

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Special Meeting Minutes
Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

May 4, 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; Public Works' Director, Troy Sposato and residents.

Approval of Minutes

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of April 20, 2020 as written.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of April 24, 2020 as written.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Present To Speak

No one was present to speak

Correspondence

There was no correspondence to review.

First Selectman's Status Report

*The financial software implementation is still moving forward. Training will begin next week.

*The replacement of the fuel tank at Public Works has been delayed by a few weeks; but is slated to begin around the end of June/beginning of July

*Concrete testing on municipal buildings (Senior Center; Library & pump house) - the report is being finalized and we are hopeful to have on the next meeting agenda.

Public Works

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

- Roadside mowing is still going on around town
- Grading of dirt roads

- Dug out waterways around town
- Contractor installed new millings at the entrance of RRRC
- Installed plaques at RRRC and the TOB for the dedication of the fields
- Installed temporary glass in the finance office
- Paved patches at Center School and did some curb repair around town
- Picked up pallets on Daleville Rd that someone had thrown on the side off of the road two truck loads
- Finished brush cutting at RRRC

Troy gave a big thank you to a resident who donated a couple of boxes of masks for the Public works crew. They are greatly appreciated!

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted beginning today, the Public Works crew has begun their summer schedule where they have 4 day work weeks and off on Fridays; unless an emergency arises.

New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Old Business

A. COVID-19 Update

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted as of today; Willington has 6 positive cases; including one hospitalization. She added we have been fortunate to have such low numbers and thanked our residents who are practicing social distancing. It is helpful to see everyone doing their part to keep the numbers low.

Our Emergency Responders have been most affected by this virus. As of today, we have 4 responders who tested positive; and two under quarantine due to exposure. All responders are doing ok at this time and are healing at their own pace. We have had tremendous support from our Mutual Aid partners; Stafford, Mansfield, Tolland and UCONN; who have been covering Station 13 in the absence of our downed responders.

WFD#1 Chief Moore was present. He noted that we are waiting to see how the responders test and they should start to come back over the course of the week. One should be released today. He added that we cannot thank our Mutual Aid partners enough for their help.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that she has received several inquiries and suggestions to allow Willington residents to vote on the budget. She said while other municipalities have been creative in their voting processes; the Governor has clarified that Executive Order 7HH and the language in Executive Order 7I make it mandatory for the Towns legislative body (Board of Selectmen) to authorize the budget making authority (Board of Finance) to adopt the municipal budget and set the mil rate; therefore we must move forward with the process that has been put forth under Order 7I.

Today our Human Services Department held a drive up food distribution. Jennie Arpin; Willington Human Services Director was present. This is the first time Willington has ever held a drive up food distribution. She added that the Food Pantry has experienced more activity over the past month. At today's event; Ms. Arpin added that they handed out brochures to promote the Human Services Department; with what they can offer; taking away some of the intimidation to those who might not be

familiar with them. Ms. Arpin added during they drive; they also used the opportunity to hand out masks to those in need.

Ms. Arpin stated that today's food distribution saw 57 cars and some had multiple families in them (such as seniors who car-pooled); handing out a total of 66 packages (and 67 masks). There were also 2 deliveries at the end of the day. Ms. Arpin noted that she was happy to assist 68 total families today.

It is the beginning of the month; and many families in need might be getting their SNAP benefits or food stamps; and suspects if the food drive was held later in the month; we might see larger numbers stop in.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that Ms. Arpin shared some stats – on a normal March; the Food Pantry services 52 families and a normal April would be 58. This year; she has seen 70 in March; and 93 in April – and 1/3 of the clients in April are new to the service. First Selectwoman Wiczenski added that many of the people who drove through today were very grateful to receive the services. She then thanked Ms. Arpin for putting the event together as well as the volunteers and Troy and Jayson from Public Works for their help today.

