

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

Budget Meeting
Hybrid — In Person and Online

February 1, 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 Chair	Christina Mailhos Secretary	Walter Parsell	Jason Ross	Stephanie Summers	Melissa Miller (ALT)	Britt Rothausen (ALT)
In person	In person	Via Zoom	Absent	In person	In person	In person	In person

Donna Latincsics, Business Manager – In person
Peter Tanaka, 1st Selectman – In person
Fire Chief Tom Snyder, Willington Hill FD – In person
James Knight, President, Willington Hill FD – In person
James Callaghan, Director of Recreation – In person
Karen Cote, Director of Human Services – In person
Karenann Caldwell, Chair, Library Board – via Zoom
Jennifer Miller, Animal Control Officer – In person
Joe Colangelo, Chair, Parks & Recreation Commission - In person

Residents in person and via Zoom

Call to Order

Bruce Lawler called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Seating of Alternates (if needed):

Mr. Prusak motioned to seat Ms. Miller for Mr. Parsell.

Ms. Summers seconded the motion.

Discussion: none

A roll call vote was taken.

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

Opposed: none

Abstentions: none

(5-0-0)

Motion passed.

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Present to Speak:

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road, spoke regarding the Library Board budget that may be presented this evening and expressed concern. Overall, the proposed budget is able to maintain repairs appropriately, but his greatest concern is that they will have a personnel budget without knowing how many hours each position will have, or the hourly amount, other than for the positions of Director and Co-Director. For example, they do not know if an Assistant II will maintain 12 hours and have a salary increase to \$27 or if the position will maintain the same salary but have more hours. They do not know how many hours a position will have. The Board should recommend that the Library Board provide clarification and support the dollar amount requested for salaries.

New Business:

1. Request for funds to replace the furnace at Willington Hill Firehouse, Tom Snyder, Chief.

Chief Snyder explained that a service was performed at the firehouse, and they were told that the middle furnace is failing and emitting CO into the building. The building has three furnaces that cover the apparatus bay, the meeting room, and the main area. The latter is the one that is failing. He submitted a quote to the Board for funding to replace the furnace. It is an emergency given that it is the middle of winter. He noted that the CIP and budget processes would take too long.

Mr. James Knight explained that he spoke with Tom, a representative of Homestead, who noted that the furnace was manufactured in 1995, making it 29 years old. It is at its life expectancy and is not repairable. Mr. Knight noted that this furnace heats the offices as well as the kitchen and bathrooms which have a lot of plumbing. They cannot afford to have the pipes freeze. Mr. James Knight spoke to the technician who explained that next will be complete failure of the furnace. The heat exchanger is cracked so when the fan turns on it draws excess air from the furnace which can draw the CO into the building.

Mr. Lawler asked if they got any other quotes aside from the one from Homestead. Mr. James Knight responded that they did not. The service was performed on January 18th at all three buildings. Homestead was competitive last year when another furnace in the building was replaced. It was almost \$20K. Mr. Lawler noted that the law states that any maintenance over \$5K requires three quotes to be submitted. He suggested that they get two more quotes so they can move this forward. He also recommended that when getting the quotes, they ensure that Homestead would be able to service the equipment that is supplied. Mr. Lawler noted that there are two maintenance lines in the budget as well as a misc. budget line and asked if any funds could be moved from other lines to cover the expense for the furnace. Chief Tom Snyder responded that they would not be able to absorb the \$9K. This is why they came to the Board.

Mr. Lawler confirmed that they would get two more quotes and asked that they schedule to present the information to the Board at its next budget meeting on February 8, 2024. The Board will move forward at that time.

Ms. Summers noted the three furnaces and that 1 was replaced via ARPA funding. She asked about the age of the third one. Mr. Knight explained that it is the same age. Ms. Summers asked if given the age, if it makes sense to get quotes on two furnaces. Mr. Knight responded that he would ask Homestead for a recommendation. All of the furnaces were inspected, and this was the only one with major problems. Ms. Summers asked if Homestead would quote

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furnaces that they would not service. She confirmed that they are under contract with them for annual service. Mr. Knight did not believe Homestead would quote for something they could not service. He had a difficult time finding someone to do an annual contract due to the Training Center having a commercial unit and places will not do service contracts for items where they do not have parts. Additionally, the house that is rented is electric forced hot air and many companies will not service it. Homestead stated that there really is not anything they will not service. Ms. Summers asked Mr. Knight if he felt he could get two additional quotes. Mr. Knight responded that he could.

2. Budget request presentations: Special Revenue Funds

a) 0511 Animal Control

Ms. Jennifer Miller, the Animal Control Officer, noted that the budget will remain the same as it has been for the past 2 years. It is working for them. Some minor repairs will be needed at the pound soon but can be addressed.

Mr. Lawler noted that the pound was discussed at the CIP meeting in regard to the requirements of the state. Ms. Miller commented that the state is giving a 5-year period for everything to be updated. She does not see where anything needs to be done now.

