

**TOWN OF WILLINGTON
ANNUAL TOWN BUDGET MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 19, 2022**

First Selectwoman Erika Wiczenski called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM with residents in attendance. She then read the warning/call of tonight's meeting & asked for nomination of a moderator.

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 at the OLD TOWN HALL at 11 COMMON ROAD in WILLINGTON on Tuesday, April 19, 2022 at 7:00 P.M. for the following purposes:

ITEM I

To discuss the proposed General Government and Education budgets for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. A summary of the Town budget is:

Estimated	
General Government Budget	
Operating	\$4,961,357
Capital:	
School Bond	0
General Purpose Bonds	177,000
Reserve Fund	245,923
Capital Expenditures	80,000
Capital Projects	0
TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT	\$5,464,280
Estimated	
EDUCATION BUDGET K-8	\$ 9,074,681
REGION 19	\$ 4,459,628
TOTAL TOWN BUDGET	\$18,998,589
TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES	\$ 3,998,093
To Be Raised by Taxation	\$15,000,496
Less Applied Fund Balance	490,230
NET AMOUNT TO BE RAISED BY TAXATION	\$ 14,510,266

ITEM II

To set a date, not less than seven nor more than fourteen days thereafter, for a vote on the annual general government and education budgets by a separate "YES" or "NO" vote on the voting machines.

ITEM III

To set the Town Office Building as the polling place and to set the hours, of the referendum, during which votes may be cast, not less than between the hours of twelve o'clock noon and eight o'clock P.M. and not more than between the hours of six o'clock A.M. and eight o'clock P.M.

ITEM IV

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will adopt the Capital Improvement Program for fiscal years 2023 to 2027.

ITEM V

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Finance, will appropriate \$350,000.00 from the Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of road repairs to Moose Meadow Road.

Dated at Willington this 7th day of April, 2022

Willington Board of Selectmen:

Erika G. Wiecenski, Liza Boritz & James Bulick

John Blessington moved to nominate Suzanne Chapman as moderator, seconded by Peter Tanaka.

Vote: All in favor No: 0 Abstain: 0

Motion passes

Moderator stated that it was nice to be able to meet again in person at the Old Town Hall, then asked to dispense another reading of the call:

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Moderator then opened discussion to the Board of Selectmen and Education if they wanted to speak on behalf of their budgets.

Michelle Doucette-Cunningham, Chairman of the Board of Education stated that she would be happy to answer any questions regarding the K-8 Education budget; adding that it is important to note that a 1.26% increase over last year should be celebrated; given the cost of inflation, contractual obligations and rising fuel prices.

Laurie Semprebon thanked the Board of Finance and Board of Education on their hard work with these budgets. She added it is a great budget and should be supported.

Joanne Taraskiewicz asked what the mil-rate increase would be? Michael Makuch answered the increase would be 1.26% mil increase. The current year milrate is 29.99%

Richard Mueller asked what happens if we don't increase the budget at all? First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that the increase in goods and services have gone up considerably and when you pair that with contractual increases, our costs are significant. We are seeing this across the board. She gave examples of the cost of fuel, oil and items that we need for road salt have gone up.

Mr. Mueller then asked what are we doing to economize? First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that we have not cut staff; as we are already bare-boned and we have significant needs in our infrastructure. It would be difficult to cut back further than we are with trying to continue the work that we are doing.

Michael Makuch said we could make it a 0 increase a few different ways: cut expenses down or dip further into savings. If the goal was to reduce expenses, then we would have to cut services or functions/programs. If we want to keep the functions/programs/services, then we would have to dip into savings. He then warned that the BOF has a policy to hold approximately 8-12% of what our budgeted expenses are for any year and this year's proposed budget is at 10%; which is in the middle. We had been high in previous years; and that was what allowed us to keep the mil rate flat the past few years. Mr. Makuch then explained the mil rate is proposed to be increased by 1.26%. For example, if you have a home assessed at \$100,000, the increase would approximately be \$126.

Mr. Mueller then said that he hopes we are not spending money on unnecessary things. Mr. Makuch stated that if you were to watch any of the you-tube videos of the past Board of Finance meetings, that is not the case.

Elizabeth Woolf stated that she currently sits on the Board of Finance as an Alternate member; and has served on the BOF for 15 years. She hears Mr. Mueller's concerns and invites him to attend the Board of Finance meetings so he would truly understand the budget process. She clarified that the budget does not have much room or measure for cuts. If you are asking what would happen if we didn't move this budget through; all of the functions of the town would get cut (such as road maintenance & plowing, etc). The Board of Education is tied up with union and there isn't much room. So when people think there is this big nut that has a lot of triggers, pulls and measures – it doesn't. She then again invited him (and others) to attend the meetings, so he could see firsthand, the process of the Board of Finance and what is involved. It is important for people to understand how it is done.

Moderator then closed discussion on ITEM I and clarified that there is no vote on this item as it will adjourn to Referendum.

Moderator then read ITEM II

To set a date, not less than seven nor more than fourteen days thereafter, for a vote on the annual general government and education budgets by a separate "YES" or "NO" vote on the voting machines.

Christine Psathas moved to set the Budget Referendum date to Tuesday, May 3, 2022.

Michelle Doucette-Cunningham seconded the motion.

No discussion was held.

Vote: All in favor No: 0 Abstain: 0.

Motion Passes.

Moderator then read ITEM III:

To set the Town Office Building as the polling place and to set the hours, of the referendum, during which votes may be cast, not less than between the hours of twelve o'clock noon and eight o'clock P.M. and not more than between the hours of six o'clock A.M. and eight o'clock P.M.

