

**TOWN OF WILLINGTON  
SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE**

Regular Meeting Minutes  
Hybrid; TOB, Common Room & Virtual Meeting

April 19th, 2023  
6:30 PM

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

Member	Position	Present in Person	Present via Zoom	Absent
Phil Stevens	Superintendent of Schools	X		
Mike Makuch	Board of Selectmen Representative (Chairman)	X		
James Marshall	Board of Finance Representative		X	
Christopher Tillona	Board of Education Staff			X
Ann Grosjean	Board of Education Member		X	
Katherine Viveiros	Construction Industry Experience			X
Peter Latincsics	Member at large	X		
Justin Niderno	Member at large			X
Briana Ross	Member at large		X	
Ralph Tulis	Member at large (Vice Chairman)	X		
Erika Wiccenski	Member ExOfficio (non-voting)			X

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Makuch called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

**PRESENT TO SPEAK**

John Blessington, 29 Mason Road: Mr. Mason stated that Sherry Macinda wrote a letter to the SBC and can't be here tonight, so he wanted to read it for her. The letter suggested not discussing a new survey to taxpayers. The letter also stated that if the results of the referendum had said yes, a survey would not have been done. The letter also asked to dissolve the SBC, and said biased members of the SBC should not be allowed to be on the committee. The letter stated disappointment in learning about grants from the public and not SBC members or other school officials. The letter asked that time not be wasted because it is almost summer and that is the ideal time for contractors to work. The letter also asked SBC members to say that the public was misinformed. Mr. Blessing also noted that a letter he had written had never made it into the minutes and hoped that the letter he just read would.

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road: Mr. Tella asked if the SBC would honor the vote of the people saying it is a yes or no answer. He said that he feared a new survey could be used to possibly push a second vote on new schools. Mr. Tella stated that the SBC should be dissolved and that a new building committee should be made to get necessary repairs done.

Pete Tanaka, 125 Mason Road: Mr. Tonacka stated that he agreed that the SBC be dissolved and that a new committee be formed to make repairs to the schools. He noted he was not sure what that process would be, but there needed to be a School's Facilities Committee instead of a School Building Committee.

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An online speaker: She thanked the SBC for the work they have done and continue to do. She said she believed that the SBC should remain and that a second referendum should happen. She stated that being in a state of continual repairs of the old buildings would cost millions, just as a new school would. She stated that those who paid attention to just the end of the process only saw the last minute problems that erupted. She also noted that a lot of conspiracy was generated around what would happen to properties related to new schools being built. She said that many of the problems that came up with the referendum were solvable.

Matthew Clark, 42 Burt Latham Road: Mr. Clark stated that the school referendum defeat was now a month old and adequate time had been had to discuss the path forward. He stated he did not know what the SBC had to do with continuing facility studies, and that other committees in town are already in charge of doing that. He stated that the SBC should be dissolved and that if it is not, they should be given a new charge. He also stated that he did not believe a second referendum was needed.

Alan Ayers, 38 Timber Lane: Mr Ayers stated that the SBC has to continue because no other options are known. He also noted that more information is needed on how to repair the schools, he said someone needs to come in and get a good estimate of what the repair costs would be. Mr. Ayers said that people had the information available but did not do their due diligence to find the information regarding a new school.

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road: Mr. Tella said that his February 16th submission for the FOI request has not been fulfilled. He also noted that CT Mirror did not have anyone reach out to them and that CT Mirror reached out to the town.

### **CHAIRPERSON REPORT**

Chairman Makuch stated that he knew there was desire from the community to disband the SBC and that there is desire to continue it. He asked that people give them more time to decide the future of the committee with other town Boards and Committees. Chairman Makuch said he did not see a likely path to a referendum for a new school at this time. He said it was clear that the new school was not what the town people wanted, however where they go from here needs to be discussed further. He stated he would like to discuss how to get more town feedback and understand what the taxpayers want. He also noted that the Hall Foundation was not mistreated in the process. Chairman Makuch said he understood why some did not like a survey, however he would like to learn more about what the town wants. He stated that bias has been mentioned by residents and that he did not believe that the committee members did not have to be neutral. However, he said that the Committee's job was to get the information and make the best decision they could on the information that was presented. Mr. Makuch also said that the discussion of grants was very important and that the district is continually applying for grants.

