

Town of Willington

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BOARD OF FINANCE

Regular Meeting Minutes

In Person; TOB, Downstairs MeetingRoom & Virtual Meeting via ZOOM

September 16, 2021

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):

Mike Makuch – Chairman
Geoff Prusak – Vice Chairman
Peter Tanaka– Secretary
Matt Clark
Christina Mailhos
Stephanie Summers
Lisa Woolf – Alternate

Members Absent:

Brenda Abrams – Alternate

Also Present:

First Selectwoman Erika Wiecewski
Business Manager Donna Latincsics
Treasurer Laurie Semprebon
Superintendent Phil Stevens
Katherine Viveiros – Chair, School Building Committee
Members of the Public

Chairman Mike Makuch called the meeting to order at 7:08pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None at this time.

Note: The current secretary is leaving from serving the Board due to her current work situation. Will address later in the meeting.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

Laurie Semprebon: Hi, good evening. Thank you for all of your time. I know this is going to be a long meeting. I just would encourage the Board of Finance to finally approve the allocation for the building committee so the building committee can move forward and we can make progress on this. That's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

Michelle Cunningham, 41 Liska Road: I want to second what Laurie Semperbon* said. I think that the points that you made at the last meeting have been heard and I think that the point's made and it's now a chance to move ahead on something the people of Willington have already voted to support. We would like to see you release the funding to the school building committee. Thank you.

Kirstie Farrar: I just wanted to ditto what has already been said. We can't expect the committee to do its job if they can't be funded and experts don't work for free. So we really need to release this money so that we can move forward here.

Ann Grosjean: Thank you for letting me speak tonight. As a member of the school building committee, I would really like to encourage you to allocate the \$100,000.00 so that we can hire an owner's project manager. Which will help us to move forward on both of the ideas, the renovation as well as constructing a new school so that we can fully explore both of those possibilities. With an owner's project manager, we also would need access to money for architects and engineers. I think that it is also very important that the money is released in a full block because every time we ask for money, it would need to go to the Selectmen, they only need a couple (once/twice a month) and then it would need to go to a public vote. Not only would that be cumbersome for our residents to keep going to public votes but it will also cost the town quite a bit. So I really encourage you tonight to allocate that \$100,000.00 which has already been approved by our town residents so that we can move forward with the school building project. Thank you very much.

Katherine Viverios: I assume that the Board of Finance has the revised language for the school building committee request for funding. But I am going to read it just in case there are members on the call that may not have it in front of them.

Chairman Makuch: This is an agenda item so I would like to have you speak, as you are the chairman of the committee, I would like to have you speak during the agenda item. You can speak in present to speak but it is on the agenda and I think your place would be better during the agenda item.

Katherine Viverios: Can I at least say what everybody else said? I encourage you to consider the revised language and I can talk more about it when it's on the agenda item. Thank you.

Sarah Baker: Thank you all and I appreciate the time you all spend working and being good stewards of our finances. And thank you also to Phil for sending out that thankfully detailed timeline of the roof project. It does often feel like groundhog day and I think for those of us who aren't in the weeds but that was really helpful. Really I am here to talk about the appropriation for the school committee. The town voted on the budget which includes \$100,000.00 to the school committee for consultants. I would ask that this committee do as we have asked, do as we have approved and release them the money that we have decided is appropriate for them to have for these consultants. It does not need to be any more complicated or bureaucratic than that. It is not the purpose of this board to micromanage the work of other committees and other boards. A fund for new versus remote I think is unnecessary; they would likely have consultants; you can very well imagine that they will be doing work on both and so please just release them the money so they can move forward with this work. The more delays we have, the more it will eventually cost our town one way or another. Thank you.

Peter Latincsics, 97 Trask Road: I would like to second my colleagues on the school building committee that I serve with that it's important that we have funds to function with. At the same time I also want to stress that we don't wish to work at cross purposes with the Board of Finance or the Board of Selectmen or any other board in town; that we wish to work in a cooperative fashion. Harping about the inefficiency of town meetings and that it's cumbersome to go to the Board of Finance are unfortunate but these checks and balances help us

all gain the trust of the townspeople. And not be dismissed merely because we are enthusiastic about our project or another board for a project that may be pursuing. I want to stress that we want the Board of Finance to do its job so we can do our job. Thank you so much.

