

**MINUTES**  
**TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT-BOARD OF FINANCE**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**

**This meeting was online only**  
**Thursday, January 27th, 2022**  
**6:30PM**

**Called to order** at 6:35pm by Chairman Makuch, with the following in attendance: Jim Gilligan, Christina Mailhos, Geoff Prusak, Lisa Woolf, Joe Sherrell, Mike Makuch. Chief Moore, President Gantick, and other fire department members were present

**Seating of Alternates:** Mike moved and Geoff seconded to seat Jim for Pete Tanaka, all in favor, Mike moved and Geoff seconded to seat Lisa for Stephanie Summers, all in favor

NOTE: Stephanie arrived at 6:41pm and assumed her seat automatically

**Present to Speak**-No one spoke

**Old Business**

- 1) WFD 1 update on ambulance repairs and possible request for additional funding:

Mike did a quick overview of the conversations that started in October about the condition of the ambulance as well as rising salary costs. Mike refreshed all parties that the BOF doesn't have line item veto, but does provide guidance as to what is felt to be prudent of sustainable. At the last discussion (1/20/2022), the ambulance was out of service due to engine issues. There were two options presented to either replace the current engine for about \$30,000, requiring additional funding to the FD budget, or rebuilding the current engine for about \$12,000. BOF advised/encouraged that the FD do the rebuild of the current motor in the ambulance with the knowledge that it could be done quickly and within budget and get them back in service, and that the board would be open to the FD coming back later for funds if this expense stripped their budget.

Mike Makuch turned the floor over to Chief Moore.

Chief Moore said that their board met after the Board of Finance 1/20 meeting. They discussed time lines and costs. Over the next couple of days, they tracked down details from the vendor. For the full replacement of everything under the hood, it would be \$34,200, plus transmission and rear axle work, yet TBD. A summary of Fund 17 was presented, indicating that there were funds available.

Mike said that there had been background discussion about allocations from Fund 17 and if that can be done outside of the annual budget process. It was thought that the contract between the FDs and the town said only in normal budget process, but there is anecdotal information that this fund has been tapped mid-year via taxpayer approval. There is conflicting information, but there is certainly funding available in some manner, even if through the typical budget process.

Chief Moore also added the update that the anticipated replacement engine delay was not as long as expected, perhaps only three days longer than the rebuild.

Mike discussed the three options available: Take the path of last week by providing some guidance to either stay the course with repair, or move up to the replacement engine, or send a motion to the Board of Selectmen for a town meeting to approve funding. No matter what, the Chief can move forward as he has the funding to get started.

Goeff asked for total of the "wanted" repairs, which Chief Moore said is about \$38,000, plus the rear axle, which might be \$2000. The repair option is \$12,000 plus the axle for about \$2,000.

Stephanie asked if we do the more expensive repair, can we delay the purchase of the new ambulance?

Chief Moore said he isn't sure, the delay for a new rig could be 2 years.

Stephanie asked, and Mike confirmed that the money isn't needed to be expended until delivery, but the approval needs to be in place so that the department can commit to the order. It would be shown as an expense, so it would be in taxation. Using money from Fund 17 is at any moment "off budget", but still has a downstream affect on available funds, and thus could lead to taxation to replace/refill.



Stephanie said that her thought is that if we do this larger repair (about \$40,000), we should buy some time with that and delay something in return for the expense. Which Chief Moore said he didn't disagree with, but he hesitates because even with a 2 year warranty, how long is the delay to get the new truck.

Christina asked if they also plan to purchase a used ambulance. He said yes, hoping to delay having to replace the current rig. When asked when this will take place, Chief Moore said he hopes at the next ARPA meeting. They would be asked for \$80,000 for the rig and equipment. He could use the 2 older ambulances to hold out a bit longer. Christina asked to clarify what he just said: if they would be OK in this scenario with delaying the purchase of the new rig. He said he couldn't speak for his board, but probably. Christina said its just a lot all at once, to which Chief Moore said he agrees.