Ms. Summers commented that she had heard about the viability of the facility and asked if Ms. Miller had information such as the average number of animals housed at the pound. Ms. Miller explained that last year they only had six impounds. This year they have had five already, but it is to be expected. The number of people dumping animals has increased but she estimates the average is six and there have been less than 10/year. Last year, the heating was a little higher due to a dog which stayed for an extended period. If there are no animals being housed, the heat is turned down but not so much as to allow the pipes to freeze. Ms. Summers asked about traffic in regard to people's interest in adopting. Ms. Miller explained that that is the problem. There is not much traffic. They post on social media and often put the dogs on the roadside along the route to the dump so people will see them but at the moment, people are not adopting. This is not limited to Willington. Ms. Summers asked about the response time for people to receive assistance if the town was in more of a consortium model. Ms. Miller responded that it would be the same. As soon as she gets the call, she gets in the car.

b) 0512 Parks and Recreation

Mr. James Callaghan, Director of Recreation, requested \$94,516, a 0.17% decrease from last year.

His focus was on trimming the budget and making the revenue and expenses more realistic based on the programming planned for next year. He highlighted the Yoga/Wellness Program, Summer Sports Camp, Winter Camp, and potential summer programs. After speaking with Human Services, he decided not to run a Winter Camp next year due to Christmas falling on a Wednesday.

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Mr. Callaghan explained that they plan on voting to move \$10K from the undesignated fund to next year's budget in support of salary and noted that Mr. Colangelo was present. Mr. Colangelo stated that this was done last year as well.

Ms. Summers asked about Youth Basketball. It was a great success but had a sharp decline in participation. She asked if Mr. Callaghan thought it would make a comeback. Mr. Callaghan responded that this year it was on track with last year, but he has some ideas to promote it in the coming year. This includes yard signage. He attributes some of the decline to the decrease in the number of students. He hopes to see an increase next year. This year, the coaches have done a great job, and the kids are really enjoying it. Ms. Summers noted that the budget has some good initiatives including Mr. Callaghan's interest in running a basketball camp as well as resurrecting pickleball. Mr. Callaghan explained that he is looking at pickleball in late spring at the Hall Memorial School after basketball wraps up and more gym space is available. Depending on demand, they may offer a fall session as well.

c) 0513 Human Services

Ms. Karen Cote, Director of Human Services noted that she is asking for salary increases. ARPA funds were used for a Senior Center Coordinator position for the first, second and third years of the position but the funds are no longer available. She needs to pick up this salary and understands that this was agreed upon when the ARPA funding for the position was discussed. She would also like to increase funding for her assistant from 8 hours/week to 15 hours/week.

Mr. Lawler confirmed that prior to the Senior Center Coordinator position the role was filled by a volunteer. Ms. Cote explained that the volunteer was a senior who was 90 years old but decided to retire. The ARPA funds covered the position as follows: year 1, 100%; year 2, 50%; year 3, 25%. It was her understanding that the town would fund the position after the third year.

Mr. Lawler asked if the Senior Center has a board and if it is volunteer. Ms. Cote confirmed that there is a board but will need to get more information.

Ms. Mailhos asked for more information about the increase in the number of hours and a justification for it. Ms. Cote explained that her assistant currently works 8 hours/week and does a phenomenal job taking care of the food pantry. Many more people are utilizing this service. Ms. Cote noted that she is planning on doing fundraisers and would like to initiate multiple youth programs but needs assistance. Fundraisers will be held in the evenings, and she will need backup help. Ms. Cote highlighted that a comedy night fundraiser is upcoming, and she will share more information soon.

Ms. Summers asked for more information about the Senior Center position. Ms. Cote explained that they have regular programming which includes the following: line dancing, cornhole, Tai Chi, craft workshop, craft social, men's pool, chair volleyball, Saver's trip, Walmart trip, lunch/brunch trip, Lunch with a Good Book, and bread distribution. The Executive Board meets monthly, and a general meeting is held as well.

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Further, a casino trip is being scheduled for February. She will send the Board a copy of the programming. Ms. King, the Senior Center Coordinator, is also working on an AARP Community Challenge Grant, the CT Art for Senior Centers Grant, The Button Shop Bugle Monthly Newsletter, and the durable medical equipment inventory. She is also preparing for weekly programming, researching and planning for upcoming programs, researching possible upcoming trips, staying up to date on issues that effect seniors in Willington, maintaining her certification as a CHOICES Counselor, brainstorming ideas for the community, and communicating and networking with other Tolland County senior centers. Ms. Summers asked about the myriad of military services. Ms. Cote will get more information on this.

Ms. Mailhos noted that the ARPA Commission funded a community cares program (\$5K) which would help residents assist seniors in town. She asked about its status. Ms. Cote will research this and provide the information.

d) 0517 Library

Ms. Karenann Caldwell, Library Board Chair, explained that the Directors tried to keep the budget as close as possible to an inflationary increase. Even though the inflation rate is going down, many things are still more expensive. Building maintenance is up 28.38%. The line had not been addressed for 2 years but the building is getting older, and work is needed. Building repairs also increased for the same reason. The maintenance line is set and includes the elevator, fire response, water testing and treatment, and the water softener. Money was set aside for heating and electrical work as well in case repairs are needed. She noted that some maintenance is very high. Electricity is flat and they projected a cost increase for propane. Ms. Caldwell noted that reduced line items include internet, phone, security, patron software, and outside resources such as the Library Consortium.

