

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Board of Selectmen
40 Old Farms Road
Willington, CT 06279
(860) 487-3100
(860) 487-3103 Fax
www.willingtonct.org

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Special Meeting Minutes
Via web interaction (via Zoom platform)

September 8, 2020
6:30 PM

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

First Selectwoman Wiczenski called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM with the following in attendance; Selectmen Boritz & Blessington and residents.

Approval of Minutes

First Selectwoman Wiczenski moved to approve the minutes of August 18, 2020 as written. Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.
Vote: 3 Yes (Wiczenski, Boritz & Blessington) 0 No.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski moved to approve the minutes of August 21, 2020 as written. Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.
Vote: 3 Yes (Wiczenski, Boritz & Blessington) 0 No.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski moved to table the approval of the minutes of August 26, 2020 until they are refiled with the correct date. Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.
Vote: 3 Yes (Wiczenski, Boritz & Blessington) 0 No.

Present To Speak

Peter Tanaka was present to speak. He stated at some point government is going to have to determine that it is an essential business and open up as others have. I understand the governor has continued his monarchy until sometime in February but at some point we need to open up the town hall as an essential business. I would also like to speak to the letter that was sent to the BOS regarding the library. I believe that we have more than mere suspicion to begin an investigation into what happened with the finances and that we should be reporting this as soon as possible to legal investigatory services such as the state police.

Correspondence

A list of Correspondence is available in the Selectman's Office.

First Selectman's Status Report

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated the fuel tank replacement at the Public Works garage began, they removed the old tank and the new above ground tank is set to be delivered and installed tomorrow. As of right now we have a temporary fuel tank set up at the Public Works garage so that we can provide fuel for not just our equipment and EMS but because of the delay due to Covid, we ran right up against school

starting so our biggest concern was that buses were able to fuel here and not have to line up at area gas stations.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski received an email early this afternoon that outlined additional funding for the 2020 Presidential Election cycle from the Secretary of State specifically saying that Willington was slated to receive PPE for our poll workers (we received 2 boxes of PPE last week) and an additional \$5,434 to support costs due to Covid and the election. The Registrar's Office and the Town Clerk's office are working on what their extra expenditures are so we can see how far the \$5,434 will go in covering the extra costs. There was also a State Polls Grant for each polling place, we have just one and they would receive \$1,000. I am asking for clarification to see if the \$1,000 is on top of the \$5,434 and if it's going directly to the Registrar's Office.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated the Registrars have determined that moving the polling place from the Town Office Building to Hall School gymnasium is the best option for us to allow for better social distancing, allow for one way traffic, and is handicap accessible. For any voters unsure you also have the option of an absentee ballot for both the normal reasons as well as Covid.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated the Assistant Town Clerk position which will be available after October 2nd has been posted internally per our CBA if it is not filled internally then we will post externally.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated the Administrative Assistant position has been posted and it will close on September 15th. Applications should be sent here to the Selectman's Office.

Public Works

Troy reported the following that has been done by Public Works:

Continued roadside mowing

Patched holes around town

Paved the intersection by Trask Road and the Fire Station

Completed work at the Fire Station for the school to make an outside classroom

Land clearing at Center School

Emptied trash at the park

Tree removal around town

Tomorrow we start chip sealing as follows: Kucko Road, Saint Moritz Circle, Lucerne Drive, Adamec Road, Burt Latham Road, Hall Hill Road, and Timber Lane.

They will set the fuel tank tomorrow and hopefully within another week we should have fuel running. First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated there has been a tremendous amount of work between our Public Works Department and the schools. I really want to extend our appreciation to Troy and his staff for the work they have done to support Willington Schools and their effort to create outdoor learning space for students who are going back to school.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski reminded residents who live on the roads that are getting chip sealed to move their cars.

a. Request to extend Public Works summer hours

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated Troy requested to extend the (4) ten hour days which were set to end next Sunday until November 1st. The summer hours at Public Works are set through the CBA we have in place. I believe it's the second Sunday in May through the second Sunday in September. They work (5) 8 hour days the rest of the year. This gives them more time in the day to get some of the bigger projects done while there is still daylight. We had approved this last year and Troy has asked for it again. First Selectwoman Wiecenski asked Troy what they had planned during this extended time.

Troy Sposato replied I would like to rent an excavator for the month of October to address some drainage issues that we didn't get to in the spring time. There are a couple water ways we can't get to with our regular backhoe. I know the BOF said if we could rent one and prove to us, it is something we could possibly think about purchasing for the following year.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated I know at the beginning of the summer you were able to get quite a bit of work done utilizing that machine, obviously some of these project are weather dependent so hopefully we can continue with that, This is an issue that is set by the union contract, is your staff in favor of extending the 10 hour days?

Troy Sposato replied yes, I spoke with everyone and they are in favor of it. If we had to go back to the five 8 hour days they would be ok with that too.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated in the past as a board we have approved such extension which is why I told Troy I would bring it back to the board for us to determine.

