

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Special Meeting Minutes
Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

February 8, 2021
6:30 PM

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM with the following in attendance; Selectwoman Boritz, Selectman Blessington and Public Works Director Troy Sposato.

A. Present to Speak

No one was present to speak

B. Budget Workshop

First Selectwoman Wiecenski started the discussion with reviewing the first run of the budget provided by the Finance Business Manager Ms. Latincsics. It was discussed on the front page you will see the total Selectmen budget, noted is the 14.7% an increase of \$518,311.00. This was prefaced that this is reflective of requests, we are just starting our work in reviewing. The bottom portion of the front page reflects capital improvement, these dollars hit local funds in the Selectmen's budget which reflects an 18.4% increase totaling \$100,235.00 additional dollars. Additional clarification was provided that CIP is still working, year one has not been finalized as of yet, with that said some of the figures presented are still fluid.

Moving on to page 2, the first department is the Selectmen's department. Salaries remain flat due to negotiation year, there are placeholders in the budget for variable salaries based on union negotiations. Overall in the 0111 Selectmen Department there is a .6% increase of which is \$990.00 additional dollars requested. The increases are in Commissions as you may recall the Historic District increased their budget for certificates of appropriateness and plaque restoration for twelve historic homes. The second increase is with the First Selectwoman's cell phone to be Town owned.

Moving on the next item is department 130 which is Accounting Services. Again the salaries will remain flat. You will note an increase in accounting software support an increase of \$1,517.00 additionally there is an increase to training and education of \$840.00. The overall department increase is 1.1% which is an overall increase of \$2,357.

Moving on to Assessors department 0134. You will note in the Assessors budget there was a decrease of (\$491.00) in computer support, a decrease of (\$200.00) in tax mapping, an increase to Assessors supplies of \$1,200, additionally an increase of \$250.00 in training and education. Overall there is a net increase of \$759.00 at .8%.

Moving on to Revenue Collector department 137. The only increases reflected are for DMV fees an increase of \$100.00 and an increase of \$370.00 in computer support. Overall there is a net increase of \$470.00 .6%.

Moving on to Town Counsel department 0141, the budget will remain flat.

Moving on to Town Clerk department 0151. It was noted that there is a .2% increase totaling \$255.00.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski asked Ms. Latincsics if the salary is correct for the Town Clerk, although we are remaining flat with salaries due to negotiations the first glance of the Town Clerk salary appears to be inaccurate.

Ms. Latincsics advised that the salary change is netted out in the placeholder. All salaries will remain flat when there is a change as there was with the Town Clerk, the change is noted in the place holder.

A discussion was held on the Town Clerks budget. Initially when the Town Clerk's budget was presented to the BOS. Line item 890 Miscellaneous was used and the BOS requested splitting out those expenses to more appropriate line items. Ms. Latincsics explained that the miscellaneous \$2,900.00 was parsed out as such; \$1,000.00 towards training, \$1,000.00 towards dues, \$400.00 towards the Assistant Town Clerk for an additional 3 Wednesday's for overtime if needed and lastly \$500.00 for additional extra coverage expenses to cover for vacations etc. The only additional expense is \$255.00 for election expenses.

Selectwoman Boritz commented that she appreciates that the Town Clerks office took the BOS feedback and parsed out the line items from miscellaneous as it makes for a better understanding of the business needs and where expenditures are earmarked. The willingness to be flexible assists in the process of cost allocations and efficient department function with a level of specificity.

