

# SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Minutes  
Via Public Online Video Conference (Zoom)

January 26, 2021  
6:30 PM

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

Member	Position	Present	Absent
Phil Stevens	Superintendent of Schools	X	
Erika Wiczenski	Board of Selectmen Representative	X	
Mike Makuch	Board of Finance Chairman	X	
Niko Semerzakakis	Board of Education Staff	X	
Ann Grosjean	Board of Education Member	X	
Katherine Viveiros	Construction Industry Experience	X	
Gary Anderson	Member at large	X	
Nancy Bailey	Member at large	X	
Peter Latinsics	Member at large	X	
Justin Niderno	Member at large	X	
Briana Ross	Member at large	X	

## CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Wiczenski called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

## PRESENT TO SPEAK

Elena Testa of 11 Meadow Lane asked why only one of the committee members represented the Board of Education. She thanked the committee members for volunteering. She also asked that the committee remain cognizant of the fact that COVID-like needs may arise again in the future and that plans should be made with that in mind.

Matthew Clark of 42 Burt Latham Rd asked if there are members of the committee who have construction, building or facilities management or financial experience. He recommended this as well as creating a series of options for the town to consider.

## NEW BUSINESS

First Selectwoman Erika Wiczenski invited all members of the committee to introduce themselves to the group. She explained that the 11 members were chosen by the Board of Selectmen. She included that she previously served on the Board of Education for 8 years when there was discussion about declining enrollment, aging facilities and increasing operating budgets. She is also a Hall School alum.

Phil Stevens is the Superintendent of schools and the parent of Willington students.

Katherine Viveiros is a 20-year resident, the parent of Willington students, a Masters in Construction Management, 20 years of construction experience, a senior project manager at UCONN and she has worked on many school projects in the past.

Peter Latincsics' is a 35+ year resident, former member of the Board of Finance, the Board of Education, Planning and Zoning and Capital Improvement Plan, Project Manager at Otis Elevator Company (34+ years), and he has served on many town committees including the 1990 School Building Committee.

Briana Ross is the parent of Willington students, a lifelong resident, and an early childhood educator for nearly twenty years.

Gary Anderson is a 5-year resident, the parent of Willington students, Director of Planning and Economic Development for the town of Manchester for the last 5 years, an urban planner for 10 years, someone who staffs boards and commissions (ex: Wetlands and Planning and Zoning), and a member who has experience working within public budgets as well as public projects.

Nancy Bailey is a 25-year resident, the parent of Willington students, has worked in the construction industry for over 30 years, has a small business in town with her husband as electrical contractors, has experience with architects, contractors, and suppliers, and she served on the Library Board of Directors for 20 years while the new construction was being planned and executed.

Mike Makuch is the Chairman of the Board of Finance, a Certified Fire Marshall and Certified Building Official, a retired career Firefighter, ran the code compliance and life safety office for a fire department, Construction Engineer working in construction to ensure site safety and contract compliance, a graduate of the "new" Hall Memorial School the last time it was renovated, completed in 1981, father served on the School Building Committee for said renovations of HMS.

Ann Grosjean is a 30–40-year resident, the parent and grandparent of Willington students, a Board of Education member for 8 years, and a retired educator after 35 years.

Niko Semerzakis attended both CES and HMS, is now a Special Education teacher of 8 years at Hall Memorial School, was formerly the school custodian at HMS and is looking forward to lending his various experiences to the committee.

Justin Niderno works as an estimator for Eversource and has an electrical license.

#### **A. Appointment of Chairperson**

First Selectwoman Wiczenski suggested that someone other than herself be the Chair. Originally it was stated that the Board of Selectmen would choose a Chair but First Selectwoman Wiczenski thinks that it is too big a role to assign someone and that it is better for someone who wants to do it to volunteer.

Gary Anderson asked if the appointment might be postponed until the members had an opportunity to know one another better.

Peter Latincsics agreed with Gary and he asked if Phil Stevens would be the Chair in the interim and then choose a Chair at a later date. He said that because this responsibility has been passed from the Board of Education to now being a town issue, it would be good to have a non-educational person fill the role but he is open minded.

