

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes
Lower Level Conference Room

January 21, 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 6, 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 6, 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 13, 2020 at 5:30 PM as written.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No

Selectwoman Boritz moved to approve the minutes of January 13, 2020 AT 6:30 PM as written.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No

Present to Speak

Peter Latincsics noted that he is pleased to see item 7A is on the agenda and stated that he would like to reserve time to speak during the discussion on the agenda. He noted that he would like to allow ample time for discussion on the matter. Mr. Latincsics added that it is important to not restrict the discussion; because at the last town meeting, it was suspended due to Fire Department rules and there were a lot of questions about the process.

Peter Tanaka spoke on item 7B; noting that he feels it is very important to have the public be able to speak and be involved for two reasons; 1) that is the way the best decisions are made; when alternative facts that may not have already been entered into the discussion. It is very important from a democracy point of view that the public be able to express themselves. Mr. Tanaka said the 2nd reason is from a philosophical point that this is democracy and we are citizens, not subjects of this board, therefore we should have our input at the time decisions are made. Willington's town structure is that the townspeople are the legislative

body and the Board is the executive branch. If the Legislative and Executive Branch can't communicate; then that is a major downfall in the process.

Correspondence

A list of Correspondence was available for the Selectmen.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the new Hazard Mitigation Plan that was recently approved was received in the Selectmen's office. In addition, we received some posters regarding the 100th anniversary of Women's Suffrage from the Secretary of State's Office. The posters are beautiful and quite large. They are on display at Center and Hall Schools.

Status Report

*The Assistant Land Use Agent position has been filled by Ashley Stephens, who began with us on January 13th. We look forward to her having long tenure with the Town.

Public Works

Troy Sposato was present. He reported the following for Public Works:

- Roadside mowing is still going on
- Patched holes around town
- Tree trimming on Mason Rd
- Tree removal on Daleville, Kollar, Luchon and Liska Roads
- Clean shop, Wash trucks
- Trucks ready for the storm
- Hauled millings from the state
- Replaced cutting edges on a couple trucks and the loader
- Picked up trash at RRRC and tires at Fenton-Ruby Park

First Selectwoman Wiecenski asked Troy for an update on the snow budget. So far we have had 16 storms that have required sand/salt mix; plowing or both. So far, we have used up a considerable amount of salt thus far. Troy clarified that last year, the town used a 1-1 mix of sand and salt; whereas this year he has increased the salt to a 2 – 1 ratio instead. Mr. Sposato said with the increase, the salt budget has been hit pretty hard; but also has been receiving many compliments on road conditions during storms. First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that her office has received many compliments and clarified that the crew is still plowing the same; they have just changed the material that is put on the roads. She then said that we will have to keep an eye on the budget but is confident that Public Works can still keep within the total budget.

Mr. Sposato also noted that the State is also mandating that the Towns use more salt going forward because DEEP is considering the sand (which ends up to be road sweepings) are hazardous. He then stated using all salt will end up saving money in the long run because we will not have to sweep.

New Business

A. Call Town Meeting

First Selectwoman Wiecenski read the call of the Town Meeting:

**TOWN OF WILLINGTON
NOTICE AND WARNING**

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

The electors of the Town of Willington and all persons who are entitled to vote in Town Meeting on the matters mentioned in the following warning are hereby warned and notified to meet in Town Meeting at Hall Memorial School, 111 River Road, Willington, at 7:00 P.M. on Thursday, January 30, 2020 for the following purpose:

ITEM I

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Finance, will appropriate \$16,900 from the Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of patching the roofs at Center Elementary School and Hall Memorial School.

ITEM II

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Finance, will appropriate \$160,252.73 from the general fund balance for the purchase of a new Freightliner 114SD – Plow Truck for the Department of Public Works.

ITEM III

To see if the townspeople, based on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will establish a School Building Committee for a Building Project of a Pre-K through 8 School. Registered voters attending shall cast a certified paper ballot yes or no vote for this item.

ITEM IV

To see if the townspeople, based on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen will authorize at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for a Building Project of a Pre-K through 8 School. Registered voters attending shall cast a certified paper ballot yes or no vote for this item.

ITEM V

To see if the townspeople, based on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen will authorize the Superintendent of Schools to apply to the Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services to accept or reject a grant for a Building Project of a Pre-K through 8 School. Registered voters attending shall cast a certified paper ballot yes or no vote for this item.

