

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN Special Meeting Minutes

Board of Selectmen  
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**Town Office Building  
Selectmen's Conference Room**

**December 10, 2018  
5:30 PM**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM with Selectman Blessington, Selectwoman Makuch and Revenue Collector, Lisa Madden.

### A. Discussion – Personnel Matter: Revenue Collector Position

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that this had been discussed at the meeting last week. She handed documentation given by the Revenue Collector to the Selectmen for review. Since the Assistant Revenue Collector has retired, the Collector determined that she does not need to fill the part time position due to office efficiencies. The Selectmen had asked to hold a separate discussion for the request for the Revenue Collector to increase the hours of the position from 30 to 35 per week; bringing it up to full time.

In the documentation that was submitted, there was a letter, written by the Revenue Collector as well as a list of job duties that were performed by the Assistant; the day to day tasks done in the Tax office and things that the Revenue Collector will now be doing because she will be on her own.

Revenue Collector Lisa Madden stated that she wanted to have this discussion in public as it is not about her, but the position. This way, it will not be a surprise to the Board of Finance when the budget is being discussed.

Ms. Madden stated she has been with the Town for 3 years. She worked very well with Ms. Vogel and they had the highest collection rate in the Town's history and they created many efficiencies along the way such as electronic payments (people are able to pay their taxes online) and they communicate more with the public than ever before. Over time, with the efficiencies in place, the Assistant ended up having less day to day work to perform. Ms. Madden then stated when she was informed that Ms. Vogel was planning her retirement, Ms. Madden decided that there wasn't enough work in the office to keep someone busy for 22 hours per week. She then thought the best idea would be to bring our Tax Office up with the rest of the towns in Tolland County. Ms. Madden noted that almost all of the towns in the State have a full time Revenue Collector. She then clarified that this will allow her to be in the office during public hours but will also allot time for her to do things when the office is closed; noting that the Revenue Collector does need down time each week to process payments and research without disruption. Since she is not asking to keep the part time position, she will only need a few hours here and there for clerical help with the exception of June, July and August, when it is their highest collection months. She added that she will be saving the Town approximately \$48,000 in the department by not filling the position.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified: if we do not fill the part time position, there will be savings in the Revenue Collection Department, but there will be additional cost to the Town. The increase would be from bringing a part time position up to full time (for benefit purposes). This is not an overall savings and this is something the Selectmen have to look at moving forward.

Selectman Blessington stated this concerns him because it is being sold as we are going to save money, but in reality it will cost more. First Selectwoman Wiecenski agreed and said while the part time position would no

longer come out of the Revenue Department, the part time salary and benefits would just be moved to the Selectmen's budget.

Ms. Madden stated that she is just trying to think of what would be best for the Town and it is not for her personally. She sees that other departments need help and this is an opportunity to do so.

Selectman Blessington argued that if something were to happen, and the Revenue Collector had to be on leave for several months, the Assistant would be here and able to run the department in your absence. Ms. Madden stated although the Assistant was able to run the department, there are still some things that she could not do and needed help with. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that is something we will need to take into account. She then added that we would be looking for a highly qualified person to fill the new position so they would be able to learn more intricate details of each office and be able to cover them efficiently.

Selectman Blessington said he would like to see the Assistants in each Department be able to take the job over if the Department head were to leave; or be able to do the job as a whole in the event that the Department head is out for an extended period of time. This never seems to happen and this disturbs him. Ms. Madden clarified that some people do not aspire to become the Department Head; they are happy with what they are doing and don't want the responsibilities. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that all of the Assistant positions are in the union. It is not a requirement that they become certified and now we are asking them to perform work that may not be in their union-authorized job description. She added that it gets tricky because now we are asking for more certified people, we already know we are behind in salaries and benefits – now we are asking them for more qualifications for less money – we are going to narrow our pool even more. We need to know what we think we can do moving forward.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we are heading into budget season. She thinks we might be able to find some money to cover the increase now, but is unsure of how things are going to look after July 1<sup>st</sup>. She is looking to see if the Selectmen are in support of this - if we can agree upon a budget. She then added that we will also need to take into consideration that the Board of Finance has line-item control over our budget and might not see the same value as we do when voting on the budget. Ms. Madden stated this is exactly why she did not want this to be discussed in Executive Session.

Selectwoman Makuch stated that we have a hard time recruiting people to come work in Willington because the pay is low and the benefits are not great as they are part time. She believes we should do as much as we can to ensure that every position can be as full and robust and appealing as possible. If we want to attract high quality professional people, we need to be more appealing – and right now we are not. She noted that we have recently seen how difficult it can be to find a qualified candidate who is willing to work here for the pay we offer. She added that she is however having difficulty with the fact that the Selectmen were told that we don't need the extra help, but do need the extra hours. – it is harder to justify and figure out how to handle that because it sounds like there is a need for someone to be there to help out. First Selectwoman Wiecenski agreed that she too, has struggled with the justification. Ms. Madden had brought the idea to her almost a year ago, proposing that she would not need to fill the position due to efficiencies. The conversation that did not happen was that she felt that she would need the additional 5 hours per week – that was not verbalized.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she had been thinking of the part time (floater) position for quite some time, not thinking we would be adding anything additional. The request of an additional hours threw a curve-ball into the mix for sure. Ms. Madden clarified that she felt it made sense that she would be asking for the additional hours because she has found efficiencies in other areas. First Selectwoman Wiecenski agreed that it makes sense, however she did not ask for her to take on the extra work. The thought process was if you can do it, and it saves the Town money, so let's move forward. She then clarified that she did not offer up more (salary/hours) because we just don't have it and it wasn't budgeted.

