

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
40 Old Farms Road
Willington, CT 06279
(860) 487-3100
(860) 487-3103 Fax
www.willingtonct.org

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes
Lower Level Conference Room

April 1, 2019
6:30 PM

**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 Boritz* & Blessington, and residents. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Please note name change from Selectwoman Makuch to Boritz as noted in the March 18, 2019 meeting.*

Approval of Minutes:

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of March 18, 2019 with the following edits: correct the spelling of Phil Monty's name (should be Monty not Monte); Page 7; 4th paragraph should read Selectman Blessington suggested setting up a meeting with Planning Zoning or their representatives and the First Selectman to meet with Mr. Berg. (add First Selectman to the sentence).

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Present to Speak

Rosa Chinchilla of 5 Common Road complained of loud noise coming from 232 Tolland Turnpike. Members and residents along the Historic District have held discussions regarding the noise to see if something can be done. The noise seems to be of a generator and Ms. Chinchilla noted that there is also a light beaming from the barn in which shines into her house. She asked if anything has come about of the sound ordinance and if anything could be done about this.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the Noise Ordinance has not moved forward and that Ms. Chinchilla should contact the authorities, if she finds the noise to be a nuisance after a certain hour of the night and that has always been an option for any resident.

Correspondence

A list of Correspondence was available for the Selectmen.

First Selectman's Status Report

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she will defer to the items that will be discussed along the agenda.

Public Works

Troy Sposato was present. He stated that a used sweeper has been purchased and should be delivered by Friday. The Steps on the front of the building are in the process of being replaced. The faulty steps have been demolished and the contractor plans to pour new concrete tomorrow. In addition the rails will be fixed this

week ask well. The crew fixed a pipe on Busse Road that had collapsed and they were also fixing curbing around town. Lastly, they fixed a spring in the doors at the garage.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she appreciates that Troy jumped right into assist with finishing up the ramp project.

New Business

A. Appointment

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that we were going to appoint a new Revenue Collector, however today First Selectwoman Wiecenski received a letter declining the offer from Ms. Stebbins. Although Ms. Stebbins was our first choice the insurance that we offer for part time employees was a big factor in her decision. The cost for a single employee per pay period is \$231.46. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then noted that we currently do not have any part time employees who take the town insurance and she believes affordability is the factor.

Going forward, First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that we need to review the position to see if it needs more than 30 hours; which will bring it to full time or look at the way we offer insurance to incoming employees. Right now we are going to have to go back to the drawing board. There was a large gap between the first and second candidates and not sure if the second choice would be the right fit. If we repost the job we are not sure what pool we are going to get and also need to consider if 30 hours will be enough for a new employee who does not have the experience; especially since we are dropping the assistant's hours down from 27 to 12 hours per week. That is something to think about going forward.

Selectwoman Boritz suggested pulling the initial committee back together again to hold discussions about the remaining candidates and if it is possible to pull from there or if we want to re-advertise. Selectman Blessington was in agreement.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski said she had hoped to have better news. The interview panel will meet soon to discuss how to move forward.

B. Emergency Vehicle Pre-Emption Equipment

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted in March, she received communication from the DOT to herself and the Fire Marshall regarding the traffic signal equipment at the intersection of Routes 32 and 74; which is slated for replacement. As part of the replacement, the State would be installing emergency vehicle pre-emption equipment. The town would then be responsible for ownership and future maintenance of the equipment.

Richard Palmer, Town of Willington Fire Marshall was present. He noted that we are talking about an emitter that is installed in the emergency apparatus, which can control the traffic lights at intersections. He noted that a lot of our neighboring municipalities have these transponders on their emergency vehicles and have been using them for a while. It is important for them to be able to control dangerous intersections while in an emergency situation. These emitters can work on any receiver in the state.

Mr. Palmer noted that the emitters are being offered free to the town, however the installation will be costly; and could run between \$350 on the smaller vehicles up to \$900 for the larger apparatus. He then explained that the installation must be done by an authorized installer; that is why it is so expensive. He then noted that it is a public safety feature and recommends that we take part of this program; beginning with 4 or 5 of them now in this fiscal and the remainder after July 1st (next fiscal year).

