

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

Budget Meeting
Hybrid — In Person and Online

February 8, 2024
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):

Bruce Lawler Chair	Geoffrey Prusak Vice Chairman	Christina Mailhos Secretary	Walter Parsell	Jason Ross	Stephanie Summers	Melissa Miller (ALT)	Britt Rothausen (ALT)
In Person	In person	Via Zoom	Via Zoom	In person	In Person	In Person	In Person

Also Present:

Donna Latincsics, Business Manager – In person
Alex Moore, Chief Willington Fire Department #1 (WFD#1)
Trevor Gantick, Deputy Chief WFD#1 and Fire Marshal
Stuart Cobb, Captain WFD#1 and Emergency Management Director
Ron Gantick, President WFD#1
Tyler Millix, Vice President WFD#1
Derrick Wiczenski, Firefighter WFD#1
Tom Snyder, Chief Willington Hill Fire Department (WHFD)
James Knight, President WHFD
Jeremy Chartier, Treasurer and Captain WHFD
Residents in person and via Zoom

Chairman Bruce Lawler called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

SEATING OF ALTERNATES:

No alternates need to be seated.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

No one was present to speak.

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

NEW BUSINESS:

1) Budget Request Presentations: Emergency Services

a. Emergency Management Director Stipend – Stuart Cobb

Emergency Management Director Cobb stated that he is asking for a tiny bit less than last year, his request is to continue the \$6,000 stipend half of which is reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Performance Grant that comes through the State and the \$1,000 is for one half of the maintenance for the generator at Hall School. Stef Summers asked if he was adding a stipend for an Assistant Emergency Management Director, and he stated not to his knowledge. First Selectman Tanaka stated that is something they are maybe considering, but it is still up in the air right now.

b. Fire Marshal – Trevor Gantick

Fire Marshal Gantick stated that his budget remains flat for this fiscal year. Fire Marshal Gantick mentioned that he does always ask that he be considered for a raise in line with the contractual employees in the town. He stated that the Deputy Fire Marshal's stipend remains the same as well as Fire Marshal expenses. Stephanie Summers asked when his appointment started and he stated it was June of 2022. Stephanie thanked him for providing the Board with a job outline of the Fire Marshal's duties and asked if he has an annual report that he files as to his actions in town. Fire Marshal Gantick stated that he submits one to Donna Latincsics as she requests it every year. Donna will share his report with the Board.

Chief Moore asked to have the ambulance payroll budget, which was next on the agenda be presented after both fire department budgets as the ambulance payroll budget may call for longer discussion.

c. WFD#1 – Chief Alex Moore

Chief Moore mentioned that one thing that is different with this year's budget is that WFD#1 and WHFD have standardized their fire department line items so they all line up for each department. He stated that before each category was different between each department and through the Emergency Services Efficiency Committee they were able to align their budgets so that they are all within the same categories. Chief Moore then went over their call volume for 2022-2023 which for total calls was 1,146. He then went over the calls from July 1, 2023 to a week ago and the total calls are 564 so far this fiscal year. They are projecting their call volume for this year to be anywhere from 1,200 to 1,250 by the end of the fiscal year based on past years. Stephanie Summers asked how many calls were in the Town of Union. Chief Moore stated that they did 58 calls to Union last year of which 30 were transports. He stated that out of the Town of Union they billed \$30,000 and have collected about \$28,000.

Chief Moore then went through all their line items stating that they did increase building maintenance at their south station (143 River Rd.) as they are using the building all the time staffing it 24/7. He stated that the pest control line item covers both stations and the camper. He stated that they were able to reduce the electricity at the main station with only the camper there, but they did increase the electricity at Station 213 a little bit with it being used all the time. Heat for Station 13 was lowered and increased for Station 213. Chief Moore stated that under the administrative expenses account they don't use the legal fees line item, computer hardware which mostly consists of the copier lease, the insurance increased 13%, physicals for volunteer members (required for volunteer members) is \$1,000 (the paid members physicals come off the paid side of the budget), response software they use jointly with WHFD for calls which goes to members phones on I am responding (IAR), no increase in training, no increase in office supplies, no increase in good and welfare and no increase in administrative

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

miscellaneous. A new line item is day room supplies where they categorize their bottled water, etc. for the members. Chief Moore stated that the total administrative increase due to the insurance is \$3,000.