Mike Makuch asked if the motion could be tabled for the time being.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski said that the make-up of the committee was based upon the committee made in 1990 and the people bring a lot of expertise. She would not like to discount someone from being the Chair because they are an educator and she would not want to set a negative tone.

Katherine Viveiros asked First Selectwoman Wiecenski to highlight some of the things that the Chair would need to do and how often the committee would meet.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the frequency of meetings could vary from weekly to perhaps sooner. It is not a lifetime position and several Chairs may take over throughout the course of things. She stated that the role of Chairperson includes setting the agenda, scheduling meetings, adhering to and enforcing Robert's Rules of Order, and moderating meetings as well as keeping the committee on task.

Phil Stevens pointed out that setting the agenda will be up to the whole committee to determine at the prior meeting. Running and organizing meetings means keeping the group on task. There are several people on the committee who can guide each other through Robert's Rules.

Mike Makuch asked if we could ask Mr. Stevens to temporarily Chair.

Phil Stevens agreed to act as interim Chair for now. He is a non-voting member so he doesn't believe that being Chair long-term is the right move. He said that First Selectwoman Erika Wiecenski could Chair as well.

Mike Makuch MOVED to appoint Phil Stevens as acting Chairperson and table the decision on the permanent Chairperson until the next meeting.

Gary Anderson SECONDED the motion.

DISCUSSION: none

VOTE: 10 Yes, 0 No

Member	Vote
Erika Wiecenski	Y
Mike Makuch	Y
Niko Semerzakis	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y
Kathy Viveiros	Y
Gary Anderson	Y
Nancy Bailey	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y
Justin Niderno	Y
Briana Ross	Y

MOTION CARRIED

Phil Stevens said that he is willing to answer anyone's questions about filling the role of Chairperson.

## **B. Appointment of Recording Secretary**

Phil Stevens stated that it is important to have a Recording Secretary because it is not enough to have just recorded videos of the meetings. If there is not a member of the group who is interested, they will need to ask for funding.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that there are no funds for the committee. A town committee was able to eventually secure funding for a recording secretary from the Board of Finance but that a member fulfilled the role until that time. She asked if the committee wanted to pursue that financial support while having a member fill the role in the meantime.

Peter Latincsics MOVED that the committee direct the acting Chair to communicate with the Board of Finance to secure funding for a professional secretary dedicated to the task.

Ann Grosjean SECONDED the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Briana Ross asked if there was a format for the records available as reference.

Phil Stevens explained that the notes go into the agenda and that the purpose is to provide a snapshot of what happened. It includes all voting information.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski said that a basic template could be offered and that the committee determines what is to be included. Some things are required to be included such as the start and end time as well as the voting information. In the past notes from meetings have been vital to School Building Committees to show the process.

Gary Anderson stated that he would rather not ask for funding for a secretary at this time and he asked if anyone on the committee was willing to do it.

Briana Ross stated that she takes notes at all meetings anyway.

Phil Stevens said that Briana could start out as secretary and then if it began to impede on her participation on the committee the idea of asking for funding for a secretary could be revisited.

Ann Grosjean encouraged Briana to inform the committee if the time commitment became overwhelming.

Katherine Viveiros offered to review minutes with Briana prior to submission.

Peter Latincsics WITHDREW the MOTION.

Ann Grosjean suggested that the committee consider requesting the funding now and then not using it until needed.

Briana Ross volunteered to serve as recording secretary.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski MOVED to appoint Briana Ross as Recording Secretary for the School Building Committee.

Mike Makuch SECONDED the motion.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

Phil Stevens reiterated that the position does not have to be permanent should it impede participation in committee matters.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that going forward they could look at budgets to determine if there could be funding for a professional secretary.

VOTE: 10 Yes, 0 No

Member	Vote
Erika Wiecenski	Y
Mike Makuch	Y
Niko Semerzakis	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y
Kathy Viveiros	Y
Gary Anderson	Y
Nancy Bailey	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y
Justin Niderno	Y
Briana Ross	Y

MOTION CARRIED

### **C. Review of Charge**

The group reviewed The Town of Willington School Building Committee Charge, adopted 12/07/20 by the Willington Board of Selectmen.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that most pieces of the charge came from other School Building Committees. Item 10 was added and is specific to Willington.