### **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

#### **A. SBC regular meeting minutes of 3-15-23**

The meeting minutes have not been done at this time.

#### **B. SBC regular meeting minutes of 4.5-23**

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The meeting minutes have not been done at this time.

C. SBC Finance Subcommittee meeting minutes of 3-31-23.

R. Tulis motioned to approve Finance Subcommittee minutes from March 31 2023.

Chairman Makuch said to hold off on it until all members could see them and decide it was recorded properly.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Makuch stated that he has been in communication with the Hall Foundation and that he asked them what they had done prior to the referendum because they had made a small Committee of Foundation members that if the committee passed, they would figure out what to do with Hall School. They are asking for a little time to figure out some direction since the referendum failed.

P. Latincsics said that there were questions raised about how the building would be returned to the Hall Foundation. He stated that any information the SBC has from the Hall Foundation should be collected and passed on to the Board of Selectmen and The Board of Education.

Chairman Makuch said that emails have slowed down in the last couple weeks and that they will be sent to the Board Members. He stated he had made an effort to respond to residents who reach out to him.

### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Land Assessment Subcommittee: There is no new report.

Finance Subcommittee: P. Latincsics stated that the Finance Subcommittee had an update on their expenditures. He noted that not a lot had changed. He noted that there is a balance left of \$50,000 and asked the Board of Finance if there are any other invoices out there.

Makuch stated he would have to go over the report, however he knew some bills from March were just coming in.

Communications Subcommittee: There is no new report.

### OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Makuch moved to add agenda item 7D to old business which would be a PO increase for QA+M.

P. Latincsics seconded the motion.

Member	Vote
Mike Makuch	Y
James Marshall	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y

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Briana Ross	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y

***Vote: 6 YES 0 NO 0 ABSTAIN***

### ***Motion passes***

#### **a. Referendum Voter Feedback Survey**

Chairman Makuch stated that he had mixed opinions on this and that there are also mixed opinions from residents and committee members. He stated that he was not looking to do a survey for a second school, however he does want some feedback on what town residents want when it comes to fixing the schools. He said that the price for the postage mailing would be about \$800. Makuch said that the price includes all the houses in town. He said that to protect people's anonymity it would be much more than \$800 because it would be postage going both ways. He said the full package method could cost close to \$2,000.

P. Stevens said he reached out to UCONN's public policy office and that he has not heard back.

P. Latinsics said that he believed this type of survey would fall under the direction of a new School Facilities Committee to guide them with a potential new charge. He said he believes that the SBC's charge has been filled except for cleaning up invoices, etc.

Chairman Makuch said that creating a new committee and making a new charge and then doing surveys would be less productive because they would not know what town residents would want until after the committee is made.

P. Lantiscis said it would be more appropriate coming from a different committee or the Board of Ed.

Chairman Makuch said that it could be from the Board of Ed. but wonders why there is resistance to the SBC sending out a survey because the survey is based on the work the SBC did.

A. Grosjean said that if they decided to do a survey the information would be sent to the Board of Ed.

Chairman Makuch said that one of the things he would like to do is write a letter to the Board of Ed. and Board of Selectmen to get direction on where the SBC should go.

P. Lantiscis said that it should be directed to the Board of Selectmen since that is where the SBC was created. He also said he had a strong disagreement with having a survey sent to residents and that it was fundamentally wrong to ask the voters on why they voted the way they did. He stated that he believed that the SBC had received abundant feedback at this time especially at the most recent town meeting.