Chief Moore explained that the equipment maintenance budget is hose testing, ladder testing, pump testing every year on all the apparatus and there is no increase in that line item. ET (Engine Tank) 113's budget was increased by \$1,000 as it is no longer on warrantee. ET 213 is a 1990 vehicle and it's budget was also increased for the same reason. He stated that there was a very large expense this year for ET 213 of \$12,000 as they were required to replace all tires in the rear of the truck (8 tires). The tires were 17 years old and the truck could not be certified to run until it got new tires. Chief Moore stated that Squad 113 is the most used truck (a 2003 International) besides the ambulances. It goes to all motor vehicle accidents, house fires, etc. and there is no change to the budget on that vehicle. Service 213 (a 2015 Ford F350) has no change in its budget. Ambulance 513 is up for replacement. Chief Moore stated that having the second ambulance (Ambulance 613) has been very beneficial, so that there wasn't the amount of mechanical failures that they usually have with Ambulance 513 as it isn't running as much because they have the two ambulances. There is no increase for either ambulance. Chief Moore stated that the mobile data service is for iPads and Wi-Fi devices to log their patient care reports. The monitors in the ambulances are required to have internet access because they need to be able to send information to the hospital. He stated there is also an MDT (mobile data terminal) in the front of the ambulances and fire trucks for getting directions to the scene and getting one way communication back to the dispatch center. The next item was protective clothing, which Chief Moore stated was the biggest item increase in their budget. He stated that they had a long discussion about this last night at CIP, and has to be determined on where this item will fall (CIP follows through on their plan or to come to the BOF in the fire department's budget). He stated they have four sets of turnout gear right now that need to be replaced. The turnout gear is only good for ten years and those sets have timed out. He stated with the new OSHA standards that are coming, they are going to start having two sets of gear per firefighter and firefighters can not share their gear. Each firefighter has to have their own gear. He stated that it is very important with the paid personnel having two sets if one set gets contaminated on a call and has to be washed, the second set is there for them to use. He stated that this is for both departments. He and Chief Snyder have worked together on this for CIP so they are both doing the same thing. That explains the large increase in the budget for their turnout gear this year. He stated that this needs to be either in CIP or their budget but they aren't sure which one as both CIP and BOF have told them that it should be in the other's budget. He just needs to know where to put it as it is not going away and is a recurring expense as turnout gear times out. Christina Mailhos (also CIP Chairman) stated that she it doesn't matter to her which budget it is in other than she wouldn't want to see the money in the operating budget and then used for something else. She stated that she believes it does belong in the operating budget as it is an every year thing as long as it gets used for that purpose. Chief Moore agreed with that. Chief Moore stated that the line item for uniforms includes tee shirts and job shirts for volunteers and there is no change in that line item. He stated that there is no increase in radios and pagers. It covers dilapidated pagers and the dispatch center is adding an 800 system, which will benefit the two departments. The departments through a joint project got a big radio upgrade through ARPA for fire, EMS and public works to outfit every piece of apparatus with the same radios programmed the same way and each officer has the exact same portable programmed the same way. Stef Summers commented that that the line item should go down a little with the infusion of brand new radios. Chief Moore state that they still have to use their old radio equipment as the dispatch center has not transitioned to the 800 radios yet, and they are still having issues with the old radios, and this line item also covers repairs of radios and pagers. Chief Moore stated that the fire equipment purchases line item refers to equipment on the truck (hoses, nozzles, saws, etc.) and there is no change in that line

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

item. He stated that the equipment miscellaneous line item is \$1,450 and is a new line item for WFD#1, WHFD had this line item previously. Captain Cobb stated that this includes ethanol free fuel for the chain saws, concentrated foam systems in the truck, and fluids in the trucks, etc. to keep the apparatus going. Chief Moore stated that the total equipment expenses are \$188,300 and increase of \$14,250 and the big chunk of that is with the turnout gear.

Chief Moore then discussed the medical cleaning budget which consists of hazardous waste cleaning for the ambulance, medical equipment and supplies, etc. That budget decreased slightly and is \$12,000.

Stef Summers stated that she is glad that the two departments worked together on their budgets, but the budgets are missing incremental increases and there are no percentages attached to line item increases which is important for the BOF when they do their presentation with questions that come up. The two departments will get together with Donna Latincsics and get that to the Board.

Walter Parsell asked if they shop around for turnout gear or is there only one supplier, and Chief Moore stated that they go off the state bid.