Moving on to the Town Office Operations. First Selectwoman Wiczenski started the discussion prefacing that there will be some significant increases as we have discussed in the last several meetings. The big increase is reflected in computer expenses, you will note Ms. Latincsics has updated the spreadsheet to include the increased expenditures. To recap, the TOB responsibility for computer expense are split between BOE & the Town. The Town is responsible for 53% which was just over \$111,000.00. The line item cost is increasing in efforts to facilitate the required migration to Microsoft Office 365 for compliance and is a necessary expenses. The additional cost for year 1 is \$38,000.00. It was expressed that we are continuing to meet with NOVUS our IT Company to find some cost savings with cloud storage and potentially to parse out individual department expense that will utilize this software. The intent for this is to parse out the migration expense to individual budget lines vs. taking the hit 100% in the Selectmen's budget. The next large increase is due to postage which increased \$3,002.00, postage increased .01 on metered postage effective January 25, 2021. It was noted that it is difficult to track postage as the postage comes out of the Selectmen's budget. We do not currently have the ability to track postage by department. For example with absentee ballots, January & July Tax bills & Assessors bills and Registrar of Voters mailing etc. The next increase is with fire alarm monitoring an increase of \$470.00, several lines down you will note a decrease of (\$250) for Security System Monitoring. This is due to TN no longer providing this service with our service agreement ending 6-30-21. The new service is based on a quote from a State approved vendor. This service will reduce our panel from two to one panel for both fire and security monitoring. The next increase is for \$186.00 for TOB electricity lease. The following line item you will note a significant decrease in TOB heating oil (\$1,298.00). In the spring at the onset of COVID with the assistance of Ms. Latincsics we were able to negotiate a lock in rate which is proving to be a significant savings. The lower cost lock in rate was \$1.63 per gallon for heating oil and \$1.64 per gallon for diesel. For perspective purposes at the time we negotiated the heating oil, the rate was \$2.14. Overall the increase to the Town Office Operations is 18.6% \$40,721.00.

Selectman Blessington commented that the increase is quite a leap however he understands that computer upgrades are necessary and integral in day to day operations.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski responded by saying it is a tough pill to swallow however a necessary expense to ensuring compliance and day to day operations continue without incident. We will continue to work with NOVUS to look for cost savings and or parse out expense portions to individual departments. We should see a decrease over time as the first year expense reflects all the work needed to divide the domains.

Moving on to Town Hall Operations which is our Old Town Hall. Overall there is a decrease of (\$692.00) due to cost savings with heating oil as mentioned above.

Moving on to Consulting Engineers, there is an overall increase of \$5,000.00 based on our previous discussions in the BOS Budget workshop there is a need to increase each line item back to the original request of \$10,000.00 for each line item, consulting land use and consulting engineering for Public Works. There are projects in the works for Land Use, \$4,500.00 of that will be encumbered July 1, 2021. As you will recall \$10,000.00 was the asking budget and the BOF cut these line items down to \$7,500.00 to be clear we are asking the line items to be increased to the original ask of \$10,000.00 for each line based on forecasted projects.

Moving on to Senior Center Operations. There is a decrease in insurance, water service and with oil heating costs. There is a slight uptick in cable expenses. You will note the increase in fire alarm monitoring as indicated above with a new panel and service provider. Overall there is a net decrease of -1% (\$336.00). It is with great hope that by the time this budget is enacted the senior center will start to see in person services. We are making some progress with vaccines with our most vulnerable population. The vaccines will be rolled out shortly to 65 and older residents.

Moving on to department 0233 Health District. There is an increase reflected of \$1,072.00 which is a 3.2% increase in Health District budget. COVID warrants an increase as they are doing the work of many with very limited staff. They have received some federal dollars to offset some new positions so that they can continue to do the important work that they are doing between testing and vaccine clinics.

Moving on to 0235 Fire Main and Hydrant will remain flat at \$8,626.00. This is not a contractual service.

Moving on to Building Official costs. There is an overall increase of \$1,332.00 2.7% there is a slight increase to permit system support. Additionally there is an increase in purchased service which is reflected of a contractual salary increase. We contract with the Town of Bolton for this shared service. The salary is reflected under purchased service.

Selectman Blessington wanted to clarify that the Building Official contracted salary increase is factored into this budget. Also noting that once union negotiations are finalized the entire budget will increase to what is negotiated less the Building Official position.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski confirmed yes the contracted salary increase is factored into the budget as we have a three year contract with the Town of Bolton. The annual increases for contracted services have already been factored in and are contractual. The Building Official services are purchased this position is not union and will not be applicable in the union negotiations. The Town of Willington also contracts services for our Zoning Agent which will work in the same fashion. Additionally when the negotiations are agreed upon, the placeholders for salaries will increase the salary line items across the entire budget.

