

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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WILLINGTON, CT.

2023 FEB 23 AM 10:31

  
TOWN CLERK

40 Old Farms Road  
Willington, CT 06279

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[www.willingtonct.org](http://www.willingtonct.org)

## BOARD OF FINANCE

Regular Meeting  
Hybrid – In Person and Online

January 19, 2023  
7:00 PM

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

**Members Present (a quorum of 4 members is required to conduct business): "X" Indicates Present**

Geoffrey (Geoff) Prusak (Vice Chairman)	Christina Mailhos	Joseph (Joe) Sherrell	Stephanie (Stef) Summers	Peter (Pete) Tanaka	Jim Gilligan (ALT)	Elisabeth (Lisa) Woolf (ALT)
In person	In Person	In Person	In Person	Absent	In Person	Via Zoom

### **Also Present:**

Erika Wiecewski – first selectwoman – In person

Tom Snyder – chief, Willington Hill Fire Dept. – in person

Alex Moore – chief, Willington Fire Dept. No. 1 – in person

Donna Latincsics – business manager – in person

Laurie Semprebon – town treasurer – Zoom

Laurie Hall – bond counsel – Zoom

Phil Stevens – schools superintendent – Zoom

James Marshall – candidate for vacant seat on BOF and SBC appointee – in person

Members of the public

Vice Chair Geoff Prusak called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

### **SEATING OF ALTERNATES:**

Stef moved to seat Lisa Woolf for the vacant seat.

Christina seconded

All in favor

Motion passed

Geoff moved to seat Jim Gilligan for Peter Tanaka.

Christina seconded

All in favor

Motion passed

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**Stef moved to move the potential school bonding presentation to the beginning of the agenda to accommodate visiting bond counsel.**

**Christina seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed**

Erika reminded everyone that the four options will be narrowed down to one February 1<sup>st</sup> by the School Building Committee (SBC) they will then refer and recommend the project to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) who will then refer it to the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) and finally the Board of Finance (BOF) for appropriation. Erika invited bond counsel Laurie Hall to talk about the potential bonding process and how the BOF will play a role in that. Christina, who is chair of the CIP, and Laurie discussed potential timing of the bond payments. It was determined that the timing will be based on expectations for paying for the project, but the project financial advisor would be better equipped to answer. Stef, Laurie and Erika discussed the process of recommending the motion for referendum. Stef and Erika discussed the current estimated tax increases the SBC released for the proposed project.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**Stef moved to approve the minutes from January 20, 2022, as written.**

**Jim seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed**

**Stef moved to approve the minutes from July 21, 2022, as amended.**

**Jim seconded**

In discussion, Stef suggested the last names be included on first reference to non-board members cited in the minutes.

**All in favor**

**Motion passed**

**Geoff moved to approve the minutes from August 25, 2022, as amended.**

**Stef seconded**

**Discussion**

Stef said a reference to "Shakespeare Day" should be "History Day," and unclear reference was corrected to GASB (Governmental Accounting Standards Board).

**All in favor**

**Motion passed**

**Geoff moved to approve the minutes from December 15, 2022, as written.**

**Stef seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed**

## **PRESENT TO SPEAK:**

None

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## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **1) Budget status financial report**

Donna reported that we are over budget on the revenue side due to heightened collections in three categories – Licenses and Fees, Investment Income, and Miscellaneous Revenue. She added that she expected at fiscal year's end to see that property tax revenues also exceed the budgeted amount. The expense side is tracking close to the six-month pace, and she said she sees nothing out of the ordinary.

### **2) Update from the School Building Committee Representative**

Geoff noted the position is vacant so we will see if anyone volunteers to fill the role later in the meeting.

### **3) ARPA Update**

#### **a. Representative's Report**

#### **b. Process Discussion**

Christina reported the last meeting was a public hearing. She gave the balance of the funds and said that there is approximately \$157,000 to appropriate, but there is nearly double that in requests. However, there are also some larger projects that are finishing up and are expected to return about \$115,000 to the ARPA fund balance. The next meeting is on Monday, Jan. 23.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **1) Election of Officers: chair, vice chair and secretary**

**Christina moved to nominate Stephanie Summers for board chair.**

**Lisa seconded**

**Geoff moved to nominate himself for chair.**

**Jim seconded**

Brief discussion about the procedure of the vote ensued. Then Geoff called for the vote for Stef as chair.

