

# Town of Willington

---

## Board of Selectmen

40 Old Farms Road  
Willington, CT 06279  
(860) 487-3100  
(860) 487-3103 Fax  
[www.willingtonct.org](http://www.willingtonct.org)

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

### Regular Meeting Minutes

In person & Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

October 18, 2021

6:30 PM

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

First Selectman Wiczenski called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM with the following in attendance in person: Selectman Blessington in person, Selectman Blessington via Zoom and residents in Person and via Zoom.

### Pledge of Allegiance

### Approval of Minutes

First Selectman Wiczenski moved to approve the minutes of October 4, 2021, as written.

Selectman Boritz seconded the motion.

2 Yes (Boritz & Wiczenski) 1 Abstain (Blessington).

### Present To Speak

None.

### Correspondence

None.

### First Selectman's Status Report

- A. **STEAP Grant:** Still working with DPH to finalize items; one is an easement to go from the Old Town Hall and across the road to the Town Green, this will then require a town meeting for approval. We have asked P&Z to do an 8-24 review.
- B. **School Building Committee:** Last meeting was held October 6th. Discussion was held in regards to \$100,000.00 that had been allocated in the town meeting the previous day. The next step for the committee is to develop an RFP to hire an OPM. The next meeting is Wednesday, October 20th at 6:30pm via Zoom.
- C. **CRCOG ADHOC Crumbling Foundations Meeting:** Attended meeting last Friday. Have not had one since December 2019. Presented by CFSIC that was set up to allocate funds for repairs of crumbling foundations. 88% of claimants are represented in 10 towns and Willington is one of the top 10 towns. Willington has 127 claimants. 402 homes have had foundations repaired; that's approximately 350 since the 2019 meeting. Some of those numbers include condominiums and some of those condos are on Baxter Road. They've paid over \$77 million in claims; the average

claim is about \$167,000.00 and the maximum claim was \$175,000.00. Beginning in January, they will look at pending claimants that were not included in the first round. Nothing has been done with those particular packages, but hopefully in July 2022 they will begin working on those. In July 2021 they began the process of putting together a town by town progress report of non residential properties and that report should be available by March 1, 2022. .

- D. **COVID:** As of 10/14/2021, the Town has a 57.9% fully vaccinated rate; that represents 36 new fully vaccinated individuals. Since the last meeting, there have been 9 new positive COVID cases. Once again, encourage residents to be cautious and consider getting the vaccine.
- E. **Staffing:** Welcome to Christopher Roberts who has been hired as the new Assistant Land Use Agent; he began today. Alan Humphrey has been the Acting Parks and Rec Director, but beginning November 1st, he will be the permanent Parks and Rec Director. Tish Ignatowicz will begin as the Assistant Finance Manager as of November 3rd. This will create a vacancy for Tish's current position (Account Analyst) which has been posted internally first to the Union. If there are no internal candidates, we will post this position later this week.
- F. **CARES Money:** Received last year and had to be spent by December 31st, 2020. FEMA paid 100% instead of just 75%. We will now need to allocate an estimated \$5,000 or return the money. We have until December 31st, 2021 for those funds as there was an extension for the CARES funding. Considering replacing computers for staff members.

### Public Works

Public Works Director Troy Sposato reported a list of the items performed at Public Works recently::

- Roadside mowing.
- Jeff Hansen has been servicing vehicles in preparation for Winter.
- Fixed the roof at the dog pound (a few little leaks).
- Installed multiple street signs (due to vandalism, this is extremely costly).
- Paving edges around the town.
- Removed infected tree behind Old Town Hall (Emerald Ash Borer).
- Cleaned drains at the library.
- Graded Michaellec & Clint Eldredge Road.
- Changed trash at River Road Park twice during the week.
- Fixed the fence on Potter School Bridge over 84.
- Removed trees and weed whacked at the Senior Center where the well pump housing is located.



A reminder to everyone that starting Monday, October 18, 2021 there will be drainage work being done in the area of 7 Marco Road; tomorrow we will be paving it. We ask that residents avoid the area until later in the week, as the road will be closed to through traffic.

EMCOR update: AC units are currently being installed at the Senior Center and the project is anticipated to be completed by this Friday, October 22, 2021.

## **New Business**

### **A. Selectman Blessington's comments on the BOE Controversy**

Selectman Blessington: This goes back to over a month ago when a member of the Board of Education made some comments on expressing an opinion that we are teaching too much sex to children who are too young and this created quite the firestorm and that's something for the Board of Education to fight out. However I did object because at the last meeting I attended, which was September 20th, some citizens had sent letters to the Board of Selectmen blasting this individual and those appeared under correspondence and this is very unusual that the letters were read out loud at the Board of Selectmen's meeting and there was no rebuttal allowed because it wasn't on the agenda and then these letters, which is very rare, were published with comments so anybody who paid any attention to that meeting was given one side of the story about Ms. Testa. My own personal opinion is that she's a very good woman and her opinions are different than others and she's allowed to have different opinions. And those who don't like her opinions are allowed to have your own opinions. I think too much was taken to try to suppress her opinion. So I just wanted to say that at least there is a bit of a rebuttal in the minutes of the Board of Selectmen.