Dated at Willington, This 21st Day of January, 2020; Willington Board of Selectmen
Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski recapped that this item was originally removed from the call of a Town Meeting because we were advised by the Town Attorney that the Board of Selectmen did not need Town Approval to create a committee. She then clarified that if we ever decide to spend funds on such a project that would be eligible for reimbursement from a Grant provided by State funds, we would need approval from the Legislative Body.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then reiterated that she has said several times that we want to make sure that we do this the right way; not fast – and make sure we have the correct wording for the questions so we would be able to move forward with seeking reimbursement for a school construction grant; if and when the time comes. She then clarified that this does not mean that a school is going to be built. It just means that a School Building Committee can be established and begin moving with their work. If they spend money and if there is a project at the end; they would be eligible for reimbursement. She then added that they worked with school construction professionals to be sure the questions are correctly worded for any potential reimbursement. She then noted that the question could pass or fail at town meeting. If it passes, there are still many other hurdles to take before any construction would be done for any project.

There was a recommendation from the Board of Education to explore options for a K-8 school and they unanimously voted to form a committee; but it must go to Town Meeting.

She then addressed Mr. Latincsis concern about the wording being broad enough to having a school building committee- there is more than ample room to have conversation on that during item III.

First Selectwoman Wiccenski noted that the January 30, 2020 Town Meeting will be held at Hall School to accommodate the public, if there is an overwhelming demand.

Peter Latincsis said the call is troubling to him because when the board voted to ask for a Town Meeting to request a school building committee; the original request was worded "school building feasibility committee" and it got lost somewhere in the process. He thinks it should be restored – that is what the full board (with John Blessington) voted to do. – Now it just says school building committee and it sounds like a supposed outcome. Mr. Latincsis then argued that the word feasibility is an important element that the townspeople need to see. They should be able to be objective of the process. He then said it is almost premature to have item IV to prepare a building plan. – What if they decide to modify a school or plan to do nothing because enrollment is low – whatever the case may be – it does not seem right to pre-suppose a direction in the matter that is being portrayed.

First Selectwoman Wiccenski clarified that she does not believe that we (The Board of Selectmen) have ever used the term feasibility study. A feasibility study was done on the Board of Education side and made the recommendation. They authorized a committee with a purpose exploring a new PreK-8 school on a new site. That may or may not be what comes out of the School Building Committee – it will be up to them to determine; not for this board. She clarified that a School Building Committee could determine that there is no land, therefore we won't look for a new site; they could determine that a renovated school is a better option. They will look at all of those items and options and it is up to them.

First Selectwoman Wiccenski then clarified if money is spent, within the school building committee; in order to have a part of the project that is reimbursable, these particular questions must be asked before the Legislative Body.

Selectwoman Boritz then clarified that the questions were generated based on recommendations based on the outcome of many years of feasibility studies; open forums and town input. – Many of these have happened over the course of the past two years. They were generated by a lot of work by the town and a lot of input by townspeople, including the Board of Education. The Superintendent has held several open forums for the public – at least 6 over the past year. This is not a new conversation and the concept did not come from nowhere. First Selectwoman Wiccenski added that the original discussions began over 6 years ago.

Mr. Latincsis clarified that he attended every one of those meetings and is full aware of what Selectwoman Boritz is saying. He then expressed his concern that he feels they are contradicting what they had said in previous Selectman's meetings where they used the word feasibility committee. He then said he assumes that there will be room for discussion on this topic. First Selectwoman Wiccenski said that there will be at the Town Meeting.

George Debski stated that he filed a petition and asked the status of it. First Selectwoman Wiccenski stated that he should be receiving correspondence on that within a few days.

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

B. Discussion – Public Comment at Selectmen's Meetings

First Selectwoman Wiczenski recapped that this item was brought up just prior to Selectman Blessington not being able to be with us regarding public comments during our meetings. She said she feels she would like to have much further discussion when Selectman Blessington is able to partake in the conversation. She added that this is in no way taking away from the public's ability to speak. We have present to speak – this is just to help the public to understand the conversation that the work being done here is the work of the board. The public has a right to give us their comments; this just defines the times to when they are able to do that. She added that we can look at different ways to instituting. In the meantime we will continue on having present to speak at the beginning of our meetings and will look forward to discussing further when Selectman Blessington is back.

Selectwoman Boritz then stated that they should at least clarify what our practice is going to be until the time we adopt something. How are we going to handle going forward? – What does it mean to leave it as is? First Selectwoman Wiczenski said to her, they follow Roberts Rules so that would be a defined time to speak and if there are particular items and the board has called on an individual to share pertinent information, they would be invited to participate in the conversation. It is how other meetings work and not unusual. First Selectwoman Wiczenski clarified that we have to do 2 things; we have to make the meeting available to the public and we give them the opportunity to speak and share their opinions – which is important. – And we are doing that. She then warned that the open interaction during the middle of a meeting can take away from the business we are trying to conduct and our ability to communicate as a board. She would like to see the interaction with the public their ability to share their opinions with us at present to speak. We have tossed around different ideas – maybe we add a present to speak at the end. She added that it might be something we can add just before Good and Welfare without Selectman Blessington being here without disrupting the nature or tone of the meeting.