Chairman Makuch said that he disagreed with a lot of what P. Lantiscis said. He stated that they have received feedback on only a small group of voters. He said that they had the feedback from about 50 people and that there were over 1700 voters at the referendum which is a big difference. He stated that he believed that that is where they continue to struggle.

P. Stevens said that they do not know why the town residents voted the way they voted and they do not

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know what alternative the residents would prefer.

J. Marshall stated he was torn on this as well. He said that he saw value in a survey and at this time there is a very small group of people giving feedback. He stated he was not sure that a survey would be effective and that the SBC would get the amount of feedback that they were looking for. He said that someone reached out to him and said they did not like the consolidating of the grades, which is a comment the SBC had not gotten.

B. Ross said she is questioning the goal of the survey. She says that the goal would be what do you want to do from here. She stated that was important information that the SBC uses or another group uses to move forward. She also noted that she did not think the Committee failed and that she is an educator on the committee and that she did what she thought was right for the students.

Chairman Makuch said that this was something that maybe should not be decided on now and if they did decide to do a survey it should focus on asking what residents want moving forward and not bringing up the question whether you voted yes or no.

R. Tulis said he would also like to know what was not included in the charge for the SBC and what should have been. He said that he believes that the charge was focused more on a new school than options.

B. Ross said that a good question for the survey would be what kind of group or person should move forward and what charge should be done going forward.

Chairman Makuch said that no decision should be made yet.

A. Grosjean said that it would be helpful to get some final numbers on costs about the survey before they decide to send one.

### **b. Public Communications at Meetings**

Chairman Makuch said he had no new thoughts since the last meeting on this topic, but asked if anyone had any comments. He said he received feedback saying to leave both present to speak as they are, but there is also an angst from residents because committee members can not respond.

R. Tulis said having the two is good because the first one allows people to say what is on their mind and the second allows the public to voice opinions on what the meeting was about. He said he believed there should be a public forum.

Chairman Makuch said that it was very important that the SBC gets public input. So the question is how to run an efficient meeting, but also get public input.

J. Marshall said that it was rare for a school building committee meeting to run so long with meetings getting sidebarred and he is not sure where the disconnect is. He stated feedback is important and in his experience that is done in a public engagement session where there is a back and forth. He said some accommodations need to be made, but the agenda needs to be followed.

P. Latinsics said he liked the current format, and if a present to speak turned into a Q&A then the whole

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meeting could turn into the Q&A session. He said that adding residents' concern to the agenda would be helpful and a good middle ground. He also noted that when someone sends a letter, it should be part of the public records.

Chairman Makuch said that there are some fundamental legal things involved, and that making things part of the minutes gives different legal implications. All of the letters would then have to go into the minutes and there would be hundreds of pages of minutes. The minutes are intended to reflect the action of the Committee.

A. Grosjean suggested having a google doc on the website that would involve any of the residents correspondents.

Chairman Makuch said that for the good of the order, they should probably not make a drastic decision on changing how they communicate at this time, but he does want members to think about how to make public communication more effective.

### **c. SBC Charge and Future Direction/ Status**

Chairman Makuch said if the committee agrees he could send a letter to the Selectman and Chairman of Board of Education giving the status of the committee and asking for direction on what to do.

P. Latinsics asked if he was suggesting a joint meeting.

Chairman Makuch answered saying that it was an option and that it was time for someone to give the committee direction.

P. Latinsics asked if there was a consensus that the charge had been filled. He said if someone doesn't think they did, that he would like to discuss it at this time.

Chairman Makuch said he reviewed the charge and they can't go any further on a consolidated school based on the failed referendum. He stated that if the townspeople say they want to look at Hall School, then it could still be considered a K-8 consolidated school.

R. Tulis stated that if the townspeople say we need to carefully examine an affordable option for a new school then that would complicate the issue.

