

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Special Meeting Minutes
Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

June 1, 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 & Blessington and residents.

Approval of Minutes

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of May 18, 2020 as written.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of May 27, 2020 as written.

Selectmen Blessington and Boritz noted that they had not seen the minutes yet. The minutes were completed and sent to the Town Clerk; perhaps they were not sent out through eblast.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski withdrew her motion and the item will be tabled until the next meeting.

Present To Speak

Jim Bulick stated that it is very important to hold the State Police accountable and if the Selectmen are not satisfied with their responses they should work their way up the chain of command to get the answers you want as a Board. He added that he encourages the Board to look into good internal procedures and protocols of how we handle these things.

Correspondence

A list of Correspondence was available for the Selectmen to view.

First Selectman's Status Report

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that Public Works is still waiting for the fuel tank to arrive to continue with the project.

The Board of Finance adopted the budget last Thursday and they also set the mill rate of 29.99. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked everyone who participated with the Selectmen. This was an unusual budget season for all of us. She also thanked our Business Manager Donna Latincsics for the hard work she does; preparing budgets for Government and Education together. Donna submitted several variations of the budget this year due to the process changes.

Public Works

Troy Sposato presented an email list of the items performed at Public Works:

- Roadside mowing is continuing around town
- Fixed curbing and backfilled curb around town
- Installed glass partitions in Tax office and Town Clerk office
- Burnt brush pile at Transfer station
- Mowed around Public works garage and Transfer station

Selectwoman Boritz noted that she has seen catch basin cleaning around town as well.

New Business

A. Discussion – Creation of Emergency Communication Task Force

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she mentioned at the last meeting on May 27th that she would like to create a task force for emergency communication. There were major gaps with the response of last weeks incident and our reliance on the state police for the need for communication and not having our own system in place.

By creating a task force we would need to determine who would serve and what would the charge be. We heard loud and clear from our residents that we need better communication. The incident that happened on May 22 brought to light more so than ever our need to communicate to our residents. Many discussions have been held to come up that we need to relay information to our residents in a more effective way.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski said we can just go out and purchase a new tool; but the bigger question is how and when we use it. She noted that she has spoken with some of our neighboring towns; most of whom have their own system; but they are willing to work together to put a shared protocol in place. First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that we should look at meeting with these towns and also within our own task force so we determine what we can do to make our community feel safer and how we can utilize something to make it happen. She added we will also need to determine how to pay for it and find the backing for it as well.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that she thinks this should be part of a bigger discussion and we need to take some time to think of what the charge should be.

Selectman Blessington said the one thing we needed to get out of this was to put a notification system in place for the residents; whether it be ever bridge or reverse 911. We should start by asking our Emergency Services Director to look into it and determine what would be the best one for our needs. If we want to add a task force; which may take a while, we can do that too. Selectman Blessington added that having protocols in place during this last incident may have caused more harm than good. He said he thinks this because he gets the feeling that one wanted to take the responsibility of deciding what information should be released to the citizens until they heard from the Troop Commander.

Selectman Blessington added once we have a system in place, we need to make sure it is used when it needs to be used and avoid having it get used when it doesn't need to get used. For example; we would start out only for emergencies; but end up using it to announce that the town team won the championship – we have to be very careful with that. He then noted that we should come up with a charge and protocol and would rather see us move on this than wait months or a year.