Joe Sherrell asked that based on about 900 calls per year, averages about 3 calls a day, which doesn't seem to justify 2 ambulances. Further, if the option of the \$40,000 repair was completed, we should expect some life span (2 years of warranty), but the repair also offered 2 years of warranty, so why wouldn't we go the cheaper route? And the trade in value couldn't be much more for the new engine versus the rebuilt engine. Chief Moore, said he agrees, but what will break next under the hood, so that's why they are back here talking to us.

Geoff said that the full new motor would provide a 2 year warranty, and you really should be able to get more than 2 years from it, delaying the replacement. Just as you got 7 years out of the original motor.

Christina asked if they have room to store the second, and which would be primary. The Chief said that they would rotate to spread wear and would keep the second ambulance in South Willington. He said the overall goal would be to use two trucks to spread out replacement and secondly to prevent borrowing a rig from another department. She further asked about equipment that can transfer. The Chief said equipment can move back and forth between rigs.

Jim Gilligan asked that if we go with the more expensive repair and a second ambulance. Would they back the new purchase out for another year or two since we should be buying more longevity. The Chief said "he would think so" but also referred to FD President Ron Gantick. Before the President spoke, Jim noted that financially it makes more sense to go big on the repair to have 2 good rigs and get maybe 4 years out of the two, delaying the expense of the new purchase. President Gantick said he thinks the FD would be amenable as they are all taxpayers too. He further said that their board would be meeting tonight. They do need to be careful of what they look to buy, as the used market may present vehicles that are not compatible with CT regulations. Jim said that this answers his question of whether they would consider delaying if they did the bigger repair.

Joe asked that if the end goal is a new rig, the cheaper repair and not buying a second ambulance could save nearly half the requested \$300,000 for the new one, when considering trade in etc. Why not use that savings toward the new rig.

Mike did a recap and asked the board if they wanted to take any action. Stephanie said if the greater cost repair is done, we should see something for it. The three asks (repair, used rig, and new rig) are very expensive overall, potentially taking a lot of money from fund 17. There should be something astute about the larger repair. Mike said it seems that the general board consensus is that the FD should move forward with what they feel is right, but we are concerned about the total impact of the various combined requests. Chief Moore reviewed previous conversations from tonight and said that if the FD board decides to go for the bigger repair, he feels they would likely look to delay the new purchase, but he cant speak for them. Chairman Makuch asked the BOF members if they would participate in a non-binding poll to see what the feeling or guidance is. The Chief and President said that would welcome that guidance.

Joe commented that if we are seeking a new ambulance in 2 years, he would seek cheapest solution, otherwise, if we go with the full replacement engine, we should go out 4 years or so with the new ambulance.

Stephanie said she feels she is saying the same thing as Joe, we cant do all three big expenses.

Christina said she agrees with Joe. Mike clarified that she is saying she prefers the smaller repair if we are doing the second ambulance and the new ambulance right away. If the FD board is comfortable with pushing the ambulance out a couple more years, do the big repair. She agreed.

Jim said he agrees, his earlier comments asked if the larger repair could delay the new ambulance, and/or eliminate the second ambulance. He is not against spending the \$40,000 if it delays some of the other expenses.

Stephanie clarified that she agrees that we want a reliable rig. If we go with the expensive repair, other purchases should be delayed 4 or more years. If the FD board wants the new ambulance sooner, she wants to spend the lesser amount.

Geoff said since it seems they want 2 rigs, so do the cheap repair on the current, use ARPA for a used rig and then maybe get 5 years before buying a new rig with both older rigs traded in.

Mike said he would abstain from this poll, out of respect for past history and to maintain decorum.

**Correspondence** Board members have it all

**Present to Speak**-Public participation is desired and encouraged. Speakers will be limited to time and appropriateness of comments to maintain progress, stay on topic, and maintain decorum.

No one spoke

**Adjournment**

Stephanie moved and Christina seconded, all in favor at 7:24pm

Respectfully submitted

Mike Makuch, chairman and acting recording secretary

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TOWN CLERK