

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes
Lower Level Conference Room

October 15, 2018
6:30 P.M.

**Minutes are not official until approved at the next regular meeting*

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM with the following in attendance: Selectmen Makuch & Blessington and residents. She then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes:

Selectman Blessington moved to approve the minutes of October 1, 2018 as written.

Selectwoman Makuch seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

Selectman Blessington moved to approve the minutes of October 10, 2018 as written.

Selectwoman Makuch seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

Present to Speak:

Todd Bissonnette of Cosgrove Road presented photos of recent traffic activity at the TA Truck Stop along Route 320, which he feels is hazardous. He stated that he believes the problem lies with the signage – where the truck entrance is and the passenger vehicle entrance is. People cannot see where they should be pulling in – for example cars pull into the truck entrance; and then either turn around, or back up into the road so they can pull into the correct entrance and it backs up traffic. He added that there is always a truck that is parked on the side of the road as well, which also causes confusion. Mr. Bissonnette cautioned that it is creating a hazardous situation for those traveling through there. He suggested the signs should be moved.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the Selectmen are not able to act on the signage at the truck stop, but suggested that Mr. Bissonnette bring this to the attention of the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Correspondence:

A list of correspondence was available at the meeting and in the Selectman's office.

First Selectman Status Report

- Noise Ordinance – First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that Sergeant Duda from CT State Police Troop C, is hopeful a representative will be able to attend the next meeting (November 5th) to discuss the ongoing issues we have been having. Once it is confirmed, we will add it back on to the agenda as an item under Old Business.

- PZW Agent – the details of the position are still being negotiated with the union. First Selectwoman Wiecenski is hopeful she will be able to make headway tomorrow.
- Pillars under the Town Clerk/Assessor wing and Ramp Replacement Project – we are ready to go on this – we are just waiting for the contractor, who will be scheduled; weather permitting. The Building Official has signed off on all of the permits. Once they begin demolition of the ramp, the front entrance will be closed and we will use the side entrance until it re-opens. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that we are hopeful that the ramp will be re-opened by the election. If it is not, the TOB will be closed to the public on that date – we will keep everyone posted as things progress.
- Assessor Position – First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we have received a letter of resignation from Richard Kryzak, our Assessor, whose last day with us will be November 2, 2018. The Selectmen wish Mr. Kryzak well as he will be moving out of state. We will be placing the ad for the position soon.
- We still have leftover STEAP funds from Turnpike Road that we have been requesting to use towards relocating and building a new salt shed. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she is going to try to get an answer on that, however, she has a feeling that nothing is going to happen on that until after the election, but she is going to at least start asking again.
- Video Recording Policy – First Selectwoman Wiecenski has reached out to someone at CRCOG about this as they offer a shared service for video streaming that would not cost us anything. She is waiting to hear back from them to see what they offer.

Public Works

Derek reported that the crew has been busy with the following:

- Roadside mowing
- Dig out drainage swales in upper lot at Center School
- Roadside mowing
- vehicle equipment repair /maintenance
- Mow sightlines
- Remove trees in river blocking Liska Rd bridge Pipes
- Inspect plows for repair
- Repair washout on Pinney Hill

Derek reported that the department is down to one roadside mower. The larger Ford tractor has broken down again. This tractor had extensive repairs to it two years ago with the same issue. Derek reported that the last time it was repaired the cost was \$24,000 to fix it. He stated that it is over 25 years old and he does not think it is worth having it repaired at that cost again. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she is not sure if he got a quote to fix it.

A new tractor has been added as a CIP request, but it was pushed out to Fiscal year 2021/2022. First Selectwoman Wiecenski is hopeful that it will be expedited at CIP this year.

Derek added that one mower will be out roadside mowing, and the department hopes to get all mowing done before the winter season.

New Business

A. Appointment

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the Selectmen had met Mr. Szabo last year when he was interested in filling the Recording Secretary position for Board of Finance. Since then, the CIP recording secretary, Eileen Smith resigned, and Mr. Szabo stated that he would be interested in filling in.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to appoint Todd Szabo as the recording secretary for the Capital Improvement Program Committee; effective October 15, 2018; expiring October 14, 2019.

