

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes
Town Office Building

December 18, 2017
6:30 P.M.

**Minutes are not official until approved at the next regular meeting*

First Selectman Wiecenski called the meeting to order with the following in attendance: Selectmen Makuch & Blessington and residents. First Selectman Wiecenski led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes:

Selectman Blessington moved to approve the minutes of December 4, 2017 as written.

Selectman Makuch seconded the motion.

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

Present to Speak:

Peter Andersen, Chairman of the Willington Conservation Commission stated that he would like to be able to speak under the discussion of item 7.D (potential land available for sale) when the item is discussed.

Correspondence:

A list of correspondence was available at the meeting and in the Selectman's office.

First Selectman Status Report

First Selectman Wiecenski stated that she has removed two items from the list: hiring of the Town Clerk and the website upgrade, as it has been completed.

The upgraded website became live on December 11th. She is asking for the public to be patient as the employees work with the new system. Although it seemed uploading items would be easy at the training session, it is not as user friendly as they thought.

In addition, First Selectman Wiecenski noted that she needs to add an item to the agenda; cautioning that it not something that she would normally do, however the appointment of the new Town Clerk was left off of the agenda when it was posted on Friday.

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to add item F under New Business; called Appointment of Town Clerk.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

Selectman Blessington cautioned that he is not in favor of adding items on the fly, but this is something that needs to be done tonight. First Selectman Wiecenski agreed; adding because of the timing of the next regular meeting and the appointment, she said it really should be done right away, rather than waiting until the next meeting on January 2nd.

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

Public Works:

Derek reported that the crew has been busy with the following:

- Bulb replacement at TOB
- Vehicle/equipment repair
- Wax vehicles
- Roadside mowing
- Install Posts and reflectors at roadside obstructions
- Roadside brush removal
- Make sand/salt mix
- Plow & sand roads
- Clear snow from sidewalks
- Move items from attic to common room for WYFSS
- Wash plow trucks

First Selectman Wiecenski noted that we had a weather event last week and our roads were in better shape than some of the state roads. She commended the crew on a job well done.

New Business

A. Set BOS budget meeting calendar

The Selectmen discussed potential dates for budget meetings and came up with 4 meeting dates.

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to set the Board of Selectmen budget meeting calendar as follows: January 2, 2018 at 5PM; January 10, 2018 at 6:30 PM; January 16, 2018 at 5PM and January 24, 2018 at 6:30 PM.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

The meetings will be held in the Selectmen's Conference Room. First Selectman Wiecenski added that she is waiting for the minutes to come out from the BOF meeting where it was determined the due date of the Selectmen's budget.

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

B. Resolution – Homeland Security MOA

First Selectman Wiecenski noted that this is a similar Resolution that was adopted at the last meeting, but this one is for Homeland Security grant paperwork, as the other was for an Emergency Management Performance Grant.

First Selectman Wiecenski read the Resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Town of Willington may enter into with and deliver to the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, any and all documents which it deems to be necessary or appropriate; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that, Erika Wiecenski as First Selectman of the Town of Willington, is authorized and directed to execute and deliver any and all documents on behalf of the Town of Willington and to do and perform all acts and things which she deems to be necessary or appropriate to carry out the terms of such documents. including, but not limited to, executing and delivering all agreements and documents contemplated by such documents

Selectman Makuch moved to adopt the Resolution as read.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

C. Discussion – video taping of meetings

First Selectman Wiecenski noted that we have someone here videotaping our meeting, but we do not have a policy in place at this time for any meeting held in Town. She added that she thinks it is nice to have them recorded, but takes issue with the fact that the person videotaping is being paid by a Selectman, not the town.

After seeking legal opinion from the Town Attorney, First Selectman Wiecenski stated that we have an Ordinance in place in regards to recording meetings (which is State Statute), but recommends stopping the recording of meetings until we establish a policy and put in place for all boards.

In addition, First Selectman Wiecenski stated that the meetings are being taped, but are not publicly available for viewing, which is concerning. She added that the town does not have the equipment or funding to support videotaping at this time – adding that she would like to see an all or nothing policy, where all boards are videotaped or none. First Selectman Wiecenski said that she is not opposed to it, but would rather have a policy set in place first – so everyone can follow it. She then cautioned that she isn't sure if we are able to tell the other boards that they should video tape their meetings (and how it should be done) and would like to err on the side of caution until she has had time to research it further.

Selectman Blessington stated that we have been talking about this for a year now and it is something he would like to see done by everyone. He added that he is working towards making it a public policy– where the Boards of Selectmen, Education and Finance as well as Planning & Zoning and other public meetings are videotaped.

Selectman Makuch stated that she does not have an opposition to the meetings being recorded, however she said she feels that they should be posted somewhere that they are easily accessible and linkable for the townspeople. She added that she would be interested to learn more about the cost and how and where the information will be shared so it goes out to enough people making sure it is worth the value. In addition, we need to make sure it is on a platform that anyone in town can access when they want and making sure there is management of the comment and concerns on our end.