Selectman Boritz: It was handled and I feel handled appropriately at the Board of Education. I think there's a little bit of a mischaracterization with the issue as you've identified it but I see no point in having a debate or discussion about it. I think the townspeople clearly know what happened and they clearly understand the issue and I don't feel as though there's any other information that needs to be added here. There's nothing new from what we've already discussed and from what has occurred in conversation with residents, and at the Board of Education meetings.

Selectman Wiczenski stated it was not as though there was no opportunity. I read into the record the correspondence that came in. At any time, any of the selectmen could ask for something to be read into the record.

Selectman Boritz: I would like to add that that has happened. It's not extremely common but it's happened (reading correspondence into the agenda) multiple times.

Selectman Wiczenski: I will refer back to the Willington Board of Education statement from their September 24th, 2021 meeting regarding this matter.

### **B. Public Safety**

Selectman Blessington: According to the minutes of the town meeting on October 5th, First Selectwoman Wiczenski called the meeting to order at 7:05PM with 60+ residents in attendance at Hall Memorial School and on and on and doesn't mention that there was two State policemen there and this I find extremely disturbing. This is a small town, it's a meeting, it's not even a particularly contentious meeting and yet we had to have armed guards there. This is just wrong. I don't know why we had them there.

Selectman Wiecenski: My office, myself specifically, requested from Troop C the presence of an officer. They sent us two. Certainly there have been threats on social media and to individuals regarding mask mandates, mask mandates in school, and there was enough concern that we felt it would just be in our best interest. There was no cost to the Town. What we got from Troop C was the on-duty officer and they said to us barring no emergency, they would send up a patrol officer. Again two showed up, that was not what I was expecting and that if they had an emergency, they would leave, they could be with us for five minutes or a half an hour.. I thought there was enough concern over some threats and I just wanted to be sure that we were prepared. I said it publicly that evening in front of folks and I said it to the officers that were there; I didn't necessarily think that our residents would behave in such a manner as seen in many town meetings across the State and the country but I wanted to be prepared in the event that we needed their assistance. We did not, they were there. What do you consider necessary for public safety? I made that call and I stand by that call.

Selectman Blessington: I think it was overkill. Having police at meetings gives an intimidation factor,

Selectman Wiecenski: I can appreciate that you did not feel any need for public safety in your case but that was not the case for all that were in attendance.

Selectman Blessington: Fascism. This smacks of fascism.

Selectman Boritz: There have been people on social media who have been threatening to "make life very uncomfortable for me" and those are some exact quotes and to show up where I live and to make my life uncomfortable and that is something that has been repeated over and over and over in the last few weeks, the last couple of months really. I am glad again that you are not feeling any concern. Fascism, that's a very interesting take on your part. I am not even gonna bother with a rebuttal on that because I believe that you saying so in this meeting about something where two of your fellow Board of Selectmen are saying they have felt threatened, it's invalidating and it clearly shows us where you stand.

### **C. Resolution -- 2021 Homeland Security Grant Program**

This is the annual resolution for the 2021 Homeland Security Grant Program. This is an annual grant that we apply for and it requires a resolution.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved:

RESOLVED, that the Willington Board of Selectmen may enter into with and deliver to the **State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security** any and all documents which it deems to be necessary or appropriate; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that Erika G. Wiecenski, as First Selectwoman of Town of Willington, is authorized and directed to execute and deliver any and all documents on behalf of the Willington Board of Selectmen and to do and perform all acts and things which he/she deems to be necessary



or appropriate to carry out the terms of such documents, including, but not limited to, executing and delivering all agreements and documents contemplated by such documents.

Selectman Blessington seconded.

**3 Yes (Blessington, Boritz & Wiecenski) 0 No.** Motion carries.

#### **D. Award Affordable Housing Plan Development Contract**

Applied for the Affordable Housing grant. Put out an RFP and sent to three separate parties. Only received back one proposal from Tyche Planning & Policy Group, for \$15,000.00 (which is also the amount of the grant).

Selectman Wiecenski moved to award the Affordable Housing Plan Development project to Tyche Planning & Policy Group.

Selectman Blessington seconded.

**3 Yes (Blessington, Boritz & Wiecenski) 0 No.** Motion carries.

#### **E. Tax Refunds**

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to refund ACAR Leasing LTD a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$776.14

Selectman Blessington seconded. **Motion carries unanimously.**

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to refund Derik Dumond a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$84.15.