Chairman Lawler asked if the mutual aid ambulance agreement was with just the Town of Union, and Chief Moore stated that they have a PSA (primary service area) for the Town of Union and all other towns are mutual aid. Willington is the first call to the Town of Union for the ambulance. Union does not have an ambulance and has a population of 600 in their town. Stef Summers explained how the Town of Willington is in negotiations with the Town of Union since 2021 to get reimbursed for going there. She stated that the Town received a payment of \$13,000 from Union's ARPA money, but she doesn't know where the Town is now in those negotiations. Chief Moore stated that with Union's population of 600, they have agreed to \$5,000 this year with escalating fees every year after. They have not budgeted for it this year, so it is going to go into their budget starting at \$5,000 with escalators every year. Chief Moore stated that the Town of Union is willing to work with the Town of Willington, but this year \$5,000 was all that they could give. He stated that anything over a \$5,000 increase with 600 people is a large increase. The Town of Union is willing to work with the Town of Willington. Stef Summers believes there is still room for negotiations as it would take them 12 years to be even with what the BOF thinks is a fair amount. Further discussion was had on this matter with Stef, Vice President Millix and Chief Moore giving history on the PSA, mutual aid, other agencies within the Town, and the fact that Fund 17 is the only one that gives back to the Town, etc.

d. WHFD – Chief Tom Snyder

Chief Snyder stated that he wasn't going to go over the items in his budget in great detail that Chief Moore already discussed that both departments had agreed to. Chief Snyder stated that his copy of the budget did have explanations as well as the increases and decreases and percentages of the dollar amounts. He stated that the increase in their building maintenance budget is \$2,800 and most of that is because they are going to put in a security key fob system at the 25 Old Farms Rd. building. There is currently no security system there other than cameras that they installed from rental income. That increase is in building maintenance and will be a one time charge to put the key fob system in. He stated without that item in there, their budget would be a wash. He stated there is a slight increase in the telephone line item. He then moved down to the next line item that was different from last year which was heat and propane which was decreased by \$500 at 25 Old Farms Rd. because they didn't use as much as they anticipated. He stated that the miscellaneous building line item was reduced as well by \$800 and the total building expense increase was \$2,800 which included the key fob system.

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Chief Snyder stated that on the administrative budget there was an increase in computer hardware and software because they are incorporating an inventory system (assigning scan tags to all the equipment in the fire house, fire trucks, medical bags, etc.) to keep an accurate and more efficient inventory of what is being used, etc. and that is a \$2,500 increase in that line item. There is an annual fee that they will have to pay to run that system. He stated that there is an increase in the insurance line item (they did shop around for that but still have an increase). He stated that the recruitment and retention line item was reduced. He stated that the office supplies line item was increased by \$600 due to inflation. He stated that there was a reduction in the administration miscellaneous line item and the total increase for the administrative budget was \$3,000, mostly due to the inventory system. He stated that he believes that system will eventually save money because they will have an accurate accounting of what is being used, etc.

Chief Snyder then moved on to the equipment maintenance budget and he stated that they are keeping that budget even, however, there is a note there for the gas meter contract. They have been having a lot of issues with their gas meters and with this contract if there is a problem with a gas meter, the company takes it back and fixes it and gives them another one. He stated that it seems in the long run this will save some money, but this is the first time they are trying the contract, so they won't know until they have had the contract for a year. He stated that most of the line items are staying the same, but there is a slight increase in Forestry 149 (\$500) as there are some components in that truck that are getting old, need to be replaced and there are very expensive electronics on that truck. Service 149 line item has been reduced (\$2,000) as it is the new vehicle going into service and shouldn't need much work except normal maintenance. He stated there is a slight increase in the mobile data service line item with the addition of a couple of iPads going in the vehicles. He stated that there is a slight reduction in pagers, they did buy some this past budget season, so they are in good shape with those. They went up on the equipment miscellaneous (\$200) due to inflation. Overall their equipment maintenance budget was reduced by \$1,040.

Chief Snyder stated that the medical cleaning and medical equipment and supplies budget is staying even, and therefore, his total budget increase for all budgets is \$2,810 for a total of \$149,560 requested. He stated that the \$2,810 will be a wash in the coming year because that is the key fob expense is just for the upcoming fiscal year and basically their budget is a wash for this coming year.

Chairman Lawler asked if 25 Old Farms Rd. is under the department's control or the control of the Town. Chief Snyder stated that it is under the control of the department. Chairman Lawler then stated that if they are renting out the house, they are collecting revenue from that and wanted to know if they have any other revenue that they take in. Chief Snyder stated that there is other minor revenue that they take in (chicken barbecue, Easter Egg Hunt, etc.). Chairman Lawler asked if they could record all the revenue that they take in and send it to the BOF. Chief Snyder will do that. Chief Snyder stated that all the money they have collected in rent for the house has gone back into the property for repairs, etc. Treasurer Chartier stated that they have spent more money on the building than they have taken in for the rent.