P. Latinsics reiterated that they spent a considerable amount of time on items on the charge, and that the charge had been filled.

P. Stevens said he thinks its really important to know what the community is thinking and that information is needed to know what the town is thinking on consolidating schools. He stated that parts of the charge are possibly not filled because they do not have enough feedback. He also noted that there were not a lot of things left to address. He said a School Building Committee has always been in town through the Board of Education and that this particular group was assigned this particular charge.

J. Marshall suggested a joint meeting between the Board of Education to discuss what the potential next steps would be. He also noted that there is a lot that is open ended left to discuss. He said he believed there is a lot of information the committee has that can be used for what is done in the future.

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P. Latinsics asked if there was still a Board of Education Facilities subcommittee like there was when he served on the board of ed.

P. Stevens answered that it was a committee as a whole. He said that if there was a big project they get the quotes and experts are talked to. It will be reviewed and brought to the school board for recommendations. For bigger projects, and some grant projects experts will need to be brought in, in some cases. He also noted that for grants, the application has to be filled out by the superintendent which can be difficult because he does not have construction expertise. He noted that for a long term plan he is okay with renovating Hall School, but there needs to be direction on where they are going.

R. Tulis said that you have to look at consolidating schools from the taxpayers perspective and that it could be good for grant money, however it does not solve what to do with the empty buildings which is a taxpayer issue.

Chairman Makuch said that the state is trying to push consolidated schools but are not putting in enough money.

R. Tulis said that this is why projects get rejected because taxpayers recognize that it does not say anything about the cost of shutting down old buildings.

P. Stevens said that could be one of issues, that they get the same feedback from the same people and that there needs to be more feedback from the rest of the town. He says he can not make a plan for elected officials if there is not support or feedback from the public.

R. Tulis said that they do see a lot of the same faces, but each of those people are in contact with multiple other people.

P. Stevens said that it still does not reach 1,700 people.

P. Latinsics said he has a lot of people who say a lot of people do not go to the meetings because they feel intimidated.

R. Tulis said that the first time he spoke at a public meeting he was trembling and scared to comment, he said a lot of people rely on others that they come in contact with to do the right thing by them. He said do not judge attendance on how many people have comments.

P. Stevens said that he is looking for direction and is looking for more feedback to decide how to move on. He also said that he heard multiple times that the committee should be dissolved so they could apply for grants and pointed out that there were very few items on their fix it list that met grant requirements. He said that the committee is not making the town ineligible for grants. He said there was over a half million in grants in the 2023-2024 budget. He said time and direction is needed to plan repairs so that they can be planned correctly.

P. Latinsics said that the roof project was suspended because a new school was being considered. He said that now that a new school is not being considered, why isn't it reasonable for the town people to expect that a project that was suspended is now unsuspended and why it can not proceed.

Chairman Makuch said that they could potentially moving forward with those, but there is not enough

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time to make it happen this summer.

A. Grosjean said that it is important that the roof project happen in a comprehensive plan in case ventilation and other work is needed.

P. Latinsics said he agrees with what has been said but says that the problem and the reason the referendum failed was because of public distrust. He said because he believes that is true then the sooner other possibilities can be explored the better.

P. Latiniscs moved the committee to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the committee dissolve.

R. Tulis seconded the motion.

Chairman Makuch said that they had spent a lot of time talking about a more comprehensive answer than to dissolve the committee. He said it was different asking for direction than asking to dissolve.

P. Latinsics said that he did not see how a lot of options were possible by this committee. He stated there was a very strong bias on the committee to try to get the single project through. He said that there needs to be a more diverse group on the committee than just the educational perspective. He said townspeople need to be a part of the committee.

Chairman Makuch said that one of the things that would slow down exploring options would be dissolving the committee and making a new one. He said many of the same people would likely be on the next committee because they are volunteers. He said it was not the committee, it was that direction was needed and that direction needed to be followed. He said that many are looking to punish the SBC, and he respects their feelings, but dissolving the SBC does not move anything forward.