Selectwoman Boritz asked if there is a way for residents to make (monetary) donations to Human Services. Ms. Arpin said the best way to do that would be to either mail in or drop off a check to the Town office Building. There is a drop box at the front door or we are always to receive by mail. She then noted if the donation is specific to the food pantry; please write that in the memo of the check. Food donations are being held by appointment because the TOB is closed to the public.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski then noted that she has received some unemployment numbers for Willington. She shared data from the Department of Labor's website and highlighted info for Willington. The DOL made it clear that the numbers do not wholly represent COVID. The claims begin in February; which there was 1 claim; March 15th jumped to 99; March 22nd to 90 etc. She noted that the data is incomplete but they have given us some numbers. She anticipates that we will receive more information in the next few weeks and she will pass along. The information can be found at: www.ct.gov/dol. First Selectwoman Wiczenski clarified that the numbers for Willington are very small compared to other larger towns. Selectwoman Boritz asked if the numbers are of new applicants each week, or the total numbers during that particular week? First Selectwoman Wiczenski clarified that they were labeled "process initial claims". She added if we wait another week or two we should see complete numbers through April. Unfortunately; the numbers probably will not be out before the Board of Finance holds their meetings.

In addition to unemployment; our EDC conducted a survey of businesses in Willington. Our Zoning Agent; Mike D'Amato has assisted our EDC to send out a survey throughout town. They sent it out via any type of contacts they could. The survey was sent out to just over 60 businesses via email, the town's Facebook page, town website to name a few. Responses came from businesses administrative, clerical; retail; computer programming; software development; engineering & restaurants to name a few.

Staffing:

22% of the respondents stated they have reduced staff

49% are working as normal or from home

14% have furloughed or laid off some portion of their workforce

7 % have closed

8% have denoted "other"

Business activity:

15% are closed and waiting to reopen

14% denoted business activity is down more than 50%

38% denote business activity is down 0 – 50%

15% say they are not affected

Economic Supports:

52% have applied (and some have received) for some sort of Economic Support

35% have not applied for Economic Support (they either felt they did not need; or did not want to pursue)

13% denoted "other" reasons

Moving Forward:

50% of the businesses said their biggest need is for the town to provide support to assist with what programs are out there and available to them. They may need assistance with filling out paperwork for economic support; etc.

The majority of respondents denoted they are looking forward to getting back to normal ASAP.

Mr. D'Amato noted that he just pulled this info together today and hasn't had a chance to share with EDC yet.

Selectwoman Boritz said she would be interested to see a breakdown and categories; for example; how many of the restaurants are impacted for example. This would be helpful with the next steps that need to be taken. She added that it is really important to be able to offer support to fill out applications for Federal Aid.

Mr. D'Amato stated that he has spoken with Fed-Ex – they are hiring and busy. Business has increased dramatically; and they have not been added to this survey; because numbers would have been skewed. First Selectwoman Wiczenski then asked the total number of respondents of the survey. Mr. D'Amato noted that 57 businesses took part of the survey; however there are a substantial number of people who are considered as a business in Willington – more than you might think. As he works on this with EDC (and info from the Assessor's office); looks more like it could be 150 +/-; ranging from one person doing taxes from their home; to Fed-EX. EDC will keep the survey open and keep building the momentum to get all businesses involved to work together.

Selectwoman Boritz then clarified that one of the reasons she requested this information was to better understand the impact on the taxes we are going to be collecting on these businesses; the mom and pop shops that are the root of our community; to see what is happening with them and how they are affected.

Mike said hopefully as we leave this open; the results will become more stable. First Selectwoman Wiczenski noted that the data will also be helpful to what we are able to share with them. For example a truckload of PPE had become available from the state last week and was given out to small businesses in the towns; the caveat was they had to employ over 58 employees. If we had a database with that info; we could have had more than just one business take advantage of that.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski thanked Mr. D'Amato as he was at the last BOS meeting where the Selectmen had asked for the info and he and Rich Mindek (Chairman of EDC) jumped on this.

