

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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## Capital Improvement Committee

40 Old Farms Road  
Willington, CT 06279

**Regular Meeting**  
**Hybrid — In Person and Online**

**January 17, 2024**  
**7:00 PM**

In Attendance in Person: Chairman Christina Mailhos; First Selectman Peter Tanaka; Board of Finance Chairman Bruce Lawler; Committee Member Karenann Caldwell; Committee Member Stuart Cobb; Committee Member James Marshall,

In Attendance via Zoom: Committee Member Melissa McKinnon

Absent: Committee Member Jennifer Goodale; Committee Member Jim Bulick

Donna Latincsics, Business Manager – In person  
Robert Shabot, Conservation Commission – In person  
Mike D’Amato, Zoning Agent, Land Use – In person  
Ralph Tulis, P.E. – via Zoom

Residents in person and via Zoom

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

**2. Present to Speak - none**

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**a. January 10, 2024**

*Mr. Tanaka motioned to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2024 meeting.*

*Mr. Cobb seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.*

**4. Project Presentations by Department**

**a. Conservation Commission**

Mr. Shabot presented the Commission’s request for \$30,000 this year and for the next 5 years. The money would be for the Open Space Fund.

Last year, the request was reduced to \$25,000 but approved for \$30,000 for the next 4 years and the Commission would like to have this extended to 5 years.

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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The Open Space Fund is for land purchases, conservation easements, appraisals, surveys, and legal fees. Mr. Shabot explained that it is helpful to have adequate funds on hand so they can move quickly when a piece of property becomes available. Two years ago, a parcel became available, but they did not have any money so they could not talk to the owner. The Commission would like to remedy this moving forward.

At present, they are looking at another property. Mr. Shabot provided details and noted that to address a few items the cost is estimated to be \$30,000-\$40,000.

Currently, the Open Space Fund has a balance of approximately \$95,000.

Regarding why the Commission is looking to purchase land, in the last Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), the town set a goal of setting aside approximately 20% of land area as open space in perpetuity. Currently, the town is at approximately 8%.

Mr. Shabot explained that when purchasing a piece of property, 2 appraisals are needed which cost about \$2,000-\$3,000 each. These funds are needed up front. Property surveys have a cost and there are associated legal fees. Further, conservation easements do not always come with a large piece of property. If a town does not want to own a property, one way around this is to have it as a private property with a conservation easement. To have the land set aside in perpetuity in a natural state or agricultural use, development rights may be purchased.

A brief discussion about state funding took place. Two years ago, the town closed on a property and there were costs associated with 2 appraisals, the survey, and legal fees. When the state requested more GPS locations sited, it cost an additional \$4,000. The town was awarded an \$85,000 grant to offset the cost of the property. The standing costs (appraisals, survey, legal fees) were still those of the town and came from the Open Space Fund. Mr. Shabot noted that over the 20 years he has been involved with the Commission, it has brought in over \$300,000 in state grants to offset costs. A brief discussion of the time and work needed to apply for, and ensure they are following the requirements of state grants took place.

Mr. Shabot confirmed that appraisals on the parcel under consideration have been completed and they know the property's borders. Surveys are often done to address any legal or title issues.

In terms of acreage, Mr. Shabot estimated that conservation land in terms of acreage in town is as follows: Fenton-Ruby 280; Marsh Road (largest) 225; miscellaneous other. Mr. Lawler noted that the town's goal is to have 20% open space and asked about the goals of other towns. Mr. Shabot was unsure but cited a neighboring town as having bonded \$7M for open space.

Mr. Shabot explained that many people who own large parcels are attached to the land and will sell at a reduced price. Every family's needs are different and this impacts the cost.



# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Mr. Tanaka asked if the Commission is looking at another parcel in town. He explained that if the Commission advocates for property, consideration is more likely to happen. Mr. Shabot explained that the best open space to acquire is that which is abutting open space for the consideration of wildlife. Mr. Shabot provided information about a property under consideration.

