the percentages reflect and not just the percentage increase. Selectman Bulick suggested a few areas that he believed could be cut including: the potential for the employee insurance line item to be decreased, decreasing the CIP requests and only include a 3% increase this year, and decreasing the Accounting Services budget. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the increase in the Accounting Services line item is for the addition of the position for the Assistant Business Manager which was agreed upon last year and is being fully funded for the first time in this budget, as well as the proposed salary increases for the other finance department positions, and the increase in the accounting software support at 4.6% from last year.

Discussion continued on other items in the budget that had percentage increases this year, such as the Revenue Collector's budget, the Assessor's budget and the CIP budget. Multiple residents have had significant concerns with the Assessor's office and there needs to be an Assessor in the office who works more hours and is getting the job done and meeting the needs of the residents. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the increase in the CIP budget is an increase of \$64,000.00 from last year's budget. Discussion was held on the Public Works budget and the need for the tree budget line item to not be underfunded this year, as well as the need to continue serious road maintenance. The current situation with Moose Meadow Road is a prime example of the need to maintain the roads. Selectwoman Boritz stated that last year, the Selectmen agreed that the money should not have been removed from the tree trimming budget after the fact and that the town cannot keep repeating the same mistakes and end up in the same place each year.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski suggested asking the Board of Finance to send this current budget to the voters of Willington; there is a 3.9% increase in the budget overall with both the general government and the school.

Discussion was held on the increase in the Senior Center budget and if the work for the parking lot can be put off or if it may be a safety concern. Selectman Bulick inquired about the town counsel increase and First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated this is an average of the last five years of the town counsel budget, this is not a known expense that can be fully budgeted each year. Selectwoman Boritz stated that the Board should wait until BOF gives the BOS guidance of what they believe should be cut/removed from the current budget if necessary. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that this budget is already a reduction from the starting point, as the Public Works budget was cut already earlier in this cycle with the road maintenance budget in prior meetings and many of the Town departments have gone back through their budgets over the last few months to see where else they could cut from.

**Vote: 2 Yes (Boritz & Wiecenski) 1 No (Bulick). Motion carries.**

#### **B. Moose Meadow Road damage/repair**

The Moose Meadow Road repair project was discussed; the quote that was previously received that had the fixed cost is still the lowest vendor quote. First Selectwoman Wiecenski suggested adding a contingency fee which would be a total cost of \$343,000.00 utilizing the initial proposal and a maximum of a 15% contingency.

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to formally ask the Board of Finance to appropriate \$350,000.00 for the repair of a 3,900-foot section of Moose Meadow Road.**

**Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.**

**Discussion:** This project would be to repair the road as soon as possible this fiscal year, instead of waiting until July 1. The town procurement policy is to utilize a state approved vendor or to receive three quotes

for the project. This step of the process is to allocate the funding first and then securing the vendor will come after.

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

### New Business

#### **A. Appointments**

##### **a. School Building Committee Recording Secretary**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Nicole Fusco, as the School Building Committee recording secretary; effective retroactive to December 15, 2021 – expiring June 30, 2022.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

##### **b. Board of Finance Recording Secretary**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Samantha Sperry, as the Board of Finance recording secretary; effective immediately – expiring June 30, 2022.

#### **B. Tax Refunds**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund Knight & Sons Construction Corporation a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$101.96.

Selectman Bulick seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund Financial Services Vehicle Trust a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$562.49.

Selectman Bulick seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund Frank R. Simlick Sr. a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$22.34.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund Frank R. Simlick Sr. a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$63.58.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund Frank R. Simlick Sr. a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$26.39.

Selectman Bulick seconded the motion.

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

#### **C. Speeding on town roads**

Speeding on town roads was discussed briefly at prior meetings; recently there was a serious accident in the Village Hill neighborhood which was likely a result of speed. The car was in multiple pieces and was significant and it seems as though excessive speed was the cause. There was also recently an accident on 320 which involved a car versus pedestrian that was possibly speed related. The DPW crew has installed the speed radar signs but without waiting for the speed data to come in, the First Selectwoman's Office has formally requested Troop C to increase patrols in the area. The DPW crew installed the speed sign in the Village Hill area and at 4:30pm, the highest speed was already 74 miles per hour, clocked by speed radar. This road is not just our residents driving on it, as this is a through way coming out of Stafford as well. Other

problem areas include St. Moritz Circle, Village Hill Road, and Schofield Road. Ultimately, the Board may need to look at other sources of funding for speed radar by the police; these issues are taken seriously, but without a police force, the Town has to work with Troop C to increase the patrols.