**Lisa yes, Christina yes, Stef yes, Joe abstained, Geoff no, Jim no**

**Motion passed, 3-2, with one abstention**

Given the tally, Geoff declined a vote on his nomination. Stef asked if he would consent to remain in place as vice chair and he said yes. The board reached consensus that Geoff will continue as vice chair and Peter will remain board secretary. Stef asked Geoff to finish chairing tonight's meeting.

### **2) Discussion of potentially filling BOF member vacancy**

Geoff said there still is a vacant seat on the board, resulting from Chairman Mike Makuch's move to the Board of Selectmen in December. He noted that an option in the past was to alternate seating the two alternates to cover the vacancy.

**Stef moved to nominate James Marshall, a candidate endorsed by the Willington Democratic Town Committee, for the vacant seat on the BOF.**

**Lisa seconded**

Copies of a letter of interest from Mr. Marshall were distributed to board members, and he spoke about the experience he could offer the BOF and what he hoped to learn from them.

**Lisa yes, Christina yes, Jim Gilligan abstain, Joe yes, Stef yes, Geoff no**



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**Motion Passed, 4-1, one abstention**

### **3) Adjustment to CIP Purchase of PW Vehicle**

Erika reminded everyone the original order for the new F350 pickup truck for the Public Works director was cancelled due to long-term delays at Ford although our financing had already been secured. She and the director, Troy Sposato, decided instead to purchase an SUV that could be used for hauling cones, signs, shovels, etc. If Troy needs to plow, which he has at times, there is a back-up truck he could use to do that. The accessories on the SUV include basic lights and a radio. Joe and Erika discussed the purpose of the vehicle. Erika said that, under Troy's contract, he is equipped with a town vehicle that he drives to and from his home because he is on call. His current vehicle has a plow that is used from time to time, but he doesn't have a snow route because that is considered union employee work.

**Stef moved to recommend that the Board of Selectmen call a town meeting to change the vehicle reference in the approved CIP plan from a Ford F350 to a Chevy Tahoe SSV 4x4, as well as the accessories needed to outfit the vehicle.**

**Christina seconded**

#### **Discussion**

Joe observed that it seems we are replacing a usable truck with a plow for an SUV for transportation and wondered if it had to be a Tahoe or whether they could find a more affordable option. Erika answered that the Tahoe had the same footprint as that of a 1500-class pickup and Troy would be hauling equipment as previously mentioned so they didn't want to get something too small. She also said it is harder to find a stripped-down version of a four-wheel-drive vehicle such as a Ford Escape, saying that they come with heated seats and upscale features that are not needed in a fleet vehicle. She was asked if there would be a trade-in of his existing vehicle; she responded that it would be sold or offered for trade-in, and the money would return to the General Fund.

**Christina yes, Jim yes, Joe yes, Stef yes, Lisa yes, Geoff yes**

**Motion passed, 6-0**

### **4) WHFD Volunteer Bonus Request**

Willington Hill Fire Dept. Chief Tom Snyder spoke about the problems they are having with recruitment as well as retention, particularly for volunteers. He recommended \$1,000 bonuses for 17 volunteers from both firehouses who hold EMS certifications and who helped take calls consistently throughout the pandemic. He said the bonuses would make a great impact and heighten morale for those who are least expecting it. Paid fire station employees received bonuses from ARPA funds, but unpaid volunteers didn't qualify for it and he said they should get something as well. Donna said she believes there will be a surplus at the end of the fiscal year to cover this request, pending no unforeseen expenditures occur. Christina said this wouldn't have to go to town meeting because it is under the \$20,000 threshold. After discussion, the board consensus was to revisit this request at the end of the fiscal year when it could be certain of a surplus. Erika said three elected officials – the two registrars and the treasurer – would also be considered for bonuses akin to those the town employees received. Stef noted that Willington teachers did not receive bonuses for their efforts during the pandemic.