Mr. Marshall asked about the progress over the past 7 years since the POCD was written given the investment in the Open Space Fund and that they are still 8% shy of the goal. He asked how far the \$150,000 over 5-years in the CIP would go to meet the goal. Mr. Shabot explained that it allows the Commission to move and have evaluations of the property done without going to the Board of Finance. Property purchases do not come from the Open Space Fund. Ms. Mailhos explained that without money set aside, it is difficult to approach a potential seller. There is uncertainty. Mr. Shabot explained that the appraisal also alerts the Commission about potential issues.

Ms. Caldwell asked who made the decision to set aside 20% of the land in Willington and when it was done. Mr. Shabot explained that it was about 20 years ago when the POCD was developed with the input of citizens throughout the community deciding what was important to them as residents. The POCD is 2 things: conservation and development. The Commission developed the first half of this plan. He noted that it is an advisory group. Ms. Mailhos noted that one of the questions on the CIP application is if an item is in compliance with the POCD.

Mr. Cobb asked if the 8% of the town's conservation land includes state land or land held by private trusts. Mr. Tanaka explained that 8% is town land and the other 4% is state land and land where there are development rights.

## **b. Library**

Ms. Caldwell explained that the request is for work on the exterior of the building. It needs some caulking and mortar replacement. Additionally, concern regarding the gutters, and lack of gutters was noted during the walkthrough. It was recommended that the gutters be addressed before fixing the exterior of the building. In year 2, they would like to address exterior items including mortaring, caulking, patching stucco, and painting the trim around the windows. Additionally, in year 2, they are requesting to address the windows and doors including having UV protection. In year 3, the request is to replace the carpet with vinyl flooring in the community and conference rooms. Year 4 would be painting the walls etc. While they do not have a request for year 5, during the walkthroughs it was discussed that they consider getting a quote on replacing the roof. At that time, the roof will be 22 years old.

Ms. Mailhos confirmed the requests per year. Ms. Caldwell explained that year 1 is \$30,000-\$40,000 for gutters. Year 2 would be \$62,000 in addition to the cost of washing the windows and possible UV protection. Years 3, 4, and 5 are as follows respectively: \$21,868, \$71,225, \$10,000.

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Mr. Cobb noted that given that the quotes are 2 years old, if the year 1 request would be updated before they vote. Ms. Caldwell confirmed that that year 1 request will be updated. They will get a quote from the original builder, W.J. Mountford Co., and can get additional quotes if needed.

Mr. Marshall noted that the quotes are from a single contractor and confirmed that they are a point of reference. Ms. Caldwell explained that that they do have quotes from other sources for some of the items.

Mr. Lawler asked about the windows and the need for scaffolding. Ms. Caldwell noted that it is due to the work of scraping, patching, and painting the trim. The scaffolding will be in place.

Mr. Cobb asked about the current projects. Ms. Caldwell explained that part of last year's request was to address the HVAC items and they have done so. Additionally, the work requested for the mechanical room was performed. Currently, there are no ongoing projects.

Ms. Mailhos asked about the ARPA funds for the retaining wall. Ms. Caldwell noted that the RFP to the town was only done a few months ago and they are waiting on this.

Mr. Cobb asked if the library received any money this fiscal year which has not yet been spent. Ms. Caldwell responded that they still have a little left and are holding it in case an emergency arises (building repairs and maintenance). If there are no emergencies, they have a few items they can address. The ARPA funds for the retaining wall have been approved, they just have not yet been received.

Mr. Marshall asked Mr. Tulis about the library foundation investigation. Mr. Tulis explained that he took 4 core samples of the library foundation, and they were examined by a lab in Canada. The concrete is not 100% pyrrhotite-free but the conclusion was that it was not enough to warrant doing anything other than waiting. Mr. Tulis commented that judging by what he has seen, it is unlikely the pyrrhotite will ever affect the foundation, but he cannot guarantee it.

