

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

40 Old Farms Road
Willington, CT 06279
(860) 487-3100
(860) 487-3103 Fax
www.willingtonct.org

BOARD OF FINANCE

Budget Meeting
Hybrid- In Person and Online

March 9, 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):

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

Also Present:

Troy Sposato, Department of Public Works - In person
Alan Humphrey, Parks and Rec - In person
Jennie Arpin, Human Services - In person
Alex Moore, Chief Fire Station #1 – In person
Donna Latincsics, Business Manager – In person
Erika Wiczenski, First Selectwoman- In person
Members of the Public

Chairwoman Stephanie Summers called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

SEATING OF ALTERNATES:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Pete moved to approve minutes as written from February 9, 2023
Geoff seconded
Christina yes, Jim M, abstain, Joe, yes, Geoff, yes, Peter, yes, Stef yes.
Motion passed 5-1, 1 abstention.

Geoff moved to approve the minutes as amended from February 2, 2023
Pete seconded

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Page 2 in the parks and rec paragraph it should be specified the it was Joe Sherrell who commented about doing well with the current landscaping set up.

All in favor

Motion passed.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Mike Pinatti, 19 Pinecrest Road, spoke on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department and said although they have a decent fund balance, they have a large list of repairs needing to be done that the money would be used for. They are not just going to sit on it, he said.

Laurie Semprebon, Turnpike Road, commented on how different positions in town are compensated. She has been on multiple boards, currently is the town treasurer and is on the BOAA. She mentioned she thinks M&T Bank will start charging the town fees after our first year is up in August. Researching and changing to a new bank would fall under the town treasurer's responsibility. She said the registrars and the treasurer roles are different from some of the other elected positions.

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road, is concerned that we are paying a lawyer that does not specialize in municipal law. He is concerned we are paying Mike D'Amato to promote large development in our town. He is concerned we are purchasing DPW director Troy Sposato a vehicle to drive around in and "not do work."

NEW BUSINESS:

1) Budget Deliberations

Stef said we will likely need to meet on March 23, a reserve date on the budget calendar. Donna introduced the Fund Balance spreadsheet. As we stand, if the BOF accepted every department's budget request and applied \$650,000 from the fund balance, which is recommended to keep our fund balance now higher than 12%, we would have a decrease in our mil rate of 0.12, bringing the mil rate down to 31.15. Stef said the probate number came in at \$3,976, replacing the \$4,000 placeholder. Stef reminded everyone that the Human Services budget is asking for a dramatic increase due to the new Senior Center Coordinator position, but the board should look at who else is asking for double digit increases as well as take into consideration the 5-year look-back growth data. Peter suggested we should set aside some money for the registrars because the bill for early voting looks like it will get passed. Christina said we could put the money in the contingency fund instead of adding it to their budget. The board agreed to set aside \$15,000 in the BOF contingency line for the early voting impact. Christina said she is concerned that many of the departments who are asking for more than a 20% increase also have large fund balances at their disposal. She would like to see the fund balances be spent before asking for an increase in their new budgets.

The board discussed the library's budget and remarked on how they have had \$100k growth in a 5-year period. Stef suggested applying some of the library's revenue against their budget. Last fiscal year they received \$14,588, and so far this fiscal year they have received \$36,603, approximately \$20k from a grant. Stef proposed applying \$25k of that revenue against their FY23-24 request, bringing it down from \$55,131 to \$30,131. Joe added he would like to see their total budget around \$255k vs. the requested \$297k, which would place their growth percentage in line with similarly sized departments. Stef said she doesn't think we should go that far without talking to the library department heads. Jim M. said their budget growth is staggering and after seeing all the off-budget bank and investment account balances,

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he would like to see their budget increase this year at 0%. The board decided to digest the new information received from the library and decide at the next meeting.