Stef Summers asked why WHFD's medical cleaning, equipment and supplies is \$7,000 less than WFD#1's and how come there is no money in medical cleaning. Chief Snyder stated the medical cleaning for WFD#1 is mostly for the ambulance cleaning, etc. and Treasurer Chartier explained that the only medical cleaning they would do would be if they had to send a piece of gear out for decontamination, which is

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

very rare maybe once every couple of years they might send out one piece, so there is no point in wasting money on a line item that they aren't going to use.

e. Ambulance Payroll – Chief Alex Moore

Chief Moore stated that they employ 4 full time employees who work rotating schedules and 11 per diem/part-time employees. He stated that contract negotiations are starting soon, and they have reached out to Chairman Lawler about getting a representative from the BOF to sit in on the negotiations. He stated that the wage increase is an estimate, as he went off of last year's increase so he could have an amount in there. He doesn't know what it is going to be because of the union negotiations.

Chief Moore stated that last year they discussed the administrative position, and it is in the budget this year. It is a 10 hour a week position that plans, coordinates, supervises and evaluates fire and EMS operations with WFD#1, ensures the departments training program meets the needs and goals of the department, establishes policies and procedures for safe operation of fire/EMS response, works with elected or appointed officials local fire/EMS officials, community and business representatives and the public on all aspects of department activities and would ensure the department is compliant with local, state and federal guidelines. Chief Moore stated that they employ 15 employees, Public Works has 5 employees with a full-time director. He stated that his is a volunteer position as the Fire Chief, and he manages a full-time department. This position is so that he could be there 10 hours a week with the staff managing hours. He wouldn't be there 10 hours in one day, it would be split up in the week to ensure stuff that they are supposed to be getting done is done, the training is being done with trucks, etc. He stated that they have had an \$81,000 increase in Fund 17 and the majority of that is because of the second ambulance, but also because their call volume is up. He stated that they did check with the billing company he talked about earlier from October to October and they are at \$100,000 unanticipated above from where they were. He stated that every year they are looking at ways to shave off where they can save money to not have a huge impact on the budget every year. Chief Moore stated that their recommendation is to use \$40,000 off the Fund 17 of that unanticipated revenue and that would be about a 1.86% increase to the ambulance budget, that way they would be able to get the administrator and give them a little room because he doesn't know what the contract negotiations are going to bring.

Chairman Lawler asked if Chief Moore could break down the mutual aid by town and add that to the spreadsheet. Chief Moore stated he has those numbers and will get them to the BOF. Chief Moore stated that their biggest mutual aid that they go to is the Town of Tolland, Stafford is second. He stated that Willington strictly concentrates on UConn coming into town for almost ¾ of the town if they are out on another call because of their availability. This is designed to get an ambulance here as quickly as possible, and UConn can do that over both Tolland and Stafford with the number of ambulances they have in service.

Christina Mailhos mentioned that Fund 17 used to be a bigger source of revenue and it is good to see it is coming back to the way it was as it was low recently. She stated that they have been using it to offset the payroll every year for the last five years. She stated that she feels that is artificially lowering the ambulance cost to the taxpayers. She stated that it is helping the Town out, but it is also depleting that fund when they need to go buy another truck (as there is one in year 4 or 5 in CIP) and they want as much money as possible to be in there. She thought they were going to try to wean off this money and stop using it and she is concerned about that. Chief Moore stated that they only suggested using the \$40,000 because it is unanticipated revenue. He stated that they were averaging about \$213,000

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

coming into Fund 17 every year. He stated that they are up over \$300,000, so that is why they feel comfortable using the unanticipated income off of it. Further discussion was had on this. Stef Summers asked if the BOF could see the two scenarios with the administrative job and without, without the offsets, and Chief Moore will get those to the BOF. Stef stated that with a truck replacement on the five-year plan and both departments with huge capital challenges, she doesn't feel that now is the time to add staff. She asked if Chief Moore could do those administrative tasks during the down time when he is working and Chief Moore said 9 times out of 10 the answer is no, if he is either at the fire department or at the Town Office Building, it is volunteer time. She stated that the other Chief's administrative duties are done on volunteer time and that Chief Moore might be starting a trend here that the Chief or administrative people from WHFD may come to the BOF to ask for pay. Chief Moore understands that and stated that he, Chief Snyder and Stafford are the only Fire Chiefs outside of Union that aren't getting compensated for the fire chief position. Stef understands that, but with everything going on she doesn't feel this is the right time to be expanding the payroll.

