

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Board of Selectmen  
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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes  
Lower Level Conference Room

January 6, 2020  
6:30 PM

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM with Selectwoman Boritz and residents in attendance. Selectman Blessington was absent. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she had a request to move item 8A (old business; approve Local Emergency Medical Services Plan) up on the agenda so Chief Moore could return to work.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to move item 8A after present to speak.  
Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.  
Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No.

### Approval of Minutes:

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the minutes of December 16, 2019 minutes as written.  
Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.  
Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No

### Present to Speak

Peter Tanaka of Mason Road asked everyone to keep Selectman Blessington in their thoughts and prayers as he is in the ICU at Hartford Hospital and is hopeful that Selectman Blessington will have a successful recovery. Next; Mr. Tanaka stated at the last meeting, all discussions with the public were shut down. He would like to see meetings resume to the way it always has been; noting a change in the format would make the items that are up for discussion more of a lecture, which he is not in favor of. Lastly, Mr. Tanaka noted item B on this agenda under new business is to go into Executive Session. He warned according to CT General Statutes 1-100; subsection 6; do not meet the requirements for executive session, unless we are pulling the Superintendent from the committee.

Donna Cook of Common Road stated that she had sent a letter to the Selectmen over the weekend. Because she is getting over a bad head cold (and has little voice) she asked Liz Perry to read the letter into this meeting. Liz Perry read the letter:

Board of Selectmen  
40 Old Farms Road  
Willington, CT 06279

January 6, 2020

Dear Board of Selectmen,

After reading the agenda for the Board of Selectmen for January 6, 2020, I am respectfully requesting that items 7B (Executive Session- Discussion appointment of Board of Education Officers), and Items 7C (Appoint Board of Education Officers) be removed from the agenda.

On December 10, 2019 the Board of Education meeting ended without any officers being elected. One of the individuals who had been elected to the Board had not been sworn in prior to the meeting. At the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, First Selectman Erika Wiecenski said that she hoped that we would be able to settle this amongst ourselves and that any three members of the Board of Education could request a special meeting at which officers could be elected.

After the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, Liz Perry was sworn in as a member of the Board of Education. On December 12, 2019 I contacted the superintendent's office and requested that a special meeting be called for the purpose of electing officers of the Board of Education. Herb Arico, Elena Testa, and Liz Perry also requested that a special meeting be called.

On December 16<sup>th</sup> the Special Meeting Agenda was filed with the Town of Willington. The only purpose of the meeting was to elect Board of Education officers. A copy of the agenda is attached for your convenience. The members of the Board of Education were notified of this meeting via our board of education email account. The meeting was called in compliance with CT Statute Section 10-218 and the Willington Board of Education's policy 9321.

On December 17, 2019 a reminder email was sent out to remind all board members that the meeting was being held as scheduled. I received no notice of cancelation.

On December 17<sup>th</sup> the Special Meeting was conducted at the time and location specified by the Special Meeting Agenda. There was a quorum. In addition to four members of the Board of Education, there were several members of the public in attendance. At that meeting, Herb Arico was elected unanimously as the Chairman, Elena Testa was elected as the Vice Chairman, and Liz Perry was elected as the Secretary. The minutes of the meeting were filed with the Town of Willington on December 18<sup>th</sup>. A copy is attached for your convenience.

I expect that the Board of Selectmen will recognize the duly elected officers of the Board of Education. I request that this letter be read into the Board of Selectmen minutes in its entirety (including attachments).

Regards,  
Donna V. Cook, CPA

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted for clarification the attachments were the agenda and minutes that were filed. *(the original letter and attachments are attached to the minutes)*

George Debski of Fenton Bluffs Drive asked to reserve his right to speak when the topic comes up on the agenda.

Mike Perry of Balazs Road also asked to reserve his right to speak when the topic comes up.

Peter Latincsics of Trask Road stated that he attended the Board of Education special meeting on December 17<sup>th</sup> and observed the election of officers at that meeting. He is urging this board to recognize the actions of that meeting and would also like to reserve time to speak when the topic comes up on the agenda.

Laurie Semprebbon of Turnpike road stated in the 8 years she has served on the Board of Education she is not sure how a special meeting can be called without a chairman. She added that she is not sure it is proper to reserve a right to speak upon a topic.

Jim Bulick of Laurel Drive pointed out that officers were appointed for a term of 2 years on December 19, 2017; so officers were in effect at the time of that meeting.

