

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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40 Old Farms Road  
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## BOARD OF FINANCE

Regular Meeting  
Hybrid — In Person and Online

December 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 <b>Chair</b>	Geoffrey Prusak <b>Vice Chair</b>	Bruce Lawler	Christina Mailhos	Walter Parsell	Jason Ross	Britt Rothauser (ALT)	Vacant (ALT)
In person	In person	In person	In person	Via Zoom	In person	Via Zoom	

Donna Latincsics, Business Manager – In person  
Peter Tanaka, 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman – In person  
Superintendent Phil Stevens – In person  
Fire Chief Alex Moore – via Zoom  
Residents in person and via Zoom

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Stephanie Summers called the meeting to order at 7:02PM.

**SEATING OF ALTERNATES:** none

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Christina Mailhos motioned to accept the November 16, 2023 Special Meeting minutes.

Stephanie Summers seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken:

In favor: Prusak, Mailhos, Lawler, Parsell, Ross, Summers

Opposed: none

Abstentions: none

Motion passed. (6-0-0)

Geoffrey Prusak motioned to accept the November 16, 2023 Regular Meeting minutes.

Jason Ross seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken:

In favor: Lawler, Parsell, Prusak, Ross, Mailhos, Summers

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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**Opposed: none**

**Abstentions: none**

**Motion passed. (6-0-0)**

## **PRESENT TO SPEAK:**

Pete Latincsics, 97 Trask Road, noted that he is coming before the Board as the Chairman of the Republican Town Committee and would read a letter submitted to the Town Clerk, the Board, and the Chair.

*Ms. Summers requested that he do so under agenda item New Business, 1.*

Mike Makuch, former Chair of the School Building Committee (defunct) and resident of Clover Spring Drive, commented that he conveyed to the Chair the final report of the School Building Committee and is available for any questions during tonight's meeting. He noted that the remaining funds (approximately \$67K) earmarked for School Committee work are now released back to the town since they were not expended. The Efficiency Committee brought forward a unanimous vote to earmark approximately \$30K for a fire station location study with the pending request to expand or replace facilities. Mr. Makuch would like the Board of Finance to consider either adding an agenda item or, at a later date, keeping some of the \$67K available to fund the location study (approximately \$30K). He noted that Mr. Tanaka is also in attendance, and he may speak to this as Chair of the Efficiency Committee as well.

Pete Tanaka, 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman and resident of 125 Mason Road, commented as Chair of the Emergency Services Efficiency Committee, that the topic noted by Mr. Makuch will be taken up by the Board of Selectmen as soon as he can get it on the agenda. He believes they may be moving forward and asked that the Board of Finance earmark some of the funds. It would be tremendous.

## **CHAIR'S REPORT**

Ms. Summers commented that as they close the calendar year and get acquainted with a new board, they are poised at the cusp of what promises to be a rigorous budgeting process for Fiscal Year 2024-25. For the budget they are midway through now, several factors were in their favor including an overall schools budget with under 1% growth year over year, a lesser number of students with special education needs requiring six-figure outlays, a large fund balance, and climbing town revenues due to building fee activity and higher interest rates on investments. The year before them is unlikely to show these factors continuing in their favor. Additionally, after the failed referendum to pursue a preK-8 consolidated new school, the town is facing millions in repairs with roof and HVAC renovations at the top of the list for both its 75-year-old grade school and 100-year-old middle school. Further, this is in the context of aging infrastructure throughout town facilities including emergency services and the Town Offices. Ms. Summers commented that they will need to come together to do their best work on the Board to review, filter, and act on the best paths forward. The issues are not solvable in 1 budget season, but they can build on what has already been started such as the "Shock Absorber" money in Capital Improvements, similar to the way households set money aside in savings, to prepare for upcoming major expenses including the likely potential bonding. They need to start by updating their budget guidance to the town's budget writers and serve as a resource for them to plan wisely. Ms. Summers thanked everyone for their willingness to take part and do the heavy lifting.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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## Chair

Nominations were opened.

Geoffrey Prusak nominated Bruce Lawler for Chair.

Discussion: Mr. Prusak noted that they discussed this and Mr. Lawler is willing and capable of taking on the position. Mr. Prusak noted that he is willing to help out in any way possible in terms of providing a historical frame of reference.

Walter Parsell seconded the nomination.

