

**TOWN OF WILLINGTON  
ANNUAL TOWN BUDGET MEETING FOR  
GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND EDUCATION  
MEETING MINUTES**

First Selectman Peter Tanaka called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM and read the call of the meeting:

The electors of the Town of Willington and all persons who are entitled to vote in Town Meeting on the matters mentioned in the following warning are hereby warned and notified to meet at the OLD TOWN HALL at 11 COMMON ROAD in WILLINGTON on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, at 7:00 P.M. for the following purposes:

**ITEM I**

To discuss the proposed General Government and Education budgets for the fiscal year July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. A summary of the Town budget is:

Estimated	
General Government Budget	
Operating	\$5,518,808
Capital:	
School Bond	0
General Purpose Bonds	150,000
Reserve Fund	1,531,000
Capital Expenditures	0
Capital Projects	0
<b>TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>\$7,199,808</b>
Estimated	
EDUCATION BUDGET K-8	\$ 9,877,772
REGION 19	\$ 4,632,193
<b>TOTAL TOWN BUDGET</b>	<b>\$21,709,773</b>
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES</b>	<b>\$ 4,204,145</b>
To Be Raised by Taxation	\$17,505,628
Less Applied Fund Balance	700,000
<b>NET AMOUNT TO BE RAISED BY TAXATION</b>	<b>\$ 16,805,628</b>

**ITEM II**

To set a date, not less than seven nor more than fourteen days thereafter, for a vote on the annual general government and education budgets by a separate "YES" or "NO" vote on the voting machines.

**ITEM III**

To set the Town Office Building as the polling place and to set the hours, of the referendum, during which votes may be cast, not less than between the hours of twelve o'clock noon and eight o'clock P.M. and not more than between the hours of six o'clock A.M. and eight o'clock P.M.

**ITEM IV**

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will adopt the Capital Improvement Program for fiscal years 2025 to 2029.

# ITEM V

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will appropriate \$27,049 from the Capital Reserve Fund to 04-0450-001: School Repair Projects. These funds are to come out of the million dollars set aside for School Projects in CIP FY 2023-2024

Dated at Willington this 11th<sup>th</sup> day of April 2024

Willington Board of Selectmen:

Peter Tanaka, G. Matthew Clark & G.Andrew Marco

First Selectman Tanaka noted that there was a typographical error in the call where the general operating budget is listed as \$65,000 over and the capital expenditure line is listed at 0 which is \$65,000 under. Although these numbers are not listed, it does not change the total General Government budget and that is correctly listed.

First Selectman Tanaka then asked for nominations for a moderator.

Christine Psathas nominated Erika Wiecenski as moderator, seconded by Mike Makuch.

Moderator asked for any objections to dispense a second reading of the call. There were no objections.

Moderator then read ITEM I:

To discuss the proposed General Government and Education budgets for the fiscal year July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. A summary of the Town budget is:

Estimated

General Government Budget

Operating

\$5,518,808

Capital:

School Bond

0

General Purpose Bonds

150,000

Reserve Fund

1,531,000

Capital Expenditures

0

Capital Projects

0

**TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**\$7,199,808**

Estimated

EDUCATION BUDGET K-8

\$ 9,877,772

REGION 19

\$ 4,632,193

**TOTAL TOWN BUDGET**

**\$21,709,773**

**TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES**

**\$ 4,204,145**

To Be Raised by Taxation

\$17,505,628

Less Applied Fund Balance

700,000

**NET AMOUNT TO BE RAISED BY TAXATION**

**\$ 16,805,628**

Moderator then opened the floor for discussion noting that there is no vote on this item.

First Selectman Peter Tanaka stated that the Town operating budget contains a number of expenses totaling a 4.4% increase. In the budget is \$1.5 million that covers an HVAC



and roof on the schools, \$150,000 to pay for the library bond. He also then clarified again that there is a typo of \$65,000 is listed as the operating budget but should reflect under capital expenditures that will cover parking, paving and security at the Town Hall.

Moderator then asked if the bottom line net to be raised by taxation to be moved to referendum; is correct? First Selectman Tanaka answered yes.

Peter Latinesics noted that he is trying to understand such a large tax increase in a single budget year and recognizes the process - driving the large increase to the budget, but what he is not understanding is why we chose to pay for it out of the operating budget. He then asked why the Boards of Selectmen, Finance and CIP Committees sit down and try to bond; noting that it is hard to sustain this level increase this year and years to come. He is looking for feedback.

First Selectman Tanaka noted that the 22% increase in the capital expenditure increased by \$50,000 - \$65,000 it is not a large dollar amount but it is a large percentage. He also noted that CIP has put in a plan to bond in the next few years but until we figure out a long term plan, it is hard to get bonding funds for projects that are not planned.

James Marshall said that a 1.5 mill increase is not an increase it is all operating there is a negative increase if it is not the driver of this increase we are not addressing any capital needs and we are going to have to address the \$40 million of work that needs to be done and that is the reality. It isn't capital expenditure driven - it is operating budget driven.

Nick Tella said he personally hopes to stay away from bonding. His concern is a 1.4 mill increase and almost half of it is driven by the Board of Education at \$724,000 - and it is out of control. The out-placement is out of our hands. The BOE spending should be put on hold to offset the outplacement costs. An 8.6% increase is not fiscally responsible.

Mitch Saba agrees with what Mr. Tella just said. He added that years back, they tried to cut \$50,000 from the school budget and it was that they tried to take away the art teacher. We have a 30-40 cars at Center school (K-4) That seems like a lot of people working in that building. He added that we have a 14% poverty rate in this town this budget may increase it by 6% - which would put us higher than Rockville. Mr. Saba added if any one of us in this room have an issue with their house, we would make due as best as we can until we can get funds to fix it - the town should do the same.