Michelle Doucette-Cunningham of Liska Road stated that she wanted to set the record straight. The Board of Education Attorney was contacted immediately after the BOE meeting to find out what the their options were. This has never happened when a chair was not elected. At the time of the meeting we [BOE members] did not know whether a special meeting could be called. The information provided by the BOE Attorney was very clear - that a special meeting could not be called without a Chairman. Ms. Doucette-Cunningham clarified that this information was shared with all BOE members. Any meeting held after that (until the next regularly scheduled meeting) should be considered to not be held in accordance with State law. Ms. Doucette-Cunningham went on to remind everyone that we had a terrible ice storm on the particular date the special meeting still went on. The location of the meeting was at the library; however she received notification that the library had closed due to the weather and hadn't given it a second thought until she saw an email to state the meeting had happened anyway. Ms. Doucette Cunningham stated that she is very disappointed that her colleagues would stoop to hold a meeting when they knew many people could not attend or even know about it; not to mention to move forward on something that we probably should have had a broader conversation about. The fact that there were no members of the opposing party at that meeting is not because of the lack of interest in the conversation or resolving this issue.

Chiara Bambara of Clover Springs Road suggested having the Selectmen hold present to speak in the same format that the Board of Education conducts their meetings; where the public has a right to speak before and after the meeting; giving people the opportunity to make their opinions known based on the conversation that was held. She personally thinks a back and forth has a place in a meeting like this.

Elaine Newcomb of Fermier Road stated she would like to reserve her right to respond to the topic discussed. She added that she doesn't understand how you comment on something beforehand.

Tracy Anderson of Willington Hill Road supports Michelle Doucette-Cunningham's comments. She stated that she followed the directives of the law. She based her decision to not attend the December 17<sup>th</sup> BOE meeting on the law, the weather and the fact that the agenda was not submitted by the Superintendent.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then continued the meeting with *Item 8A; Old Business*.

#### Old Business

##### A. Approve Local Emergency Medical Services Plan.

The plan had been submitted to the Selectmen at the last regularly scheduled meeting; but was waiting on some additional attachments. The Selectmen also wanted some additional time to review before approving. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she had questions regarding several of the attachments that were referenced in the document that appeared to not be included in the plan itself. For example, the Tolland County Emergency Operation Plan and the Town of Willington Emergency Operation Plan. Willington Fire Department Chief Alex Moore was present. He stated that many of the referenced items that are in there have already been approved and are in place working documents. Because of the size of the file, it is only necessary to reference them; rather than attaching them.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then stated that she had a question regarding the management structure noted on page 5 item d, which states the fire chiefs – *AHJ for EMS Manages all department operations and personnel. Sets strategic and tactical objectives – reports to First Selectman/ Board of Selectmen*. She asked if the Fire Services Contract that is currently in place needs to be referenced. Chief Moore stated he doesn't think that is necessary the way the contracts are written.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that this is a new document. Chief Moore agreed; noting that it has been put forth by the State – so every town that has an EMS Plan. He noted the plan will be good for 5

years and has been told the State will be putting a new document up in the next 5 years. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked Chief Moore for the work he put into this.

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the Local Emergency Medical Services Plan as presented.**

**Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.**

Chief Moore stated that he will bring an executed copy once WHFD Chief Snyder has signed the document.

**Vote 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No.**

### Correspondence

A list of Correspondence was available for the Selectmen.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she had planned to read the letter that was sent in by Donna V. Cook; but it had already been read under present to speak. She then added for reference a document that came in through the Town Attorney's office; forwarded via email from Thomas Hennick of the FOIA Commission referencing Executive Session to discuss an appointment of Board of Education Officers.

Mr. Hennick's response was based on asking for clarification regarding individual officers in which the Board of Selectmen have authority. The answer was - yes they would be covered by executive session; referencing the statute that Mr. Tanaka had referenced as well - it states: Discussion concerning the appointment, employment, performance, evaluating health or dismissal of a public officer or employee, public officers can be employees or appointed board members.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then clarified that this item was put on the agenda only in the event the Selectmen were going to discuss the people that were to be appointed. It may or may not have been used.

### Status Report

*Concrete Testing in Municipal Buildings:* First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that all of the core samples have been taken from the library, Senior Center and pump house. They have been sent out for testing. We look forward to getting the results. We will keep everyone posted when we receive the information.

*Assistant Land Use Agent:* We have made an offer to a prospective employee and are anticipating a signed agreement. We anticipate the new employee to begin on January 13<sup>th</sup>.

