

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

Regular Meeting
Hybrid — In Person and Online

September 21, 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 Summers Chair	Geoffrey Prusak Vice Chairman	Christina Mailhos	Joseph Sherrell	Peter Tanaka Secretary	James Marshall	Jim Gilligan (ALT)	Elisabeth Woolf (ALT)
In Person	In person	Via Zoom	In Person	In person	In Person	Absent	Absent

Also Present:

Alex Moore, Willington Fire Dept. No. 1, Chief – In person
David Woodworth, Willington Fire Department No. 1, Assistant Chief – In person
Donna Latincsics, Business Manager – In person
Erika Wiecewski, First Selectwoman – In person
Michelle Cunningham, Chairman, Board of Education – In person
Stuart Fisher, candidate for First Selectman – In person

Chair Stephanie Summers called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

SEATING OF ALTERNATES:

No alternates need to be seated.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Peter Tanaka moved to accept the June 15, 2023, minutes as written.
Seconded by Vice Chairman Prusak.
Motion passed (6-0).

Peter Tanaka moved to accept the August 17, 2023, minutes as written.
Seconded by Vice Chairman Prusak.
Motion passed (5-0-1 Joe Sherrell abstain).

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PRESENT TO SPEAK:

No one was present to speak.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Chair Stephanie Summers stated that they are still in dire need of a recording secretary as it is going to get busier as they get into budget season. She is again asking if anyone knows someone who might be interested in Town Government that is good at paraphrasing, getting things accurately and following the course for doing competent minutes, please let them know the BOF is hiring. She stated that one person may be able to fill a couple of roles as CIP is also looking for a recording secretary. Stef stated that there was some talk about looking into a stenographer, however, she feels that the meetings are long enough that a transcription would be unwieldy to read and raw-form minutes would be confusing because of shorthand and acronyms the board uses in discussion. She believes it is better to have someone who can sift through what is said and paraphrase where needed and accurately record the motions, votes, etc.

Stef stated that board member Peter Tanaka, who is the Emergency Services Efficiency Committee chair, attended the last BOS meeting and made comments about asking the Town of Tolland to revisit its scheduling regarding emergency responders as they don't schedule them on nights and weekends. Thus, WFD1's ambulance ended up covering all of those calls as Mutual Aid assistance, which overwhelmed our staff on Labor Day weekend. She said she appreciated his highlighting a concern she and others on the board raised in the last budget season about lopsided Mutual Aid relationships with larger surrounding towns that do not staff 24/7 as Wellington does. Peter said that the request came from the two fire chiefs in town. Chief Alex Moore stated that he did speak with the fire chief in Tolland, and Tolland is working on some ideas to put in place to help with that problem. First Selectwoman Erika Wiczenski is going to follow up with the Tolland town manager as well. Alex stated that Tolland has staffing problems just like many other towns.

Peter asked if a job description for the recording secretary has been handed out. Stef stated it had, but it needs to be updated to reflect the busyness in the budget months with weekly meetings. Stef will look into refreshing it and putting it on the home page of the town website again.

OLD BUSINESS:

1) Budget Status — Financial Report August FY23-24 – Donna Latincsics, Business Manager

Donna Latincsics stated that they budgeted for \$50,000 investment income for the year and in two months they have collected almost \$48,760. There are no expenditure concerns at this time.

2) Updates From BOF Representatives

- a. CIP – Christina Mailhos, chair (nothing reported)
- b. ARPA Projects – Christina Mailhos, chair

Christina Mailhos stated that they met on Monday to discuss all the items and to get caught up and recap where they are. Since that meeting, Donna Latincsics sent Christina a list of all the different projects and each project's status. They meet again on Oct. 2, 2023, and at that meeting they may be able to approve one or both projects on the list that were waiting for funds to be available. She stated that they will probably have to dip into the contingency fund for one or both projects. They should be able to close quite a few projects that are completed. They are in a wait-and-see phase, but they could be in a position where they are asking for more submissions at some point. The funds must be encumbered by Dec. 31, 2024, and spent by Dec. 31, 2026.