First Selectman Wiecenski cautioned that it would be different if it were supported by the town; because right now, it is someone else's equipment and the town has no control over the content; putting the town possibly at risk. If we do something ourselves, we have control over the camera, the sources and the trail. She reiterated that she is not opposed to the videotaping (and is aware that other towns do it) but would like to set something in place to have it done the right way so the Town is protected.

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to discontinue recording of the Board of Selectmen's meetings until we put a procedure in place.

Selectman Makuch seconded the motion (for the purpose of continuing the discussion)

First Selectman Wiecenski stated that she would like to research this and compile the information that Selectman Blessington has and will work on getting a procedure in place and perhaps setting up a YouTube channel for the Town, which will allow access for everyone to see. Selectman Blessington clarified if you have access to YouTube, then you have access to the videos now. First Selectman Wiecenski then cautioned that she would not know videos of the meetings exist, if she weren't in attendance at these meetings and saw someone with a video camera recording it. She then asked how anyone would know that they are available. Robin Campbell cautioned that she knows that the videos exist and are on YouTube, but they are not easy to find on there. Selectman Blessington added that this is one of the things that he is learning as we go. He has the people who video tape them name them and upload them – right they should be under a search of "Wilmington Town Meetings".

Selectman Makuch said she is curious to see what the cost would be and if there is a large enough audience to make sure it would be cost effective. She then suggested perhaps creating a trial period. She added that we should have a standard procedure to follow and understand where it is posted and how we can access it (and be able to fund it as well).

Selectman Blessington said that he is interested in getting other boards to do this and has a meeting set up with the Chairman of the Board of Finance to discuss further and see if the Board is interested. He said he has not spoken with the PZC or BOE yet. He then added if we don't follow through with this he is not sure it is ever going to happen or how to move forward from this point. First Selectman Wiecenski clarified that she will work on this and will start with this board, then phase in the others. Since we are entering budget season, it is a perfect time to start looking into it. First Selectman Wiecenski noted that she believes many people might like to follow a video of a meeting adding we just need to make sure it is going out to the people. The problem now is probably because it is not coming from the town. She would feel more comfortable with having parameters in place first. First Selectman Wiecenski said she will begin looking into it tomorrow.

Selectman Blessington said that he is not sure the motion is even legal. First Selectman Wiecenski clarified that she spoke with the Town Attorney, who suggested that the motion would have to be made prior to a meeting; therefore she wouldn't be able to stop the taping of this meeting. She made it clear that she is not talking about holding off on the videotaping forever, but just the way it is being done right now - until we can standardize a policy.

Selectman Makuch asked for further clarification – is it the recording or the distribution that is the issue? First Selectman Wiecenski noted it is the fact that it currently has nothing to do with the Town and we don't know what happens to the footage once it leaves this building and we have no idea who owns it, but there is nothing there that is sanctioned by or property of the town. Selectman Blessington then asked if it were to belong to the town, then who would be the one to edit it? First Selectman Wiecenski said no one would edit it – it would be kept intact and then linked to our website (via either you tube or vimeo) with copyright information. If we put something in place before it is posted, then we have control over it. She added that we don't have control over the other Boards/Commissions who choose not to tape their meetings and she doesn't have all of the answers tonight; she is saying it is worth looking into.

Selectman Makuch agreed that it is worth looking into; but hesitates saying it should stop because there is no way from preventing anyone else from bringing a camera in to tape. She then said she would like to see the motion modified to make it a bit more proactive. . It would establish a date to create procedures in place for the official video recording of meetings. A chain of custody needs to be established and the media is made accessible. She noted that we can't stop anyone from recording but we can establish an official Board of Selectmen recording of our meetings where a situation would become acceptable.

Selectman Makuch made a friendly amendment to the motion: remove the component about discontinuing the videotaping and adding that we are going to establish guidelines for the recording and posting of official Willington Board meetings.

Selectman Blessington seconded the amendment.

Vote: 2 Yes (Makuch & Blessington) 1 No (Wiecenski)

First Selectman Wiecenski noted she is voting no simply because she wanted us to stop the procedure in which the way it was being done until we established guidelines. She clarified the video recording can continue although she would rather see us in control of it. We live in a Democracy; which she loves. She thanked the Selectmen for the discussion and asked Selectman Blessington to share the information that he has so she can begin working on guidelines.

D. Discussion – potential available land for sale

First Selectman Wiecenski stated that a gentleman had contacted our office stating that he has 26 acres of land that abuts the Senior Complex and is thinking of selling it. He would like to give the Town the option of purchasing it first. The parcel is 26 acres of forest and wetlands with frontage along Clint Eldredge Road. The gentleman is asking \$5,000 per acre.

