

## SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

Date: January 26, 2023, 6:30PM

### Community Forum

In person TOB Common Room & Public Online Video Conference (Zoom): Recording

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

Member	Position	Present in person	Absent
Katherine Viveiros	Construction Industry Experience	X	
Phil Stevens	Superintendent of Schools (non-voting)	X	
Mike Makuch	Board of Selectmen Representative (Chairman)		X
James Marshall	Board of Finance representative	X	
Ann Grosjean	Board of Education Member (Secretary)	X	
Gary Anderson	Member at large	X	
Ralph Tulis	Member at large (Vice-Chairman)	X	
Peter Latincsics	Member at large	?	
Justin Niderno	Member at large	X	
Briana Ross	Member at large	X	
Christopher Tillona	Board of Education employee	Present via Zoom	
Erika Wiecenski	Member Ex Officio (non-voting)	X	

Also present: Residents

Vice Chairperson Tulis called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

Vice Chairperson Tulis began the meeting with a brief statement from Chairperson Makuch who was unable to be at the meeting. He then explained what the options were with regards to this school project and how the meeting would run.

The meeting proceeded with numerous community members discussing their thoughts and feelings towards the school project.

Some community members shared how they have lived in Willington for over 25+ years. They were extremely concerned with the drastic tax increase and how much this project would cost the town. Some were concerned they would have to leave Willington because of this. Many felt with how tough times are for numerous townspeople this is not the right direction for the town, at least for now. There was discussion of the town roads and the costs associated. The location of the new school had many citizens concerned as well. Some community members discussed their concerns with having children from the age of 5-14 years old being in the same school. Other community members discussed how difficult it could be for children that started their school experience during Covid and now they are finally back to "normal," it would be hard for them to deal with a school construction project in their school. Some community members wanted everyone to remember a new school does not make better teachers and students. It was also discussed that the population has decreased in Willington throughout the past few years. They expressed their confusion as to why would the town want to build a new school.

Other community members were supportive of a new school or renovation. They believed that it was

time to give the children and the teachers of Willington an updated and more efficient school. Some explained that continuing to fix the issues at the current schools is just not working anymore. They felt it had become a safety issue for the students. A few former students spoke and shared their recent experience while they attended Center and Hall School. They shared why they believed an updated school was important and needed. It was discussed how some community members wanted to see updated science programs, technology, playing fields, a cafeteria with natural light and successful learning spaces for students, and a renovation or new school could provide these items. It was discussed how Willington has had the lowest mill rate for years and it was time to spend some money to help the education system. There was a discussion regarding that not having an updated school could also cause Willington to lose families and discourage new families to move into Willington.

Community members asked the committee various questions such as: Why are there only two options? How does the state reimbursement work? How will this project impact taxpayers? What will happen to the old schools if a new school is built? Where would students go during any renovation? How does the ed specs define reasonable cost or does it? What is the timing of this project and when will the referendum take place? What is the cost difference with or without an auditorium?

Some community members took the time to thank the committee for their dedication and hard work. Between the wonderful communication such as emails, flyers, social media, having informative sessions and holding their two regular meetings a month. They were very appreciative of all of this. They also expressed their concern with how the community was making negative accusations towards the committee. This behavior was making them sad and disappointed with the townspeople. They wanted to remind the townspeople to be respectful and mindful of others, even if they had a difference in opinions.

While other community members expressed their frustration with the committee. They felt the committee had already made their decision and wanted a new school. It was stated that they felt some of the communication from the committee was skewed. They also felt they were misled with the numbers regarding taxes. Some felt manipulated.

The committee answered questions as community members asked them. They discussed and reminded the community what their charge was. They also discussed the Friar report and the numbers they have been using during this process.

***Motion by Ralph Tulis to ADJOURN the meeting.  
First Selectwoman Wiecenski SECONDED the motion.***

*All in favor, motion carried unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 9:23PM

Next regular SBC meeting: February 15, 2023

Nicole Fusco  
School Building Committee Recording Secretary

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TOWN CLERK