Katherine Viveiros thought it wise to include a deadline or schedule to keep the project moving along. She asked if the Board of Education has a commitment date driving the need for the charge and what that date may be.

Phil Stevens stated that the Board of Education recommended that a new school be built on a new site (Friar Study Options 8A and 8B) but that there was no date set at this point.

Peter Latincsics asked if any commitments had been made or if forms had been filed yet under item (B) from the Charge.

Phil Stevens answered that no, there had not been any forms filed at that time. One cannot apply to the state until everything is already in order in regards to big projects. There has been an informational discussion about the process needed.

### **D. Overview of Friar Study Options**

Phil Stevens reviewed the 2017 Friar Facilities Study, explaining details of each option including cost, length of time needed for completion, disruption of student learning space, and pros and cons of each option.

Gary Anderson asked to clarify that the report indicates values from 2019.

Phil Stevens replied yes, and that there are choices to be made about materials used so it reflects the average cost per square foot at that time.

Ann Grosjean pointed out that the Board of Education leaned toward options that included building upon new land because there was a level of risk and possible hidden issues such as with the septic changes at Center School.

Justin Niderno asked to clarify if the committee's charge was to look specifically at options for building a new school.

Phil Stevens replied that yes, that is specifically what is in the charge but that the committee can decide how to move forward.

Peter Latincsics said that the focus of the charge seemed to be set on building a new school yet he believes the committee should revisit other options. At a future meeting he would like to know more about the town's status with the Hall Foundation, and if we could meet with a representative formally to hear what they are open to and what options they see as viable.

First Selectwoman Wicewski agreed that it is important to meet with the Hall Foundation. She said that one of the charges is to determine whether it is best to develop a new building on new property, a new building on old property or to renovate one or two of the current buildings where they stand. She asked Peter Latincsics for an example of what other options he would like to consider other than the ones already presented.

Peter Latincsics wanted more time to look into that. He asked if it would be possible, for example, to alter HMS's interior and use just the "bones" to make it a more usable space. He wondered what other options have yet to be thought of. He recommended Ralph Tullis as an asset to the committee. Peter recognizes that field space at Hall School presents a conflict. He wonders what property is available or possible in South Willington particularly the Village Model discussed years ago amongst the Selectmen.

Mike Makuch asked if the people who did the Friar Study looked at other properties or other kinds of properties in town.

Phil Stevens answered no, but that he has looked and identified some suitable lots for a new build. He has reviewed property options with the Board of Education in Executive Session.

Mike Makuch thinks one of the things to consider is something like the Youngerman Property, with 52 acres, which the 1990 School Building Committee did consider. The property was purchased by the town but was later deemed not suitable for a school by the committee. Perhaps it is now something that can be used in some way.

First Selectwoman Erika Wieceński will look for the report telling why the property was undesirable.

Peter Latincsics recalled that it was deemed undesirable but didn't remember the reasoning for the determination.

Gary Anderson asked to know more about why the Youngerman Property had been deemed unsuitable. He asked if it would be possible to have an executive session so that the committee could be informed of possible, suitable new building properties in town.

Phil Stevens agreed to share what he has researched thus far.

Peter Latincsics recommended that the First Selectwoman contact a former Selectman, Carlton Cziki, about the Youngerman Property.

#### **E. Discuss Next Steps**

Erika and Phil will:

- Talk with Hall Foundation
- Have a representative from the Office of School Construction and Grants speak to the committee
- Provide access to Friar Study
- Provide high level details of community surveys
- Provide maps of HMS and CES Properties
- Provide information about possible properties
- Provide maps of property already owned by the town including commercial and vacant space
- Find someone with financial experience to come speak to the committee
- Provide enrollment data
- Talk about items in the CIP plans
- Find documents stating why the Youngerman Property was deemed undesirable.

Katherine Viveiros liked the idea that maybe the committee can make their own new option as Peter Latincsics mentioned, yet is it going backward in the process to review all options that have already been eliminated? Are we then not following through with the charge?

