

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Board of Selectmen  
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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes  
Lower Level Conference Room

February 3 2020  
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, Superintendent Stevens and residents. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### Approval of Minutes:

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of January 21, 2020 at 5:30 PM as written.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No

First Selectwoman Wiecenski Selectman moved to approve the minutes of January 21, 2020 at 6:30 PM as written.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No

First Selectwoman Wiecenski Selectman moved to approve the minutes of January 27, 2020 at 5:30 PM as written.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No

### Present to Speak

Ralph Tulis stated that he should be receiving the reports on the core samples taken from the Senior Center; library and pump house sometime this week. He then stated that the 3 items voted on at last week's town meeting have strong implications that we are looking at a new school with no other options. He said he cannot support that. When he was attending center School in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, they were building the first addition; and same when he was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Hall School. Mr. Tulis said that Hall Memorial School is a precious & historic resource. He suggested if nothing else, they should reconsider bringing that building back to what it was. The original auditorium is probably still intact under what is now the library. It supported music and theatre; had stage lights and a real stage curtain. Mr. Tulis added resurrect the core building to what it was – noting that it would need to be brought up to current standards. – It does not necessarily need to remain as classroom space; it could be turned into offices. The auditorium could provide a resource that even the Board of Finance would want. He added he would support something like that. It is over a hundred year old building; - you can't just throw something like that away.

Mr. Tulis added he feels that it is not appropriate for us to lose it if it is no longer being used as a school; noting the village district zoning changes (currently in the planning stage); where there is no longer one use per lot regulation, could complement the entire area.

Mr. Tulis stated if we avoid the state mandate, it might be a good thing for Willington; noting that he would like to see funding for the school project come solely from Willington taxpayers, to avoid the mandates put forth. He clarified when the state and Federal government get involved, there are always strings attached. – 19 acres for the school population that we have seems ridiculous.

After reviewing the documents from public outreach on the new school study, Mr. Tulis stated he was disappointed in the low attendance numbers; feeling that it was mostly parents with younger children. He clarified that they might have a different perspective of the future than someone such as him, who is looking at a fixed income. There has to be a middle ground.

### Correspondence

A list of Correspondence was available for the Selectmen.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that an email from a resident with concerns in the way the Town communicates with residents regarding town meetings and voting events. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she is certainly willing to hear some suggestions; however she noted that Town Meeting is our form of government and we also must follow specific statutes – which does not allow absentee or electronic voting.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that there were questions the day of the town meeting, where people asked if they would be able to submit an absentee vote or if they could just vote and leave it with the others so they could leave early. The legal information that was shared with us is that we must have adequate discussion held prior to the vote; therefore we were not able to take votes on those items beforehand and you needed to be in the room to vote. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then stated that she sees the challenges but is willing to participate in the conversation to get more people involved. She added that there are certain items that will need to go to Referendum rather than just a town meeting; but our form of government is Board of Selectmen town meeting form of government and we do not want to discount the town meeting portion. In the meantime, we will look at how we can disseminate the information to our residents. If we were to form a charter, we might be able to restructure the way we operate our government. First Selectwoman Wiecenski warned that there has only been one discussion regarding a charter over the past 40 years; and it did not go over well – it failed.

Selectwoman Boritz added that she sometimes finds it confusing – she has heard so many times that we do not want to be connected to the state because the state has strings, yet at the same time we do not want to talk about establishing our own rules. It is sort of a catch 22.

### Status Report

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she will be meeting with Troy, our Town Engineer, Karl Acimovic and April Ryan from UCONN to discuss movement on the MS4 designation tomorrow morning.

At last week's town meeting, the town approved the purchase of a new plow truck. The new truck will be delivered tomorrow.

### Public Works

Troy Sposato was present. He reported that the crew has been busy with the following:

- Roadside mowing is still going on

- Repaired dirt roads with process gravel
- Tree removal/ trimming is still being done on Mason Rd
- Removed desks and metal chairs at Hall School and brought to transfer station
- Trash at RRRC
- Moved boxes and desks at TOB
- Patched holes around town

First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked Troy and the crew for taking care of that. She noted that we do not have a facilities employee so all of that stuff falls on them.

### New Business

#### A. Appointment - Eastern Regional Tourism District Board of Directors

Selectwoman Boritz moved to appoint Katherine T. Brody as the Willington representative to serve on the Eastern Regional Tourism District Board of Directors. Effective February 4, 2020; expiring February 3, 2023.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski seconded the motion.

Katharine Brody was present. Ms. Brody has been serving as the representative for Willington on this board since 1998; and in the past 10 years, the board has changed names at least 3 times. Ms. Brody stated that the Northeast corner has been absorbed by the Mystic. It was then was changed the Northeast Corridor and they used to print a magazine, called Mystic Country; but it was dissolved 3 years ago.

