

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN Special Meeting Minutes

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

**Town Office Building
Lower Level Conference Room**

**January 13, 2020
6:30 PM**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM with the following in attendance: Selectman Boritz, Town Attorney Ryan O'Donnell & residents. Selectman Blessington was absent.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that Selectman Blessington is still not with us. She heard he is doing better and is hopeful to see him back with us.

A. Discussion and Appointment of CIP Vacancies

First Selectwoman Wiecenski said for months we have been asking for people to come forward to serve on the CIP. We received 4 names. CIP held their first meeting last week and will continue to meet on Wednesdays for the next several weeks. It is important to have a full board.

Jim Bulick sent a letter on behalf of the Republican Town Committee recommending Peter Latincsics and Geoff Prusak. Two Democrats have also sent emails noting interest; Christina Mailhos and Sarah Smith.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Christina Mailhos as a member of the Capital Improvement Program Committee; filling a vacancy, effective January 13, 2020; expiring November 30, 2022. Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that Ms. Mailhos is a former Selectman; currently serving on the Board of Finance as an alternate. All four of these candidates bring experience to the table. We can't go wrong with appointing any of these people, however we only have 2 vacancies.

Vote 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Geoff Prusak as a member of the Capital Improvement Program Committee; filling a vacancy; effective January 13, 2020; expiring December 1, 2021. Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that there are two different end terms because one of the seats sat vacant all of last year. She added Mr. Prusak served on both CIP and the BOF and was re-elected to serve on the Board of Finance.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked all four individuals for putting their names forward. She added that she is certain we can find other ways in which to utilize them.

B. Discussion and Appointment of BOE Officers

First Selectwoman Wiecenski recapped on December 10, 2019, the Board of Education held their first regularly scheduled meeting following the election. At that time she was asked to start the meeting and facilitate the

election of a chairperson at which time, once the chairman was seated the meeting would be turned over to them to run the remainder of the meeting. First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that meeting ended in a 3-3 tie after numerous votes for a chairman and there did not seem to be any movement. She then warned, per State Statute, the BOE had until December 18, 2019 to resolve the issue itself before it statutorily went to the Board of Selectmen to appoint a Chair and a Secretary.

Four members of the Board of Education held a meeting that was held; where elections of officers took place but seems to be questioned by the other members of the BOE as well as the BOE legal counsel. The feeling is that they did not have the authority to call that meeting. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated we now find ourselves if that is in fact the case, our statutory duty then is to appoint officers after 30 days of taking office. The Selectmen shall choose the officers of the board. —that's where we are and why we have come here today.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that our Legal Council is here to answer questions as to whether it is the authority of the Board of Selectmen to appoint a chairperson and a secretary. She then clarified that the appointment of a vice chairman would not be the authority of the Selectmen.

The Board of Education Attorney was present. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then asked him if he wanted to share anything on behalf of the board. He said not at this time.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that we have interested parties in this issue – we are here to make sure we handle this the right way so that the town and the Board of Education can move forward to serve our students and our residents. That is the only goal here. She then asked the Town Attorney if it is within our authority based on the facts before us to appoint these officers.

Attorney Ryan O'Donnell who was present stated absolutely; referencing Section 10-222-18 of the Connecticut General Statutes; adding it is part of the statutory responsibility based on the fact pattern laid before the Board of Selectmen; brought forth by the Board of Education. Attorney O'Donnell said if the Selectmen hadn't been part of this from the beginning – beyond notification – the First Selectwoman serving as Ex-Efficio of the initial meeting. He clarified that there has been very little involvement from the Board of Selectmen – it has primarily been an issue of the Board of Education – but when they (the BOE) is unable to appoint officers and when leadership explains to us a number of ways the laws have been violated, the responsibility falls to the Board of Selectmen to make that decision.

