

**TOWN OF WILLINGTON
PUBLIC HEARING &
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 15, 2021**

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by First Selectwoman Erika Wiczenski who then read the call of the meeting:

The electors of the Town of Willington and all persons who are entitled to vote in Town Meeting on the matters mentioned in the following warning are hereby warned and notified to meet in Public Hearing/Town Meeting (face masks required) at the Willington Old Town Hall; 11 Common Road, Willington, CT at 7:00 P.M. on Wednesday, December 15, 2021 for the following purposes:

ITEM I (Public Hearing Item)

Presentation and discussion of a 7 year Lease/Purchase Agreement for a 2022 Freightliner 114SD Conventional Chassis TENCO 12M-10-SS-SSCONV All Season Body, a 2022 Ford F450 XL 4X4Chas/C 145" Wheelbase Duramag Heavy Duty Dump Body Model #DB0969514SS All Aluminum Additional for color green, and a 2022 Ford F350 XL 4X4 S/C 148" Wheelbase for the Willington Public Works' Department. – No vote on this item.

ITEM II

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will adopt the septic system easement and maintenance agreement for the Willington Old Town Hall located at 11 Common Road in Willington, CT.

ITEM III

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will adopt an ordinance to establish an American Rescue Plan Act Commission.

Dated at Willington,

This 6th day of December, 2021, Willington Board of Selectmen; Erika G. Wiczenski, Liza Boritz, Jim Bulick

First Selectwoman Wiczenski then asked for nominations for a moderator.

Christine Psathas nominated Peter Tanaka as moderator; seconded by Robert Shabot.

Motion called to a vote:

All in favor. 0 No. 0 Abstain.

Motion Carries.

Moderator then asked to forego a second reading of the call. There were no objections.

Moderator then opened the floor for discussion regarding ITEM I:

Matt Clark asked if this item has been approved by the Board of Finance. First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated it was voted by the CIP and approved for appropriation by the Board of Finance.

Peter Tanaka asked if we need to hear about this if we are not allowed to vote on it. First Selectwoman Wiczenski clarified that a Public Hearing is a requirement of a lease. The 7 year lease which was approved at the last meeting of the Board of Selectmen has come in at a favorable % savings and has come in at approximately \$3,000 less than anticipated.

ITEM II was then moved by John Blessington, seconded by Liza Boritz.

Moderator opened for discussion:

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that this project is being funded by a STEAP grant. The septic will be located under the Town Green (across the street of Common Road); even though they are both Town property, the STEAP requires us to have an approved easement in place.

Laurie Semprebon noted that the Planning & Zoning Commission discussed this project as well and found important to note that the septic will not affect the ability for vehicles to be driven on for any activities that happen on the Town Green.

Ralph Tulis asked if Planning & Zoning issued an 8-24 on this? First Selectwoman Wiecenski answered that they gave a favorable consideration.

Moderator then called ITEM II to a vote:

All in favor. 0 No. 0 Abstains.

Motion Carries.

ITEM III was then moved by Laurie Semprebon, seconded by John Tehan.

Moderator opened for discussion:

Matt Clark stated that he thinks the establishment of the commission is a good idea, but asked why do we have to go around the regular budget process? The way he sees it would be that the people who would be appointed to this commission would be the only ones who will vote on spending this money.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated if the Ordinance passes at this meeting, would establish a Commission who will administer the funding as a grant which would not be a budgetary appropriation.

Matt Clark then stated that we're talking about \$1.8 million and if this ordinance passes, then no elected officials will be able to vote on this money – just the commission. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified 11 commission members would be voting on it. She added that a member of the Board of Finance will also be a member of this Commission as well.

Jim Bulick stated that this type of commission would be very valuable as an Advisory Commission – it would be good to get input from the various representatives but his concern is reference of “item F” which states: “The commission will be responsible for appropriate use of funds, shall create internal local controls, shall document expenditures, and be subject to audit”. Mr. Bulick noted that he believes that goes against General Statute; §7-348 and §7-349, which authorize the Board of Finance to approve and appropriate funds. By having one organization in charge; you are taking the intake, the expenditures and reconciliation of the money. It is just bad finance. Most organizations don't do that – and it takes control away from the townspeople.

Liza Boritz responded to Mr. Bulick's statement; and noted it was discussed at a Board of Selectmen's meeting last week that there would be involvement of other members within the town who are responsible for spending. It wouldn't be only up to that commission to justify the books or reconciling - it will go everywhere and the same process that the town spending goes currently, so there will be other hands on the dollars. She then asked if this doesn't pass as a commission, then what the default would be for the funds. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated it would go back to the Selectmen; who would then have to bring to Town Meeting.

Ms. Boritz then clarified that our options would be to have this funding go through an 11 member Commission or have the Board of Selectmen and another Town Meeting. The important aspect of this commission would be for them to be able to create a mechanism that makes it as streamlined and quickly as possible to get the money to the business who are filing for bankruptcy or in the hands of individuals who don't have heat or unable to pay their rent. We need to be able to get the most rapid response for the use of these funds.

Elena Testa asked why we are in such a hurry? We have three years to spend this money. Her concern is the elimination of the Town involvement.

Matt Clark stated that he thinks most people don't have a problem with the commission, but what he doesn't like is that it doesn't go through the normal process. He understands that you want to have the money go fast, but the regular process usually takes about 2 weeks, between the Board of Finance and holding a Town Meeting; reiterating that he has a problem without having input from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Town Meeting.

Joanne Taraskewicz asked if any of the money could be used towards school concerns and things for children. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the Town could use some of this funding in our schools, if they decided to do so, but the Board of Education received a separate grant for their budget.

Christina Mailhos asked how many people would be on the Commission.