Mike Makuch noted that it seems like First Selectman Tanaka and Mr. Marshall are saying can't both exist at the same time. He clarified that you can try to pick out which is causing the increase but the fact of the matter is we are paying for the capital or operational - we are paying for all of it out of our taxes or revenue. - just like you would use your paycheck and take money out of your savings accounts.

Jennifer Goodale added that she sits on the Board of Education and the CIP Committee and spent meeting upon meeting trying to balance the kids needs and the towns needs. They spent hours talking about what is needed versus what they want. Its easy to say "cut that". We could be given \$20 million more and it still wouldn't be enough.

Nick Tella noted that he saw that a facilities director has been added to the budget at a cost of \$81,000 - it shows that we are only looking to add instead of cut.



Ann Grosjean stated that the townspeople made it very clear that they did not want a new school – they wanted to repair our schools. Mr. Stevens is our Superintendent – he cannot oversee the project of repairing both schools, so rather they decided to hire someone to do so.

Superintendent Phil Stevens noted that the Board of Education knows this is a large budget item. Special Education costs are up over \$600,000 this year alone. He cautioned even if this budget were to fail at referendum, that cost must still be accounted for in the budget. It also doesn't factor in the decrease in our IT contract from 5 days to 4 or other cuts we have made in transportation and programs. Ironically it is a 1.3% increase without the added special education items. Mr. Stevens added that they have applied for over \$580,000 in grants but we have a shortfall from 7 outplaced students, where we originally budgeted for 2 but will not ask for additional funding to cover the cost this year. The BOE is doing that through grants, a frozen budget not filling open positions.

Peter Latincsics asked how the outplacement costs will impact future years, the built-in increase and the MBR. He then asked if we are going to have to face this going forward forever? Superintendent Stevens stated that is a good question; noting the towns are legally required to work within the same dollar amount that you budget for the prior years unless certain circumstances come about – like a significant decrease or a change in outplacement tuition and that would be a legal reason to allow the MBR change.

Kathleen Demers said that she supports this budget and the facilities manager. We have kicked the can down the road long enough.

Melissa Miller asked Superintendent Stevens if the facilities director position would be long term or contractual? Superintendent Stevens answered that when you get a certain amount of projects done – at some point, the position will shift to either part time or go away. The BOE projects some of these positions based on need or funding, in which this would be the same.

No further discussion was held on ITEM I. Moderator then closed discussion and noted that no vote will be taken.

Moderator then read ITEM II:

To set a date, not less than seven nor more than fourteen days thereafter, for a vote on the annual general government and education budgets by a separate “YES” or “NO” vote on the voting machines.

**Suzanne Chapman moved to set the date of Referendum to Tuesday, May 7, 2024.**

**Peter Tanaka seconded the motion.**

There was no discussion.

**Vote taken: All in favor with the exception of 3 people. 0 Abstentions.**

**Motion passes.**

Moderator then read ITEM III:

To set the Town Office Building as the polling place and to set the hours, of the referendum, during which votes may be cast, not less than between the hours of twelve

o'clock noon and eight o'clock P.M. and not more than between the hours of six o'clock A.M. and eight o'clock P.M.

**Walter Parsell moved to set the Town Office Building as the place and the hours of 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM.**

**John Tehan seconded the motion.**

There was no discussion.

**Vote taken: All in favor. 0 No. 0 Abstentions.**

**Motion passes.**

Moderator then read ITEM IV:

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will adopt the Capital Improvement Program for fiscal years 2025 to 2029.

**Peter Tanaka moved to adopt the Capital Improvement Program for fiscal years 2025 to 2029.**

**Jason Ross seconded the motion.**

There was no discussion.

**Vote taken: All in favor. 1 No. 0 Abstentions.**

Moderator then read ITEM V:

To see if the townspeople, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, will appropriate \$27,049 from the Capital Reserve Fund to 04-0450-001: School Repair Projects. These funds are to come out of the million dollars set aside for School Projects in CIP FY 2023-2024

**Jason Ross moved to appropriate \$27,049 from the Capital Reserve Fund to 04-0450-001: School Repair Projects. These funds are to come out of the million dollars set aside for School Projects in CIP FY 2023-2024.**

**Melissa Miller seconded the motion.**

Moderator then opened the floor for discussion, asking whose recommendation was for this item; noting it should be from the Board of Finance because if it is a yes vote, she wants to be sure it is legal.

Superintendent Stevens noted that this request did go from the Board of Finance to the Selectmen. Because of the shortfall in this year's BOE budget they are trying to scrape back some money from repairs and out of the \$27,000 to balance their budget. There is only 1 project estimated around \$3,000 that hasn't been completed yet. They were able to repair many other items between Center and Hall School.

Nick Tella requested clarification regarding the \$27,000 as it appears that it is really covering special education. Superintendent Stevens explained that the BOE budget is currently in the hole and they had to cover the shortfall as they had to do the repairs (which have been completed). The money allocated from CIP is not in their operating budget.

Walter Parsell stated that it sounds like general maintenance – and should be part of the regular budget. Superintendent Stevens said typically they are, but this has not been a typical year.

Melissa Miller clarified that the Board of Finance made the recommendation at the April 10, 2024 BOF meeting. She then read the motion as submitted in the minutes recommending that Selectmen call a Town Meeting to appropriate the funds.

Moderator then ended discussion.

**Vote was taken on ITEM V:**  
**All in favor 0 No. 0 Abstentions.**  
**Motion passes.**

Moderator then adjourned the meeting to Referendum to be held on May 7, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Robin H. Campbell  
Town Clerk

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WILLINGTON, CT.

2024 MAY -2 A 10:00

  
TOWN CLERK