

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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## BOARD OF FINANCE

Regular Meeting  
Hybrid — In Person and Online

May 18, 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	In person	In person	In person	In person	Via Zoom	Absent

**Also Present:**

Phil Stevens, Superintendent – In person  
Alex Moore, Willington Fire Dept. No. 1, Chief – In person  
Donna Latincsics, Business Manager – In person  
Kathy Demers, Conservation Commission – In person  
Erika Wiecenski, First Seletwoman – Via Zoom  
Janice Clausen, Revenue Tax Collector – Via Zoom  
Mike D’Amato, Land Use Agent – Via Zoom  
Christine Psathas, Democratic Registrar of Voters – Via Zoom  
Members of the Public

Chair Stephanie Summers called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**SEATING OF ALTERNATES:**

None needed

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Pete moved to approve the minutes from March 9, 2023, as written  
Christina seconded  
Motion passed 5-0, 1 abstention (Prusak)

Pete moved to approve the minutes from March 16, 2023, as written

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**Christina seconded**

**Motion passed 5-0, 1 abstention (Prusak)**

**PRESENT TO SPEAK:**

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road, wondered if the money that was appropriated to the SBC could be requested back by the BOF since it was given for the use of a new school and he believes they no longer need it.

**CHAIR'S REPORT:**

Stef wanted to clarify that the \$1 million is earmarked for use on behalf of schools' facilities, it doesn't specify it is going to the SBC or a new school. Peter broke in to clarify that he believed Nick Tella was talking about the last \$100k that was given specifically to the SBC, not the \$1 million set aside by the BOF in the first year of the CIP Plan.

Stef said the budget is operating in our favor. We won't have to tap the fund balance any further, and it will remain at a healthy 11.2% of the operating budget. She stated we will need to spend some money on our facilities, so she doesn't think we should artificially lower the mil rate in anticipation of the future.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**1) Budget Status — Financial Report: April 2023**

Donna stated that on the revenue side there are four categories that have exceeded their budget. On the expenditure side there is one area, Unemployment, that is overspent by \$130. Many departments will be underspent; she forecasts we will be over by \$600k on the revenue side. The ending fund balance forecast is \$3.2 million, which would be 16.1% of the operating budget. The BOF goal has been to keep that margin between 8 to 12%. Stef and Donna discussed that, if a line item is overspent, it usually gets absorbed by underspending in other parts of the budget.

**2) Updates from BOF representatives:**

**a. ARPA: Christina Mailhos**

Christina said they have been canceling meetings as they wait for projects to close so they can get some unspent money back and appropriate it for new things. The next meeting is scheduled for June 7. Stef and Christina discussed the process for reviewing the appropriated funds from ARPA, including the businesses and non-profits that received grants. Erika suggested inviting the EDC to discuss how the grants were spent.

**b. School Building Committee: Jim Marshall**

Jim said their past two meetings have been canceled, pending further direction from the Board of Education. At the last meeting they closed out some of the subcommittees and they wrote a letter to the BOE requesting direction on how to move forward after the referendum. The next meeting is scheduled for May 24. Jim stated there still were some outstanding expenditures; he thinks their last balance of unspent funds was around \$52k. Pete asked Jim M. if the SBC is an advisory committee of the Selectmen or of the BOE. Jim answered they are advisory to the BOE and were formed by the BOS. Pete then questioned the status of the funds allotted to the SBC if the finance subcommittee had been dissolved by the SBC, as Jim reported. Jim said he would follow up.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1) Set FY24 Mil Rate**

**Stef moved to set the mil rate for Fiscal Year 2023-24 at 32.16 mils, which is an increase of 0.89 of a mil over the FY23 mil rate of 31.27 mils.**

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**Pete seconded**

**Christina said she liked the adjustment.**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

**Stef moved to appropriate \$1 million from the anticipated 2023 General Fund balance to the approved 2024 general budget**

**Jim seconded**

**Christina clarified this is a separate \$1 million from the \$1 million set aside for the school projects.**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

## **2) CES & HMS sidewalk repairs**

Superintendent Phil Stevens stated these are funded in the CIP plan in an account that requires the decision to spend to go to a town meeting. The expenditure was already approved by the BOE. The projects are under budgeted amounts by about \$7,000 and have to be approved as two separate projects, he said. A local contractor will do the work.

**Stef moved to recommend the BOS call a town meeting to appropriate up to \$11,250 from the Capital Reserve Fund for the Center School sidewalk repairs/replacement project.**

**Jim seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

**Stef moved to recommend that the BOS call a town meeting to appropriate up to \$34,850 from the Capital Reserve Fund for the Hall Memorial School sidewalk repairs/replacement project**

**Pete seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

## **3) Associated costs to consider 7-acre Burma Road property to expand Fenton-Ruby Park:**

Kathy Demers, Conservation commissioner, shared a map of the Fenton-Ruby Park highlighting the property of interest. She explained there is a deteriorating camp on the property that would need to be removed, and also a well that would need to be filled for safety reasons. There is a small amount of garbage believed to be dumped there, but nothing hazardous. The property is mostly forested and has a small pond. There are a few associated costs to consider, including \$350 for a dam inspection Kathy said would be paid for that from their FY23 budget. Cost proposals for market value appraisals have come back between \$1,700 and \$2,000. If we were to move forward, legal expenses are estimated at \$4,000. Public Works Director Troy Sposato anticipated it would cost \$4,650 to fill the well, remove the camp, rent a dumpster, and put down some processed gravel on the road. If there are tires on the property, it would cost \$5 a tire to dispose of them. This would not include the cost of paying the workers for the labor. Conservation is not planning on applying for a grant for this property because it would not rate well on the grant approval scale, Kathy said. The Open Space Fund has \$71,000. A benefit of adding this parcel would be that the town would have control over the unmaintained roads that border Fenton-Ruby Park, Kathy explained. Anyone who owns the property in the future would have right-of-way to those roads.