Christina Mailhos nominated Stephanie Summers for Chair.

Discussion: Ms. Mailhos noted that she believes Ms. Summers has done a great job and has brought the Board to a level of organization that they have not seen in a long time. She ensures they follow the rules.

Jason Ross seconded the nomination.

There were no additional nominations.

## ***Vote:***

<b><i>Member</i></b>	<b><i>Vote</i></b>
<b><i>Ross</i></b>	<b><i>Summers</i></b>
<b><i>Mailhos</i></b>	<b><i>Summers</i></b>
<b><i>Prusak</i></b>	<b><i>Lawler</i></b>
<b><i>Parsell</i></b>	<b><i>Lawler</i></b>
<b><i>Lawler</i></b>	<b><i>Lawler</i></b>
<b><i>Summers</i></b>	<b><i>Summers</i></b>

## ***Result: 3-3***

Ms. Summers asked if a discussion or another vote should be taken.

A brief discussion regarding qualifications took place.

Ms. Mailhos commented that Ms. Summers has been on the Board for years and in the position of Chair for almost a year. She is very qualified, and this is all Ms. Mailhos needs to know.

Ms. Summers offered the option of taking another vote.

It was noted that in the event of a tie, based on statute, it goes to the Board of Selectmen for a decision within 30 days.

Ms. Summers suggested a negotiation in order to move forward with a collaborative Board when there is a serious budget season ahead of them. Ms. Summers offered to stepped back as Chair and requested that she be able to serve as Vice Chair. She asked if this would be a palatable solution.

Mr. Lawler was not in agreement.

Ms. Mailhos commented that they have not seen him at a meeting. Mr. Lawler responded that he was in attendance 2 months ago. She confirmed that he has not been through a budget season and asked if he has ever chaired a board in the past. Mr. Lawler responded that he has on a business board. Ms.



# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Mailhos commented that there is a lot to know, and it takes time for people to understand the process and deadlines. She believes it would be difficult to jump into the position without any background. Mr. Lawler responded that he believes he will have plenty of support to assist him in getting started. Everyone starts somewhere.

Another vote was taken.

**Vote:**

Member	Vote
Lawler	Lawler
Prusak	Lawler
Mailhos	Summers
Parsell	Lawler
Ross	Lawler
Summers	Summers

**Result: 4-2**

**Bruce Lawler was seated as Chair.**

Mr. Lawler deferred to Ms. Summers and she continued to run tonight's meeting.

## Vice Chair

Nominations were opened.

Walter Parsell nominated Geoffrey Prusak for the position of Vice Chair.

Bruce Lawler seconded the nomination.

Christina Mailhos nominated Stephanie Summers for the position of Vice Chair.

Jason Ross seconded the nomination.

There were no additional nominations.

**Vote:**

Member	Vote
Ross	Summers
Prusak	Prusak
Lawler	Prusak
Parsell	Prusak
Mailhos	Summers
Summers	Summers

**Result: 3-3**

**The decision will go to the Board of Selectmen.**

## Secretary

Nominations were opened.

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Stephanie Summers nominated Christina Mailhos for the position of Secretary. Geoffrey Prusak seconded the nomination.

There were no additional nominations.

## Vote:

Member	Vote
Parsell	Mailhos
Lawler	Mailhos
Mailhos	abstention
Ross	Mailhos
Summers	Mailhos
Prusak	Mailhos

Result: 5-0-1

Christina Mailhos was seated as Secretary.

Ms. Summers congratulated everyone who has a clear future.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Nomination of BOF alternate, Republican Town Committee Chair Peter Latincsics**

Mr. Latincsics, 97 Trask Road, read the letter that was sent to the Town Clerk and the Board with the Willington Republican Town Committee's nomination of Melissa Miller for the position of Alternate on the Board of Finance. He appreciates the Board's consideration.

Ms. Miller, 55 Milhaliak Road, was in attendance and provided information about her background and interest in the position.

She has been a resident of Willington since 2002 and a resident of CT for almost her entire life. Ms. Miller has worked for the State of Connecticut for 28 years and for the last year has been a Paralegal Specialist in the Department of Public Safety in the Attorney General's office. Ms. Miller has been involved with the Town of Willington and worked with social services during COVID even when she was still working for the state. Further, she has been actively involved in charity work including volunteering for the past 4 years as a sexual assault counselor. In terms of finance, she has worked as a head bookkeeper and in the cash office for Shoprite Supermarkets. Ms. Miller has spent a lot of time involved with town meetings and was discouraged to hear about the condition of the town's buildings. She would like to step up and assist in making progress.

