

**TOWN OF WILLINGTON
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 8, 2022**

First Selectwoman Erika Wiczenski called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM and 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 Town Meeting at the Old Town Hall; 11 Common Road, Willington, at 7:00 P.M. on Monday, August 8, 2022, for the following purpose:

ITEM I

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Finance, will authorize the appropriation, not to exceed, \$79,000.00 from the Capital Reserve Fund to an account for the John Deere Excavator, for the purpose of purchasing a new John Deere Compact Excavator, per the quote presented.

ITEM II

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Finance, will authorize the appropriation of \$100,000.00 from the Reserve Fund to Project No. 04-4041 for school building committee consultants as previously approved by voters at the annual town meeting 2022-2023. The funds will be utilized to hire consultants to assist the SBC with the review of options including but not limited to renovation, addition or a new school, and any other items to assist the SBC in fulfilling their charge.

ITEM III

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will adopt the updated transfer station fees, effective August 9th, 2022, for the Town of Willington Transfer Station, 49 Hancock Road in Willington, CT.

Dated at Willington,
This 25th day of July, 2022.

Willington Board of Selectmen.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski then asked for nominations for a moderator.

Laurie Semprebon nominated Erika Wiczenski as moderator; seconded by Michelle Doucette-Cunningham.

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:

ITEM I was then moved by Jim Bulick, Seconded by Ann Grosjean.

Laurie Semprebon asked for more information on the equipment. What will the excavator be used for and why do we need it?

Troy Sposato, Director of Public Works stated that we the excavator has tracks which will be able to go into the woods and turn 360° - something the backhoe cannot do. Also, it will be used for multiple things.

Jim Cartabiano asked what is going to happen with the old machine? Troy stated it will be traded in towards the new one.

Evan Cartabiano asked how much use the new machine will get – will it be used every week? Also, he stated that \$10,000 for a trade-in price seems low. Is there an option to sell the machine outright? Troy said it will be used a few days per week and as much as possible and there is an option to sell, but it would not be a guarantee that we could get over \$10,000.

Ralph Tulis asked if we have a trailer capable of transporting the new machine? Troy said yes.

Walter Zalewa asked if we looked into leasing one instead of buying outright? Mr. Sposato said that is a question for the Board of Finance.

Alicia Corsini asked if we are going to be coming back to ask for more money for a truck that we haven't budgeted for an additional \$40,000 and we still have 2 propane tanks that we will have to purchase (dog pound and DPW) costing almost \$20,000. She said she knows that the guys need a new excavator, but you are also going to be coming back to us for another \$50,000. First Selectwoman Wicewski stated that those items are not set and are also not part of this motion.

Elaine Newcomb asked what the life expectancy would be for this excavator? Troy Sposato stated if it is maintained properly, it could be 10-15 years or even longer.

Nicholas Tella asked to clarify that we have not approved the \$250,000 for the town truck? First Selectwoman Wicewski clarified that the truck is not an item being discussed on this agenda. Mr. Tella added that we have an additional \$18,000 for the tanks coming up and we are at the beginning of the fiscal year. Would it be wise to look further down the fiscal year to see where our money is on this later, rather than rushing out of the gate spending the money.

Donna Cook asked how many hours per year would this be used? Would it be more cost effective to rent a machine instead? Troy responded that he is hopeful to use it quite a bit. He added if we rented a machine, we would be paying the rental fee, whether the guys are here or not. If we have something rented and a guy is on vacation and another guy calls out sick, then we have a machine that is sitting, and we are paying for it regardless. It wouldn't make fiscal sense to rent something.

David Krivanec asked why can't we just use contractors instead of training the guys on new equipment. Troy Sposato responded that the guys know how to use the machine.

Lucien Bessette said the town owns a grader, which is over 35 years old. It only goes out to grade a few times per year. It would cost a lot of money to pay someone to grade and we leave no money in the budget for a contractor. The proposed excavator will get used most of the time and the crew is experienced.

Todd Bissionnette said he has worked in construction for many years. That machine will last for years and even if it is only used 10 times a year, it would end up costing approximately \$4,000 per year of its lifetime. It will pay for itself.

Jim Cartabiano asked why we need a tracked machine? Troy stated that the excavator that we have has gotten stuck numerous times.

Nicholas Tella asked if we are satisfied on how we have been maintaining our equipment? Mr. Sposato stated he is satisfied with the maintenance. Mr. Tella then asked how will we ensure there will be a maintenance program going forward. Troy responded that is part of his job – to make sure that all of the equipment is properly maintained and that as long as he is Public Works Director, the maintenance will be done.