Walter Parsell stated that he is looking forward a year from now without the \$40,000 available from Fund 17 and potential increases due to the contract and what this is going to look like. Stef Summers asked if Chief Moore could share with the BOF the payroll information like they provided last year for the BOF and Chief Moore said he would.

Stef Summers asked when their last audit was, and Chief Moore stated it is ongoing currently and President Gantick stated that they are just waiting for the auditor to finish. Stef gave some history on WFD#1's past filing with the IRS and a short discussion was had on this. She stated that heading into big capital asks of the town, the town needs to see that things are right with WFD#1 and the IRS.

CORRESPONDENCE: Chairman Lawler stated that he was contacted by Chief Moore regarding the union negotiations for the fire department, and there are two people interested from the BOF in being in on the negotiations depending on when the negotiations are scheduled (work conflicts) and it would be best if they could be held in the evening. Chief Moore stated they will do their best on that.

PRESENT TO SPEAK: Vice President Millix stated he wanted to clarify something regarding Fund 17 and wanted to know if everyone on the BOF is aware that there is a contract between the Town and the two fire departments to provide services to the Town. He stated that it was executed around the year 2000 because both departments were private corporations, and everyone felt that it was important to have these agreements so everyone knew exactly who was doing what. He stated that the BOF members should get their hands on this contract because some of the stuff that has been talked about over the past 2-4 years is very well documented in the contract and the contract is renewed every 5 years. He stated that referencing Fund 17 emergency services reserve fund, over the years some money has been taken out, some years the fund was heavy and some years the fund was light to offset the payroll increases. He stated that WFD#1 has had paid staff for years, he believes this is their 56th year with a paid staff for the ambulance. Vice President Millix then read the portion of the contract that deals with Fund 17 and how it relates to how the money is used for that fund. He stated that the contract is there, but it gets overlooked by everyone except by people that have been around a long time, but it is a very important document for both departments and is enforced by both departments and the Town. A discussion was had on the updated contract, paid staff increases, the fact that they can't get volunteers to run on the ambulance on a regular basis. Jason Ross asked when the contract was written, how many trucks did the department have and what were the associated costs with that, have they gone up? Vice President Millix stated that the only monetary use of Fund 17 was for purchase or paying leases.

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

President Gantick stated that they have not added any trucks, however, the price has gone up. Jason stated that he knows that they now have two ambulances and Chief Moore stated that the second ambulance was purchased with ARPA money and that is a big contributor as to why they had the unanticipated increase in Fund 17. Vice President Millix stated that either he or Christina Mailhos will mail out the contract to the BOF members as they both have it. He also stated that if any BOF member has any questions please reach out to him or Chief Moore. President Gantick gave some history on the insurance recovery program and Fund 17.

Peter Latincsics, 97 Trask Road said he had a couple of observations and then a request he would make of the BOF after these presentations tonight and he thanked both fire departments for their presentations. Peter stated that one observation was the way the budgets were presented. He understands that the budgets were consolidated for the first time and before that they were separate, so he doesn't see how he can see the increases or decreases. He stated that the ESEC was mentioned, and there are other inefficiencies he is thinking about. He urges the BOF to think about if in fact the two departments are cooperating and sharing a common ledger, using the same services, there should be decreases in operating costs, so he would be interested in beyond just the actual increases and decreases what efficiencies are being achieved, which he thinks the Town is very interested in given the heavy capital requests, so that is his first request of the BOF. His second request is regarding the ARPA fund and how funds were utilized to purchase capital equipment (radios and communication devices). He stated that the BOF is bombarded by every department/agency in town for capital requests and frequently the complaint is that they have to wait for those funds in the out years. He wants to know if it would be possible to have the ARPA funding reflected in CIP to show that money was put forward (taxpayer money, some of it Willington money) to show positive contributions to these fire departments from those funds. His third request is regarding Fund 17. He has been an observer of this process, and he distinctly remembers the Chairman of the BOF then setting up Fund 17, and he remembers its purpose being to purchase equipment, to replace the ambulance, to replace other fire trucks which made total sense then and makes even more sense to him now hearing that the average fire truck costs in excess of \$800,000. He is very concerned to hear that this potentially would be and has been used for payroll or operational costs. He is glad to see the concern of the BOF on this issue. He looks forward to how they will address it. Peter then thanked the BOF.

GOOD AND WELFARE: Stef Summers thanked Donna Latincsics for updating the five year look back. Chairman Lawler also thanked Donna for including that in their attachments.

ADJOURNMENT:

Stephanie Summers moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 pm.

Seconded by Vice Chairman Prusak.

Motion passed (6-0).

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Smith

Eileen Smith
Recording Secretary

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[Signature]
TOWN CLERK