Ms. Summers noted that Ms. Miller has been active in speaking out on town issues over the years and this speaks well for someone interested in public service to the town.

Stephanie Summers nominated Melissa Miller as the Republican Board of Finance Alternate. Geoffrey Prusak seconded the nomination.

Discussion: Mr. Parsell commented that Ms. Miller has done a fine job over the years speaking up about town issues and getting in front of the Planning & Zoning Commission.

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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**In favor: Parsell, Prusak, Mailhos, Ross, Lawler, Summers**

**Opposed: none**

**Abstentions: none**

**Motion passed. (6-0-0)**

**Melissa Miller was seated as the Republican Board of Finance Alternate.**

**2. Request to advance CES plumbing repairs budgeted in CIP, Supt. Phil Stevens**

Mr. Stevens explained that the Board of Education (BOE) has \$20K in the current CIP for plumbing in each school and is requesting the full \$20K. He noted that with the plumbing projects, it may turn out that they can only afford to address 2 of the projects if once started it is determined that a repair is more expensive than expected which happened previously at the Hall School. Mr. Stevens reviewed the 3 projects and presented them in order of their priority: 4 sinks, countertops, faucets and shutoffs if needed; a leak in the base of a toilet and possible damage to the floor; a drip (not septic) at the back of a wall-mounted toilet.

Ms. Mailhos asked if the \$3,500 noted would be enough to address the 2<sup>nd</sup> item listed. Mr. Stevens explained that it is an estimate based on what can be seen. If it is more than \$3,500, he will use funds from the operating budget. The \$20K request needs to go through the process due to the account that it is in. It needs to be presented to the BOE and once approved it then needs to be brought to the Board of Finance which will need to request that the Selectmen call a Town Meeting for approval so he can access the funds.

**Stephanie Summers motioned to request that the Board of Selectmen call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$20,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund to 04-4049 CES Plumbing Projects.**

**Walter Parsell seconded the motion.**

**Discussion: none**

**In favor: Lawler, Ross, Parsell, Mailhos, Prusak, Summers**

**Opposed: none**

**Abstentions: none**

**Motion passed. (6-0-0)**

**3. Revised motion to make use of NIPS fee revenue for Public Works used street sweeper purchase, Business Manager Donna Latincsics**

Ms. Summers reviewed the background information for this item.

One of the options for the revenue is to use it toward a street sweeper.

**Stephanie Summers motioned to move \$5,822 from the general fund balance to 0311.730 Public Works Equipment Purchase.**

**Geoffrey Prusak seconded the motion.**

**Discussion:** Mr. Tanaka commented that he learned of the fund when asked to file a report on how the money was spent. The funds may only be used toward a limited number of items, but one is a street sweeper. Having been on the Board of Finance, he knew they were purchasing one. This will allow the town to free up money in the fund balance so that it may be used toward something else and he may then properly file the report. The funding arrived in 3 payments over the past 18 months. Towns receive 2 payments annually.

**In favor: Prusak, Parsell, Ross, Lawler, Mailhos, Summers**



# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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**Opposed: none**

**Abstentions: none**

**Motion passed. (6-0-0)**

Stephanie Summers motioned to recommend that the Board of Selectmen call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$74,178 from Capital Reserve Fund to 04-4051 for a used 2012 ELGIN Street Sweeper from Chadwick-Barrow.

Geoffrey Prusak seconded the motion.

**Discussion: none**

**In favor: Prusak, Parsell, Ross, Mailhos, Lawler, Summers**

**Opposed: none**

**Abstentions: none**

**Motion passed. (6-0-0)**

4. **Motion to recommend Town Meeting to appropriate funds for 2024 Revaluation, Donna**  
Ms. Latincsics explained that the last revaluation was in 2018 and there was a 1-year extension. Willington is due for another revaluation in 2024. Funding was planned for in the CIP and \$30,000 was set aside in FY22-23 and \$32,700 was set aside in FY 23-24, for a total of \$62,700. It is not quite enough to cover the expense. The Assessor sent out an RFP and has chosen a vendor to recommend to the Board of Selectmen. The bid is for \$62,000 but additional funds will be needed for supplies and litigation if needed. Any funds that are not needed will not be expended. They anticipate the entire project will cost \$74,500.