Kiley Fults: I would just like to reiterate almost everything that Sarah Baker said. I think that it's really important that we get the information that we need and that we not be held up with the Board of Finance in political decisions that have already been made, funds have already been appropriated and let's get the information before we go further into that.

Melissa Williams-Mckinnon, 63 Luchon Road: I want to echo exactly everything that Sarah Baker, Ann Grosjean, Kiley Fults has said because this money has been appropriated and the town voted on it, which it seems as though it should be appropriated by you guys to the school building committee. We know that nobody works for free and there is so much information that they have to get it costs them money and I trust the school board committee will make the correct decisions once they get that money and use it appropriately so I hope that you guys will give them the money that was approved. Thank you very much.

OLD BUSINESS:

Request to move public works Item 5 to the beginning of old business; if there is no objection.

5) Board of Finance letter to Public Works re trees and storm damage

a) Report from PW and BOS re storm damage

Chairman Makuch: The letter has not yet been sent to Public Works due to delays within, but DPW Director Sposato has prepared a report on both concerns, the trees and the recent storm damage.

DPW Director Sposato: Still using asphalt every day and still need to put process on the dirt roads. As of right now DPW has used \$127,052.00 this year so far repairing the roads. That does not include asphalt slips in the last few weeks. Currently buying asphalt each day so that number will eventually go up once all of the slips have been received. This is for damage from storms starting July 17th and every rainstorm that has occurred since then. July 17th was the Mason Road event but damage did start the week prior on Liska Road.

There is a spreadsheet available for each road of what was spent, material cost (gravel/asphalt), the trucking and the contractor on Mason Road to re-do the culvert. The spreadsheet includes the material being bought in and the materials and work by vendors. Not tracking staff labor separately. At this point, do not believe there will be any reimbursement available but would need to break down the labor costs later if necessary.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski: Currently the bulk of the storm damage that we had did not qualify for FEMA. There was not enough damage across the state. It was pretty isolated in nature, which is why DPW Director Sposato had to track each event individually.

P. Tanaka questioned if budget adjustments need to be made for these events and DPW Director Sposato stated that it is currently coming out of the asphalt budget as of now. There is also chip seal money to be used as those roads that were to be done are either currently damaged or there was not time to prep those roads due to the storms. As of right now, if there is a bad winter or a major storm, there could be a need to come back to the Board for additional money to appropriate.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski: One of the things that Troy talked with the Board of Selectmen about was that the chip seal did not get done this year. It was two fold, the amount of damage that we had and then the

amount of rain affected the vendors. At this point if we were to move forward with the chipsealing in the Spring in this current budget, we would have to come back to ask for more funds for it.

S. Summer asked if there was a figure for what it would cost for chipsealing in the Spring. DPW Director Sposato answered that there is currently a quote for \$147,000.00 and \$10,000.00 of that is for the school parking lots which is believed to be a CIP project that was approved so roughly \$137,000.00 or \$138,000.00 would be expected.

DPW Director Sposato reported a brief overview: In the month of July, the DPW removed 88 hazardous trees; 72 of them were ash trees, on the following roads: Moose Meadow, Blair, Marsh, Daleville School, Eldredge and Marco Roads. The total budget for the month of July was \$35,280.00.

In the month of August, the DPW removed 56 hazardous trees; 42 of them were ash, on the following roads: Daleville, Depot, Cowles, Jared Sparks, and Mason. Total budget was \$16,000.00. Year to date as estimated \$51,280.00 has been spent. Just had Linden come in to remove some additional trees that were in bad shape and will be receiving another bill for about \$3,000.00. This has basically used the budget.

P. Tanaka stated that at some point the Board received a letter that there were approximately 250 trees that should be removed. DPW Director Sposato stated that he is continuing to create a list of trees that need to come down during his daily routines, this includes ash trees and oak trees that are split. He is prioritizing what trees need to come down first and what money there is to do it. The current running count of trees that have been taken down is approximately 144 trees.

1) Public Health Crisis Update

a) General Update

Unemployment numbers have not come out yet. Around 6% last month for July. August numbers may be in that ballpark still. For a COVID update, our numbers are up right now. Since our last reporting on September 8th, we are up 12 cases in the last week. With the state color code we are at the orange level. Seeing a rise every day. The Schools are seeing an increase as well. There have been 8 days of School and there have been 3 cases in the school currently; over 20 people between staff and students have been quarantined.

b) Update on federal funding (American Rescue Plan)

The Board of Selectmen is setting up a committee to review requests. The committee will meet on Monday for the first time.