First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked Mr. Palmer for his research on this. She added that we have asked to see what other towns have paid for maintenance on these devices, and have not received any feedback; because none

of them have had to pay for maintenance as of yet; and some it has been about 3 years. It is unclear what they have budgeted for, in the event they must perform maintenance.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that it is important to note that any apparatus (from any town) will also be able to control the intersections while crossing through town; noting that Route 74 and 32 is a dangerous intersection. She then noted that she is concerned that we did not budget for the installation – but the reasoning is because we just received this information (and offer of the free devices) about a week and a half ago. She then asked if both departments would be in favor of this and if they would be able to absorb the cost of installation on their vehicles this fiscal year.

Stuart Cobb, Emergency Management Director noted that the Route 74/32 intersection is now more dangerous and near impossible for the Ambulance to cross over now that the island was lengthened in front of Dunkin Donuts. He said especially if there are a few cars sitting at the intersection; the ambulance is trying to go through; they ultimately have to push the cars through the intersection so it can pass or they have to drive on the left side of the island; leaving another dangerous situation or they just sit there until the light changes. By having control of the light will make it easier and safer for all. He then added that WFD#1 would be able to support a few vehicles and suggested the Ambulance be the first to have the emitter installed.

Selectman Blessington asked how many vehicles would need this? Mr. Cobb stated that WFD#1 has 5 and Tom Snyder noted that WHFD has 5 as well; a total of 10. In order to receive the emitters; the town must enter into the Maintenance Agreement first.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted if we decide to enter into the agreement; we should agree on that as a board. Selectwoman Boritz cautioned that we need to see the agreement before we decide. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she will see if she can get the documents so we can review further.

C. WHFD – Property Purchase Request

The Selectmen (along with the Board of Finance) received a letter from Willington Hill Fire Department dated March 28, 2019; noting interest in purchasing the property (formerly known as the St. Jude church and rectory) which has been for sale for a while.

WHFD Chief Tom Snyder was in attendance to speak to the letter. Chief Snyder noted that the Hill Fire Department received a large donation many years ago and that money has been built up over the years from investing as well as holding several fundraisers throughout the year; such as the Egg Hunt; chicken BBQ, etc. to hall rentals to help keep growing their funds. They now have an opportunity to purchase the land across the street; which originally had been listed at \$675,000. After waiting it out for a while, the Department had begun to hold conversations with the Diocese and the Realtor which kept going back and forth until last Monday, where the Department made one last final offer and it was accepted. Chief Snyder noted that the final offer was basically all they had to offer but it is too good to pass up. Per Chief Snyder, the current Fire Hall has concrete issues (not crumbling; but other issues); parking lot issues, a leaky roof and plumbing to name a few problems. They have LoCIP funding to go towards the parking lot repaving project which has not happened yet.

As the offer had been accepted; the Realtor had notified the Department that other offers had come in; higher than what they had agreed upon which made the Department move quickly and entered into an agreement to purchase at the cost of \$350,000. Chief Snyder stated that the Department is hopeful that they will be able to work with the Board of Finance & Selectmen to secure the property and assist with maintenance costs.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski asked Chief Snyder if the Department is looking for the Town to purchase the property? Chief Snyder noted that they listed three options in the letter.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then read the suggested financial options as outlined in the letter:

1. *The Town funds the purchase entirely; potentially, this puts the property in town title and control and repays the Association its deposit money.*
2. *The town and the Association share the purchase price; will require a modification to the existing fire services contract or a separate agreement to clarify cost share; title- holding expectations, etc.*

First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that the Town currently has an agreement with Willington Hill Fire Department; not the Association. Anything having to do with the Association would require a modification to the agreement.