Selectwoman Makuch seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

Old Business

A. Building Fee Discussion

First Selectwoman Wiecenski recapped that the Building Inspector had asked the Selectmen to consider raising the permit fees slightly; which was discussed at the last meeting. She had researched the history of the building fees and noted it was not that easy to find all of the details. She noted that the last time the fees were increased was June 21, 1999 and the time before that was April 19, 1993, where the fee had been increased to \$8 per thousand. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that there was not a lot of information on what happened with the fees between 1972 and 1993, therefore she was not able to determine how much they had been increased during that time but there is a 20 year span that they had gone from \$2 to \$8 per thousand.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that we should at least consider collecting the .26 cents per thousand education fee separately, rather than absorbing the cost into the fee. Right now, we have to pay that to the State. She stated not only have we not increased our fees in the past 19 years, to offset the increase in salaries and the new software, we also have to pay out the education fee to the state.

The Building Inspector's recommendation is to increase residential permit fees from \$10 to \$12 per thousand and commercial fees from \$10 to \$14 per thousand. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted back in 1993 and 1999, there was little to no discussion regarding the fees or the increase. She stated that the discussion held at the last meeting, was to have the increase taken out of the General Fund, but she feels that she would rather have the people who want to use the service pay for it, rather than having the whole town pay for it.

Selectman Blessington stated supposedly this was done for the good of the town but once again, we are telling people they will use this service and pay for it whether they want to or not. He added that his feeling is that we should have only the very basic fee or no fees at all. We should have to only pay the .26 cent per thousand only because the state tells us we have to; but otherwise, if he had his way, it would all be paid out of the General Fund; keeping in mind for the average citizen of what this costs. Selectman Blessington added that he supposes that we are not going to go backwards but he is still opposed to increasing the fees.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that there is a base \$35 fee across the board plus the fee per thousand. She clarified that the Building Inspector is not asking to raise the base fee.

Selectwoman Makuch added that this should be looked at as to the benefit of the individual, but also that we are subjected as a town to offer these services to ensure that our residents are protected when they build something. She added that we did not opt to do this – it is mandated by the State. To have a slight monetary increase for a service that we are required as a town to provide, and that individuals will benefit from; there should be no argument. Lastly, she added that it is a slight increase for something that hasn't been touched in almost 20 years.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski agreed, noting here we are 19 years later, where we have seen increases in salaries and technology where we are making things easier for residents and this will help offset these costs. She noted that the Building Department is looking to set the fees so they can implement with the new permitting software that is slated to go live in November.

Peter Tanaka stated that the Board of Finance was not in favor of supporting the new permitting software, because they felt that the residents would see an uptick in fees in order to support it. First Selectwoman Wiecenski disagreed, noting the fee increase shouldn't have to happen because of the permitting software – she added they have not been touched in almost 20 years and we are behind other towns and we are almost providing a disservice. We are still well behind what other towns charge and we are the only town that absorbs the .26 cent educational fee – all other towns charge a separate fee for that. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the discussion in the past was that these fees were to cover the cost of the inspections and travel, etc. She argued that if the fees in 1999 took care of that, she is doubtful that they cover the cost of the current rates.

Selectwoman Makuch stated that we have to pay for the service – it is the question do we want to raise the taxes for everyone (increase the mil rate) or do you want to charge an additional fee – either way, the taxpayers are going to be paying more. The question is not if we are going to pay, but rather it is how. First Selectwoman Wiecenski added that it is also who should be paying for it – noting that the only people paying the fees would be the ones who are using the service.

Selectwoman Makuch stated that we have been talking over the past three meetings on how significantly under-resourced we are, so if we want to be able to continue running and functioning as a town, then we need to figure out where the money is going to come from to offset the costs. She then asked Selectman Blessington which would be more palatable – raising everyone's taxes, or slightly increase the fees?

Selectman Blessington stated that a fee is a tax. Selectwoman Makuch then asked who he would like to see pay for it? Selectman Blessington said he would rather see it come from the General Fund and the Willington tax payer. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then asked Selectman Blessington if he would rather see no fees at all? Selectman Blessington said although it would be impossible, he would like that – but it would never happen. Selectwoman Makuch said then everyone would be paying more. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then asked what about the people who have lived in their home for 20 years and maybe never used the service; but with it added to their taxes, they are paying for it every year. She clarified, unlike the Transfer Station, it is more limited and you are going to affect fewer residents.