Selectwoman Boritz said that we have a challenge with the way it is written in our policy – officially we have an item (#3) on the agenda that is present to speak and according to the agenda; no one else other than the Board of Selectmen should be speaking after that point – that has not been our practice since she has been on this board. So if we decide to leave it 'as is' then we are welcoming the back and forth discussion. First Selectwoman Wiczenski said we have been and we did last week as well. The other option is to add some clear informational guidelines under present to speak and what that would look like.

Selectwoman Boritz then clarified that they have had several meetings over the past year that have devolved into chaotic contribution- and it has been counterproductive to our conversations. She then clarified that we are not the Senate where no one is even allowed on the floor. We need to strike a balance and honor the tradition of our town to be more casual; but also need to be more efficient and able to allow the Selectmen to make a decision and have conversation amongst ourselves. There have been times where it has been delayed or disrupted. We need to clarify what the expectations are as soon as possible to eliminate and minimize the challenge and potential ill-will. First Selectwoman Wiczenski agreed; noting that we could even limit the time people have to speak; but at what time do you cut it off? – You don't want to decide at random to not let one person speak after letting 3 others before them while in the middle of a discussion. Selectwoman Boritz said, exactly – that is why we should set something up now so we don't end up in that situation. If we leave everything as is then the expectation is that no one will be able to speak after item 3 on the agenda. First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that is not atypical of a council or board of selectmen meeting. Selectwoman Boritz stated that the town of Mansfield, for example runs their meetings very similar; where no one is allowed to speak while the council is doing their work; but she thinks there is an intermediate area for us; but she also thinks we need more definition and clarity so the expectation is clear to all.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski then asked Selectwoman Boritz if she'd like to see any changes? Selectwoman Boritz said yes, at the very least; add a second present to speak so there can be participation at the beginning and end of each meeting. First Selectwoman Wiczenski was in agreement; noting that the time for the public to speak will be during those times; unless called upon by a member of the board.

Also, any comments should be directed at the Chair. She added that it is not often where the Selectmen add items to their agenda, but tries to do so before present to speak so it gives people the opportunity to speak on that item. She also added that people will have the opportunity to speak on other topics that are not on the agenda if they so choose – that is what we are here for – to listen to the public.

George Debski recommended if a time limit were added, it may be helpful so the meetings do not drag on. First Selectwoman Wiczenski agreed and noted during her time spent on the Board of Education, they did have a policy with a time limit for those to speak. She stated that she feels a time limit per person instead of as a whole. The next meeting agenda will reflect a second present to speak, which will be added just before good and welfare.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski added that she will also add a present to speak at the special meeting agendas as well. She noted that the agenda is usually posted up as a template, and it was never intended to not allow the public to speak.

Old Business

A. Recap of School Building Committee – next steps

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that she left this item on the agenda; but noted that there is really nothing for this board to discuss, until the item goes to Town Meeting. It will be left on the agenda pending the outcome of that Town Meeting.

Good & Welfare

We received our monthly service call from Troop C for the month of December, 2019:

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|-------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| Accidents: | 21 | Criminal Investigations: | 20 |
| DUI's: | 2 | Burglaries: | 0 |
| Traffic Citations: | 220 | Larcenies: | 0 |
| Non Reportable matters: | 226 | Written Warnings: | 10 |
| Verbal Warnings: | 23 | Infractions: | 115 |

First Selectwoman Wiczenski reminded everyone to lock their vehicles at all times and remember not to keep personal belongings in there. We are still hearing of break-ins in neighboring towns.

We received a thank you letter from Connecticut Children's Hospital. On December 13, 2019, the Town Office Building and schools participated in the annual PJ Day and raised \$604.74 which was donated to CCMC. Last year, 360 schools and 190 businesses across the state participated in PJ Day and since 2011, PJ Day has raised more than \$637,000 for the Center for Cancer & Blood Disorders. First Selectwoman Wiczenski thanked everyone who participated.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that budget season is well underway. There are many meetings in the upcoming weeks. CIP meets every Wednesday and other boards are holding budget workshops.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that she and Troy Sposato went to see Selectman Blessington in the hospital last Friday. We ask everyone to keep him in their prayers and First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that she hopes to see him back here soon.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
R. Campbell, Office Manager