Selectwoman Boritz agreed with Selectman Blessington; noting that she doesn't think anyone would want to wait months to get something in place. She added the EMD can help decide what the best system would be for what we need and that should be something we would be able to move on pretty simply. She warned that we should also put some protocols in place; such as when to use it. This scenario; God willing is very unlikely to happen again; however we do have other incidents in which it could be used. For example if there was a car accident and a road was closed; or downed wires – and currently these types of things are emailed to a small fraction of residents (those who have signed up for the service receive them). She added that is also one of the things we will need to do is have the residents sign up for the system; but she believes it will be less challenging now because there is such motivation to get the connection. Selectwoman Boritz added that she thinks we can move quickly on that piece; and get price quotes for that immediately and not wait to create a committee.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski added while she agrees with both Selectmen on this; she also believes it is important to put a group together. We have no budgeted funds for this; and we are about 31 days from the end of the fiscal year. In order to spend money on such an item; we would need to get a transfer from the Board of Finance. We would need to know what we are purchasing and how much it will cost. The timing is what may make things a little tough. We are looking at a surplus because of COVID; and if we can use some of that; by holding special meetings to get it done; that would be the most prudent thing for us to do.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that she has spoken with our surrounding towns who have these systems; and the system is only used for very specific things (as opposed to announcing the team winning the championship as Selectman Blessington referenced). We will need to put a protocol in place so it is utilized properly. She added it would behoove us to allow some funding to send a mailer out to every household with information on how to sign up for the system once it is in place. It is important that we get this out to everyone as opposed to only those who choose to opt in.

As far as who we decide to sit on this committee is bigger than just the three Selectmen, First Selectwoman Wiczenski said. She suggested the following: a member of law enforcement; the Emergency Management Director, An EMS member, a member each of the Board of Selectmen, Education and Finance and three residents. Selectman Blessington said that is a pretty big committee. First Selectwoman Wiczenski said it is but she believes it is important that it is not just those who are doing the work for on the town side for the boards and commissions – it is important to have a good cross section. Before the end of the last special meeting; she added that she had two residents who wanted to participate and sent her their contact info. There is a desire for people to help.

Selectwoman Boritz stated it doesn't seem to be that unwieldy of a group - we have larger and smaller committees that are out there and many of the members would make sense to make up the committee.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that CIP is made up of more members as well as the Emergency Services Efficiency Committee – while it seems like a lot- they are all important voices.

Selectman Blessington asked First Selectwoman Wiczenski if she has a draft of the charge of the Committee. First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that she can start working on the draft and if they have notes they want to share, they will begin discussions at the next meeting. She added that she will also start looking at the different systems. They will look to discuss at the meeting on June 15th. In the meantime, First Selectwoman Wiczenski said she is working on setting up a meeting with the other towns; Stafford, Mansfield, Tolland, Ashford and their EMDs to begin the discussions of their systems.

Selectwoman Boritz then asked if any of our neighboring towns; who have their own systems sent out alerts? First Selectwoman Wiecenski said they did not; as they received similar information as we did; noting it was isolated.

Old Business

A. COVID-19 Update

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted we have had increases in positive testing, fatalities; and tests conducted overall; but have seen a decrease in hospitalizations. The data for Connecticut is as follows (as of today):

42,740 positive cases
154 hospitalized
3,964 fatalities
259,320 total tests performed

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted although our numbers are going down; the state has opened to Phase I and we will see the results from that. We have been very fortunate this side of the state. Willington now has 13 positive cases and 0 probable cases.

All of the first responders who tested positive several weeks ago have all been re-tested; have resulted negative and are now back to work.

The TOB remains closed to the public. Next Monday, June 8th, we will have at least one staff in every department report to work in the building and by the end of June; (6/29) the office will be fully staffed; but still closed to the public.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the guidance from the state notates that all offices should be equipped with automatic (touchless) hand dryers; soap dispensers and water faucets. We received a quote to put one automatic faucet in each of the bathrooms (there are 5 total) and the quote was almost \$1,000 per faucet. First Selectwoman Wiecenski cautioned that she is concerned that the \$1,000 may end up to be more when they try to install modern technology in our old building. She then asked the Selectmen for feedback regarding the cost of the faucets; noting that she is not certain we would be totally reimbursed by FEMA. Right now we have purchased touchless paper towel dispensers and are looking into automatic soap dispensers; however they are hard to come by.