The state is trying to rejuvenate the tourism districts in the state; noting that there are now 3 active districts. Ms. Brody stated that she reached out to the Selectmen's office to be properly re-appointed to the board.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked Ms. Brody for her willingness to serve on this board.

**Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No.**

#### B. Tax Refunds

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund 4202.62 to Nissan Infiniti; LT; on a certificate of correction.**

**Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski, Boritz) 0 No.**

#### C. Update – 2019 Grand List

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the 2019 Grand List was filed last Friday. The town shows a 0.87% increase in Real Estate (\$3,268,208); a 9.26% increase in Personal Property (\$23,550,420) and a 4.65% increase in Motor Vehicles (\$47,298,550); grant total 1.67% or \$7,365,058 increase. The increase does not include the reduction for the Willington Senior Housing Pilot agreement; which deducts \$1 million; therefore the total increase of the 2019 Grand List came in at \$6, 365,058. The total increase was due to income and expense penalty Assessments and motor vehicles registered either out of town or out of state residing in Willington.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that this was a great amount of work that has come out of the Assessor's office and commends Walter Topliff, but more specifically our Assistant Assessor, Rachel Pierce for the tremendous amount of work.

The total adjusted net increased net assessment results in a tax revenue increase of \$191,524 at the current mill rate of 30.09. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she was preparing herself thinking she was going to see a lower number this year due to crumbling foundations. She noted that we had 8 foundations that were repaired and brought back on the Grand list at full assessment; however we had 18 new properties added to the list. The cumulative total assessment reduction for crumbling foundations is \$10, 097,905. The total estimated tax loss due to crumbling foundations for the 2019 Grand List is \$303,843.

The report shows the top 5 increases and decreases in personal property and the top 10 taxpayers. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that we will watch these numbers play out as we work through budget season.

### Old Business

#### A. Recap of School Building Committee – next steps

In October this board unanimously voted to create a school building committee made up of 11 members and the question was taken to Town Meeting last Thursday where question number 3 was to form a school building committee for the purpose of a PreK-8<sup>th</sup> grade building project. It did not specify a new building project or on a new site. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that it is important that it be for the school building committee to determine the project. She clarified that she worked with DAS Office of School Construction to help us with the question so it wouldn't lock us into a new school on a new site. It could mean a renovated building on an existing site; but that is for the SBC to determine. The question at town meeting passed 132 Yes to 82 No.

The other questions were questions that need to be voted upon in favor at town meeting (by the legislative body) in the event we were to apply for a grant for the project. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that there are still many steps that must be taken before either of these items go into place. (Specifically item 3 – applying for a grant)

There was a question as to whether or not the Selectmen (or Town meeting) has authority to authorize the Superintendent to apply for the grant. For clarification; the Board of Education has to vote and approve Ed-specs and the town (Legislative Body) then must authorize the actual grant. Therefore, we cannot apply for the grant until the Ed-specs have been approved by the Board of Education. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then warned that we are a long way from that at this point. She added the first thing we need to do is get people on this building committee.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski recapped the SBC will be made of up 11 members; one being the First Selectman, Superintendent (as Ex-officio); a BOE member, a BOE staff member, a BOF member, one member of the community with construction industry experience (as required by the state in order to be reimbursed by a grant); and 5 community members at large. An email was sent out seeking letters of interest and qualifications. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she would like to start this from scratch; now that it has been voted on by the Town.

Selectwoman Boritz agreed; noting that there has been much more publicity about this since last fall when the first email went out. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she would like to send out the notice again seeking submissions with a deadline of February 17<sup>th</sup>. She will also reach out to those who expressed interest last fall and ask them to resubmit if they are still interested.

The Board of Selectmen will take in all of the submissions and choose most of the 11 members. First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that the Board of Finance had put up a member prior and the Board of Education did not. She will throw that back out to the boards to ask them to re-submit their recommendations.

The first step will be to send this out to the public and then have the Board of Selectmen talk through the letters of interest and set up the recommendations for appointments. The SBC will meet in public meetings and will have recorded minutes and there will be open transparency.

We will have people call or email the Selectmen's office if they are interested. We did receive a number of interested candidates the last time we solicited interest. We will reach out to them notifying them that we are starting the search over and ask them to resubmit their information to go in with the new ones. Selectwoman Boritz suggested that we wouldn't ask them to do anything in addition to what they have already done.

### Present to Speak

Peter Tanaka suggested the charge for the School Building Committee be as open as possible and the members be chosen as ideological diversity when moving forward. He noted that he feels outcomes can be predetermined by selection of board members.

Mr. Tanaka added that he was in the upper level at the TOB last week and the Superintendent came in with this iPad looking marketing device (that would most likely not be in the Town's price range). It got him thinking at the last town meeting there was an outcry for better communication. He stated that he feels we are pressing the technology of 1996 with emails and public notices – perhaps it is time we start looking at other ways to get the word out; especially seeing how fast technology has progressed. He noted that everyone has screens and Wi-Fi in their homes; there has to be a way to get a way to send the information out to them.