Moderator then read the list of proposed commission members:

- a) The current First Selectman
- b) The current Town Clerk
- c) The current Emergency Management Director
- d) The current Business Manager
- e) The current Director of Public Works
- f) The current Human Services Director
- g) The current Zoning Agent
- h) A current Parks & Recreation Commissioner
- i) A current Board of Finance member
- j) A current member of the Willington Public Health Community
- k) A current member of the Willington Economic Development Commission

Christine Psathas asked if there will be any oversight by the State or Federal Government before the money is disbursed. First Selectwoman Wiecenski said no. We already received the first installment in June of this year and the second installment should be expected to come a year later. The State can't place additional limitations and there is reporting that will have to be done on a regular basis. She then added that we anticipate a final rule on the funding soon.

Mike Makuch asked if there are any other towns who will be doing this process with an ordinance or anything comparable. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that our neighbors in Stafford recently adopted a very similar ordinance in which this one was modeled. They have begun to meet and spend money to put necessary funding back into their community.

Moderator asked Mr. Makuch (who is the Chairman of the Board of Finance) if he sees this a problem with a secondary track not integration with the current board of finance form of the town? BOF Chairman Makuch stated that he does see the value in getting this thing moving and the BOF has discussed the possibility of having business that are in need of rescue. He added that he is hesitant of things that take away from the taxpayer's approval – for example no vote on a 7 year lease. He isn't sure why we have that rule in place, but that was before his time.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we had to follow the purchasing guidelines and needed to follow the rules that are in place (in regards to the lease).

Nicholas Tella stated that this money can be used for reducing taxes, so are we looking into that or are we ignoring it? First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that she has read multiple copies of the interim final rule as well as multiple copies of the guidelines that have been provided and they all state that one of the absolute ineligible uses is offsetting taxes and you cannot add to the "rainy day" fund.

Jim Bulick stated that he asked the town of Tolland how they are going to administer the funding for their allotment and they told him that they plan to go through their normal procedures and controls and expenditures. He then asked if we had any of our auditors look at this.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski clarified that every dollar that comes from this grant will funnel through the Finance department as any other of our dollars in any grant or expenditure form do and are subject to an audit of the town books. She added they are not individual books that will run through the normal procedures. There is nothing additional. This group will be responsible for justifying how they will be spending the funds.

Michelle Cunningham asked if this Commission will fall under Connecticut General Statute 9-167a; which means it will be warned as a regular meeting of the Town so the public may participate and watch these meetings. First Selectwoman Wiczenski agreed, and added that the one of the items outlined in the ordinance state that the commission shall educate the public via a hosted presentation and ARPA fund updates. First Selectwoman Wiczenski added that input from the public is vital.

Moderator responded to Ms. Cunningham noting that her point was valid, but added that attending a meeting is different than being able to vote at a meeting.

Matt Clark stated that he looked at the list of representatives on the proposed commission and it appears that only three people were elected by the Townspeople. The rest are appointed/hired. He reiterated that he doesn't have an issue with the commission; but has an issue that the Town Meeting process will not be involved.

Stef Summers suggested adding a 12th position to the commission who would be a citizen; a "member-at-large"; non-town employee or commission member. Almost all of these people are employees and not all of them live in town; for example the Zoning Agent. If you appointed a citizen you might get more interest in things like local businesses, or the scout groups and they are familiar with the infrastructure.

Elena Testa stated that she is surprised to hear that our Zoning Agent is not only not living in our town but is deciding how the town spends the money.

Liza Boritz clarified that 5 of the members are obligated to be residents; which is almost half of the committee. It happens to be that several other staff members are not residents but there are other members who are elected officials (who must be residents). There are Townspeople who will be on this committee. There is an end – date to spend this money, which is in 2026; but the hurry is that the people that need this money, need it before 2026 and cannot wait for 4 years to get it.

Debra Linares asked how the commission was formed with these people. Are the people on this commission going to represent the entire town, or will they just represent who they stand for? First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that she took the ordinance template from the Town of Stafford and changed the members to better fit our town make up. The individuals here represent the most of the eligible use of the dollars.

Rachel Cook asked why money that will be used for our Town would be managed by outsiders. Liza Boritz said because they are staff who have expertise in their area to serve the Town of Willington. The Zoning Agent, who isn't a resident, was hired to provide his expertise to the Town of Willington. Whether they live here or not, they still have concern for our town.

Matt Clark said that he thinks we should vote on it. He will vote against it. He agrees with forming a commission but we should kick out the part that says that we won't go through the regular process of the town.

Peter Latincsics stated that he agrees with Selectman Bulick – it is simply inappropriate for any organization to receive money and spend it just doesn't make good sense. The larger issue is that we have a legislative form of government that requires us as a town to approve spending. Clearly, this ordinance is designed to circumvent it. He added that we have seen a quick response when funds need to be appropriated – when the fire apparatus

needed to be fixed, when the boiler needed to be replaced at the school – money has been made available in a quick timeframe. We want to have townspeople involved in our process - that is who we are. We are not Stafford, we are not Tolland and that is not how we do our town business. Eleven people with knowledge is a lot of power and not a good idea. He then moved to amend the ordinance before being voted. This ordinance be subject to all the standard financial approvals that any other spending would be required of in Willington by Statute.

Moderator noted that he is not sure that we cannot amend an ordinance without another call.

Christine Psathas cautioned that this is the agenda that we are following and there is no swaying.

**Matt Clark moved to call the question, seconded by Liza Boritz.
All in favor with exception of P. Latincsics (1 No). Motion carries.**

**Moderator called Item III to a vote by raise of hands.
15 Yes, 9 No, 1 Abstain. Motion carries.**

**Matt Clark moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 PM with a second by Jennifer Tehan.
Motion carries**

Respectfully Submitted,

Robin Campbell
Town Clerk

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TOWN CLERK