Selectwoman Boritz asked if there are already staggered hours so that there is some amount of coverage on a Friday.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated we have such a small crew so when our Public Works is on their summer hours they all work Monday-Thursday. One of the things we could do is change Troy's hours so he was the coverage on Friday but then that leaves a couple hours every day where his crew is here and he isn't. I think our residents are used to the summer hours and they will leave messages. If there is something urgent, they will call the Selectmen's Office. If there were emergencies we would treat it the same way we would any other day the department is closed, they would be called in just like they are in the winter time.

Selectwoman Boritz stated I think this is what John was getting at; it increases our chances of having to pay overtime. I don't know that this is a big concern before October 31st.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to approve the extension of Public Works summer hours until November 1, 2020 with the understanding that if weather dictates we can change it at any time.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated if we start to get weather reports that there is pending snow, we can come back and revisit the extension of the summer hours and make changes. They would still have the machine and still be able to use it just with shorter days.

Selectman Blessington stated I don't know if the motion is workable as is. Would we have to hold another special meeting to change the hours back? If we don't I'm sure the union wouldn't want us to just change them.

Troy Sposato stated if we extend the summer hours and we had a storm I think the guys would just say we will go back to our regular hours. If we do end up having snow in October, I think I could tell them were going to go back to our regular hours this week, I don't think they would have an issue with it.

Selectman Blessington stated my concern is union contracts and I would suggest we amend the motion to strike out the part about changing the hours if weather changes. It should be pretty safe to go through until the 1st of November.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated I will accept that amendment.

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

New Business

A. Response to Community Concerns Regarding Library

First Selectwoman Wiczenski read the following statement:

Several citizens have expressed concerns regarding allegations related to a former employee at the Willington Public Library. While I appreciate the concerns of the citizens, the matter is currently being addressed internally by the Willington Public Library and the Library Board of Directors. At the present time there is no role in that process for the Board of Selectmen. This individual was not an employee of the Town of Willington therefore our board remains willing to assist the library where and when appropriate to do so within the investigation. This is not a matter for discussion this evening.

Selectwoman Boritz state given the information that I have based on our legal advice I am in support of your statement.

Selectman Blessington stated I am still not comfortable with this. I don't think anything is being accomplished and we need to insure it does.

First Selectwoman Wiczenski stated there is a Library Board of Directors meeting which is their regular meeting on the 2nd Friday of the month. I would assume they would speak about this and your concerns could and should be heard at that board. We are aware of the issue and paying attention to it but we are also aware the Library Board is taking action and right now it is a matter for them. The former director was an employee of the Library Board and right now that's where the matter lies. We are here to assist them if they need us.

B. Pre-Application for Remediation of Brownfields Grant with the Town of Ashford (Cadlerock)

First Selectwoman Wiczenski moved to approve the submission of a 2020 Brownfields Remediation Pre-application for Cadlerock with the Town of Ashford.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

C. Tax Refunds

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$1,159.85 to Robin and Wendy Knight on a certificate of correction.

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to refund \$1,048.75 to VW Credit Leasing LTD on a certificate of correction.

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

A. Old Business

A. COVID-19 Update

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated I did not see numbers out today but as of yesterday we still had 16 accumulative cases in Willington and 0 probable cases. The Town Office is still operating via appointments and we are going to go back to our regular hours. We altered our Monday hours towards the beginning of the pandemic and beginning Monday September 21, 2020 we are going to go back to our 12:30PM-7:30PM hours to better serve our residents and allow greater access for those who need appointments after 4:00PM.

a. In person meetings

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated I think we have been able to effectively hold our meetings via zoom and they have been well attended. As we near the six month mark we need to further determine the best way to conduct our essential legal meetings of town boards and commissions. As you know we do not have a meeting room equipped with technology to broadcast our meetings live from the Town Office Building or any other town facility. This along with space to accommodate larger boards and members of the public, make this a difficult task. As we approach budget season, we have at least one board with 10 members and at the table this board is elbow to elbow. I see a need to hold in person meetings but I also see the concern that we are not set up for that. We don't have the funding for those capabilities. I see a need for one of three options; continuing with full zoom, go to a hybrid model allowing for some in person and then zoom, or we are all in person. The all in person would mean we need some sort of technology available for folks to be able to attend our meetings. I think all the options come with increased costs whether it is improved technology or the cost of zoom and meetings hosted by CHA. I am thankful they are able to do that for us but none of these things were imagined to be long term.

Selectwoman Boritz stated I don't imagine any immediate ability to go back to in person meetings as they have been in the past with us in a small conference room. We wouldn't be able to have anyone else there. I don't think we have another facility that would allow us to hold meetings. Is there a reason we can host our own zoom meetings?

First Selectwoman Wiecenski replied it is a matter of the fact that we have a free Zoom account and you can only hold one meeting at any given time on any one platform. With CHA hosting our meetings, if their using their Zoom business account they also have the ability to allow for a larger audience. In order for us to host the meetings, we would have to use our YouTube account to live stream but then anyone who wants to comment would have to do so through email or in the comment section. I feel like we have been successful and we can continue this model for some time going forward. We could purchase our own full Zoom account or GoToMeeting account; it's having someone to administer that on every given board that becomes the concern.