Robin Campbell forwarded the offer to the Conservation Commission, Housing Authority and the Board of Education but has not heard back from any of them as of late. She also explained to the land owner that something like this will take a little bit of time for everyone to discuss and make a decision.

Peter Andersen, Chairman of the Conservation Commission was present. He stated that the Conservation Commission has received the letter and reviewed the map, but has not had a chance to assess the property, noting the angle the Conservation Commission would have on this parcel would be to preserve as open space. The Commission will have an opinion on it once they have had a chance to run an analysis on it but will report back to the Selectmen once they do.

First Selectman Wiecenski noted that the BOE is conducting a facility study (hence why they were notified of the offer of sale as well); but this does not look like the ideal place to put a school; as the frontage, being on a back road would not be able to accommodate the traffic. Another option would be to create an access drive which cuts through from the Senior Complex, but that is not ideal. Selectman Blessington noted he understands there is quite a bit of wetlands involved as well.

Selectman Blessington stated that he is most likely against it; but we should at least table it until we have had a chance to hear back from the other boards.

Mr. Andersen stated the Conservation Commission will get back to the Selectmen, but noted that the price would most likely need to be discussed and it would also need an appraisal; which is sometimes a requirement if the town were interested in seeking a grant to fund the purchase.

E. Appointments

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to re-appoint Tiina Binheimer as Municipal Animal Control Officer for the Town of Willington, effective January 1, 2018; expiring December 31, 2018.

Selectman Makuch seconded the motion.

Selectman Blessington stated that Tina is the best Animal Control Officer that we've ever had and he is happy to be re-appointing her. First Selectman Wiecenski added that she has heard nothing but great things about her as well.

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

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to appoint Amy Lam as Town Clerk; effective January 9, 2018; expiring January 8, 2022.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

First Selectman Wiecenski stated that we had quite the Hiring Committee; comprised of herself, Selectman Blessington, former First Selectman Christina Mailhos, former Selectman Kim Kowalyshyn, Town Clerk Donna Hardie, Stafford's Town Clerk; Karen Troiano and Tolland's Town Clerk; Sheila Bailey. She thanked Karen and Sheila for their assistance in the hiring process. She noted that Amy will be coming in on a per-diem to work with Donna prior to her retirement on January 8th.

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

Old Business

A. Crumbling Foundation Update

First Selectman Wiecenski stated that there is nothing new to report on the topic at this time.

B. Budget Update

The Board of Finance had met last week, and First Selectman Wiecenski & Selectman Blessington were in attendance. The BOF is still asking us to freeze discretionary spending, but has given approval to move forward in filling the vacancy in the Finance Department. They have asked to hold off on the Land Use position until further notice. The BOF also set their budget calendar at that meeting – dates are forthcoming when their minutes come out.

Good & Welfare

The CIP Committee will hold their first meeting this coming Thursday, December 21st at 6:30 PM in the lower level conference room. At that meeting, they will establish the Chairman and set the meeting schedule.

Our Assessor, Jody Heon has submitted her resignation. Her last day will be next Wednesday, December 27th.

This past Friday, December 15th, the TOB closed at noon so the employees could hold a potluck holiday party. A good time was had by all. First Selectman Wiecenski thanked Brenda Weber for organizing the party and the activities. Christine Psathas (Registrar of Voters) stated it was very enjoyable and thanked First Selectman Wiecenski for allowing the building to close at noon so all of the employees could enjoy themselves without having to worry about going up and down the stairs.

First Selectman Wiecenski noted that the Selectmen meeting calendar, which was adopted at the last meeting has the wrong date for the second September meeting (it should be September 17, but was submitted for September 18th). The meeting calendar will be fixed and reapproved at the next meeting. Robin Campbell thanked Lisa Madden (Tax Collector) for bringing it to our attention.

Lastly, the Board of Finance had held a special meeting on December 14th to fill the alternate seat, however the vote does not stand because all six members were not present at the meeting. The Town Ordinance states that all six members must be seated and vote on filling a vacancy. First Selectman Wiecenski clarified that she does not believe that the vote will change (because there was only one name presented to fill the vacancy); but noted that will have to hold another special meeting with all regular members seated who will vote on the nomination – it is just a formality that needs to be performed properly. She thanked the person who stepped forward to fill the alternate vacancy.

Selectman Blessington noted that the State has passed Public Act 17-231; where they will no longer be processing Bazaar and Raffle permits. The documentation will now be processed in the Municipality in which the event will take place. He noted that the State will still collect their 2/3 cut of the revenue from processing the permits even though the town is doing all of the work – adding that it is yet another unfunded mandate from the state.

First Selectman Wiecenski wished everyone a Merry Christmas; Happy Hanukah and Happy New Year.

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 PM

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Campbell
Administrative Assistant