

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Board of Selectmen  
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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Special Meeting Minutes  
Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

August 18, 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. She then explained that there was a glitch in the posting of the regular meeting (that was supposed to be held last night). It was found yesterday morning that the agenda had not been published; even though it looked like the posting went out. Under the Executive Order that is in place; all virtual meetings must be properly posted at least 24 hours in advance on the town's website and apologized for the mishap.

### Approval of Minutes

Selectman Blessington moved to approve the minutes of August 3, 2020 as written.

First Selectman Wiecenski seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of July 15, 2020 as written.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

### Present To Speak

No one was present to speak.

### Correspondence

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted among the items received were a letter of intent to retire from the Assistant Town Clerk; an Abatement letter from Willington Hill Fire Department and a letter from concerned citizens sent to the Selectmen and Library Board of Directors. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the Library Board of Directors addressed the letter on Friday evening during their regular meeting; at which she attended. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then added that the Library Board is looking into the matter and seeking legal action.

Selectman Blessington noted that the people who signed the letter may have attended that meeting; had they known the matter was going to be discussed at the Library Board Meeting. It was not on the original Agenda; but added on at the last minutes. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that the intent was not to hide the discussion. The information was gathered by the acting Director and it was presented in the report to the Board. It was at that time that First Selectwoman Wiecenski had them add as an item so they could formally discuss and take potential action.

She further clarified that the Selectmen do not have say over their Agenda. The communications were shared along with the letter that was received within the Director's report of the specific concerns. She then added that certain members of the library Board had received the information for the first time during the meeting.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then noted that one of the concerns stated in the letter that was received is that nobody cared about the issues brought forth; she added that she cannot disagree with that statement more and noted that the Library Board is taking the matter very seriously and may take legal action. If so, we would not be able to publicly speak about pending litigation.

#### First Selectman's Status Report

The Fuel Tank Replacement at Public Works should begin on Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>. It was delayed due to the storm a few weeks ago. The Delay is actually working to our advantage which will allow Public Works to use the fuel up which means there will be less to transfer; thus saving money.

Town Clerk Position – the original deadline was last Thursday; however it was found that the ad was not posted on the Official Town Clerk Association website (which is part of the typical process); therefore the deadline was extended to this Friday, August 21<sup>st</sup>. The Selectmen and 2 Town Clerks (from Tolland and Stafford) will sit on the interview panel.

The Revenue Collector shared that we are a bit ahead of where we typically are at this point in the collection cycle. So far, \$6,531,489.95 has been collected which consists of 47% of Real Estate, 56% Personal Property and 60% motor vehicles. The Total collection expected for 1st Installment is \$7,367,759.69 ~\$836K to that goal which is right on target.

STEAP Grant – the program is once again being offered but this year is for a smaller projects. Priority will be given to COVID related projects. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she had originally planned on submitting a request for funding to begin repairs on Village Hill Road; however the max amount to be awarded is \$128,205; therefore she changed the scope and will be applying for the full amount to go towards a septic; painting and window re-glazing at the Old Town Hall. The deadline is Friday, August 28, 2020. This item was originally in the CIP; but was cut due to COVID.

#### Public Works

Troy reported the following that has been done by Public Works:

- Roadside mowing is still going on around town
- Trash at River Road Athletic Complex; which has increased to twice per week
- Storm clean-up is still continuing
- Fixed fence at RRRC
- Removed tree at Center School that had fallen in the playground during the storm
- Lindon tree service was in town removing hangers and removing hazard's trees all around town

Troy then noted that new stickers will be handed out at the Transfer Station on September 26, 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. Attendants will be checking registrations at that time. He asks everyone to be patient during this time to allow the attendants to properly check registrations and distribute the stickers.

## New Business

### A. Name Municipal Water Coordinator

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that part of CRCOG's (Central Region Council of Government) Homeland Security Grant Program is requesting for all municipalities to name a municipal Water Coordinator who will speak to and receive information from state sources on water systems and local drought impacts etc.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Troy Sposato as the Municipal Water Coordinator for the Town of Willington in accordance with the CRCOG 2020 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) who will serve as a point of contact to OPM (Office of Policy and Management & DPH (Department of Public Health.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the information is due to CRCOG by June 30, 2021.

