

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN Special Meeting Minutes

Board of Selectmen
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**Town Office Building
Selectmen's Conference Room**

**February 11, 2019
5:30 PM**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM with Selectmen Makuch & Blessington, Business Manager Donna Latincsics and residents.

A. Budget Workshop

First Selectwoman Wiecenski presented an updated budget, which shows a slight increase from the last meeting; which is now up from 0.7% to 2.2%.

Part of the increase is because the Planning and Zoning Commission will be asking for a change in status to our Assistant Zoning agent, from part time to full time. The PZC is able to cover the salary increase; however the insurance coverage change will be reflected in the Selectmen's budget at an increase of about \$10,000.

Eastern Highlands Health District submitted a planned contribution amount of \$32,090 (an increase of \$910) although the number has not been voted on, the Director of the District is confident the number will be in the ballpark.

The Revenue Collector's budget reflects a 2% increase for the Revenue Collector's salary and a decrease of \$12,000 to the Assistant position; which will be cut to 12 hours per week. Instead of replacing the person at 22 hours (where we knew that we did not have 22 hours of work) we talked about trying to fill the needs the town has; by transferring 10 hours to the Recreation Department, where an assistant position was added to that department. The reduction in hours on our side will be an increase to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Selectman Blessington said we are getting a lot of growth all of a sudden. A year ago (after many years of not having an assistant in Land Use) we finally got one part time, and now a year later all of a sudden, they are going to full time. He added he really doesn't think we need more time for the Recreation Department. First Selectwoman Wiecenski said she sees an incredible need for someone – this is a department that produces a decent amount of revenue all of the programs are revenue/cost neutral. As a result, our Recreation Director keeps adding programs as requested by residents and does not have time to fundraise. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that Ms. Parsell is only able to do so many things in 35 hours per week. The job she has now is much more than 35 hours per week and cannot continue to function a successful program without help.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we tried to find solutions to fill the gap (in creative ways) but the union could not come to terms with that. This is another way to do that. Otherwise, we will end up filling a 22 hour per week position and not be able to keep that person busy because the job description is restricted by the union. She then clarified that there is a need in a department – you might not agree with the department that the need is in, but the need is still there. She added that she would refer to Planning and Zoning regarding the Assistant's increase but noted that PZC has not voted on it yet and if their budget does not go through, then we would not see such an increase in the insurance line. The hope for the union is that our interim Agent (who is currently contracted) will be able to share knowledge with the Assistant and be able to help her grow into the Zoning Agent over time.

Selectman Blessington stated that he understands the insurance portion of it and it is up to the Board of Finance to handle. First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that the PZC will meet and vote on their budget next Tuesday as their budget is due to BOF next week.

Selectman Blessington then asked what new programs have been started in Recreation over the past year? Maureen Parsell, who was briefly in attendance stated that the programs that have been in place; such as basketball has grown substantially in the last 3 years. We are at the point where we are maxed out and there is no more gym space to allow for any more teams. We currently have 6 high school teams; and one of the teams is a girls high school team; which is new this year. She noted that she is not allowed to run any other programs that require the gym because it is packed every night of the week, due to the number of players. Last year, she started a pickleball program; but that cannot run until basketball is over. In addition, Ms. Parsell stated that she has held successful yoga classes as well as summer camp, which hasn't been held since 2011. The Recreation Department has also started up a wellness program (in November); she has published the Willington Wire eNewsletter, has expanded the tree lighting event and also implemented summer concerts, which the sponsorship for those is very time consuming.

Selectman Blessington said all of these are very nice things – but is there a limit? If the people of Willington keep asking for more and more is it our responsibility to give them what they want? First Selectwoman Wiecenski clarified that it is our responsibility to hear what they want as we would hear any other concerns. It is important to different age groups and the different needs of the town.

Ms. Parsell said she hears different things from residents all of the time and tries her best to accommodate them. She has held swim lessons, babysitting training, and different safety courses – she feels it is her obligation to bring quality and affordable programs for our residents of all ages.

Selectwoman Makuch stated that there is a cost benefit analysis too. One of the things that we in Willington are challenged with is that we are right next to Mansfield, who has tons of services for their town; and we are not able to offer that level although we are growing. If we are not competitive with that, people will not want to live here. We already see declining enrollment in schools, we need to become more appealing and recreation is one way of doing that.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she would argue that we have more programming than one 35 hour per week person can do, but that doesn't stop Ms. Parsell and she is successful at what she does. Ms. Parsell added that she is also responsible for all of the park maintenance (all fields and Halls Pond) in addition to her program.

Selectman Blessington then stated that our taxes are getting higher and higher. He then said at what point does it cease to be the responsibility of the town to fulfil everybody's wants and desires? First Selectwoman Wiecenski then said that we have a department – shouldn't we make sure it is running properly? Or should we only fulfil it to what he feels it should be.

Selectman Blessington said the department will continue to grow and as it grows, we will never have enough help. He then stated that it is not that Parks and Recreation is not important; but we cannot cut the education budget because children will die of ignorance if we do such a thing. He then said if asked which is more important; education or Parks and Recreation; he would choose education.

Selectwoman Makuch stated that is a false choice and no one is asking you to choose and this doesn't even add any money to our budget; it is about keeping it the same, with shifting the money from one department to another. It is about dividing resources and dividing up responsibilities. First Selectwoman Wiecenski then asked Selectman Blessington if he would rather see someone sitting in an office with no work to do a good portion of the time? Selectman Blessington then stated he would rather see resources being spent in another office where there is other work to do. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated "I'm telling you there is an office with adequate work to do" why wouldn't we allocate the resources where there is a need. She added that we have a need in multiple departments

and a lack of need in another. She tried to work with the union to come up with a solution, but they did not want to work with us. This particular discussion actually means less to our budget. It is a net zero.