Selectman Boritz seconded. **Motion carries unanimously.**

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to refund Joseph Lanche a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$39.70.

Selectman Blessington seconded. **Motion carries unanimously.**

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to refund Gail LeBlanc a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$78.55.

Selectman Boritz seconded. **Motion carries unanimously.**

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to refund Jie Liu a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$24.44.

Selectman Blessington seconded. **Motion carries unanimously.**

First Selectman Wiecenski moved to refund Kevin J. Spain a Certificate of Correction in the amount of \$61.09.

Selectman Boritz seconded. **Motion carries unanimously.**

#### **Old Business**

None.

## Present to Speak

Jim Bulick, Laurel Drive: I attended the Town meeting the other day at the Hall School. I did go up to the police officers and I did discuss with them, I said it's unusual. I haven't recalled seeing any police officers at town meetings in recent memory and I asked them why they were here and they told me they were hired to specifically enforce the mask mandate. I'm kind of stunned here. What's the truth, what's the facts. Were they hired to indeed enforce the mask mandate or what's going on here. We seem to be playing a little fast and loose with the facts. I hope it's not that. I hope it's just a misunderstanding, but I'm very concerned about having police officers that are at our town meeting if all they were there to do was enforce the mask mandate.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham, 41 Liska Road: I also serve on the Board of Education and I wanted to note that for the record it is board policy that when we have large groups of people such as at the musical or graduation, we often invite public safety officers to come and be at the site with us. It's just a good practice for things that happen when there's a lot of people in one place. If you may remember there was a car fire a number of years ago accidentally when someone parked on some leaves. That's just a simple accident of what happen. But given the threats that have been happening on social media, not only in Willington but especially around the country and the level of anger that I have witnessed first hand from people who feel very strongly against this mask mandate, I am incredibly disappointed in Selectman Blessington's lack of awareness of these threats, lack of compassion for his colleagues who've been threatened. My experience has always been that if a person expresses something to you, the first response should be I'm sorry to hear that or I'm sorry you had to experience that. I would like to know more about why you feel threatened and instead the thing is that it's overkill. It's not any different than other large meetings we've had in that building except that the anger in town from people, a very small vocal majority, no I'm sorry, minority, a small number of people could have been disruptive. So I don't think it's overkill in any way, shape or form. I think that it was very reasonable and I am sure there were people that did not attend that town meeting for exactly the fear of it getting out of hand. They might have felt more comfortable had they known that there were going to be police officers there but because they weren't hired, they were just on duty, there was no guarantee that they were going to be so. So I am just saying that it is not a bad thing to have public safety officers there. And I am really disappointed in the way that this was expressed. I'm also very disappointed in the way that Selectman Blessington characterized the controversy at the Board of Education. I think that anybody who hasn't already should go to the Willington Youtube page and watch the Board of Education September 14th meeting for yourself. You can make your own decisions and then you can watch the September 24th followup with the statement that was made and voted upon and supported by six of the seven members. So I think it's essential that you make your own decisions based on what people had to say tonight but that I think it's very clear where people's hearts and minds are about this issue based on the statements made here today. Thank you

Peter Latinscis, 97 Trask Road: I was also at that Town Meeting and I want to address also the issue of the State of Connecticut police presence. I was unaware frankly, of any threats against our Board of Selectmen from the public and I am shocked to hear this. I apologize but I am not a participant in social media. However I am concerned that we address anything like that of course but at the same time I am concerned about police presence at routine town meetings where we want full public participation and don't want the meeting chilled by police presence. I ask the Board of Selectmen to address this because I don't recall anytime in my 35 years in Willington where we have police presence at a town meeting. I just don't ever recall that and I am very concerned about this kind of precedent moving forward.



### Good & Welfare

Mobile Food Share will continue at the TOB next Wednesday, October 27 from 11:00am to 11:30am as a drive through model. This is open to all.

If you're able, to support our small businesses and restaurants, as they need our support.

Municipal elections will be held on Tuesday, November 2nd from 6:00am to 8:00pm. They are here at the Town Office Building.

The VFW will be hosting a Veteran's Day event Saturday, November 13th at 11:15am at the Veteran's Memorial across from the Senior Center.

Our next meeting is Monday, November 1st. We will not be able to use the common room because it will be set up for elections. We are going to try to use the downstairs room for that meeting but it may be a fully remote meeting.

The Willington PTA is next Friday, October 29th. Reach out to Melissa McKinnon if you are interested in hosting a trunk. The event will be at the River Road Athletic Complex.

**First Selectwoman Wiczenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:12 PM.**

**Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.**

**Vote: 3 Yes (Blessington, Boritz & Wiczenski) 0 No. Motion carries.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Kelsey Allard  
Recording Secretary  
Town of Willington

RECEIVED  
WILLINGTON, CT.

2021 OCT 25 P 3:10

  
TOWN CLERK