Chairman Makuch: Seeing some of our local businesses starting to pack up their outdoor dining because of the season changing. Hoping our businesses that are open right now continue to do okay. Do not know if we have any information on businesses that are still suffering.

First Selectwoman Wicewski: Chief complaint from small business and restaurants in Willington and surrounding towns: they cannot find enough employees and are struggling as an industry to maintain staffing.

2) School Building Committee -- Consultant Funds Appropriation

Chairman Makuch: As the Board of Finance representative to the Building Committee, discussed concerns on the request for the allocation of funds. After a lengthy discussion, the Committee did come up with modified wording in hopes to resolve the concerns presented. Chief among those changes is addressing the fact that in the committee meeting and in the presentation by the consulting firm, that they saw how the consulting firm

could work to satisfy both of the major pathways that the committee might take; one pathway being the renovation pathway (renovate one school, renovate two schools, renovate the other school) and then the other pathway would be the new construction.

SBC Committee Chairman Viverios expressed that she would like the Board to consider the revised language. There were some valid comments from both positions at the last Board meeting regarding supporting it as originally submitted and also with the idea of having a little more description and concern about the consultants looking at both options, or many options. That's what triggered the additional paragraph to define that the funds will be utilized to hire consultants to assist the School Building Committee with the review of multiple options. I would hate to limit the building committee to just 2 options. We also have other needs in regards to hiring consultants that are not specific just to those two options; for example a recording secretary, and also hiring someone to do our new projections for the town. Thank you very much for your consideration.

P. Tanaka stated he would like to thank the building committee board for listening to the concerns of the Board of Finance members. This revision meets many of the concerns that were had.

P. Tanaka made the motion: The Board of Finance would request that the Board of Selectmen hold a Town Meeting to appropriate \$60,000.00 from the reserve fund to Project No. 04-041 for school building committee consultants as previously approved by voters at the 2021-2022 annual town meeting. The funds will be utilized to hire consultants to assist the School Building Committee (SBC) with the review of multiple options, including but not limited to renovation/addition or new school, and any other items needed to assist the SBC in fulfilling the charge of the SBC committee.

Chairman Makuch seconded the motion.

Discussion was held in regards to appropriating \$60,000.00 instead of the requested \$100,000.00. It was important that the secretary and other positions were now included. There was additional discussion on appropriating smaller segments of additional money if needed over the \$60,000.00 in the motion. There was discussion on the accountability of the SBC for proper use of the money and recording how it will be spent. Additional discussion of what would be included in the scope of the RFP and what tasks would be included.

VOTE: 3 YES (G. Prusak, P. Tanaka, M. Clark) 3 NO (S. Summers, C. Mailhos, M. Makuch)
Motion fails.

C. Mailhos made the motion: The Board of Finance would request that the Board of Selectmen hold a Town Meeting to appropriate \$100,000.00 from the reserve fund to Project No. 04-041 for school building committee consultants as previously approved by voters at the 2021-2022 annual town meeting. The funds will be utilized to hire consultants to assist the School Building Committee (SBC) with the review of multiple options, including but not limited to renovation/addition or new school, and any other items needed to assist the SBC in fulfilling the charge of the SBC committee.

S. Summers seconded the motion.

Discussion was held in regards to appropriating \$100,000.00, as originally requested. The School Building Committee listened to the concerns of the Board of Finance members and revised the wording, as requested. The SBC is requesting this amount of money so they can move forward with the RFP for the OPM. Reducing the amount of money appropriated could continue to delay the process.

Roll call vote on calling the question. For clarity, this particular motion would stop discussion and make us vote then next on the main motion go ahead and call the vote for the call.

VOTE: 6 YES (G. Prusak, P. Tanaka, S. Summers, M. Clark, C. Mailhos, M. Makuch) 0 NO

The motion passes to call the question.

VOTE: 4 YES (G. Prusak, S. Summers, C. Mailhos, M. Makuch) 2 NO (M. Clark, P. Tanaka)

Motion passes.

3) School Roof Project

a) Information from Superintendent Stevens and Business Manager Latinsics

Superintendent Stevens: Consideration of the timeline for the roof project. Have had to have the roof patched twice now; once in March 2020 and then patching for minor leaks at both schools. The cancellation that came from Kosta Diamantis, Office of School Construction Grants & Review, states that he cancelled the application and will allow the resubmission once the school committee decides their next steps.