Moving on to Public Works, based on all the requested budget items the increase is \$327,563 or 27.7%. There are a few noteworthy things to mention, you will see a request for ten additional hours for the

Public Works Administrative position. The request is to have Mr. Sposato's Administrative Assistant go from 15 hours per week to increase to 25 hours per week. That would be an additional salary cost at his current rate would be and additional \$10,696.00. Additionally you will note line 135 there is a request for an additional two full time laborer positions with a total cost of \$96,845.00 in just salary.

Selectman Blessington wanted to go back to line item 124 for the PW administrative assistant position. Does that include or change benefits?

Ms. Latinsics responded by saying this particular line item was budgeted for a waiver based on current elections in benefits.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski wanted to note that if this change is approved and that staff member left Town service there is potential in the future that there could be additional cost incurred if benefits are elected.

A discussion was held on the Public Works staffing request. There are some concerns on how the additional hours for the Admin position would look. This is currently a 15 hour union Administrative Assistant position with the intent to increase to a 25 while utilizing that staff member for a multitude of additional duties that are not all necessarily admin functions but of a laborer. This could change the entire nature of the original position. Although that staff member is eager and willing to assist, at the end of the day we would be asking for that staff person to work out of class. Although a willingness to volunteer for other duties as assigned is helpful and appreciated it may be a disservice to that staff member to work in the capacity of a Laborer but to continue to be paid as an Administrative Assistant. The discussion continued on with a Laborer position, if we added another full time laborer would we still need an additional 10 hour increase for the Administrative position.

Selectmen Blessington commented in total the budget request is for an additional 90 hours per week which is a hefty jump. We have a responsibility to meet half way to parse out needs vs. wants.

Selectwoman Boritz came back to the original intent of budgets. We rely on our department heads to tell us what they need to efficiently run their department. With that said, having a half million dollar increase to an overall budget will realistically not be feasible. In looking at the budget what areas does Mr. Sposato feel could be responsibly cut and what areas require the infrastructure changes that are necessary? Can we approach this in a staggered method, where we add potentially one position vs. two and a half which is an additional 90 hours per week combined? It is the belief that we need to review line by line while reviewing this holistically on a whole. While we want to keep budgets flat due to instability with the economy realistically we need to invest in our infrastructure to prevent large losses for necessary maintenance in the future.

The discussion continued on the topic of if we had two additional laborer positions then there may not be a need to employ a snow contractors that we currently utilize. The dollars for that are reflected in the snow portion of this budget. If we add two additional laborer positions we will be able to deduct those costs however if we choose not to add two additional laborer positions we may have an increase in the snow contractors fees to ensure we have adequate snow clearing coverage.

The Public Works Director Mr. Sposato responded by saying he understands this request is a large increase. Initially the thought was it would be easier to increase hours of an existing employee who would hit the floor running vs. the request of two brand new laborer positions. The fact of the matter is we are in need to invest in our infrastructure and we need to be flexible to think outside of the box to facilitate work that has never been done before while maintaining duties and tasks that are required daily. All of the budget requests are necessary to maintain an expected level of service while securing infrastructure that has deteriorated for many years. The safety of our residents is our number one priority which requires an investment that has a cost associated with it. For example trees, it is becoming more problematic that we

remove obvious dead or dying ash trees in the area as this could potentially be a safety risk to our residents and children. These are expectations that fall on the Town and funding for these projects are necessary. We have options to facilitate that work or to pay a contractor for that service. Continuing on to truck maintenance, we are half way through the fiscal year and we have spent over \$60,000.00 in repairs on trucks that should have been replaced in our five year plan. These are scenarios that are outside of our control but we need functioning vehicles to facilitate the expectations of the residents.