R. Tulis questioned how residents felt about the credibility of the committee..

J. Marshall said he was personally frustrated and offended by repeated comments that the committee was stacked for a new school, saying that the charge was a new school. He also said he was personally offended because he is not looking to push a particular project. He said quite frankly he is looking for a solution to the schools.

B. Ross said she did not think the committee should ask to be disbanded and that it sounded like quitting. She said any committee member could quit at anytime they wanted. She said that she believed asking the Board of Selectmen for direction is what should be done at this time.

P. Latinsics said that he said it is important to respect the vote of the townspeople and that it seems like people want to continue the committee in spite of that.

A. Grosjean moved to call the vote.

Chairman Makuch seconded

Member	Vote
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Mike Makuch	Y
James Marshall	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y
Briana Ross	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y

***Vote: 6 YES 0 NO 0 ABSTAIN***

***Motion passes***

Voting on motion to recommend to the selectmen that the school committee be dissolved:

Member	Vote
Mike Makuch	N
James Marshall	N
Ann Grosjean	N
Peter Latincsics	Y
Briana Ross	N
Ralph Tulis	N

***Vote: 1 YES 5 NO 0 ABSTAIN***

***Motion fails***

Chairman Makuch moved that the committee send a letter to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education asking for direction through communication or a joint meeting.

B. Ross seconded the motion.

P. Lantincsics says he opposes the motion because he sees it as an attempt to circumvent the referendum vote.

B. Ross said that they do not have the power to dissolve themselves and that they are just asking what they should do going forward.

A. Grosjean stated if they were able to do a survey they could have information on what residents would like the town to do. She noted that they are changing direction.

Member	Vote
Mike Makuch	Y
James Marshall	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y

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Member	Vote
Peter Latincsics	N
Briana Ross	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y

*Vote: 5 YES 1 NO 0 ABSTAIN*

*Motion passes.*

### **d. PO Increase for QA+M**

Chairman Makuch said that they had hired QA+M a while back through a bidding process before the first of the year to do the conceptual plan for different options. He said he believed the purchase order was for \$19,500 and that they got the last bill from them for the reimbursables that were contractually included. The bill came to \$197.28.

Chairman Makuch moved that the PO cost increase by \$197.28 so they can pay the final bill.

R. Tulis seconded the motion.

Member	Vote
Mike Makuch	Y
James Marshall	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y
Briana Ross	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y

*Vote: 6 YES 0 NO 0 ABSTAIN*

*Motion passes*

### **NEW BUSINESS.**

Chairman Makuch moved to add item 8A, subcommittees, to new business.

R. Tulis seconded the motion.

Member	Vote
Mike Makuch	Y
James Marshall	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y

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Member	Vote
Peter Latincsics	Y
Briana Ross	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y

*Vote: 6 YES 0 NO 0 ABSTAIN*

*Motion passes*

### **a. Subcommittees**

Chairman Makuch recommended disbanding the land assessment subcommittee since there is no use for them now, and disbanded the finance subcommittee since they are down to their last few bills and also asked for guidance on the communications subcommittee.

A. Grosjean said she would like to keep the communications subcommittee in tact in case they decide to do a survey.

J. Marshall said it was a good idea to hold off on disbanding the communications subcommittee until there is direction.

Chairman Makuch moved to disband the Land Assessment Subcommittee

P. Latinciscs seconded the motion.

P. Lanticiscs asked if there were any recoverable funds from surveys and land testing etc.

Chairman Makuch said that he did not believe so.

B. Ross asked if there were any legal loose ends with the property owners that needed to be tied up.

Chairman Makuch said that they were waiting for final copies of some reports, but it was a communications issue and the Land Assessment Subcommittee would not be needed for that.