3. *The Association attempts to pay the entire purchase price privately; this will be a big lift for the Association; requiring some combination of existing funds, financing, large donations, angel investors, etc. This puts the Association in full control of the title, but is very costly and may not be possible.*

Selectwoman Boritz then asked if they go with the third option, the assumption would be that there would be no money left to renovate or turn it into a firehouse. Chief Snyder agreed; noting it would just be to secure the property as is and they would have to look to bonding in the future for a new firehouse. He then added that the Hill F.D. has a submission on the CIP plan for a new firehouse in the out years of about \$5.5 million; but if this purchase is put in place, the amount would be essentially cut in half because there is already a small portion of a building on the lot already. First Selectwoman Wiecenski cautioned that the CIP request did not include a property purchase; even though it might have been assumed by the Department; it was not spelled out or clearly mentioned. She then clarified that the LoCIP funding for the parking lot improvement would not be able to be used towards this purchase. If that project is not done the LoCIP funds will be returned to the pool for another project that has already been approved by CIP. Chief Snyder stated that the Department is open to hold discussions on this. They are just waiting to see what the Selectmen and Board of Finance want to do.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted while this land is valuable to the town, she is not sure that the town is in the position to purchase land specifically earmarked for a new firehouse. In addition, at one of the recent meetings the discussion of consolidation was revisited and both departments seemed to be on board with the communication. If we are going to continue that conversation, then where does a new fire house fit into the mix? She then warned that a bigger discussion needs to be held and we are several steps away from the town saying that we want to purchase this piece of property. She clarified that the offer was made between the Willington Hill Fire Association and the Realtor – not the Town. She then added that she is not sure that the Town is ready to move as quickly as the offer is valid.

Selectwoman Boritz agreed with First Selectwoman Wiecenski's sentiment - a lot of discussions will need to happen before we have an end result. She then noted that a year and a half ago, the Selectmen had held discussions regarding the same piece of property and we discussed that it is valuable; especially since we have had issues with this building here it would be nice in an ideal world to just purchase it and put a new TOB on it. She added that she is not sure of how much time the Department has to move on this. Chief Snyder noted that the Department has 60 days with the deposit they wrote and have another 60 days to close on the property and within that timeframe the plan was to approach the Selectmen and the BOF to bring them on board. He then noted that they just want to secure the property at first knowing that a future fire house could be several years away. The cost to the town at this point could be relatively minor and they could potentially reimburse the town in the future. Chief Snyder noted that the Department is more than willing to come up with the money that they built up to stay in the property as another investment as long as the town is on board with helping to secure it so it doesn't go to anyone else.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then warned if the town were to purchase it, then the town would decide on how that property would be used, cautioning that a new fire house would be several years out in the future. Chief

Snyder noted that the Association has secured the property in the Departments name and they would like to be under a contract with the town or whoever to say that it is for the Department's use.

Selectman Blessington asked if the Church would be turned into a new firehouse? Chief Snyder said yes and the house would be kept intact and used as a rental to generate some income. The church would be renovated to use as a hall to be rented out and generate income until they are able to add on.

Selectman Blessington stated that it seems as though they might be jumping the gun and that is an awful lot of money to spend on something that we are not sure where we are going to go with – especially since the discussions of a central location had been held if consolidation were to happen. We need to figure out how much two new roofs are going to cost on both schools; we have roads that really need to be fixed – these things are ahead of a new fire house on the priority list. If the Department purchases it then you are going to spend all of your savings in the hopes that someday you will use it; but he does not see it will be a call for the town to buy and hold it or even take over the maintenance – it just doesn't seem like a good idea.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski added that she supports the idea of being able to use the property, but doesn't think we are anywhere near being able to sign up to use it for a future firehouse- especially within the timeframe that they want to move. She then warned that the property might have zoning restrictions associated with it. Chief Snyder stated that he had spoken with Planning and Zoning. The house is residential – and is fine to rent as such. They would have to pull permits to use the church as a hall. Selectman Blessington asked if they would need to put a driveway in for the house. Chief Snyder said as of now, no they would be able to rent it as is.

Chief Snyder clarified that the Department is in no means looking for the town to commit to building them a new fire house – they are looking to lock in the land. He added even if the land were to sit for a long period of time, they would maintain it and it would hopefully grow in value and they could potentially turn around and sell it for more than they purchased it for. He added that they just wanted to begin the discussions. They are hopeful to get on the next Board of Finance Agenda and hold discussions there as well. First Selectwoman Wiczenski cautioned that the town side of the purchase wouldn't go through the Board of Finance at this point; it needs to go through the Selectmen and to Town Meeting as the determining factors. She then noted that the CIP Committee held very difficult discussions and decisions about not funding three critical road projects and two of those roads have been on the plan for over 25 years. She said she is not able to justify purchasing a piece of property that is the same cost of fixing one of those roads. If the Fire Department had a plan in place and was waiting for the right piece of property to come along, then she could see jumping on it and would look at it very differently. She added that she does not think that they have enough time to move within 120 days to hold all of the discussions that would need to be held.