The discussion continued with the request of two new laborers and what additional work could be done. Additionally the discussion included necessary road repair expenditures. The Administrative Assistant duties were discussed that this staff member has their own assigned plow run in efforts to assist the team in facilitating snow removal. The current admin staff member plows and sands all the parking lots for the town additionally both schools which is outside of the current job description. The discussion went back to changing the nature of the job description with in a unionized position. Again we go back to although the willingness of this staff person is helpful and appreciated it may be a disservice to that staff member to work in the capacity of a Laborer but to continue to be paid as an Administrative Assistant. We need to critically think this through so we are making the best decision for our tax payers and our staff. The BOS believes all of the discussion points referenced in the budget are all necessary, how we approach this in a phased in schedule is still being sorted through. The discussion continued with moving dollars around. In the scenario of leaving the Admin at ten hours and adding 1 laborer only the Selectmen wanted to see the fiscal impact. The snow contracting service will go out to bid this summer as the contract is ending. If the snow contracting was removed and one laborer added there would be an offset of costs. In comparison with that calculation it would reduce the total Public Works budget increase from \$327,563.00 down to \$244,771.00. These are rough estimates in efforts of discussion, there would be additional cost savings in the insurance line item. The discussion continued the original budget request reflected an additional 90 hours per week, will a reduction in requested staff impact the forecast of road repairs etc. in other budgeted line item.

Mr. Sposato responded by saying the line items based on the budget outline is misleading in the fact that Chip Seal –truck rental and chip seal stone are all inclusive. In previous years the Town rented the chip seal truck and ordered stone currently we contract that service where the stone is inclusive in that cost. These line items should be combined however the structure of the budget doesn't allow for lines to be combined.

The discussion continued on chip seal portion of the Public Works budget. Additionally the line item 578 dry fire hydrant for \$1,000.00 was discussed. This line item is included on the Public Works budget and the PW Director is responsible for the line when the Fire Department monitors yet Public Works pays the expense without any control over the service or the expenditure.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski asked Ms. Latincsics if that dry fire hydrant expense could be populated in a more appropriate section of the Selectmen's budget.

Ms. Latincsics responded by saying she will review and give it some thought.

Selectmen Blessington spoke about the Chip Seal portion of the budget. From the discussion we are contracting most if not all of these services. At quick glance the way it is sectioned out it does appear that we are facilitating the work internally. It would be easier to understand if some of these line items were combined and reflective of the contracted service.

The discussion continued, the consensus of the Board is that the service should be outlined in the budget to what is actually taking place. The consensus is to combine some line items to be reflective of the actual service being provided. Additionally it should be useful and understandable for the department head to appropriately forecast.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski spoke about the overall budget based on the group consensus there is an obvious need to secure infrastructure however the reality is we won't be able to include all of the budgeted requests based on our current fiscal situation. The board wanted Mr. Sposato to be mindful and review areas in which he sees available options for cuts while still maintaining integrity of the necessary functions. This was prefaced with while the Board understands the need for all of the budgeted requests, the fiscal reality is putting constraints on what is fiscally feasible. With that said, we cannot fully operate with flat budgets year after year without investing in our infrastructure. That is a topic that needs to be addressed with the Board of Finance. We are currently over the threshold of 12% in our rainy day fund, the board is hopeful that some of those funds can be transferred to balance this budget. There is a need to reinvest funds back into Willington.

Selectmen Blessington wanted to discuss the tree removal line item. The request is to add an additional \$25,000.00 totaling \$50,000.00 which is a 100% increase. The question is are there that many trees impacted and lined up to be removed? He understands there is a problem with dying trees however what is the feasibility that you can remove all of the trees you're expecting to.