Robert Shabot stated that he as a resident would not like to pay for gentrification – someone else's swimming pool, large garages, etc. Peter Tanaka said that the Selectmen keep stating that this is a service, but he thinks of it as a burden that our population is suffering because of our Government. Todd Bissonette stated if you build something, specifications are to be followed and the building inspector is to make sure everything is done to code – when dealing with an electrical project for example, could end up saving someone's life if it were not installed properly and inspected. Especially when people who are purchasing homes, they do not know what is inside of the walls that is why these things are inspected.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we are not just talking about residential properties – but commercial properties as well.

.26 First Selectwoman Wiecenski reviewed the minutes from the last meeting, where the Building Inspector suggested keeping the minimum \$35 fee across the board.

Town of Willington Building Inspector, James Rupert had been asked to join the meeting to answer a few questions regarding his recommendations. Mr. Rupert stated that the minimum fee of \$35 should be applied across the board. This will be less confusing when setting up the permitting software. The minimum \$35 fee is

for a portion of the first thousand dollars. Then the rate of \$12 will be applied per thousand on residential projects and \$14 per thousand on commercial projects. In addition, the .26 cent educational fee should be collected separately as well.

Selectwoman Makuch moved to increase the building fees as recommended by the Building Inspector. *a minimum \$35 base fee across the board for the first thousand dollars; \$12.00 per thousand additional for residential and \$14 per thousand for commercial and 26 cent per thousand for state educational fee.* First Selectwoman Wiecenski seconded the motion.

Christine Psathas asked what will happen if the State educational fee increases? First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that it would then be reviewed in the event it happens.

Vote: 2 Yes (Wiecenski & Makuch) 1 No. (Blessington)

Motion passes.

Mr. Rupert then stated that the fees should have a starting date.

Selectwoman Makuch made a friendly amendment to the above motion: to have the increased building fees take effect on November 1, 2018.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

Good & Welfare

Sarah Reis, who is the founder of "It Takes A Village Hill" will be hosting a local heroes breakfast on Sunday, October 21st. The breakfast will be to honor all of our firefighters & their families and will be held at Willington Hill F.D. Hall. If anyone is interested in helping or donating, please contact the Selectmen's Office and we will put you in touch with Ms. Reis.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we received a letter from Phil Monty, who was interested in seeing more American flags on display along Old Farms to the Senior Center and also from the Town Green to the Library. Mr. Monty has proposed to have a committee formed to oversee the project and he has also drafted a sample donation form for those interested in purchasing or sponsoring a flag. Mr. Monty has also offered to serve on the Committee and to install the flags at an appropriate height to save the town additional expenses. Lastly, Mr. Monty stated he is hopeful to have flags in place by Veteran's Day.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she agrees this is a great idea, however when the Selectmen had discussed a few months ago, there were many logistics to work out. For example, there are several houses between the Town Green and the Senior Center - all of those locations would need permission. Also, in other towns, we tend to see along a main street - which is something we really do not have.

The Town of Stafford has loaned us their speed trailer on Cisar Road. First Selectwoman Wiecenski thanked them for installing it out there. She is looking to see if they would let us keep it an additional week, but to flip it around to catch traffic going the opposite direction of what it was capturing this past week.

The annual car show had another successful year on the Town Green. First Selectwoman Wiecenski was honored to be part of the event. She thanked Joe Phillipi and the CT Street Legends for putting it on again this year. The event raised \$1,846, which was donated to the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation.

Jim Rupert suggested that the motion that was made under Building Fees should have an effective date. The Selectmen made a friendly amendment to add an effective date (see under old business).

The Willington PTA will host a Trunk Or Treat event on Saturday, October 27th from 1:30 -3:30 PM in the parking lot at Center School. If anyone is interested in hosting a trunk, please contact Dawn Niderno.

Reminder – this year's Election will be held on Tuesday, November 6, 2018. In the event the ramp has not been completed, then the Town Office Building will be closed to the public on that date. (we will send out notice ahead of time). First Selectwoman Wiecenski also warned that it will be quite noisy while the contractor is demolishing the ramp. The Tax office may be relocated or closed on those days as it will be very difficult to hear anything.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:33P.M.

Selectwoman Makuch seconded the motion.

Vote: 3 Yes (Wiecenski, Makuch & Blessington) 0 No.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Campbell
Administrative Assistant