Phil Stevens said that according to the charge there will not necessarily be a new building built on new land, but that there must be only one building that houses grades PreK-8. In regards to grants, funding two different sites will not be possible. The Office of School Construction and Grants is more likely to fund one building because it decreases cost. Phil Stevens pointed out that the small population makes one school more likely to be funded.

Peter Latincsics asked what commercial, especially vacant property is available in town. He asked for enrollment data for the last ten years and future projections. He asked if the committee has access to the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities data to see the demographics.

First Selectwoman Erika Wieceński said that the committee does have access to that data. She asked how soon this information was wanted?

Gary Anderson said that he wanted staff to have time to gather everything, so an appropriate time frame should be had.

Phil Stevens suggested one meeting specifically about land. He suggested that over the course of the next 4-5 meetings he could get visitors to come speak to the committee (ex: Hall Foundation member Tyler Hall, Colliers representative). This will help drive the process.

Katherine Viveiros asked if a guest could come to the next meeting.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski asked when we would like to meet again.

Gary Anderson said that one month from now gives time for data collection and for some committee members to attend to their budget season responsibilities.

Katherine Viveiros asked what educational and programmatic specs we need as in fields, a pool, a gym, an auditorium. She requested a sample of what Willington might want to look like.

Phil Stevens said that the Board of Education is responsible for determining education specs. The committee can look at Mansfield's new schools as a reference. Colliers may also help with educational specs.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski pointed out that field space differs for a middle school vs an elementary school.

Phil Stevens said that fire codes for a PreK-8<sup>th</sup> grade school are very different from a middle school. For example, the younger grades could not attend HMS as it stands because of specific fire codes.

Ann Grosjean suggested that the state visit a meeting to answer questions.

Peter Latincsics asked for emails of committee members.

Erika Wiecenski reminded everyone that email communication between individuals could be considered an illegal meeting according to FOIA (Freedom of Information Act). Sharing of information is acceptable but the work of the committee has to be done in meetings. The only thing not public is work done in executive sessions. No action can be taken and nothing is recorded.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 PM.**

Mike Makuch SECONDED the motion.

VOTE: 10 Yes, 0 No

<b>Member</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Erika Wiecenski	Y
Mike Makuch	Y
Niko Semerzakis	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y
Kathy Viveiros	Y
Gary Anderson	Y
Nancy Bailey	Y



Peter Latincsics	Y
Justin Niderno	Y
Briana Ross	Y

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted,  
 Briana Ross  
 School Building Committee Member and Recording Secretary

Attachments: Town of Willington School Committee Charge

**Town of Willington**  
**School Building Committee Charge**  
Adopted December 7, 2020 by Willington Board of Selectmen

- A. The Willington School Building Committee shall be established by the Board of Selectmen. Any vacancies occurring shall be filled by the Board of Selectmen.
- B. The Committee is authorized to request the Board of Education and Superintendent of schools to file applications and other documents as may be required by the State Board of Education or the State Department of Education.
- C. Funding of the operational expenses of the committee shall be administered by the Board of Finance.
- D. The Committee shall be responsible for:
  - 1. Defining a prek-grade 8 school to meet Willington's educational needs in cooperation with the Board of Education.
  - 2. Recommending a competent architectural and engineering and other appropriate services for the preparation of plans and specifications for constructing, furnishing, and equipping the school.
  - 3. Developing a building proposal with associated financial commitments for Town approval and developing a strategy for obtaining approval of that proposal.
  - 4. Cooperating in the securing of state funding to support the building program.
  - 5. Finding and recommending a site, if necessary, to meet school construction and Town needs.
  - 6. Reviewing architectural plans, specifications and proposed construction contracts.
  - 7. Working with the Treasurer and Board of Finance and other officials to secure funding/bonding for the projects.
  - 8. Adhering to state statute at all stages of the project.
  - 9. Obtaining the approval of the town legislative body for all obligations incurred throughout the building process.
  - 10. Identify potential future uses of the two current school buildings, if necessary..
  - 11. Overseeing construction and completion of the project.