Patty Zulick-Bessette asked how long this project has taken to go through the Board of Finance? Mr. Sposato replied 3 years.

Peter Tanaka moved to vote on this item via paper ballot.

Robert Shabot seconded the motion.

All in favor. 0 No. 0 Abstain.

Motion Carries.

Paper ballot (yes / no) results:

Yes: 26 No: 14 Abstain: 1

Motion carries.

Moderator then opened the floor for discussion regarding ITEM II

ITEM II was moved by Laurie Semprebon, seconded by Michelle Doucette-Cunningham.

Peter Tanaka stated if he is not mistaken, this is the second \$100,000 we are spending on this project? And if so, his worry is that we are taking up almost a quarter of a million dollars on this study and when the time comes, the people are going to say we spent so much money, why aren't we spending more?

Nicholas Tella seconded the previous comment. This is the second time requesting money. What is the remaining balance and what is the situation? Superintendent Stevens noted there is a \$25,000 remaining balance. Mr. Tella then asked if they, will they come back a third time to ask for money?

Alicia Corsini said we already spent \$200,000. How far would that money go to do repairs at the schools instead.

Laurie Semprebon said it is important for the building committee to do right and get the correct information so we can make an informed decision when the time comes to decide whether we build a new school or make renovations.

David Krivanec asked what did you do with the first allotment of money? Phil Stevens said the money was spent on an enrollment study, a phase I environmental study, a Phase I study on private land and an appraisal as well as hiring a project manager. He added that there is \$25,000 left.

Superintendent Stevens added that at budget time, the Education budget is challenging every year. We have 400 students and are paying for 2 full-size buildings and staff for each. If we move them into one building, it would be cheaper in the long term.

Alicia Corsini said if we have less than 450 kids, the state has certain requirements, correct? Superintendent Stevens said yes. The reimbursement rate is based on the per-capita enrollment. They take the highest enrollment and that is how they factor the reimbursement rate. Ms. Corsini then said that Stafford has 3 vacant schools and still has the same staff and they did not save a lot of money. We should take a lesson from them before it is too late. She then added if we lose Hall School, the Hall foundation has done so much for this town and treat that with respect. First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that there is no project that has been defined at this point. Ms. Corsini stated that she has read the minutes – it is clear that they are leaning towards a new school.

Superintendent Stevens clarified that part of the charge of the committee is to make recommendations for both Center and HMS if a new school is built.

Todd Bissonnette then asked if we have 400 students, what is the projection for 10 years from now? Superintendent Stevens said our highest is about 420 and that is what they are basing the reimbursement on.

Phil Monty said first survey 7 options were given the first time the survey went out. Will there be other options to choose from? Superintendent Stevens noted their approval was to look at renovations or new school at a new site. Center Schools structure and size of the land is not sufficient for a new school or renovation. HMS is being investigated.

Nicholas Tella asked if there has been any consideration of the property at 24 Old Farms Road as an option? Superintendent Stevens clarified that 24 Old Farms Road is privately owned.

Michelle Doucette-Cunningham stated having high-quality schools and a new school attracts people with children and brings up your property value. She would rather live in a town that supports our kids and get a valuable education.

Patty Zulick-Bessette asked how old the schools are and if there could be asbestos? Superintendent Stevens noted HMS was built in 1922 and has been added on a few times and Center School was built in 1952 and once you open the walls up, you have no choice but to...

Ralph Tulis said he has been focusing on trying to convince folks to reconfigure Hall School. He added that every kid from every house still will not cover the cost of a new school.

Peter Tanaka moved to vote on this item via paper ballot.

Alicia Corsini seconded the motion.

All in favor. 0 No. 0 Abstain.

Motion Carries.

Paper ballot (yes/no) results:

Yes: 19 No: 23

Motion fails.

Moderator then opened the floor for discussion regarding ITEM III.

Item III was moved by Peter Tanaka, seconded by Phil Monty.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham asked what the current fees are for the tires? Troy Sposato stated \$2 and \$10.

Alicia Corsini asked if the Town is going to make money on the increases? Troy Sposato responded that there is a fuel charge increase and doubts that we are going to make any money.

Nicholas Tella asked if there is an explanation on why there was an increase in the fees? Troy Sposato noted that MIDNEROC is experiencing increases from their vendors.

Peter Tanaka moved to go to a voice vote on this item.

Phil Monty seconded the motion.

Vote: Yes: 42 No: 1 Abstain: 0

Motion Carries.

ITEM III Vote results:

All in favor. 0 No.

Motion Carries.

Peter Tanaka moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted

Robin H. Campbell
Town Clerk

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WILLINGTON, CT.

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TOWN CLERK