Mr. Sposato responded by saying absolutely the cost of tree removal is very expensive and dangerous. For example if we use Lindon Tree their fee is \$1,400.00 per day. We currently have some trees that are heavily problematic on Old Farms road. The quote states it will take three days to remove them safely. In this example the cost will be \$4,200.00 for just a couple of trees however due to the location and the public safety issue they need to come down. Mr. Sposato has a spreadsheet of problematic trees identified around Willington which is pages and pages of projects that need to be done prioritized by the severity and safety. There are several problems with trees that we are battling, ash trees that are being destroyed, gypsy moth damage etc. The ash trees that are impacted are crumbling at the base, there is a safety concern. CIP has cut our request for a bucket truck to assist in cutting trees down safely. It was described in the CIP committee that it is their belief we do not have the staff to justify the expenditure of a bucket truck. With that we are forced to contract out tree removal which is a costly endeavor.

Moving on to the Cemetery the budget will remain flat.

Moving on to the Transfer Station budget. There is an increase of \$29,000 which is an increase of 12.5%. These additional expenditures are contractual in nature, for bulky waste disposal and trash removal.

Moving on to the Capitol Reserve. These reflect funds that CIP Committee recommends that we put aside into Capital reserve. At the current state reflected in this budget shows a decrease of (\$84,356) please know that CIP has not completed their work so that figure will change.

Moving on to the Housing Authority the budget will remain flat.

Moving on to Accrued sick days has reduced by (\$5,000) the reduction is reflective of a census of current employees.

Selectman Blessington asked Ms. Latincsics if this fund is a cumulative fund. He recalls some years ago we were in a bind with this scenario whereas we didn't have the funds to cover. The concern is with decreasing this line item we don't want to create additional problems down the road.

Ms. Latincsics responded by saying yes this fund is similar to a savings account for employees who have accumulated a sick day pay out per the terms of an early contract. The money is saved so that when the time comes to retire the employee then receives their payout for accumulated sick days. Additionally this is inclusive of any unused vacation days. The contract changed in 2012 to provide a payout upon retirement of certain benefits. At the time you referenced we had not have the proper safeguards in place

to account for the change. Accounting changes have occurred for this scenario so we will not see the lack of funds for this particular scenario as we experienced many years ago. For example if the Town of Willington ceased to exist on July 1 2021. We would have the funds for payout.

Moving on to Dog Fund Grant, this line item is under the Selectmen's budget. Our animal Control Officer is requesting an additional \$282.00

Moving on to Human Services Grant the increase of \$3,909.00.

Moving on to Social Security the budget item will remain flat at \$86,955.00

Moving on to Unemployment the budget item will remain flat at \$1,000.00, we do not have any anticipated unemployment currently.

Moving on to Health Insurance. First Selectwoman Wiecenski updated the group that she received word today that we had anticipated an increase of 8.2% however our insurance increase will only be a 2% increase which is a win. This budget item will reduce additionally if we do not approve the two new laborer positions for Public Works or reduced down to one new laborer.

Moving on to Pension fund there is an increase of \$60.00.

Moving on to insurance line item. We received a 3% reduction in our workers compensation insurance however we are incurring a 3% increase with LAP Insurance.

Moving on to miscellaneous line item will remain flat. This is inclusive of retirement gifts or bereavement flowers for a staff member. Additionally some unexpected expenses with COVID have come out of this budget line item.

Moving on Debt Services has decreased (\$6,000)

Moving on to Capital Expenditures these reflect local projects within CIP. The line item is increased by \$150,299.00.

First Selectwoman started the discussion that if we made no changes that would leave the Selectmen's budget would increase \$518,311.00 with an increase of 14.7%. It was requested that Ms. Latincsics reflect some of the changes that were discussed during this meeting. Once we have the adjusted budget we will be able to make some decisions as to where we stand.

A discussion was held. The consensus from the group is to review the adjusted budget and schedule an additional BOS Budget workshop for Tuesday February 16, 2021 as Monday is a holiday for the Town of Willington staff. Additional time to review is necessary.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski wanted to take the time to thank Business Manager Ms. Latincsics for putting this altogether for the Selectmen. It is noted that she has been working tirelessly in preparing budget requests from all facets for the Town and the Board of Education.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 PM
Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Sharpley
Administrative Assistant
Town of Willington

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT
Received for record Feb. 12, 2021
At 9:32am RMM ATC