Mr. Tulis noted that the issue with the stucco on the exposed concrete on the back is primarily aesthetic. The issue of the joint between the stucco and brick is not unusual but is a maintenance item they should pay attention to. He added that moss took residence in the weep holds of the brick veneer and should be regularly cleaned out. He added that the retaining wall on the southside has issues as well. Mr. Tulis explained that he blames the damage in part on the block that was used not being very water resistant.

Mr. Cobb asked if the retaining wall will be in future years in the CIP. Ms. Caldwell noted that if they have funds in the building repair and maintenance fund, they will be used to address some of the retaining wall concerns and drainage.

## c. Land Use



# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Mr. D'Amato explained that the request is to address an intermittent issue they have had in the Land Use Department. It was infrequent until this past year and now they get water in the department every time it rains. A substantial amount of water is coming in. He estimated that 50+ gallons of water were removed from the floor after the last storm. Last year, the town had the office flooring replaced and it is being ruined. Someone looked at it and recommended sizing the downspout correctly to address the water being discharged as well as turning attention to the negative slope in the garden area immediately against the building. It was also recommended that some excavation be done to see if there is an issue in that regard, and if so, seal or coat as needed. Mr. D'Amato noted that they do not have a quote but reviewed the damage and cleanup. At the moment it is something the town could submit to insurance, but it does not make sense to do so if rainwater keeps going into the office. They would like to solve the problem. The request is to investigate the situation, get a formalized plan, and implement a solution to address the problem.

Ms. Mailhos noted that this item was submitted for the current fiscal year. In terms of timing, she is unsure if it makes sense to wait for the CIP to go into effect. Mr. D'Amato explained that at the time did not know what the cost would be, so he made the submission. Mr. Marshall noted that this is not something they should wait to address. Ms. Mailhos noted that it should fall under the Selectmen. Mr. Tulis commented that this is not a new issue and belongs in the Board of Selectmen budget. That said, he believes there may be a simple way to address it via directing the water in a better direction.

Mr. D'Amato explained that he asked Mr. Johansen about the situation, and he looked at the building. The request was based on his recommendation as far as the negative slope causing water to run toward the building, the insufficient size of the downspouts, and the issue of the foundation. To solve this, he felt that unless the scope were to grow, it would be substantially less than \$12,000. To implement the solution, they would resize the gutter to capture the amount of water coming off the building. Further, changing the pitch of the garden area would allow the water to flow away from the building. Currently, the water flows back. Lastly, it was recommended that the foundation in the area be coated to seal what is accepting the water. Ms. Caldwell asked if this would be enough. Mr. D'Amato explained that to move the water with any type of pipe or infrastructure would be a significant undertaking given the parking lot and if it is a crack or issue in the foundation, or a ground water issue, they would still have water coming into the office.

Mr. Marshall commented that he believes this needs to be addressed via the current year fund. Mr. Tanaka agreed.

Ms. Mailhos noted that there are ARPA funds for the documentation software project underway with the Town Clerk. She asked Mr. D'Amato if he believes that Land Use will need significant funds to do similar items, or a continuation of the project, in the next 5 years. Mr. D'Amato explained that they have completed scanning but have not yet addressed the flat files in the breakroom area. The company's minimum project cost is

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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\$10,000 for offsite scanning and the plan is to tack on two \$5,000 operating budget line items so it can be completed. Mr. D'Amato noted that the only other thing which has not yet been discussed by the PZC, is the 2026 POCD project. Traditionally, the town has hired consultants, but it is something that can be done in-house so he does not anticipate a significant request.

## 5. Future Meeting Planning

The January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting was cancelled due to members and the Board of Education being unable to attend on that date.

Ms. Mailhos noted that yesterday was the deadline for submissions.

## 6. Adjourn

Mr. Tanaka motioned to adjourn at 8:50PM.

Mr. Cobb seconded the motion.

All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

*Lisa Pascuzzi*

Lisa Pascuzzi

Recording Secretary

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*[Signature]*  
TOWN CLERK