Selectman Blessington said we are dealing with a philosophical difference in what government should be. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that we have a Parks and Rec Department and it needs to be adequately run; which is not the case now. Selectman Blessington said that concerns him that you keep trying to expand it. It is not the core function of Government to provide basketball to kids. It is going to add to the taxes.

Peter Tanaka suggested the Selectmen re think of what the core function of government should be; and asked them to reconsider shifting the help to another administrative department or even perhaps cutting the hours and putting that money towards air bottles for the Fire Departments so they do not suffocate while running into a burning building. He added that there may be people that move to Mansfield because they have the best of everything – library's, schools, parks that they spend tremendous amount of money on; but there are others who choose to move to Willington because our taxes are lower.

Selectwoman Makuch clarified that she stated that we need to offer some services so we are not an un-desirable town to live in – it is all inter-related because if we are not desirable, then we all lose. She then stated that we are not saying we are increasing the capacity of our support staff but the other thing to keep in mind is what takes work off of anybody's plate in such a small building; will take some work off of everybody's plate.

Selectman Blessington stated that last year, the Director position became full time and now we need an additional part time person. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated for a long time, there were a lot of things lacking in the department and services were not being offered. She would like to see her tax dollars go towards things that benefit people or residents.

Mr. Tanaka added that he has a son who teaches karate for a living; where having programs that are paid for by tax dollars make it hard for him to make a living with that sort of competition. Mr. Tanaka then clarified that Ms. Parsell does a tremendous job and that is what is making this conversation so difficult. First Selectwoman Wiecenski agreed, noting that Ms. Parsell does a tremendous job for the entire town; and for residents of all ages.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski then asked Donna Latincsics to recap how the budget increased from 0.7 to 2.2%.

Donna stated that there were two pieces on the employee insurance; there is a change because we received a resignation today the change is due to the census changing in staff.

Donna added that the Finance Department received notice last week that the accounting software that they have been using for over 20 years will be sun setting as of June 30, 2020; which means there will no longer be any support of maintenance on it. The town uses this software for general accounting, payroll & human resource functions. With that being said, Ms. Latincsics noted she is not sure what we will be replacing it with, nor the cost, but has added a place holder for starting up new software.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that she has added a few things into this budget; which she feels strongly should stay; such as the traffic control line as we have had so many requests from residents across town. In addition, the facility maintenance is very important to keep in the budget.

Selectman Blessington stated we have done about all we can as far as the roads go. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that she has heard all of the concerns and has put forth a request. We have done our due diligence and this is not something we are oblivious to. She clarified that she would like to wait until we have a new Public Works Director in place before we begin implementation.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski recapped the budget as a whole:

- Accounting Services shows a 7.5% increase due to future software implementation
- Assessor shows a decrease of - 8.3%
- Revenue Collector shows a decrease of -12.2%
- Town Clerk shows an increase of 1.8% for purchased services
- Town Hall Operations shows an increase of 25.5% due to maintenance and computer support services
- Old Town Hall operations shows an increase of 4.8% due to oil (heating) costs
- Senior Services shows an increase of 6.2% due to maintenance services
- Public Safety shows an increase of 2.9% due to contractual services with Eastern Highlands Health District
- Fire Main/Hydrants shows an increase of 8.4%
- Building official line shows an increase of 29.8% due to the permitting software support addition
- Public Works shows an increase of 3.9% to reflect CIP requests and lease payments
- Transfer Station shows an increase of 3.7% due to the addition of hours for the Assistant T.S. Operator
- The Capital Reserve shows an increase of 111.30% but will change, once the CIP Committee sets the plan and submits to the Board of Selectmen.

Donna explained that the Capital Reserve is one of four items on the CIP plan. The CIP budget is up \$5,400 and there are 4 line items that add up to local CIP funds that affect the Selectmen's budget. They are: the annual transfer to the Capital Reserve Fund; Capital Expenditures (930); debt payments in Public Works and debt payments in line 910. First Selectwoman Wiecenski stated that the CIP Committee is continuing work on the plan. The Committee will meet on Wednesday. Peter Tanaka, who is also a member of the CIP noted that the requests came in at \$2.64 Million, and they have to get down to \$550,000.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we do not have any other budget meetings scheduled past this meeting. She then asked the Selectmen if they are comfortable with submitting a 2.2% increase, or do they want to schedule more workshops? Selectman Blessington stated that he believes all of the disagreements have been hashed out and we will continue to disagree but that is why we are here; noting he does not feel a reason to continue.

Selectwoman Makuch stated that we have tightened up and refined to the point that is reasonable to put forth without further input. She added that she does not want to cut the proposal to help remedy the speeding concerns (traffic control) as we have heard something about this at almost every meeting. She added that she feels it is important and doesn't want to cut them out before even giving the Board of Finance to look at it.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski noted that we are still in the process of hiring a Public Works' Director and could be negotiating the salary; which could reflect a slight change in that particular line.

The current budget that will be put forth to the Board of Finance is \$74,983 or 2.2%.

The Board of Selectmen will meet again at their regular meeting which will be on Tuesday, February 19th at 6:30 PM. At that meeting, they could vote on this budget as well as the FY 19-20 CIP Plan.

First Selectwoman Wiecenski moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:26 PM

Selectman Blessington seconded the motion.

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

Respectfully Submitted:

Robin Campbell

Recording Secretary

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT

Received for record 2/13/2019

At 10:20am Quynh B. Law T/C