

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Board of Selectmen  
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## Emergency Communication Task Force

Special Meeting Minutes  
Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

March 3, 2021  
6:30 PM

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

WFD#1 Chief Moore called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM with the following in attendance;  
First Selectwoman Erika Wiczenski, Lt Robert Palmer, Mike Makuch, Emergency Communications  
Director Stuart Cobb and Sarah Worthens.  
Christina Mailhos joined at 6:32 PM  
Members absent- Vincent Pagano, Superintendent Phil Stevens

### Approval of Minutes

First Selectwoman Wiczenski moved to approve the minutes of January 28, 2021 as written  
Mike Makuch seconded the motion.

Vote: 7 Yes (Wiczenski, Worthens, Palmer, Makuch, Moore, Mailhos & Cobb) 0 No.

#### A. Review Survey Results

Sarah Worthens started the discussion by sharing a power point presentation. The Survey Monkey tool provided a break out of data by question. In total 299 responses were received.

Question 1. What types of events do you expect to be notified as emergency communications; 297 or 99.33% public safety / law enforcement concerns, 219 or 73.24% road closures, 236 or 78.93% severe weather planning or reaction, 174 or 58.19% pandemic planning or reaction, 14 or 4.68% other.

Question 2. what types of events do you expect to be notified of as general/administrative communications; 40 or 13.38% none of the above, 107 or 35.79% non-emergency weather planning or reaction, 123 or 41.14% non-emergency pandemic planning or reaction, 205 or 68.56% road closures, 184 or 61.54% town meetings, 138 or 46.15% food banks and other town service availability, 13 or 4.35% other.

The Committee was encouraged to see residents want to see notifications for Town Meetings.

Question 3. What methods of communication would you expect to get communications via/from? 129 or 43.14% automated phone call, 262 or 87.63% automated text, 211 or 70.57% automated e-mail, 118 or 39.46% social media, 48 or 16.5% in-town signage, 6 or 2.01% other.

A discussion was held, based on the results, it appears that the preference is by automated text and or e-mail. It was clarified that the survey allowed for multiple choices for questions that asked why types of communications a resident would expect to see. These are identified with check boxes vs. circular radio buttons.

Question 4. What is your preferred back up if a primary system is inoperative (choose one); 2 or .67% none of the above, 148 or 49.66% phone call, 108 or 36.24% e-mail, 30 or 10.07% social media, 4 or 1.34% signage, 6 or 2.01% other.

A discussion was held, in this example the question was a (choose one) example.

Question 5. Would you prefer to be automatically enrolled into a system with an “opt out” feature, or do you prefer to “opt in” at your discretion; 197 or 66.11% I prefer to be automatically enrolled, 101 or 33.89% I prefer to enroll myself should I desire to receive notifications.

The survey majority preference appears to be the preference to be automatically enrolled. This information surprised the committee as unexpected as there is not a current method or capability to automatically enroll residents.

Question 6. Would your “opt out” and “opt in” answers be different between emergency and general messaging; 171 or 57.19% yes- I prefer separate options for emergency and general messaging, 125 or 41.81% no – I prefer to receive all messages, 3 or 1% no – I do not plan to enroll at all.

Question 7. What is your relationship to the Town of Willington? 288 or 96.64 I am a Willington resident, 4 or 1.34% I work in the Town of Willington, 6 or 2.01% other.

Question 8. Are you currently enrolled in the statewide CT Emergency Alert System? 142 or 47.49% Yes, 45 or 15.05% No, 112 or 37.46% Unsure.

A discussion was held regarding the high percentage of unsure if they are currently enrolled in the Statewide CT Emergency Alert System. The last question of the survey was a placeholder for entering e-mail information if you wanted to be contacted separately and free text comments. The free text comments have not been thoroughly reviewed as of yet. Ms. Worthens shared her screen with an excel spreadsheet of open ended responses. Comments and feedback was discussed by the committee.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski asked Mr. Cobb to share the information related to an e-mail he received related to CT Alert system as it is important information to assist in making a recommendation.

Mr. Cobb responded by saying an e-mail was sent out by Mike Caplet who is our DEMHS region 4 lead. It discussed that during the COVID season many messages were pushed out from CT Alert related to COVID updates. At that time it was noted that there was a massive unsubscribing from CT Alert which they believe was related to over saturation of receiving COVID messages. The recommendations to municipalities is to ensure that we split any systems in place related to administrative notifications vs. Emergency notifications. The State is trying to remediate not over saturating residents with repetitive information with the intention to lesson unsubscribing to the CT Alert system.

A discussion continued that the survey response was positive and it is clear that people especially younger residents want text notification vs. e-mail. It is becoming more clear that residents are not looking to our website daily for information as residents expect information be forwarded directly. It was noted that this system will be an important item for communication.

#### B. Recommendation to the Board of Selectmen

Chief Moore started the discussion that he personally is more comfortable with Everbridge because he utilizes it on a daily bases.



Stuart Cobb expressed that although the price for Ever Bridge is higher than Code Red the familiarity of the application with partnering Towns is a plus and allows for additional resources.

Mike Makuch echoed the same sentiments and agrees the price difference is quite higher however the familiarity and resources has value and outweighs the cost.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski agrees, what happened in May to the Town of Willington shined a light on where we lack in resources. That is not from a lack of asking by my predecessors. Historically these types of budget requests have been cut out of the budget. Having a communication system is not a luxury but a necessity and the events of last year show us the reality and need for this expense.

Mike Makuch concurred and believes this is a prudent idea to move forward and there are steps that we can take to augment this process. If we develop a non-critical alert website that may assist us in not over burdening people with less critical messaging. An example would be for road closures that is less critical in nature but important information in planning your commute etc.

Christina Mailhos commented that she agrees Everbridge is the preferred vendor from an implementation perspective.

**Stuart Cobb moved that the Emergency Communications is recommending to the Board of Selectmen to purchase the Everbridge product as budget allows.**

**Sarah Worthens seconded the motion.**

Lt. Palmer expressed at this point in the conversation he will need to withdraw from voting because of the financial aspect to the Town and his current standing as the Commander of the barracks. He will abstain from voting as to not partake in recommending any financial obligations.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski will also abstain from voting on a recommendation to the Town as the Board of Selectmen will be reviewing the Committee recommendation.

**Vote: 5 Yes (Worthens, Makuch, Moore, Mailhos & Cobb) 0 No. 2 Abstain (Palmer, Wiecenski)**

Chief Moore discussed the next step is to get onto the Board of Selectmen agenda and to start working on policies and procedures that should be put into place. We will refrain from scheduling the next meeting until after we have presented a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen to determine our next step processing.

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:35 PM**

**Vote: 7 Yes (Wiecenski, Worthens, Palmer, Makuch, Moore, Mailhos & Cobb) 0 No.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Heather Sharpley  
Administrative Assistant

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WILLINGTON, CT.

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TOWN CLERK