Christine Psathas moved to have the voting place for Referendum be held at the Town Office Building at 40 Old Farms Road from 6:00 AM until 8:00 PM

Peter Tanaka seconded the motion.

No discussion was held.

Vote: All in favor No: 0 Abstain: 0.

Motion Passes.

Moderator then read ITEM IV:

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will adopt the Capital Improvement Program for fiscal years 2023 to 2027.

Joanne Taraskiewicz moved to adopt the CIP Plan for fiscal years 2023 to 2027.

Walter Parsell seconded the motion.

Moderator opened discussion.

Christina Mailhos, Chairman of the Capital Improvement Committee stated that the CIP Committee has been meeting for several months and have heard several requests. The goal of the CIP Committee is to come up with a five-year plan and the items in the first year of the plan are in the budget that we are discussing tonight. The funding comes from the budget or other funding sources (that are "off budget") as noted in the spreadsheet in the plan.

Ms. Mailhos explained the various projects that have been added to the proposed plan. She then noted the difference between this year's plan and past years is that we all know that there is going to be a large school project coming sometime in the next 5 years; but we don't know exactly what it will be - a new school, or a large renovation of one of the existing schools. Although we don't know the details, we at least know we need to put a place holder to plan. The CIP Commission added a place holder of \$18 million bond in year 2 to start planning for it. She then added that we know we won't have extra money

to budget for much else, but luckily we have ARPA funding to assist with certain items in the short term.

Elena Testa noted that this is the first time she is seeing this, but it looks like we will be purchasing 4 or 5 trucks; do we need that many trucks in one year? Ms. Mailhos clarified that the current plan is to purchase one new dump truck, a new excavator. The rest of the items are lease payments that we are still paying back. We are trying to purchase a truck outright this year, so we don't have as many lease payments. She added that although it is listed on two separate lines; because we are going to put a large down payment on it and have smaller lease payments. The way it is set up in the spreadsheet is for calculating purposes of what the entire cost will be.

Michael Makuch clarified that it does take a little while to grasp the way the calculations work on the spreadsheet, but column "J" is what will affect the tax dollars and the proposed budget.

Various projects that are in the plan were discussed.

The moderator clarified that we would just be approving the plan at this meeting; the actual projects will be discussed further in detail and brought to (& voted on) a Town Meeting as they come up in the future.

Samantha Sperry asked if the wear and tear is looked at on the vehicles when it comes time to replace them? First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated we absolutely look at all of that. While we would like to replace the trucks around the 7 year mark, it ends up to be more like every 10 years and all of those factors go into the process.

Selectman Blessington said three years ago, the town voted to replace the roofs on the 2 schools for \$1 million but they never got done; and now the cost has risen to \$1.7 million. Are the roof replacements in this plan? CIP Chairman Mailhos said that the projects are not directly in the plan, however the schools have funding earmarked as we are anticipating some sort of projects (either a new school or renovations) down the road.

BOF Chairman Makuch added further clarification that the state warned if we (Willington) were looking into purchasing a new school, they would no longer offer funding towards the roof projects. The original plan was that the Town was going to pay 40% for the roof while the State covered the rest (60%) of the project; however we could not afford the entire cost of the roof projects if the state was no longer going to assist. We cannot move forward with the roof projects at the full cost and we are waiting to see what path will be best for Willington as the School Building Committee investigates.

Peter Latincsics moved to close discussion and vote by paper ballot on this item.

Elena Testa seconded the motion.

Moderator clarified that voting by paper ballot is not permissible as it was not warned on the call of the meeting and there are no ballots prepared to vote that way. We will have to tally votes by hand count.

Peter Latincsics amended the motion to vote by hand count.

Michael Makuch seconded the motion.

Vote: All in favor. No: 0 Abstain: 0

Motion passes.

Moderator then called ITEM IV to a vote:

Yes: 20 No: 15 Abstain: 0

Motion passes.

Moderator then read ITEM V:

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Finance, will appropriate \$350,000.00 from the Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of road repairs to Moose Meadow Road.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski explained that the project would be to work on a 3,900 foot section of Moose Meadow Road (off of Turnpike Road) which will be reclaimed and repaved; including new catch basins and drainage work. We have sought three quotes but haven't chosen a vendor because the funds have not been approved yet.

Arthur Christensen said it is his understanding that the damage was done by a contractor (working on the new truck stop) who was travelling on that road, do we have any assurance that they will no longer use the road? First Selectwoman Wiecenski said the damage was a result of contractor trucks travelling on Moose Meadow but we legally cannot forbid trucks from using our roads. The road was not in a condition to withstand the trucks that traveled on it and it is the towns responsibility to maintain a road that can be travelled on.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski said that the damage happened in a short period of time during the winter. There is a lot of warning signage through that area and she urges everyone to drive cautiously through there until it has been repaired.

Peter Tanaka moved to end the discussion and call ITEM V for a vote.

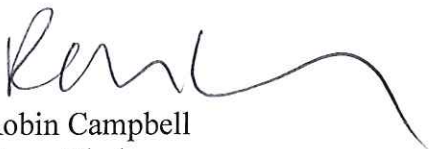
Laurie Semprebbon seconded the motion.

Vote: All in favor No: 0 Abstain: 0

Motion passes.

Moderator closed the meeting at 8:07 PM and adjourned to Referendum on May 3, 2022 at the Town Office Building from 6AM-8PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Robin Campbell
Town Clerk

RECEIVED
WILLINGTON, CT.

2022 APR 21 A 11:30



TOWN CLERK