### **Present to Speak**

Herb Klei, Turnpike Road: I had heard that you had mentioned the Assessor and that's what I am here about. The difference in the assessments on the industrial land on Turnpike Road on various lots, is so egregious and so wrong that I've been trying to deal with the Assessor since last October/November. I talked to him then and he said he would look at it and call me in January. I never heard from him. In January, I spoke to him again and told him that he never called me. He said he would call me within another week. I never heard from him again. Last week I came up here to talk to him and now I find that he is gone. There is a lady in the Assessor's Office who worked in the Assessor's office before who said she would call me, but I haven't heard from her yet. The problem is my son bought one of the industrial lots, it's assessed at \$37,000.00. The other lots along the line are all industrial and they are assessed at \$1,900.00. The disparity is so egregious that I've got to talk to somebody. I can tell you what the problem is; the problem is that on my son's lot that he bought, there is domestic criteria on industrial land and you can't do that. By Zoning, you can't build a house on an industrial land.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski assured Mr. Klei that by the end of the day tomorrow (Tuesday) he would hear back from the First Selectwoman's Office to resolve his concerns after she speaks with the Assistants in the Assessor's office to fix this issue. First Selectwoman Wiecenski apologized to Mr. Klei for the issues he has been having and stated that there is absolutely no excuse for the former assessor not responding. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that there have been many issues found since the former assessor left the job and that staff has been working to resolve them.

Suzanne Chapman: My name is Suzanne Chapman. I have been a resident of Willington since 1987. I have worked for the Town and the Board of Education, both as an employee and an elected official since 1988. I currently serve as the Registrar of Voters. I have a fairly clear understanding of how the town operates financially. I had intended to make my comments at the beginning of the meeting, but I forgot about the time change so I apologize if anything is redundant and I'm going to try and be really fast because I know we are in a rush. Every year the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance request that department heads submit budget proposals outlining what they NEED to efficiently and responsibly operate. And the departments comply. They attend meetings and defend their budgets, explain their requests and outline the importance of what they are asking for. Then we start to hear the same old things. The faces at the table change, but the words are the same. Keep spending flat, we must support our infrastructure, we can't afford it, put it in CIP (like roads for 30 years), keep the mill rate flat, residents on fixed incomes can't pay, can't raise taxes this year because – pandemic, economy, inflation, war – pick a reason, there's always something. This town does not value its assets. There isn't a town owned building that is not in need of repair. I know, I've worked in them. The town's biggest and most undervalued asset is its employees. This becomes glaringly obvious every year at budget season when experienced, qualified people are asked what they need and slapped down. Time and time again. Always trying to find a cheap way out, a band aid to fix things for now. A prime example is the difficulty we have had finding a qualified assessor. Without a strong and well-functioning Assessor's and Revenue Collector's office, what do we have? No taxes assessed equals no taxes collected. I urge you to properly fund these offices. And I'm thankful that you've sent your budget forward without further cuts. I implore you as a Board to listen to the people that work for you. This town cannot continue to function and thrive unless it is properly funded. No, I don't necessarily want my taxes to go up, but I want Willington to thrive. Value your assets, value your staff. Submit a budget that is what we need to thrive. If not us, then who? And if not now, then when? Thank you.

Matt Clark, 42 Burt Latham Road, Willington: I am sorry for not attending at the very beginning of the meeting. I also didn't see where the meeting had changed to make room for the covid relief board meeting.

The town budget increase for this year, I would like to see it stay in line with inflation; I'd like to see it similar to the 4 or 5% increases the surrounding towns are approving. I think a 10% increase is too high. I think a 4 or 5% is much more appropriate given that we have had a 3% increase in the Grand List and that was mostly due to asset inflation. Just to be clear, I am not saying that we should bargain from there, I think we should end up at 4 or 5%. I also don't think we should be spending or using one-time emergency Covid funds to pay for new town and government jobs. Every single expert I've talked to and that I've read about, they all say this is bad financial management so I wouldn't do that. And as a matter of fact, during the Board of Finance meeting, someone said that they were using Covid funds to ease the new position so that it isn't so hard on taxpayers. I think hiding increases in spending by paying for it with emergency Covid funds is not a good idea and it's not good financial management. I would limit the capital spending to 2% until we know how the town is going to move forward with our schools. Mismanagement by the Superintendent and the Town now means we have leaking roofs apparently, even after the town has approved money to fix them in a town meeting. So apparently we are not going to move forward with that because we're not going to get reimbursed while this town issues or the new school issues for us are before the state. So thank you.

Peter Latincsics, 97 Trask Road: I'll be brief because I want to get to the ARPA meeting too, but I am disappointed that the Board of Selectmen didn't respond to what I thought was direction from the Board of Finance that the increases are large that are being proposed. I understand all the needs you've identified and the enthusiasm that you have for them. A 10% increase in spending is significant and is over a 2 mill increase. I would add that it's easy to disparage the past year's town governments and town residents but I think the Town of Willington has done fairly well speaking for an older generation of voters and you might consider thinking about how we got here as you move forward. Thank you very much.

#### **Good & Welfare**

Once again, please continue to support our small businesses and restaurants in town.

Willington Day will be back in May this year, as well as the Willington PTA 5K run which will both be held on May 28th. The annual Memorial Day Observance/Parade will be held on Monday, May 30th.

Mobile FoodShare will continue at the TOB next Wednesday, March 30th from 11:00am to 11:30am as a drive through model. This is open to all residents.

For those on the current meeting for BOS, this meeting will be ended and then the online meeting link will be rejoined upstairs in the Common Room for the ARPA Special Meeting/Public Hearing.

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:39 PM.**

**Selectman Bulick seconded the motion.**

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Kelsey Allard  
Recording Secretary  
Town of Willington

RECEIVED  
WILLINGTON, CT.

2022 APR 20 P 2:00

  
TOWN CLERK