### B. Resolution – Affordable Housing Grant Award

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adopt the following Resolution:

Resolved, effective August 17, 2020, to authorize Michael D'Amato, Zoning Agent, to execute the Notice of Grant Award for the Affordable Housing Plan Grant Technical Assistance Program dated July 1, 2020; to execute amendments, revisions, and revisions thereto; to implement project activities, if approved, and to act as the authorized representative of the Town of Willington and to execute any other agreement or contract relative to said project.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we adopted a resolution back in March to apply for a grant to develop an affordable housing plan. We were awarded and now the Grant requires we appoint an administrator. Mike D'Amato has agreed to assume the role in his role as Willington's Zoning Agent.

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

### C. Tax Refund

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$326.89 to Suzanne Morris on a certificate of Correction

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$299.30 to VW Leasing LTD on a certificate of Correction

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$326.59 to VW Leasing LTD on a certificate of Correction

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

#### D. Storm Update

First Selectwoman Wiecenski recapped that the storm hit Tuesday 8/4 about 2 pm. It was a quick moving storm and by 5 pm the bulk of the damage to our Town was done. We had substantial damage and while we were prepared, our public utility, Eversource was not. We sustained close to 80 events on 41 roads in town. The EOC was opened on Tuesday and closed officially on Monday afternoon when almost all of our residents were restored power to their homes and businesses.. We had been assigned a new liaison from Eversource who was available to us but due to COVID not in person as we were used to.

We had followed the plan put in place for response which was developed after the 2011 storms and worked alongside our Emergency Management Director; Public Works Director, staff and EMS and it quickly became evident that Eversource was not prepared to respond in the manner we were expecting and deserved. It was 4 days before any real response from Eversource began in Willington. First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that there were several angry phone calls and follow ups during that time and until then, our Public Works' crews worked to clear any roads and debris that did not involve wires of any type. They cleared what they could; but that still left many areas untouchable because they involved wires. Several roads remained closed because the crews are not able to touch anything that involves wires.

On Saturday, our EMS and Public Works' crews worked alongside First Selectwoman Wiecenski as part of a make safe crew to clear those events that did involve wires and they continued to monitor the areas around town that involved closed or blocked roads (because of downed wires) when it became evident that Eversource would not be here for days. It was important to continually monitor to be sure safety was at the forefront and be sure residents knew to stay clear from those areas. First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that there were some pretty dangerous spots around town. This is when we began to finally see restoration results. The EOC worked diligently to keep our residents safe, informed and working with Eversource to get the proper response here in Willington and hold Eversource accountable. We did not take lightly the lack of response and never stopped demanding a better response from them.

A storm center was opened at Hall School and offered water and charging of electronic devices until Monday. This storm has shown us once again our Utility partner Eversource has not taken the feedback and planning that came out of previous storms.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that we did, however feel a loss from no longer having an active CERT (Citizen Emergency Response Team) and we need to work to revitalize that program. Our Human Services Department was integral in the volunteer needs we had. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked the Vernon CERT Team who offered volunteers. With this help we operated the Storm Center and checked on vulnerable residents. Our EMS partners worked to monitor the affected roads areas and assisted with Resident's needs. Thank you to our residents who looked in on their neighbors and helped keep each other informed.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that there is one area we need to address and need our resident's assistance with. Our staff and EMS worked to mark with cones, signs, and caution tape the affected dangers. We had some instances when trees and wires were cut/ handled by citizens not qualified to do so. The PW crew and EMS staff will not touch and wire for basic safety reasons. **We ask our residents to do the same.** Every down or low wire should be avoided and not touched. Your safety is at the forefront of the work that was done and taking these dangerous steps for whatever reason should never be done. Also we had multiple areas where materials to mark roads were either moved or stolen. Redirecting a detour sign to a dead end road could have resulted in an unnecessary accident. She then asked everyone to please respect the markings and know there were clear reasons this was done. She added that she cannot stress enough the need to avoid any downed or low hanging wires!