Ralph Tulis said he likes that idea; but disagrees that not every home in town has a screen in it.

Ralph Tulis added he would like to see the publication of the charge of the school building committee before they add members to it. He added this should be done before you solicit members because they need to know what they are getting themselves into. Mr. Tulis then added that he feels it is not wise for the Selectmen to be acting on this without Selectman Blessington here. He clarified that it would be nice if it were a full board to make this decision – even if it were a 2 – 1 vote. First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that she couldn't agree more. Mr. Tulis then asked how long this could wait. First Selectwoman Wiczenski then clarified that she is unsure of how long they will have to wait.

Mr. Tulis then touched on the Town Charter discussion – noting that he feels that we are somewhere in between town meeting form of government and Town Council. If we were to look into a charter, would help clean up some of the ordinances – he could possibly support that; although he is not sure if he would be ready to support Town Council. It is participation of the legislative body is where we are lacking and the expectation of the voters to be spoon fed everything. Mr. Tulis said he has said this many times before; this is a democracy – this is a participatory form of government. Residents have an obligation as a voter to stay informed and if you can't do that – guess. – That is just his opinion.

Lastly, Mr. Tulis said he would like to have the old Decicco property (next to Staven's driveway) looked at – he believes we do not have a blight ordinance; but it is disgusting. He stated that he does not like to oppose his standards with other's properties; however when it is in plain sight on a main road; it is hard not to. Robin Campbell noted that someone had come in earlier today with a blight complaint for another property in town.

In addition, the Selectmen had received an email with a similar complaint regarding the courier community newspapers; which are dropped in resident's driveways throughout town. Other residents have come in to complain about the same issue. They have stated that they have tried to reach out to the distribution desk at the company, but have been unsuccessful in having the deliveries stop.

The resident who had emailed the Selectmen noted that the Town of Vernon has banned the circulation and suggested Willington do the same. Robin Campbell stated that she has reached out to the Town of Vernon; to see how they handled passing an ordinance. Vernon is a little different than Willington as they have their own police force and different zoning regulations. She was able to get contact information on who to speak with at Courier Communities; but has been playing phone tag with them for about a week.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski agreed that something should probably be done about this as she has experienced similar in her neighborhood, where people have been placing the wet/mangled papers in her mailbox, and has seen them throughout town as well.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that the item that Mr. Tanaka had mentioned earlier was a marketing tool that Superintendent Stevens received in the mail. It was an electronic device that looked like a tablet; which was personalized with the school's logo on it and had a personalized message in it. Superintendent Stevens stated that it was such a great idea; however we would never be able to afford something like that – especially to go to every household in Willington. First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted how we share information throughout town has become quite a challenge – especially since there is not one form of technology that everyone uses. Selectwoman Boritz stated that we should be able to find something that is limited in price that has a large capacity of notifications. But we have to get the people to sign up for it.

Ralph Tulis suggested putting the info in the tax bill.

### Good & Welfare

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated she forgot to mention at the last meeting, that when she and Troy went to visit Selectman Blessington in the hospital; Selectman Blessington had asked her to share his gratitude to the Ambulance crew out of Willington Fire Department #1 who helped him. She wanted to make sure she mentioned the thanks to them for their services. We are all thankful to them for offering their services. First Selectwoman Wiczenski added that her husband stopped to see Selectman Blessington who is now in rehab last week. She is hopeful Selectman Blessington will be back soon.

Troop C shared some recent events and activities that have been happening. They recently were involved in the Special Olympics Torch Run Kick-Off event that was held at Dunkin Donuts Park on Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup>. Troop C was recognized as the troop that raised the most money for Special Olympics through fundraisers and donations. – Troop C raised over \$10,000; which was commanded by Lt. Shawn Corey, however the people most responsible are Dispatcher Ellen Jamaitus as the leg coordinator, TFC Peter Leacu and Trooper Mark Marquis (who is a Willington resident). Their efforts should be commended. Troop C is holding other activities that are outside of the scope of police activity. Sgtr Palmer, of Troop C has also offered to come out to speak with us to share in ways in which they can help our town. She noted if we would like to have them come to a future meeting, we can do that. First Selectwoman Wiczenski thanked them for all they do.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski added that it is still budget season. She encouraged residents to get involved and we welcome their input. The upcoming meetings are listed on the town's website.

Lastly, First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that a draft charge for the School Building Committee will be added to the next regular agenda. She also noted that wanted to address the concern about delaying

discussions with Selectman Blessington being absent. She noted while she agrees; she also does not want to put everything on hold so we are not moving forward. She added that she will hold the discussions about who will be chosen to sit on the SBC in public. She would appreciate a third voice, but she is uncertain of when that will be. We have to move forward with some things.

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
*Robin Campbell*  
Office Manager  
Town of Willington