### Public Works

Troy sent in an email reporting the crew has been plowing and sanding the roads from the last few storms as well as:

- Cleaned the garage
- Dug out water ways around town
- Cleaned off basin tops around town
- Fixed a couple road signs + stop signs that were knocked over
- Patched holes around town
- Cleaned and started inventory in the parts room
- Fixed propane heaters at garage done by contractor
- We keep working on the many repairs need for our fleet of trucks

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that we currently have a plow truck down but expect to have up and running in the next few days. She then added that we do not have a spare truck at this time.

### New Business

#### **A. Appointments**

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Kate Blackburn as a member at large #2 on the Youth Services Advisory Board; effective January 6, 2020; expiring January 5, 2021. Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that Jennie Arpin, Director of Human Services could not be with us tonight but sent in an email regarding Ms. Blackburn's appointment. The email states:

*I am very grateful for Kate to be joining the Youth Services Advisory Board as a Member at Large, and I look forward to her ideas and perspectives. Our next meeting will be January 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.*

*The current vacancies on this board per the DCF grant are "Police Officer", and "Local Area Service provider", and I am actively pursuing filling those roles at this time.*

Ms. Blackburn, who lives on Moose Meadow Road was present. She stated that she is happy and excited to be here. She looks forward to working with everyone. The Selectmen thanked Ms. Blackburn for stepping up and serving on this committee.

**Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Blessington) 0 No**

#### **B. Executive Session – Discuss appointment of Board of Education Officers**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski recommended to not go into Executive Session. Selectwoman Boritz agreed.

#### **C. Appoint Board of Education Officers**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that this is a very complex issue. Because Selectman Blessington cannot be with us, she feels that it is in our best interest to table this item until the full board is able to discuss. She added there should be conversation from all parties involved. We don't benefit from this partisan politics that is happening in Willington; adding there is a better way for us to move forward. This is in the best interest of the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen.

**First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to table item C – Appoint Board of Education Officers. Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.**

George Debski then asked the Selectmen if they would like to table the reservations that have been made to discuss on this topic? Selectwoman Boritz clarified that the Selectmen are not making a decision on this item right now. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that they would not like to discuss at this time but if someone felt strong about speaking out about it she would not say no to them.

Mike Perry stated that we just had an election. The residents of this town voted these people into these positions because they trust them to represent the people in the community. He recommends the Selectmen go back to the Board of Education and have them try to work out their own problems. If they can't work it out, then it go back to the Selectmen.

Peter Latinsics said he is grateful the Board of tabling this item. He added that he is hopeful that the full board does not elect to go into executive session as a matter of public interest of this issue. He then clarified that executive session should only be held for personnel matters – and not intended for this purpose.

#### **D. Discussion of Public Content at Selectmen's meetings**

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated that this was addressed at the last regular meeting; noting that she stated that we are holding a meeting in public; not a public meeting. Our meetings tend to have a lot of back and forth conversations between the Selectmen and members of the public, which can tend to become a distraction of the work of the board. She added that we welcome hearing from our residents – we were elected by them to do work on behalf of the town. There is a time for present to speak – we are willing to discuss a way to move forward and have heard a few suggestions here. This is a topic that should be discussed by the full board.

**First Selectwoman Wiczenski moved to table item D until there is a full Board to discuss.  
Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.**

Selectwoman Boritz added for those who are concerned about the opportunity for public comment – at no point has anyone expressed interest to shut it down; but what we need to do is make it more manageable. She added there have been many meetings over the past several months where public comment has turned into devolving conversations that make it very difficult for the Selectmen to conduct business and makes meetings last for hours – this does not benefit anyone's purpose. Selectwoman Boritz then added that there have been times where she had to fight the audience for floor space at Selectmen's meetings. She takes her job of representing the people very seriously, but when it comes to the point where she has to fight to be able to speak then we need to do something differently. Selectwoman Boritz added that is why this has become an agenda topic – things have gotten political and contentious. We need to address it head on – put something in place that still allows us to do our jobs while also offering the opportunity for conversation. We feel it would be best to continue the discussions when we have [John] Selectman Blessington at the table – his perspective on this is important.

Jerry Debski suggested adding a time limit (such as 2-3 minutes per person) for those who wish to speak so there is still a discussion; but it is not prolonged. Selectwoman Boritz said they mentioned that at the last meeting as an option. They want to be able to conduct their meetings in which will be fair, productive and efficient. First Selectwoman Wiczenski agreed; noting that the Board of Selectmen is the only board that meets in public that has this ongoing back and forth. The only time any other board has conversations with the members of the public is because they are speaking to an item that they are referenced. She then stated the reason she tabled this item is so that all board members will be able to express their opinion on how meetings should be conducted going forward.