Discussion was held on the cost of the automatic water faucets. Selectwoman Boritz then asked if it is a requirement of re-opening to the public? First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the document notates "wherever possible". First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she thinks it gives us some leeway. Selectwoman Boritz said that for the foreseeable future; we won't be gathering in the TOB; and unless we end up with a significant surplus; and it makes sense to consider it; but since we are not allowed to have large gatherings; we are just talking about the staff using them; she does not find it pressing to replace them. Robin Campbell reviewed the documentation and the mention is for water fountains (not faucets).

Selectwoman Boritz then noted that she does not see it to be an urgent matter; given the low traffic flow; not being open to the public. First Selectwoman Wiecenski agreed; however she added that the TOB will be opening to the public eventually; and with the COVID-19 not going away; she reminded the Selectmen that we do not have our own maintenance staff here. The schools have offered to help us with day to day cleaning; but once school gets back in session; that may come to an end. It is something we need to think about. If we had a surplus and used some of the funding to pay for the faucets; and then got a reimbursement; the funding would go back in the general fund. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then added

that the state told us they were going to pay for all of the expenses; but we were recently told that things have changed; and we now need to apply to FEMA for the 75% reimbursement and the state will reimburse the 25%. She also warned that there is no guarantee they will cover the rest of it or if they will accept the expenses. There is no guidance or specific to see what expenses are covered.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski reiterated that on June 29th the TOB will be fully staffed, which will make it easier to assist our residents; especially come tax season. She then thanked Robin Campbell who has been tasked with the administration for back to work protocols.

WFD#1 Chief Moore stated that the Fire Department staff remains split up between the two stations; this is in keeping with the social distance protocols throughout the summer.

Present to Speak

Elaine Newcomb asked the Selectmen what the protocol means by “touchless doors”. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated she believes it would most likely be an enormous expense and not one that we looked at.

Ms. Newcomb noted that there was an article in the Hartford Courant of what summer school might look like and asked if the Selectmen saw it? She noted that the draft noted no more than 10 people could ride on a bus; noting that there could be an enormous financial impact. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she would defer that to the BOE.

Good & Welfare

First Selectwoman Wiecenski reminded everyone that all meetings will continue to be virtual. All agenda's and minutes are shared on the town's website and the virtual videos are stored on the Town's YouTube page; which is “Town of Willington CT Official”. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked Mike D'Amato for assisting us with uploading and moderating our meetings.

Dog licensing begins today. Previous dog owners will receive a mailing from the Town Clerk for renewal. There is also an online method as well and the deadline which is usually June 30th has been extended to July 31st due to COVID.

The Animal Control Officer will hold a Rabies Clinic on June 13th from 10AM – 12 PM in the back of the TOB; 40 Old Farms Road. It is open to Willington residents only and you must pay exact cash amount; which is \$10. Donations will also be accepted on that day. In addition; the Town Clerk will be registering dogs and all social distancing rules will be in place and residents must wear masks.

Human Services held a food drive today (to continue the event that was cut short on May 22nd). Several donations were collected. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked everyone for their generous donations.

On Friday, June 12th from 10 AM – 12 PM, Human Services will hold another food distribution; where food, masks & household supplies will be handed out. It will be held for Willington residents only and ID will be required.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she has spoken with Lt. Palmer of Troop C earlier and he assured here that they continue to do regular patrols around town. They are making their presence known. They recognize our residents still have residual concerns and fear with everything that has transpired. If you see them driving through town; that may be why.

If any resident finds they need to talk to someone about the events of last week; please contact our Human Services Department at 860-487-3118.

Hall Memorial School has decorated the front lawn with a beautiful display of signs with pictures of our graduating 8th grade class. Although this is not how we anticipated their last ending at HMS; and will not be able to stand under our banners; their families are in our hearts as they end this chapter. First Selectwoman Wiecenski wished them luck at E.O. Smith or Windham Tech; or wherever they are going.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski wished everyone to stay well and stay Willington Strong.

Selectman Blessington said that he saw the library announced they will be opening on Friday for returns only. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that staff returned to work last week and on Friday, June 5th they will begin taking returns. Then on Saturday, June 13th, they will begin curbside pickups for on-line orders.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Campbell
Office Manager
Town of Willington