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c. SBC – Jim Marshall, member

Jim Marshall stated that the SBC met last night, and the bulk of the meeting was preparing the final report documenting the PreK-8 school projects and results and recommendations to the BOS and the Town. It was a very productive meeting, discussing some of the finer points of their conditions and they are probably very close to a final version of their report. The expectation is to share a final draft for last edits in preparation to vote Oct. 18 on submitting a final report to the BOS. He said they have about \$50,000 to be returned to town coffers and will have their financial report at their next meeting. Jim stated that the Collier consulting report is just about finalized and that will be included as an attachment to the SBC report.

Stef asked if the BOE had anything to add to Jim's report. BOE Chair Michelle Cunningham, who was in the audience, stated that the BOE's next step is to assess the current conditions of the buildings in great detail to be ready for their next board meeting on Oct. 10. There is a chance that they will move ahead with some revisions of the contract, they may put it back out to bid. They have a lot of options.

NEW BUSINESS:

1) **Region 19 Teacher Contract Negotiations, Request for BOF Representative**

Stef stated that Region 19 is opening negotiations for teacher contracts and they are looking for a representative from the Town to attend the meetings. The first meeting is Oct. 2. A discussion was had on sending a representative and the upcoming election with then new members possibly being on the board. First Selectwoman Wiczenski pointed out that the person who goes to the upcoming meeting doesn't have to be the representative for all the meetings.

Peter Tanaka moved to send Jim Marshall as the representative.

Seconded by Joe Sherrell.

Motion passed (6-0).

A short discussion was had on timing of the Willington teachers and the WFD1 employee contracts.

2) **WFD1 issues**

a. **Hurst Emergency Rescue Equipment Purchase (in CIP Plan)**

Chief Alex Moore stated that there is \$60,000 in the CIP plan this year to replace their Hurst rescue equipment on their rescue pumper. It will be compatible with Willington Hill Fire Department equipment, the current equipment at WFD1 is old, and they can no longer get it repaired. Alex explained how they will need to take out the old equipment and fit the new equipment to the pumper rescue. Further discussion with a question-and-answer time was had on this item.

Chair Stephanie Summers moved to recommend that the BOS call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$60,000 from the Capitol Reserve Fund to account number 04-4048 WFD1 Hurst extrication equipment on SQ-113, for the purpose of replacing out-of-date Hurst equipment with state-of-the-art rescue tools compatible with WHFD.

Seconded by Peter Tanaka.

Motion passed (6-0).

b. **Proposal to Use Remaining Mold Remediation Funds to Winterize Station 13**

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Alex restated the mold remediation was completed and they were under budget. He stated that, as winter is approaching, they will need to put up temporary insulation as there are trucks stationed there. He stated that they have two quotes, the first quote is for \$1,000 to get the water turned back on and get the heat back on in the building, and the other quote is to put up temporary foam board insulation on the back and side outer walls, which is \$8,250. Alex said they are requesting to use the balance of the remediation money, which is \$8,104.77, towards both projects and the remaining money would come from their budget. Alex explained how the foam board insulation would be installed and where it would go. There was further discussion on the money aspect of the project, the foam board insulation, whether the vehicles could be stored at other garages (DOT, area fire departments, etc.).

Alex gave an update on the outside pipe where the water flows from and to, at Station 13.

Peter Tanaka moved to transfer \$8,104.77 from 03-3090 Mold Remediation to 03-3091 Winterize WFD1 Station 13.

Seconded by Vice Chairman Prusak.

Discussion was had on the motion and the bid for the insulation, and First Selectwoman Wicewski explained that they are not voting on the bid for the insulation or any vendors, but for the BOF to have a process to receive bids for the project. It was clarified that they are not saying yes to the \$8,250 bid but yes to the next step in getting the project done. Stef asked when they would like to have the project completed and Alex stated that they would like it completed by the end of October and that is why they are here now.