Attorney O'Donnell then clarified that the Board of Selectmen are statutorily obligated to make that decision.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski said that she stated at the December 10, 2019 meeting that she had hoped this would have been dealt with at the Board of Education level. She added that she does not believe that any good comes from this process. It has stopped business from moving forward for the Board of Education, but we can't ignore the fact; given the information that came from that meeting that took place was not a lawful meeting. We can't ignore that – noting that the statute reads that the Board of Selectmen shall appoint – and we take that seriously.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then clarified that only 6 Board of Education members were present at that December meeting; if all 7 members had attended that meeting, we might be looking at a different outcome.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Herb Arico as Chairman of the Board of Education. Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that if the BOE had that meeting with 7 members, she believes that would have been the voted outcome. She added that all 7 members need to work on behalf of the residents and education of Willington – that is their elected role. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then clarified that no one is trying to change the fact that these people were elected to the Board of Education. The appointment of a chairperson has zero bearing on elections. The people were elected and they are serving.

Selectwoman Boritz added that she received several letters and has read every word of them all. This is not a game she wishes to be engaged in. It is disappointing the way we got here. It is politics at its worst moment – and she added she is not proud or excited to be participating in this. There can be headshaking and nodding – but here is the thing – we are trying to do the best for this town – she said she can hear all of the negative input and assumptions about our motivations – we are backed into a corner here and she does not want to be here doing this any more than you want us here doing this but we have no choice at this moment. Selectwoman Boritz added that we are down a Selectman and we could totally wipe this thing in a democratic favor if we wanted to. Jerry Debski stated you are doing it. Selectwoman Boritz said are we? We just appointed a Republican – Herb Arico – how is that different than what was voted on at the original meeting?

Peter Latincsics stated that the Selectmen failed to recognize that it is not the Town Attorney or the Board of Selectmen; but the people of this town who elect our representatives. Selectwoman Boritz clarified that they have – it is the BOE's responsibility to elect officers and they failed to do so. Jerry Debski clarified that Herb Arico was a member of the BOE last year (serving as secretary) – he had the full right to call that meeting in the first place. Peter Latincsics stated that the Selectmen are acting in legal chicanery and it is unwarranted.

Jerry Debski asked what the difference is between last week and now– the matter was tabled because Selectman Blessington was not here but he is still not here. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that the matter was tabled last week because we had learned just a few hours before last week's meeting that Selectman Blessington was not going to be here – we did not know his status or anything about his health at the time. We have to move forward with the business of this town. She added that we do not know when Selectman Blessington will be back at the table. While we would love for him to be here at the table, she does not know when that is.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Michelle Doucette-Cunningham as Secretary of the Willington Board of Education.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that when she sat at the December 10th meeting, there were 2 clear candidates for Chairman; Mr. Arico and Ms. Doucette-Cunningham. What she heard from both of them; she heard that they would happily support each other. She is taking both of them at their word and is appointing Michelle as Secretary.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she was asked to read correspondence into the minutes. We received 2 letters which were asked to be included. They were emails that were sent to Robin Campbell as well as the Selectmen's office. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted the emails came from Peter Latincsics and Donna Cook. Elaine Newcomb also sent a letter asking for inclusion of the minutes as well.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:51 PM

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote; 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No.

Respectfully Submitted:
Robin Campbell
Recording Secretary

Robin Campbell

From: Latincsics, Peter <peter.latincsics@otis.com>
Sent: Monday, January 13, 2020 8:37 AM
To: amylam@willingtonCT.org; Maureen Gantick
Cc: ewiecwnski@WillingtonCT.org; aboritz@willingtonCT.org; John Blessington; Robin Campbell; schapmam@WillingtonCT.org; cpasathas@WillingtonCT.org
Subject: Board of Selectmen 1-13-2020 Special Meeting

January 13, 2020

Board of Selectmen
Town Office Building
40 Old Farms Road
Willington, CT 06279

Dear Board of Selectmen:

As resident of the Town of Willington, I wish to express my strong objection to the "Special Town Meeting" scheduled for Monday 6:30 PM January 12, 2020. The agenda item entitled "Appointment of Board of Education of Officers" is a continuation of the First Selectwoman's persistent efforts to overturn the results of the 2019 Town of Willington general election that included our current Willington Board of Education. The new Willington Board of Education met on 12/17/2019. This meeting was duly warned and posted by the Willington Town Clerk's office. I along with other townspeople were present at this meeting to witness the Willington Board of Education elect new officers--as has been past practice by all town boards following a town election. At the prior well-attended 1/06/2020 regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen, many Willington residents spoke during the present to speak meeting portion of the meeting agenda requesting the Board of Selectmen respect the results of the town election of a new Board of Education and the undisputed right of every elected board in our town to select its officers. The Board of Selectmen did act to table their proposed "executive session" on this matter, citing the absence of Selectman John Blessington and the high level of concern expressed by town residents. It is most regrettable the Willington Board of Selectmen are now reversing their commitment to transparency and are resuming their interference in the Willington Board of Education's internal affairs in a special meeting format where public meeting access and present to speak is restricted.

Use of the special meeting format by the Board of Selectmen to undermine the recently elected officers of the Willington Board of Education is unacceptable. Our town boards and the members that serve on them are elected by the people of Willington. Any further effort by the Board of Selectmen to overturn Willington election results by executive overreach represent an unprecedented violation of our rights as town citizens and the election process. No Board of Selectmen can overturn or interfere with the results of a town election. The consequences of such an illegal action are serious for our town and would warrant a full investigation by town and state election authorities.

I urge the Willington Board of Selectmen to respect the results of our 2019 town election and the electoral process in Willington.

Sincerely,

Peter Latincsics
97 Trask Road
Willington, CT 06279

c: Robin Campbell, Town Office Manager
Amy Lam, Town Clerk Office
Election Department

Town Clerk:

Please include this communication in the meeting correspondence with a request that it be read publicly at the 1/13/2020 special Board of Selectmen meeting and as an attachment to the minutes of the 1/13/2030 Board of Selectmen Special meeting and included in the correspondence communication and attachment to the minutes of the next regular Board of Selectmen meeting.

January 11, 2020

Dear Board of Selectmen,

I just saw the agenda for the Board of Selectmen Special Meeting that will be held on January 13, 2020 at 6:30 pm.

I am concerned and perplexed. Item B is "Discussion and Appointment of BOE Officers". There is no "present to speak".

As a reminder, on December 17, 2019 there was a special meeting of the Board of Education. At that meeting, Herb Arico was elected as the Chairman, Elena Testa was elected as the Vice Chairman, and Liz Perry was elected as the Secretary. A quorum was present. Each of them was duly elected. All votes were unanimous. The agenda had been timely filed with the town. The minutes of the meeting were filed with the Town of Willington on December 18th. All the necessary supporting documentation was attached to my prior letter to the Board of Selectmen dated January 6, 2020.

It is my hope that the Board of Selectmen would not undermine the duly elected officers of the Board of Education.

Please have this email read into the next Board of Selectmen meeting at which correspondence is being accepted.

Regards,
Donna V. Cook, CPA

To the Board of Selectmen,

January 13, 2020

At the Board of Selectmen meeting of January 6, 2020, First Selectwoman Wiecenski's position regarding the appointment of Board of Education Officers, was "this is a very complex issue. Because Selectman Blessington cannot be with us, she feels that it is in our best interest to table this item until the full board is able to discuss. She added there should be conversation from all parties involved. We don't benefit from this partisan politics that is happening in Willington; adding there is a better way for us to move forward. This is in the best interest of the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen." (Quoted from the minutes of the January 6, 2020 meeting)

Her stated concerns reflected in the meetings minutes have not changed. The minority representative Mr. Blessington is still absent. There can be no conversation from "all parties involved." The Board of Selectmen is attempting to usurp the authority of the Board of Education, further affirming the partisan politics which have overtaken our town government since the November election. Board of Education officers are the business of the Board of Education.

Sincerely,



Elaine Newcomb
28 Fermier Road

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT
Received for record 01-14-2020
At 1:34pm Amy B. [Signature]