Elaine Newcomb said the problem she sees is there is a Board of Selectmen who has offered their opinion without hearing the opinion of the people who elected them. She stated that she thinks it is backwards – she has served many years on different boards of education. You should want to hear from the public before making any sort of decision – particularly an expensive or important decision. To her knowledge it has been lacking and we now have a difficult town because we don't have any common means of discussion. Ms. Newcomb added that we (Willington) used to be covered in the newspapers and things used to be out there so we would know what people were doing. Everyone doesn't rush home from their day to log on to the website to see what is going on in town – it is too little too late. Ms. Newcomb said it needs to go to the townspeople before a decision or commitment is made to a taxpayer impact issues that the town has not had an opportunity to offer an opinion. Lastly, Ms. Newcomb stated that you referenced the fact that you were elected to represent us; but there are a lot of people who don't feel represented.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that there happened to be a reporter from the Chronicle in the room.

Laurie Semprebon echoed what First Selectwoman Wiecenski had stated before – this is a meeting held in public; not a public meeting – there is a difference between the two. All of our committees are meetings held in public as well. We have elected these officials to represent us and have discussions; present to speak so we can be heard. If there is too much conversation back and forth; they can't conduct their business. It is hard for people to understand that its not just an open forum; but rather people witnessing a meeting of our elected officials.

Chiara Bambarra clarified that any of the meetings held to discuss spending money are held at Town Meeting (or referendum); not Board of Selectmen meetings. Town Meetings are when we have the back and forth discussions.

Matt Clark of Latham Road stated the he would like to see all of the commissions/boards follow the same platform across the board. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated she couldn't agree more. After spending 8 years on the Board of Education, the structure of the Selectmen's meeting was an adjustment. She stated that the motion on the table was to table this discussion. We will hold this on the next agenda to continue.

**Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No.**

Mike Perry stated that he wouldn't have known about this meeting if it wasn't for word of mouth. He has been here for over 4 years but never heard about the town's website. He did not get an invitation to any meetings but look at the turnout at this meeting. It looks like we should have a public meeting so everyone is able to speak out, that way the people who make the decisions can hear from the majority of what they want. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that reaching out to the entire town has always been a challenge. Mr. Perry stated that we need a better way to notify people in the community. George Debski noted that he filed a petition today and found out that the notice of a town meeting is posted in the paper, on the website and the board outside of the town offices. He stated that 80% of the people in town never come to the Town Offices. There has got to be a better way to notify people of what is happening and seek involvement.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that this particular board is always looking for ways to reach the public. There was a day where everyone would get their news via newspaper, but now everyone uses different sources to get their information; which makes it challenging. It won't stop us from trying to get people in the room to participate in the conversations.

Carl Pearson of Fermier Road suggested placing a programmable billboard in one of the high traffic areas in town. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated they will take that into consideration.

#### **E. Tax Refunds**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$60.39 to Kewen Wangon a certificate of correction.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

**Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$13.85 to Margaret Williams on a certificate of correction.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

**Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Boritz) 0 No**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$2,770.84 to Corelogic for an overpayment.  
Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wieczenski & Boritz) 0 No

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$1,885.74 to United Bank for an overpayment.  
Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wieczenski & Boritz) 0 No

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$300.60 to JP Morgan Chase Bank on a certificate of correction.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wieczenski & Boritz) 0 No

## Old Business

### A. Approve Local Emergency Medical Services Plan

*This item was discussed after present to speak.*

### B. Recap of School Building Committee- Next Steps

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted at the last meeting the Selectmen decided that a Town Meeting should be held before we move forward.

We have had no movement on this item. It will remain on the agenda.

## Good & Welfare

First Selectwoman Wiecenski reminded everyone that there is a town meeting tomorrow night at 7PM at the Town Office Building Common Room.

The Capital Improvement Program Committee will hold their first meeting on Wednesday night in the lower level conference room at the Town Office Building at 6:30 PM. First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that we still have 2 empty seats on that committee looking to be filled.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski shared a note of thanks from the MCLEF (Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation) that was sent to Joe Philippi who facilitates the annual Car Show in Willington. Every year, the Car Show donates its proceeds to the MCLEF. This past October, \$1,569 was donated to the Foundation. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked the people who attend the car show every year. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year the Car Show has donated; totaling \$7,900! Kudos to Mr. Philippi as well.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski asked everyone to keep Selectman Blessington & his family in their thoughts and prayers. She is hopeful to see him back & healthy soon.

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Robin Campbell  
Administrative Assistant