Ms. Summers asked about litigation. Ms. Latincsics explained that this would happen if someone does not agree with the new revaluation assessment. Ms. Mailhos noted that this happens every time. Mr. Tanaka added that the Assessor, Ms. Fishman, did extensive research. Two proposals were received. The less expensive one, after review, was found to provide more for the town than the other. It was noted that the revaluation needs to be done.

Christina Mailhos motioned to recommend that the Board of Selectmen call a Town Meeting to appropriate \$74,500 from the Reserve Fund to account number 04-4025 for the 2024 Revaluation.

Stephanie Summers seconded the motion.

**Discussion:** Mr. Tanaka confirmed that the revaluation needs to be done. He added that he does not believe that vendor pricing will come down so a little more should be considered for the next time.

**In favor: Mailhos, Parsell, Lawler, Ross, Summers**

**Opposed: Prusak**

**Abstentions: none**

**Motion passed. (5-1-0)**

5. **Adopt FY2024-2025 budget season calendar and regular meetings calendar**

Ms. Summers reviewed the Willington Board of Finance 2024-2025 Budget Calendar. She noted that they work backwards from the referendum date of May 7<sup>th</sup> and coordinate with Region 19 since Willington is a member town.

Stephanie Summers motioned to accept the budget calendar for the FY2024-2025.

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Walter Parsell seconded the motion.

Stephanie Summers amended the motion to adopt the budget calendar for FY2024-2025.

Walter Parsell seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

In favor: Mailhos, Lawler, Ross, Parsell, Prusak, Summers

Opposed: none

Abstentions: none

Motion passed. (6-0-0)

Ms. Summers reviewed the Board of Finance Combined Meeting Schedule 2024.

Stephanie Summers motioned to adopt the regular meeting calendar for FY2024-2025.

Geoffrey Prusak seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

In favor: Parsell, Ross, Lawler, Prusak, Mailhos, Summers

Opposed: none

Abstentions: none

Motion passed. (6-0-0)

## 6. Welcome to new members

Ms. Summers noted that she e-mailed the members information on state statutes that guide boards of finance as well as a handbook from Sprague.

## OLD BUSINESS:

### 1. Budget Status – Donna

#### a. Financial Report: November FY23-24

Ms. Latincsics reviewed the November financial report.

She noted that there is nothing new to highlight. There are no concerns about expenditures at this time and revenue is the same. Investment income is favorable.

Ms. Summers noted that it is forecasted that interest rates will come down in 2024.

## CORRESPONDENCE:

### 1. Status on WFD1 Station 13 building condition, Alex Moore, Chief

Ms. Summers provided a summary. The Town's Building Official has said that he does not believe the building's shell is viable for putting the building back to rights. The department has been operating out of the south station on Route 32 and some of the vehicles are at Station 13. Ongoing issues include that male and female ambulance workers need separate sleeping quarters and facilities. The town purchased a trailer to address this issue at the south station but at the main station, now that the mold has been remediated, the infrastructure would need to be addressed. The Building Official noted that since the shell is not in good shape, it becomes a reset button on building code and will be much more expensive to put the offices and separate quarters back.

Fire Chief Alex Moore explained that they need to do the shell due to the holes in the insulation. Once they do the shell, it puts them over the 50% which will require them to bring the building to code.



# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Mr. Tanaka explained that there is a difference between repair and restoration. When one repairs a building, it does not have to come up to code. Changing the skin makes it a restoration. He explained that when the skin is changed, the frame will no longer support the infrastructure of new building code. There needs to be different insulation and a sprinkler system. The frame was not built for that weight. Further, they will need exits from the sleeping quarters to the outside which do not go through the bay so the exterior of the building will need to be redesigned, or they will lose space and trucks will not be able to be parked inside.

Ms. Summers asked what the change was from the plan to make it workable until they could address it as a long-term project. Mr. Tanaka explained that the change was going from repair to restoration. The building needs to be redesigned so it comes up to code. Initially, they did not believe the shell would need to be replaced. Chief Moore explained that after they learned about the mold, they found out that they needed to do the skin. It was not discussed previously.