### **5) Letter from Treasurer regarding Paid Time**

Treasurer Laurie Semprebbon reported that she has been consistently working 2 to 3 hours more than what her stipend as an elected official was based upon. Under a reorganization in the town Finance Dept., the elected treasurer role was reduced from requiring 25/30 hours a week to an estimated 5

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hours a week to monitor bank accounts and check them against property tax receipts. The new assistant business manager took on the duties that formerly fell under the treasurer's job. Laurie has since been tracking her time at 7 to 8 hours a week and submitted data to the board supporting that. As an elected official, she said she does not qualify for a salaried position because she makes less than the threshold required and is not a supervisor. She suggested she be reimbursed for her actual hours worked and be converted to a time card system for payment in the future. Lisa stressed that the treasurer's job requires a certain expertise that is not easy to find, and the pay should reflect the value of the job. Stef noted that the reduced treasurer's role was in its infancy and the budgeted estimate was close but may need tweaking. Donna, Erika and the board discussed that more study on the issue would be needed because changing the stipend payment method for one elected town position would open the door to review all the others. Erika advised that the BOS is already reviewing the elected officials' pay, and the BOF does not have the authority to create a time-keeping system.

**6) Appoint BOF member to School Building Committee**

**Stef moved to nominate James Marshall as the representative for the BOF on the SBC.**

She noted his avid civic activity as a newer resident, his insights as an architect on school projects in neighboring states, and his family with two young children.

**Christina seconded**

**Christina yes, Jim G. abstain, Joe yes, Stef yes, Lisa yes, Geoff abstain**

**Motion Passed, 4-0, with two abstentions**

**PRESENT TO SPEAK:**

None

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

James Marshall candidate letter distributed.

**GOOD AND WELFARE:**

Stef wishes Mike much joy in his new role as selectman, and is pleased to see James Marshall on the board. With seven of eight Connecticut counties, including Tolland County, now in the high Covid infection category, she urged everyone to stay safe.

**Geoff moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 pm.**

**Joe seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed**

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Sperry  
Recording Secretary



January 19, 2023

Board of Finance  
Town of Willington  
40 Old Farms Road  
Willington, CT 06279

**Re: Interest in Board of Finance Appointment to Fill Vacancy**

Dear members of the Willington Board of Finance:

I'm writing to express my interest in volunteering to fill the open position on Willington's Board of Finance and ask that you kindly consider me for that position.

My family and I were fortunate to be able to move into Town back in July of 2020. Since then, I have endeavored to be engaged where I felt that my individual experience and knowledge would be able to serve this community that my family and I plan to be a part of for a very long time. I feel that I would be able to continue to do so effectively in this capacity, and as an architect I believe that my professional experience would allow me to offer a unique and important voice and perspective on the Board of Finance.

As part of any project, I must be sensitive to any over-arching budgetary restraints and work to develop cost sensitive design solutions. I have extensive experience in working with municipalities on building assessment and capital improvement plans and would be able to utilize that experience to help assess and validate funding requests of that nature accordingly. I often take part in project financing discussions and value management exercises to create efficient and effective projects while maximizing the value of available funding. I additionally have a strong mind for proposal development and evaluation, as well as for numbers and spreadsheets generally.

Perhaps even more presently relevant to Willington, a core focus of my professional practice is the design of K through 12 educational facilities, and I am currently actively involved in the feasibility and design of numerous school projects in the New England region. A new consolidated school here in Willington is likely the largest single endeavor this Town has undertaken, and the financial impact will be significant for any avenue chosen. I have valuable experience and an understanding of the process for pursuing state grant funding for school construction projects that I believe would make me an insightful resource to the BOF. I understand the importance of cash flow schedules for projects and would hope to be able to use this experience effectively for the benefit of the Town. Perhaps most importantly (to me at least), I have two children currently attending Center School and recognize how much of an impact these potential plans for either renovating or constructing a new school can become for them. I would love to be able to assist Willington achieve a successful, financially efficient, and impactful vision for a new or renovated school facility via a role on the Board of Finance and would welcome the opportunity.

Thank you very much for your consideration and please don't hesitate to reach out at any time if you need any additional information.

Respectfully,

James Marshall  
46 Fisher Hill Road  
Willington, CT 06279