Chief Alex Moore stated he will be sending a revised budget to the staff now that they know the fuel costs. The current ambulance budget request is \$670k, \$140k more than last year, due to payroll increases. Stef said some of that will be offset from the tower rental, \$30k, and \$10k from Fund 17. Fund 17 is typically used as a holding ground for new fire equipment and vehicle purchases. Stef questioned the mutual aid situation and the ratio between Tolland, Stafford and other surrounding towns answering our calls versus our going to their calls. Chief Moore said the ratio is off because Ashford is volunteer and an ambulance from UConn would arrive to us quicker, so we don't call on Ashford. He said Tolland doesn't pay for an overnight staff and that is why their calls to us are down. (Willington staffs its ambulance 24/7.) He believes this is how mutual aid works and we shouldn't turn down calls because the patient co-pays go into Fund 17. Stef replied that the revenue that does come in is only a quarter of the cost of running the ambulance and the other three-fourths of the cost falls on the taxpayers. Alex said Fund 17 was never designed to cover payroll. Lisa stated that the Town of Willington wasn't designed to carry the costs of the private business of the Fire Department's ambulance service. Pete asked if the mutual aid rules were written by the state or if it was an agreement between the departments. Alex answered it was an agreement between the departments. Lisa stated towns can choose to join Primary Service Areas but they don't have to pay for it and asked why should we. Pete said our ambulance crew is also our primary fire crew and that is why we are paying people to be there 24/7. Lisa said we shouldn't be funding the ambulance anymore. Stef said we should pick the low-hanging fruit and negotiate with Union to come up with fair compensation for us providing them services for 15 years without their paying a share of the cost. Lisa reiterated that paying for full-time staff for the ambulance is not equitable for the town because it has made us become the backbone of the PSA and she thinks we are being taken advantage of. Stef questioned why we need to pay for 24-hour staff when larger neighboring towns do not. Alex replied we don't have enough volunteers not to. If we no longer did overnights we would have to rely on a town that had a volunteer service or were farther away and it would cause delays and be detrimental to the level of service Willington is currently getting.

Jennie Arpin from Human Services stated she revised their budget, switching the ARPA funds received to restore summer camp from an expenditure to a revenue line item, which lowered her request. The new budget request is \$113,454, a 28.3% increase from last year. The majority of the budget increase was due to the cost of summer camp and the new Senior Center Coordinator position. Last year, ARPA paid for summer camp in its entirety. Each subsequent year will be funded by ARPA less until it is fully funded by the operating budget after 3 years.

Alan Humphrey, Parks and Rec director, said he did three major revisions to their budget, the first being the same situation with summer camp that Human Services explained, the second is lowering the electricity cost for the new lights on River Road Park that are going in, and, third, reducing the fundraising expense. Their budget request is now \$94,672, 1.9% less than last year. Stef questioned the amount in the fund balance, asking if he knew how much of the Lion's Club grant they were planning on using to purchase a scoreboard. Alan replied he thought the new scoreboard would cost \$5k to purchase, but he didn't have an exact installation quote yet. Stef and Alan discussed the programs that are yet to show any expenditures. Christina asked Alan to explain why there is such an increase to the landscaping request. He and Erika explained the potential new landscaping contract. Christina and Alan

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discussed how Parks and Rec is planning to use their fund balance. Joe asked what stage in the project process Alan was in. He answered he is in the beginning stages.

The board revisited the conversation about the treasurer's pay. Pete said he thinks it should be adjusted to reflect the actual amount of time it takes to perform the duties of the job, which they didn't previously know, it was just a guess after a financial arm reorganization. Joe questioned setting an elected official's pay based on one individual's records, suggesting there could be other factors, such as time management on the job. Geoff reminded everyone why the position roles changed in order to tighten up the town's financial procedures. Christina agreed that it should be adjusted and to think of it more as a stipend because it is not a full-time position.

The board asked Erika to answer a few questions about the Selectmen's budget. She explained the setup of the building inspector contract. Stef brought up the contracted service with Tyche Planning, which Erika also explained. Jim M. stated Tyche is contracted at \$18k as a consultant for the Economic Development Commission and he has noticed the EDC hasn't been meeting in recent months, so wondered if it is worth it to have that contract. Jim also questioned the consulting contract with Tyche for the planning and zoning commission and stated it might be beneficial to the town to rethink that contract and perhaps replace it with a part-time shared person, similar to the shared building official position.

CORRESPONDENCE:

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Alex Moore offered to respond to further questions or budget requests via email.

GOOD AND WELFARE:

Peter moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:43 pm.

Stef seconded this motion

All in favor

Motion passed

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Sperry

Samantha Sperry

Recording Secretary

RECEIVED
WILLINGTON, CT.
2023 MAY 18 P 3:20
[Signature]
TOWN CLERK