The greatest change is in regard to salary. They are requesting pay raises. She asked if the minimum wage goes from \$15.00 to \$15.69 if it is not fair for the person making \$16.00 not to receive a raise. In addition, they restructured. Currently, they have 2 Co-Directors and are going to Director and Assistant Director positions. Ms. Caldwell explained that finding a director has been an issue because of the budgeted salary of \$56K which is the bare minimum the state recommends. They will not be able to hire anyone for less than this amount. The Assistant Director salary is at the rate of the current Co-Director. The additional comes to \$10K above the pay raises. Ms. Caldwell explained that they had a line for a page which was \$15K and the position is currently unfilled. In turn, this line was deleted and \$10K of the \$15K was moved to the Director salary. A Programmer is currently working 12 hours/week but in the summer, it requires more hours so the remaining \$5K was moved to the Programmer salary line which brings the position from 12 hours/week to just under 18 hours/week. Ms. Caldwell noted that this may change depending on if the Programmer would like the additional hours and what they would like to do. If the position remains at 12 hours/week, the \$5K would be put back into the Page line item for a 6 hour/week position.

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Mr. Lawler asked about the restructuring and if any of the duties changed among the clerks and directors. Ms. Caldwell explained that the clerk positions remained the same and the Processor and Programmer would have the same jobs. The Director and Assistant Director would need to be specified. They do not yet know if the request will be approved, but if it is, the list of expectations will be drafted.

Ms. Summers asked Ms. Latinsics if there is a presumption in the budget for year-over-year pay increases and if so, what it is. Ms. Latinsics responded that there is no presumption for an increase for next year until the union contract is finalized. They are in the third year of a 3-year contract that will end on June 30th. Ms. Summers confirmed that this year was 2.75%. She asked if they could presume it will be around this. Mr. Tanaka commented that they have not yet heard from the union.

Ms. Caldwell commented that the library is not part of the union. They requested a 4.3% increase and want to normalize the library employee salaries with comparable salaries in town. Ms. Summers commented that almost all have at least a 5.3% increase and some, including the clerk, are a 19% increase year-over-year. Ms. Caldwell explained that this is because one of the clerks increased her hours to 27.5. Without the director's increase, the increases are 4.3%. Ms. Summers asked about the 40% increase for the Assistant II position. Ms. Caldwell noted that this is the programmer they are hoping to increase from 12 to 18 hours. Ms. Summers asked about the salary for the director who left the position. Ms. Caldwell did not know. Ms. Summers noted that the co-directors are not MLS-certified. A director with such credentials would be a different ballgame.

Mr. Lawler commented on the comparison of the library staff with other departments' increases. He asked if Ms. Caldwell has researched what other small towns are paying their library staff. She responded that it is more than Willington. For the surrounding small towns, Willington pays less than Tolland and Ashford. Mr. Lawler requested that Ms. Caldwell send him the information.

Correspondence:

Ms. Summers asked Mr. Lawler if it would be possible to get the budgets to the Board members 3 days in advance. Mr. Lawler responded that they tried to do so but Ms. Caldwell was inundated with things going on at the library and did not submit the documents until 4PM today. Ms. Summers noted that the Board should have the Selectmen's and the Board of Education's budget at least a week in advance. Since the town has a 4-day week, it would be on the Thursday before. It is a lot to review and would give members time to plan their questions. She asked if they could also receive communication regarding when the agenda is posted. Mr. Lawler explained that the recommendation is to submit the agenda to the Clerk's office the day before the scheduled meeting. In terms of the last meeting, requests were coming in to be added to the agenda. Ms. Summers commented that the agenda used to go out on Tuesdays and now it is late on Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. Prusak noted that they addressed the budget calendar (revised 2/1) due to a conflict with the BOE schedule.

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Ms. Summers noted that the Budget Hearing was moved to April 10th and the Annual Town Meeting to April 24th. She confirmed that the changes would be approved at the Board's next regular meeting.

Ms. Summers asked if the budget letter was completed and sent out. Mr. Lawler confirmed that it was. Ms. Summers asked if the Board could see it. At the last meeting they moved to have the Chair and Mr. Tanaka collaborate so it could go out quickly. Mr. Tanaka noted that they did so and will send a copy to the Board members.

Present to Speak

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road, commented that overall, the salary increase is appropriate but going at it without a plan is kind of "reckless". Human Services did a great job being able to identify why it needs what it was requesting. Mr. Tella wishes that the Library Board would be able to define exactly and why it needs what it needs.

Good and Welfare: none

Adjournment:

Geoffrey Prusak motioned to adjourn at 7:44pm.

Jason Ross seconded the motion.

Motion passed (6-0).

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Pascuzzi

Lisa Pascuzzi

Recording Secretary

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2024 FEB 14 A 10:00


TOWN CLERK