Selectwoman Makuch clarified that if there is justification for the work, that is fine, but if there is justification for the work with a caveat, the caveat must be attached to the initial statement.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she sits on both sides of this discussion. Lisa could have ignored the fact that we don't need someone for 22 hours and could have gone status quo and filled the position. If she leaves us, what do we do then? Do we value the work that she is doing now? - she is torn by this -- we have an experienced collector who is doing the work. Ms. Madden added that most of the surrounding towns have full time Collectors.

The part time (floater) position was then discussed. This is a part-time (22 hours per week) union position. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she has been working with the union on developing the job description and they have been open to the idea.

Selectman Blessington said as the old saying goes -- "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" so far it has not been broke -- everything has been going fine over there. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she feels it has been going better over the past few years as it is more efficient and we have high quality employees. She added what she cannot ignore is that we also agreed most of the positions are under-paid and we need to keep that in mind. Lisa ended up taking over the View Point software implementation with a successful transition.

Selectwoman Makuch said it would be helpful for her to be able to look at a Town Org-Chart - who is in the union, who is not and their pay scale -- an overall picture of the workforce so she can better research this. She added that all of these considerations are important -- it is bigger than just one department. She then asked what the specific numbers we would be looking at with the proposed increase? First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she had not received that from the Business Manager as of yet, but will forward that on once we get the information.

Selectman Blessington added that part of the selling point for this is that we need to mention that she received a \$4,000 salary increase in July. He then asked why we wouldn't be able to fill the existing position as it is and add the various office support tasks to the Assistant Tax Collector position? First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that the job description for that position is very clearly marked and the "non-union" work is not allowed to be done under that jurisdiction. Selectman Blessington then said that we are not going to be saving any money. He added that he would like to see it filled as it stands. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then asked if what he is saying is to fill a position that the Revenue Collector is saying we do not need and hope that they will do other things? Selectman Blessington said yes -- instead of creating and hiring a new position and pay that plus an increase in hours, we are going to see a huge increase. First Selectwoman Wiecenski said she has a hard time thinking we should go back knowing we won't be able to keep that person busy for the full amount of time. -- she does not think that would be the best option for the town. She added she thinks it is broke and we should fix it. It would be a poor use of resources hiring someone to work for 22 hours but they wouldn't be working the entire time.

Selectwoman Makuch stated that she does not feel that she would be able to make a decision on this right now. She wants to know what is in the current budget, because if the money isn't in there to support it, it is a moot point. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that there is some money in the Revenue Collection Department and there is some in the Selectmen's budget, but that would most likely only cover the salary until July 1<sup>st</sup>. The Board of Finance might not be in favor of that after that point.

Selectwoman Makuch asked if we would be able to do an interim to see if it will even work? At that point, then you will have time to figure out if it is even possible that the work can be handled alone. Ms. Madden said she has been doing fine -- and she likes to be busy. First Selectwoman Wiecenski cautioned that the budget process begins now and we will know by March if the Board of Finance is in agreement and supports it as well.

Selectman Blessington then asked if we hire a part time office position (floater) -- what is that person going to be doing? First Selectwoman Wiecenski went over a list of things; stating that they would be performing various

office duties to cover multiple departments when needed. Selectwoman Makuch clarified that we will need to very clearly define and outline the various tasks. Some examples would be to publish the Willington Wire, assist the Assessor during their busy season, distribute the mail, type letters, answer the phone and greet people and will perform standard office work for the Tax office during their busy collection months (to name a few). The salary will come out of the Selectmen's budget and they will answer to one Department Head. Selectwoman Makuch added that the description should be consistent among all of the departments.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that she has seen all of the negatives that have been pointed out – everything was working well the way it was and yes, there was already a salary increase in July. We would be seeing an increase in a line item. But, do we value the employees that we do have? How would we move forward if they leave – we have been saying that we want high quality workers. She added the only other option would be to fill the position as it always has been and keep the Revenue Collector at 30 hours. Ms. Madden then stated that you would need to find someone to cover the office on Monday nights. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that the thought process is that the Revenue Collector would be here working while the building is open and that is something else that would have to be worked out.

Selectwoman Makuch asked if we need to make a decision on this right now? She added that she needs to research this further. First Selectwoman Wiecenski said no, not right now, but we will have to act on it one way or another. Selectwoman Makuch said that we need to see where the floater position would fit in as well and she needs to look at a more comprehensive plan.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she will get the information for Selectwoman Makuch and the Selectmen will reconvene at a different time. The Selectmen can add it to their regular agenda or hold a special meeting. The regular meeting on December 17<sup>th</sup> might be moved earlier so they can have time to hold discussions. Selectwoman Makuch will advise if she has had enough time to review and decide. Otherwise, the next regular meeting will be held on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

#### B. Executive Session: Personnel Matter

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to go into Executive Session regarding a personnel matter and invited the Office Manager, Robin Campbell.**

**Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.**

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

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to come out of Executive Session at 7:21 PM**

**Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.**

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the personnel matters discussed tonight will be further discussed at the next Selectmen's meeting on December 17, 2018. The meeting might be called earlier than usual (at 5:30 PM) to accommodate time for discussions prior to adjourning to attend the public hearing in Ashford regarding the Cadlerock property.

**Selectman Blessington moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 P.M.**

**Selectwoman Makuch seconded the motion.**

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

Respectfully Submitted:

*Robin Campbell*

Recording Secretary

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT  
December 11, 2018  
12:15 pm *Marian Gonzalez*