Selectman Blessington noted that the way he sees this is that 50% of the businesses who responded denote that they have been negatively impacted by this – is that correct? Mr. D'Amato clarified that 50% responded that they applied for economic relief and 49% state they are working normal or from home. Selectman Blessington clarified that the other 50% denoted they had an impact on them. Mr. D'Amato said yes; they either furloughed employees; laid off employees or closed. Selectwoman Boritz clarified that a portion of the 49% who said they are working from home could be working at a lower capacity and experiencing reduced business.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski cautioned we might see a business who seems to be doing well; despite lead time; but it is all relative to what we are seeing. A local restaurant may seem to be doing well; but really only at 50% of their typical capacity and it is hard to gauge. She then urged everyone who is able to support our small businesses – it is critical to them at this time.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she just received a letter from the Secretary of State of voting procedures going forward. The letter was just received a few hours ago and was circulated to our Town Clerk and Registrar of Voters. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that they Registrars have been working diligently on a solid plan to ensure our elections can take place in a safe manner for everyone.

Christine Psathas was present. She noted that she received the email very late this afternoon. There will be a conference call with the Secretary of State tomorrow afternoon and they will go over the information in more detail. The Registrars want to make everything safe for not only the voters; but the poll workers as well. They will keep the Selectmen up to date.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we will continue to follow the Governor's lead with his plans to re-open the state and look to see what that means for our office. We are still under the work from home policy; but will also see an increase of activity as we move towards July and tax season; and will work on a new plan for when those employees must be in the building.

The Governor is expected to make an announcement regarding schools tomorrow.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski sadly announced that we will not be able to hold our traditional Memorial Day parade and ceremony this year. Robin Campbell is working with the VFW Commander to come up with a makeshift service and it might be something of virtual nature instead. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated when Willington Day was initially canceled; we were holding off on Memorial Day; however the safety of all of our residents is of foremost importance and a large gathering would not be in our best interest.

Present to Speak

No one was present to speak.

Good & Welfare

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that two plaques have recently been installed; one each at River Road Athletic Complex and the other at the TOB Ball fields. The plaques have been dedicated to two individuals; Douglas Lerner and Kevin Legare.

Douglas Randolph Lerner has been recognized as the person responsible for bringing Little League to Willington; and a plaque has been dedicated to him at River Road Athletic Complex.

The field behind the Town Office Building is being dedicated to Kevin Legare who dedicated many years of coaching Little League and was also a long time HMS baseball coach. Kevin was a Willington resident who passed away last year. Resident Dee Gilbert sought donations for the plaque that was installed last week. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19; the dedications have been postponed.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked Willington Parks & Recreation Director, Maureen Parsell, who with Public Works installed the 2 plaques and the large stones that were donated by Becker Construction.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski encourages everyone to get outside and enjoy the nice weather but reminded everyone to continue to practice social distancing.

We received the April, 2020 monthly report from Troop C:

Total calls for service:

Accidents:	5	Traffic Stops:	9
Criminal investigations:	7	DUP's:	2
Burglaries:	1	Infractions:	3
Larcenies:	3	Written Warnings:	2
Non-reportable matters:	274	Verbal Warnings:	4
Misdemeanor Summons:	2	Arrests:	9

First Selectwoman Wiecenski reminded everyone to be vigilant – if you see something say something; and contact Troop C – they cannot help us if they are not aware.

Upcoming meetings this week:

Region 19 BOE will meet at 7PM tomorrow evening.

Planning & Zoning will meet at 7:30 tomorrow evening

Board of Finance will meet at 7PM on Thursday

These are all virtual meetings and information will be posted on the website. (*Region 19 info posted on the Region 19 website).

Today is International Firefighters Day. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked members of Willington Fire Department #1, Inc. and Willington Hill Fire Department for their service to the town. We appreciate your service on a daily basis but in the midst of this health emergency we thank you for being on the front lines when we need you.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then noted that WFD#1's Victoria Mott was recognized on NBC30's Everyday Heroes segment. Ms. Mott was honored for her service on another ambulance crew that was sent to New York. Ms. Mott has since returned; and is under quarantine for the next two weeks and First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked her for her service.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Campbell

Office Manager

Town of Willington