Selectwoman Boritz then stated that the risk of purchasing the property at this point is on the Fire Department and if the Association decides to purchase the property, she is hopeful Association might be able to assist the town to be able to use the space in the future.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski added that we would have jumped on the property a year ago because she said she can think of several immediate uses for the property; that would benefit the community as a whole; if we had the funding, but those road projects and the schools needing construction. At this point because the contract is between the Town and the Fire Department; not the Association; there might be some gray areas involved if they end up purchasing the property.

Selectman Blessington then warned that the property has been on the market for quite some time, and no one has jumped on it, and keep in mind that it could become a burden.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski then stated that doesn't know if she is saying no, but she is by no means saying yes to this right now.

Chief Snyder stated that he will keep meeting with the boards and answer any questions that come up and will also keep the lines of communication open as things progress.

Phil Monty commended the Fire Department for taking the initiative on this and keeping the town involved so early on.

Old Business

A. Exploratory Flag Committee Discussion

The Selectmen received correspondence from Phil Monty regarding the Flag Display Committee with two appointment recommendations.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Joe Rondeau and Joe Csiki III to the Flag Display Committee; effective April 1, 2019

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked both Mr. Rondeau and Mr. Csiki for joining Mr. Monty in this endeavor.

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

Mr. Monty stated at the last meeting he was assigned a few tasks to be able to answer the Selectmen's questions. He noted that he would like to see flags displayed from the library all the way to the Senior Center; which will total 34 poles; noting that there are 4 already displaying flags along the Town Green.

Among the documentation the property locations with poles have been listed. The Committee drafted a donation form and a permission waiver for the residential properties that will have flags and so far they have received permission from many of the residents on the list. He has so far received some donations and others who have said they will donate – his hope is to have all of the flags paid for through donations. – they are in need of 24 flags to be sponsored.

Selectwoman Boritz asked if they have received permission to put the flags on the poles? Mr. Monty stated that he has called both CL&P and Eversource – he is hopeful to hear back from them tomorrow. Once they get permission, the holders will be installed on the poles and will remain there. The flags will only be displayed for 6 weeks in the summer and 3 weeks in the fall (near Veteran's Day); so he is hopeful that the flags will last up to 5 years. They will purchase American made flags.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski said they are moving in the right direction and is thankful for the effort they have put in so far. Mr. Monty is hopeful he will have the rest of the answers to the Selectmen for their next meeting.

If anyone is interested in sponsoring a flag or making a donation, please send a check payable to the Town of Willington; Attention Flag Display Committee; 40 Old Farms Road; Willington, CT 06279.

Good & Welfare

We have received the monthly call report from the State Police for the month of February:

6 Accidents	0 Burglaries
14 Criminal investigations	1 Larceny
404 non-reportable matters	2 DUI's
165 Traffic Citations	41 written warnings

The Tax Office has reported as of Friday, they collected \$13,191,188 and as of last Friday are \$40,347 over budget. That number will increase as of next week because more was collected today. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked Robin Campbell for covering the Tax Office while it is vacant.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski commended Jason Phillips and the cast of Alice In Wonderland for a fantastic show last weekend. This town has some very talented young people and she commends them for a job well done.

The Historical Society will hold a Spring Program on Wednesday, April 17, 2019 at 7PM in the Common Room at the Town Office Building. The segment will be held on Statutes Boulders and Monoliths – The World War I Memorials of Connecticut. It is free for everyone.

The Old Town Hall is now officially open for the spring.

WFSB Channel 3 will be featuring Willington in a 20 Towns in 20 Days segment. They will be reaching out to us to get as much information about the town as possible. This will be a good opportunity for us to feature all that Willington has to offer. First Selectwoman Wiecenski will keep everyone posted.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 PM

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Campbell
Administrative Assistant