Selectwoman Boritz stated I'm suggesting that we purchase our own and for the BOS we still have video recording, audio recording, and someone taking notes so if we were in a situation where we purchased Zoom and the recording secretary was also tasked with recording the meeting, taking notes, and keeping an eye on the chats and mute/unmute feature for present to speak, I feel that is manageable. I think this format is the simplest and most efficient for the circumstances.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski asked John if even the paid accounts can only hold one meeting at a time.

John Guskowski replied that's correct. I will tell you the town of Essex which is similarly sized decided to go with two floating Zoom accounts that the administrative assistants have a "sign out" calendar for. They share the login information with the Chairman or whoever is administering each commission. Thus far it has seemed to work pretty well. In the meantime Mike and I with CHA each have a Zoom account and there are a couple other accounts available to us through colleagues. We are able to help out with at least three meetings as needed.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated I think you and Mike have been a tremendous help getting our meetings up and running and hosting them. I'm just starting to think long term and spending as we are now in month six of Covid and under the Public Health Emergency and those executive orders potentially going into the winter time. I know budget season will be here before we know it and I want to think ahead because often times we have multiple meetings.

Selectman Blessington asked for the cost of the Zoom account.

John Guskowski replied it depends on the level. You can look up the different options on their website. It is around \$15/month per license a little bit more if you get a higher capacity. I think the \$15/month gets you a 100 person meeting and it goes up from there.

Selectman Blessington stated I would really like to go back to in person meetings but we aren't anywhere near the point where we are ready to do so. That is not a bad price and I think we can afford it.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated I agree and think we would need a couple accounts. Come January I don't think two would be enough BOF, BOE, and CIP alone could have multiple meetings we also meet multiple times and this doesn't include regular business.

John Guskowski clarified the price is \$200/year which included cloud recording.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated one of the benefits of the account is the meetings are posted on a Zoom cloud so if something were to happen to the meeting, Zoom can help you locate it on the cloud. It's an added level of security, we do need to record and post our meetings and I think our residents are starting to enjoy that. I can look into purchasing an account and we can start to use the Zoom account similar to a meeting room, if we need more we could potentially utilize the services of CHA.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated the new number of COVID cases just came up as we were having this conversation and our numbers have increased from 16 to 17. We are fortunate that these are still relatively low numbers. People seem to be doing their part to help keep each other and our families safe.

Selectman Blessington stated I suggest we purchase two accounts which would get us through to next year. We should also be thinking about looking into what we are going to do when we go back to in-person meetings as far as video recordings.

Selectwoman Boritz stated Zoom does also offer monthly subscriptions. Its \$15/month for small or \$20/month for the big Zoom. I think buying 2 or 3 year subscriptions makes the most sense.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated I want to do a little research because our board commission members and recording secretaries are not town employees and do not have town issued devices so I want to make sure there is no concern of them hosting the meetings on their own computers. I will look into this.

Present to Speak

Peter Tanaka of Mason Road was present. He stated I'm really happy to hear that the Town Hall is going back to normal hours and that there is some conversation about going back to in person meetings. The Covid numbers are accumulative I'm assuming at some point people get better or they don't get better so a far more relevant number to be giving us would be current numbers. I would like to express my disappointment in the board avoiding their fiduciary responsibility to the town regarding the library and I believe that a criminal investigation should be started as soon as possible and as part of that an accountant would take a look at the books and I think that would be very helpful.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated the Covid numbers I provide are the numbers that a provided to this office and they are accumulative. I don't have any information on the individual cases.

Selectwoman Boritz stated I wonder if we could ask EHHD for a breakdown of accumulative versus active cases. I know we are tracking it at a state level but with so few cases in our area they may not be tracking it as closely.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski I will ask.

Good & Welfare

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated our polling place for the November 3rd election will be Hall School gymnasium not the TOB. There will be information shared on our website, social media, and a post card mailer going out to all our registered voters.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated today was the first day of in person classes for Willington Public Schools and the first time they are together as students and teachers since March 13th. I'm sure there is lots of apprehension from teachers, staff members, and parents and I applaud them for the tough decisions they have had to make. We wish all the students, teachers, staff, custodians, para-professionals, food service staff, bus drivers, and administrators a safe and productive new school year and I hope you are all able to get back to class safely soon.

Selectwoman Boritz stated extra special thanks for all the work of the BOE and the Superintendent's office. I saw the Superintendent out there this morning waving in every student.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated I received an email yesterday and unfortunately the annual car show on the green set for October has been cancelled. Hopefully they can make an even better car show for next year.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 PM

Selectwoman Boritz seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Catharine Holcroft
Recording Secretary

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT

Received for record Sept 21, 2020
At 2:05pm Maureen A. Gantner

TOWN OF WILLINGTON CT
Approved for Record
Attest: _____
Date: _____