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Pete asked if Kathy had a bottom-line number for the overall cost. The figure was computed to be about \$33k.

**Stef moved to recommend that the BOS call a town meeting to appropriate up to \$2,000 from the Open Space Fund to the Fenton-Ruby Park addition for a market proposal of a 7-acre parcel on Burma Road.**

**Geoff seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

#### 4) Property Tax Suspense List

Janice Clauson, Revenue Tax Collector, stated this year we are looking at a total of \$16,599.53 to be suspended from the Grand List, which is mostly motor vehicle and personal property, particularly businesses that have dissolved. She reached out to the Admissions Office at UConn to see if they inform the international students that they must pay local car taxes. The default number is \$8,000 less than last year, so there have been some improvements, Janice reported.

**Stef moved to accept the Suspense List for FY23 and authorize the BOF Chairman to sign the list**

**Peter seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

#### 5) Status and possible action on Willington Fire Department No. 1 mold issue and costs:

Chief Alex Moore shared a presentation with the BOF explaining the timeline of the mold issue. (54:10 minutes into the YouTube video). The issue began with a foul odor in Jan/Feb 2023, leading to an air quality test in March and a visual confirmation of the presence of mold. They moved fire apparatuses and personnel to the South Station located south on River Road and have been able to maintain the services they provide. The building affected is a pre-fab from 1981 with multiple improvements. On May 2 they received a letter of denial from the insurance company due to the source of mold coming from groundwater, which is not covered. Jim questioned the square footage math provided by Service Master's quote, saying he can't get the numbers to make sense and wants to ensure they are correct and the scope is understood by all involved. Alex said he would follow up on that. Jim questioned whether it was worth it to spend so much money on a 40-year-old, pre-fab building, especially when there is a firehouse expansion request before CIP. Christina questioned the non-profit status of the fire department. Alex replied everything is in the hands of their accountant, who is going to file with the IRS. Stef questioned if an attorney should get involved because it has been a 10- to 13-year-old problem. Stef requested a status update from the accountant, including expectations of when the tax status matter would be resolved.

**Peter moved to transfer up to \$37,000 from 0831-Employee Insurances to 0503 — Capital Projects WFD1 Mold Remediation to begin the mold removal process at Willington Fire Department No. 1.**

**Geoff seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

#### 6) Property Records Scanning Project to replace mold-contaminated documents:

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Mike D'Amato, land use agent, reminded everyone that the records have been stored in the Town Office Building basement, which until recently, was a dirt floor. When the records were brought back from having been stored offsite for a while, they were not organized, were put in boxes and dropped into the basement. Water leaks, dirt floors and no air circulation led to degradation of the files. The total project would cost around \$82k, reduced through department savings and the already approved \$5,000 to bring the request to \$66k. Half of the project would be able to be completed by the deadline of the fiscal year, bringing the request down to approximately \$33k before removing savings in the first year.

**Stef moved to transfer up to \$25,500 for the first half of property records retrieval, cataloguing and scanning into a digital database.**

**5,000 from 0831 Employee Insurances**

**15,000 from 0134 Assessor (Assessor Salary)**

**5,500 from 0137 Revenue Collector (Rev Collector Assistant)**

**25,500 to 0503 Capital Projects — document scanning.**

**Pete seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passes (6-0)**

7) Transfers of unspent funds

**Stef moved to transfer \$130 from 0811 — Social Security to 0821 — Unemployment**

**Pete seconded**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

**Stef moved to transfer \$60k from 0930 — Capital Expenditures Project Village Hill Drainage Phase 2 to 0503 — Capital Projects Village Hill Drainage Phase 2**

**Pete seconded**

**This is to continue the effort of replacing catch basins on Village Hill Road**

**All in favor**

**Motion passed (6-0)**

Christine Psathas, Democratic registrar of voters, and Stef spoke about the potential ramifications for new early voting laws. The bill has not yet passed. The first event that may be affected would be the April 2024 Presidential Primary election. We currently have \$15k in BOF contingency for the additional costs of early voting. Pete asked if this would affect referendums or municipal elections. Christine said no.

Christina Mailhos asked when the joint BOS, BOE, SBC meeting was being held. Jim answered May 24. Christina said we should all try to attend because it is important.

## **CORRESPONDENCE:**

- 1) **Property Tax Suspense Letter and Report**
- 2) **Registrars Early Voting update and cost estimates**
- 3) **Registrars School Referendum data report**
- 4) **Superintendent request for appropriation on CES & HMS sidewalk repairs/replacement**
- 5) **Conservation Commission request for preliminary funds for Burma Road parcel consideration**
- 6) **WFD1 update on mold remediation issue and costs**
- 7) **Land Use cost update for Property Records Scanning Project**

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**PRESENT TO SPEAK:**

None

**GOOD AND WELFARE:**

Stef thanked everyone for their hard work.

Geoff moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:14 pm.

Pete seconded

All in favor

Motion passed (6-0)

Respectfully submitted,  
Samantha Sperry

*Samantha Sperry*

Recording Secretary

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WILLINGTON, CT.  
2023 JUN 14 A 9:37

*[Signature]*  
TOWN CLERK