Motion passed (6-0).

c. Proposal to House EMT Overnight Staff Person During Station 13 Closure

Alex stated that at the BOS meeting it was discussed that WFD1 is not supposed to have any EMT overnight staff people sleeping in the kitchen at Station 213 on South River Road, which is happening now as they have nowhere else for the second person to sleep (two staff people can't sleep in the same room). They can't keep doing that for safety reasons and both the fire marshal and building official have stated that they need to get that second person out of the kitchen at night. They have looked into options for housing the second person, including renting an apartment at Depot Road (\$1,500 a month and not available) or a two-bedroom house on River Road (\$2,000 per month). The best solution they have come up with is either renting or buying an RV to be placed at Station 13. One overnight staff person would stay at Station 213 and one staff person would be in the RV outside Station 13. During the day they would both be at Station 213. He stated that they are out of options, and this would put one person back at Station 13 at night for that side of the town. They have looked into every option they can think of, including renovating Station 213 to accommodate another room (too expensive on top of the Station 13 expenses) and this is the best solution they can come up with. Other options were discussed including WHFD (no place for them other than their community hall and they would then have to close the hall to the public), the Fish and Game Club, etc. First Selectwoman Wicewski stated that with money many of these other opportunities could be explored, but they need the funding to know that they can go out and look at the other options. Stef asked Donna Latincsics if WFD1 had anything within their budget that would be appropriate to use short term until they could come back with a proposal with a specific dollar need. Donna stated that there was no money available in their budget without prior approval to use their budgeted funds. Further discussion was had on the money they are requesting. Peter said that there should be an amount associated with the request and suggested \$20,000 (the maximum amount the Board of Finance can allot

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without prompting a call to town meeting). Alex stated he would like to see \$20,000 and if they could purchase a camper for less than that, it would be good. WFD1 Assistant Chief David Woodworth stated that something must be done, that it is mandatory per the fire marshal. They need housing and need to get through the winter. He stated that they can always come back to the board if they need to extend this. He stated that they can't have a male and female employee sleeping in the same room. He stated that the \$20,000 isn't open-ended, they are looking for a six-month solution. He stated that at least with an RV it's one expense (not monthly rent on an apartment) and would be owned by the town, later used again or sold. He stated that, before something more permanent is built at that end of town, they need to get through the winter. First Selectwoman Wicewski asked Donna Latincsics where the \$20,000 figure came from, that it wasn't just an arbitrary number that was chosen. Donna Latincsics explained that, per statute, \$20,000 is the maximum amount that the BOF can appropriate additionally to the budget from the Fund Balance without going to a Town Meeting for approval. Stef asked if, considering that the ambulance is relied on by surrounding towns as well as our town, does it make sense to look at what the overnight staffing is, and can they even do an overnight shift right now when things are up in the air with the other station. Alex stated that they have talked about how they are called out to surrounding towns, going down to one staff person at night and relying on volunteers to come in. He stated that having a volunteer come in may work for a couple of weeks, but after that it isn't going to happen. He stated that Willington will then become the problem with not being able to get the ambulance out with just one staff member, instead of being the solution for the surrounding towns to provide them with an ambulance (Tolland, Stafford, Union, etc.). Alex stated that is what the towns around us are facing, only having one staff member, and both staff members have to be certified, i.e. the person with the patient as an EMT and the driver as an EMR. A discussion was had on using buildings on WHFD's property to house a staff member. A discussion was had on using \$8,000-\$10,000 to renovate temporary sleeping quarters at Station 13.

Peter Tanaka moved to appropriate \$20,000 to the General Fund to Station 13 to remediate sleeping issues with the ambulance crew.

Seconded by Vice Chairman Prusak.

Discussion was had on this motion with some discussion pertaining to the prepared motion for this meeting, and Peter withdrew his motion and Vice Chairman Prusak withdrew his second.