Selectwoman Boritz noted that the Facebook live communications seemed to work well and allowed residents to see what was going on. She thinks we should do more of that. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she got the idea to do that so she could try to have some sort of interaction with residents – especially since there was no action from Eversource. She found that she was having difficulty with cell service as her connection kept going in and out; but added that she thinks we should keep finding different ways to get communication out. It makes a big difference for our residents to see us working behind the scenes. Selectwoman Boritz agreed; noting that in normal times, we hear the latest news at the transfer station or in the hallways of schools – right now we don't have that. She suggested perhaps having an open house – less formal type forum to communicate with residents and answer questions.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she is still communicating with Eversource of what will come out of this – we have been down this road before. Our predecessors worked with Eversource and developed protocols that have been put in place and how they are handled. We had a solid plan on Tuesday when she spoke with reps at Eversource and by Wednesday morning, it no longer existed. There were not enough crews in Connecticut and her argument was if there were 350 Eversource crews and 250 tree crews; why weren't every town assigned at least one crew; and there were no answers for that. Anger was an understatement.

### Old Business

#### A. COVID-19 Update

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that Willington has 16 COVID-positive cases and zero probable cases that are known. She added that she does have added concern about the potential for increased numbers as UCONN students return to campus. So far there are 5 confirmed on campus and 2 commuters. She has concerns of what they will look like going forward and will continue to monitor.

The Town Office Building remains closed to the public and are doing curbside appointments as needed. Last week, during the primary; TOB Staff worked from home (with the exception of Finance; who was locked in their department) to keep the number of people in the building at minimal numbers. She noted the great work by our Registrars and Town Clerk's office for the tremendous work that went into the Primary.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that she is looking to install a Ring style doorbell for visitors at the front door; which will allow us to monitor who comes in for various reasons. This will assist with a new contact tracing mechanism that is going to be implemented in the near future. When people arrive at the TOB; they will be asked a series of questions related to COVID-19 health screening.

Meetings will continue to operate in virtual settings until further notice.

### Present to Speak

No one was present to speak.

### Good & Welfare

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she sent out a phone notice to residents; informing them about the storm center. The broadcast notice reached 4,063 residents; in comparison to the COVID message sent in March; which only reached 2,899. Since March we have gained around 1,200 residents.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she heard there may have been an uptick in burglaries and stolen vehicles during the power outage so she reached out to Troop C to inquire. She was told that there was no increase of reports; noting that the activity may not have been reported to authorities. It is important to let them know. If the police are not made aware; they do not have any documentation of it. Selectwoman Boritz stated that she has seen many videos posted on social media of people showing someone running up to their cars; trying to open the doors; when they find the doors are locked; they flee – she clarified that even those types of events should be reported to the police. Even though they tried and failed – it should still be reported to the police so they can get descriptions.

We received the July 2020 monthly report from Troop C:

Accidents:	8	Traffic Stops:	70
Criminal Investigations	11	DUI's:	1
Burglaries:	1	Infractions:	38
Larcenies:	3	Written Warnings:	9
Arrests:	6	Verbal Warnings:	20
Non-reportable matters:	292		

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that this storm showed us once again that we are Willington Strong and 2020 is testing us on that. Willington is a tight – knit community – check on your friends and neighbors.

One of our younger Willington residents; Austin Kozicki who suffered from kidney disease recently received a life-saving kidney donation. His mom placed a campaign on a few billboards in the state and a very generous donor came forward. Mr. Kozicki is on the mend. First Selectwoman Wiecenski congratulated the Kocicki family and wish them all well.

Selectman Blessington stated that he wished to express his disappointment. He had sent an email request to add the library issue be put on tonight's agenda and it was not. He would like to request it be put on the next agenda and if there is nothing to discuss; it will at least be on the agenda. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that the discussion is a matter for the library board and they are taking steps. There is not much to discuss. The Library Board Chairman took steps to address the concerns stated in letter that they also received. It can certainly be added to the agenda; but it is something the Library Board is currently handling the issues and have taken steps to do so as possible litigation. She then reminded the Board if it becomes a possible litigation matter; it is no longer a matter of discussion.

The next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday September 8, 2020.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:14 PM

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Robin Campbell  
Office Manager  
Town of Willington

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT

Received for record August 20, 2020  
At 9:00 AM Matthew Aganush