Ms. Mailhos asked about the first step. Mr. Tanaka explained that they will need to hire an architect. Ms. Mailhos asked about the funds for the plans for the addition. Mr. Tanaka noted that they spent money on an architect to design an annex for the current building; however, the building will need to be changed. When adding an old building to a new one, there are architectural issues. With a new building, those issues are removed. There are also surveying issues – if the building is moved away from the hillside to address drainage, that aspect would be addressed but they need to talk to the state about an easement.

Chief Moore noted that the second round of funding from the Selectmen's CIP has not yet been used. They paused when they had the mold issue. About 3-4 years ago \$80K was used for the design. The second approved round has not yet been spent. Ms. Summers asked if any other money has been spent on the plans. Chief Moore noted that only the conceptual plans were done. Ms. Mailhos confirmed that it was approved in the CIP but it has not yet gone to a Town Meeting. They are working with Mike D'Amato and the attorney to learn if it changes the scope or if only a rewording of the RFP is needed.

Ms. Summers commented that a decision needs to be made between a new building and how it is envisioned and what can be done to solidify the building and be back in operation at Station 13 without extra conference space etc. Chief Moore explained that is it not the conference space etc., it is that the sleeping space and restrooms need to be redesigned for exterior exit. Ms. Summers noted that the RFP is different. Chief Moore responded that they have not yet received a final answer in regard to this.

Mr. Tanaka noted that they have been speaking with the state and federal governments and it appears that some funding is available for the project. Ms. Summers asked if there would be a percentage. Mr. Tanaka explained that he does not know yet. The problem is that until one has a plan, they will not say how much money is available and without money it is difficult to come up with a plan.

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Chief Moore noted that they are not asking for any action at this time. They are only providing an update.

Ms. Summers reviewed the Board of Finance 2023 Budget Guidance Letter included in the members' packets. This letter goes to the town's budget writers including those which transfer out such as the library, fire departments, parks and recreation etc., as well as all of the Selectmen's categories of departments such as the DPW.

A brief discussion took place regarding including annual reports as well.

Mr. Stevens noted that the BOE approval of the budget will be on February 13<sup>th</sup>, which is not 2 weeks before the BOF's timeline. If annual reports are to be included, he asked that time is allowed to generate those reports. Ms. Summers commented that the timing of BOE approval (February 13<sup>th</sup>) and receipt by the Board of Finance does not cause concern based on her experience.

## **2. School Building Committee Final Report**

Ms. Summers explained that she included this report as it represents years of work at a time in town that was like no other. She believes it is important to consult and has some interesting work represented. It shows how they arrived at the preferred parcel for a potential consolidated school. She highlighted Collier's Executive Summary and cited a state share precedence in a neighboring town that was 10% better than the presumption at referendum.

### **PRESENT TO SPEAK:**

Pete Tanaka, 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman and resident of 125 Mason Road, commented that the new firefighter tax abatement information will be presented soon to the Board. It is not an expenditure but a cut in revenue. The town has an ordinance that provides firefighters who participate in meetings and calls a tax abatement. The state law changed 18 months ago and doubled it. Some other minor changes were made as well so one could receive a tax abatement for the rest of their lives if they retire after 25 years but not if one continues on as a member after 25 years. Small changes such as addressing this were made. The ordinance cannot be changed without a Town Meeting and since it affects revenue, it may need to come before the Board of Finance first.

Ms. Summers noted that in the past, it was a \$1,000 maximum tax abatement for those who qualified. In 2022, the state updated the statute and made the maximum tax abatement \$2,000. The town is working to be aligned with the statute. Ms. Mailhos asked about the impact. Mr. Tanaka noted that they budgeted for \$30,000 but the actual abatement was approximately \$15,000. Thus, if doubled, it would be closer to what was budgeted.

### **GOOD AND WELFARE:**

Ms. Mailhos noted that CIP meetings will start on January 10<sup>th</sup> at 7PM. They will meet every Wednesday in January and likely through February.

Ms. Summers wished everyone a happy and safe holiday.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Geoffrey Prusak motioned to adjourn at 8:36pm.

# TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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Jason Ross seconded the motion.  
Motion passed (6-0).

Respectfully submitted,

*Lisa Pascuzzi*

Lisa Pascuzzi  
Recording Secretary

RECEIVED  
WILLINGTON, CT.

2024 JAN 16 P 12:40

*Kenneth*  
TOWN CLERK