Discussion was held in regards to the next steps for the school roofing and consideration of putting a 10-year roof at Hall Memorial School and the status of grants and reimbursements. A 10-year roof would not qualify for the grant, it would need to be a 20-year grant. Until a final decision is made, the short term patching is what has been happening, putting in new ceiling tiles, and monitoring the issue areas.

Chairman Makuch made the motion: Motion to close-out project #04-4039 Center School roof and project #04-4040 Hall School roof, which were approved at the Town Meeting on March 21, 2021, due to a loss of grant funding.

S. Summers seconded the motion.

Chairman Makuch asked if based on the conversation tonight, if we can access funding again for this project, how would that be handled. Business Manager Latinsics stated that it would again need to come to the town for a new appropriation for a new project. This is for a full roof replacement at the Hall's School.

VOTE: 4 YES (G. Prusak, S. Summers, M. Clark, C. Mailhos, M. Makuch) 0 NO 1 ABSTAIN (P. Tanaka)

4) Ambulance Service to the Town of Union

a) Special Meeting Scheduling

Discussion was held on the ambulance services to be provided to the Town of Union. The Union First Selectman would rather not meet with the entire Board of Finance. They would like to schedule a meeting with Chairman Makuch, who would like to bring another person to the meeting, so as not to imply conflict of interest. If any of the BOF members would like specific questions brought to the meeting, please send them to Chairman Makuch.

5) Reports of representatives to other committees, etc.

a) School Building committee

Chairman Makuch reported that the Land Acquisition Subcommittee for the School Building Committee will be meeting on September 22nd.

b) Board of Education bargaining agreement

M. Clark reported that there was an increase but that there has not been a meeting in the last few months.

c) Town Employee bargaining agreement

P. Tanaka reported that the Union continues to cancel meetings at the last minute for each meeting that has been scheduled. Our team has met.

NEW BUSINESS:

1) Treasurer's Revenue Report

Treasurer Semprebon presented the revenue and expenditure report. Currently no concerns as it is still early in the fiscal year.

2) Assistant Business Manager position (extension of treasurer discussion)

First Selectwoman Wicewski stated that at the September 8th Board of Selectmen meeting, the Board approved the job description for the Assistant Business Manager position. This will allow for an additional staff member in the Finance Office. The Assistant Business Manager duties would include the ambulance payroll and the ambulance accounts payable, the library payroll and accounts payable, posting revenue in the general ledger, posting bank transfer for the treasurer and responsible for timely deposit of all monies received by the Town and post revenue to the Town's account system. There will be a reduction in the salary from the current treasurer stipend that would be added to this position. The proposed 40-hour week position would be \$25.67 at Step One. The elected treasurer stipend (which is anticipated to be 5 hours a week) would be \$6,674.00 annually.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None.

PRESENT TO SPEAK:

Ann Grosjean: Thank you very much for approving the money that can go to the town for a vote.

Jen Goodale: Just have a question for the folks that are interested in the 60k versus the 100k. Question is if the 100k is allocated to the school building committee with a particular charge, hypothetically if they don't spend the entire amount, what do the folks think is going to happen to the remaining money?

Pete Latincsis, 97 Trask Road. Want to address the issue of the school roofs. Three year advocate for the school boards... Virtually no discussion on the fact that this project was approved 3 times even when the cost increased. I respectfully submit that the goal of this project is not state reimbursement, but a successful project.

Melissa Williams- McKinnon: Just wanted to say thank you very much for approving the funds for the school building committee.

Sarah Reis: Express gratitude for taking steps to move forward with school building projects.

Katherine Viveiros: Thank the Board of Finance for re-review of our recommendation and approving it. Start investigating and look at our options. Would like to echo Peter's concern and recommendation. Funding has been put on hold or cancelled off of the line item. I do recommend that somebody put a recommendation in place to at least have a 10 year roof in place. Not sure its structural but concern of actual roof leaking.

GOOD & WELFARE:

Thank everyone again for coming.

Chairman Makuch made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:24pm.

S. Summers seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6 YES (G. Prusak, P. Tanaka, S. Summers, M. Clark, C. Mailhos, M. Makuch) 0 NO

Respectfully submitted,
Kelsey Allard
Interim Recording Secretary

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WILLINGTON, CT.

2021 OCT 21 A 9:33


TOWN CLERK