Peter Tanaka moved to fund additional appropriation from the General Fund Balance to the WFD1 budget for temporary housing for ambulance paid personnel \$20,000 from General Fund balance 004 transfer out WFD1.

Vice Chairman Prusak seconded the motion.

Motion failed (2 Yes Tanaka & Prusak, 4 No Marshall, Sherrell, Mailhos & Summers).

Jim Marshall stated that the BOF supports WFD1's ongoing needs, but a lot of this always feels it is the cart before the horse and the immediate plan needs to come first whatever happens with the stations long term. For the long term, he stated, the Efficiency Committee and the departments need to get together and say this is the proposal to the town. There was discomfort on the board about authorizing a large sum without any details of a plan. Alex understands where the BOF is coming from but reiterated that they need to move that person out of the kitchen as soon as possible, as requested by the fire marshal and building inspector. Stef asked if they had that in writing, they do not. She asked if there is another motion on this subject given the discussion that was heard. Further discussion was had on what they would do, talking to WHFD again, using their budget to pay to solve this problem and then having to come

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back to the BOF for more money because they used their budget for this, procedure in calling a special meeting, etc.

Alex asked what the BOF would like to see presented at a meeting to come to a reasonable decision. Stef stated that she would like to see a plan that has a specific price tag on it, preferably two or three options with varying estimates and why. She also suggested, since they are characterizing it as an emergency situation, considering a solution as if they had to do it this weekend and consult with WHFD and others to see if they could offer help. Jim Marshall stated that they need the understanding of what WFD1 needs and to come back with those options and why. Christina Mailhos added that she would like to see the fire marshal and building official weigh in on whatever their plan is and OK it and possibly hear from some of the employees who will be living with the situation.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Michelle Cunningham, 41 Liska Road, thanked the BOF for it is difficult to make decisions like this and they are all volunteers and don't get paid for this work. It is important for the community to know that the people who serve on these town committees are doing this out of their service and commitment to the town, as do everyone on the different boards, and it is especially hard when you must make decisions like tonight. Some decisions are easy, and others are tough, and she really appreciates the fact that they are doing their due diligence and asking for planning, and she thinks that their willingness to work quickly when there is a plan in place shows that their hearts are in the right place but that they are also being accountable to all of the voters, that they are being watchdogs for the town.

Stuart Fisher, 65 Balazs Road, stated he is the Democratic candidate for First Selectman, and he hasn't met all of the board but has introduced himself to some of them. He stated that his observations tonight show how difficult these deliberations must be, and the town is coming off a very emotional school vote where it was overwhelmingly rejected to build a school. Now the buildings and facilities are going to have to be reassessed and they are coming up with plans to do that. He would hate to sit in this meeting six months from now and look at a mold-ridden facility because they haven't fixed the main problem there. He is stressing that because he isn't hearing solutions. He stated that they do need a short-term solution, but he does appreciate the board's offer to come together in a 24-hour notice to respond to a specific plan. He stated that approving money without a plan is a problem tonight and he agrees with what the board did.

Christina Mailhos stated that she was remembering something about how the town has a construction trailer up at the bus lot and how it wasn't that expensive 10 or 15 years ago when it was purchased but it isn't connected to water. She did look up construction trailers and they do come with showers, and they come with a way that you can connect into the sewer on the property, so that might be a better alternative than an RV, which could not be connected as easily. Alex asked Christina to send him the link for the construction trailer.

GOOD AND WELFARE:

Stef thanked WFD1 for being in this process and hopes they know that the board does appreciate what the fire departments do. She stated this debate was a difficult one.

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ADJOURNMENT:

Peter Tanaka moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm.
Seconded by Vice Chairman Prusak.
Motion passed (6-0).

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Smith

Eileen Smith
Recording Secretary

RECEIVED
WILLINGTON, CT.
2023 OCT 17 PM 3:10

TOWN CLERK