Member	Vote
Mike Makuch	Y
James Marshall	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y
Briana Ross	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y

*Vote: 6 YES 0 NO 0 ABSTAIN*

*Motion passes*

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P. Latincsics suggested waiting until the next meeting to disband the Finance Subcommittee until the last bills came it.

Chairman Makuch said that they will get the same report and that there is only one or two bills left.

J. Marshall said that he does not see a reason to keep the subcommittee going.

Chairman Makuch moved to disband the Finance Subcommittee.

J. Marshall seconded the motion.

Member	Vote
Mike Makuch	Y
James Marshall	Y
Ann Grosjean	Y
Peter Latincsics	Y
Briana Ross	Y
Ralph Tulis	Y

*Vote: 6 YES 0 NO 0 ABSTAIN*

*Motion passes*

### FUTURE BUSINESS – ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Future business items will include cleaning up minutes and whatever answer comes back from the letter to the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen.

### PRESENT TO SPEAK

Don Blessington, 29 Mason Road: Mr. Mason said that in regards to meeting participation people participate in meetings. He said that people could raise their hands and ask questions, and that would work very well. He said that when it came to surveys, they decided the answer to the question, and based the questions off of that. He stated that there was not adequate communication with residents, and that is why the referendum failed.

Peter Tanaka, 125 Mason Road: Mr. Tanaka said that mailing postcards to every household would not be appropriate because households have many voters. He agreed that residents should be able to raise their hands and speak to the topic that is currently being discussed. He also noted that a 2 and a half hour meeting is a detriment to communications. He also noted that it was mentioned that the public wants to punish the committee, he said that this is not true, and the public wants the committee to disband so they can move on to some reimbursable projects. Mr. Tanaka said that the committee had lost the town's trust and they do not want to see the referendum question come up again.

Elaine Newcomb, 28 Fernier Road: Ms. Newcomb asked to fact check if the new school was designed for all pre kindergarteners.

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Chairman Makuch said that it is not a Q&A it is present to speak.

Ms. Newcomb said that this was part of the problem. She said that the referendum was a tremendously big question put before the town with a huge cost and that the thing that would have made sense is that the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance owed residents a meeting to evaluate all of the pending needs in this town to see what we were going to be able to handle and what might be affordable to the taxpayers. She said attending meetings she found out about a lot of needs from around the town and that a look at the overall town needs should have been looked at and presented. She also asked if the proposed school was the cheapest possible plan.

Matt Clark, 42 Burt Latham Road: Mr. Clark said that a survey may not be the best way to get feedback from the town. He said that if you are connected to the community there is a better idea of what the results of a referendum would be. He said Phil Stevens is an advocate for the new schools so he should not be a part of reviewing surveys if they are sent out. Mr. Clark also thought it was a bad idea to combine five year olds with 8th graders. Mr. Clark said he felt his participation was not wanted due to the comments that some committee members made about hearing from the same 50 people.

Nick Tella, 49 Mirtl Road: Mr. Tella voiced frustration that the Committee did not recommend that they dissolve to the Board of Selectmen. He said that the concern that the Committee was stacked was a legitimate concern from people in town. He noted that it was not about trying to punish the SBC, but it was about the SBC not being trusted. He claimed some members were put on the committee to help push for a new school. He also noted disagreement that a superintendent should not be pushing for a new school when they don't share a typical resident's financial struggles. He said that the reasons for the referendum have been discussed. He also noted that a baseline ethics policy should be initiated when it came to town boards.

Arthur Christensen, 14 Birch Meadow Lane: Mr. Christensen said that there have been a lot of diverse opinions and thanked Chairman Makuch for not having a time limit on comments and letting people speak.

Alan Anderson, 28 Birch Meadow Lane: Mr. Anderson said he believed too much time was being spent on discussing how things like present to speak work. He said he thought a survey was really important and that it should ask people what they thought they were voting for. He asked if wording in the future could be changed to make things more clear.

### ADJOURNMENT

*Motion by P. Stevens to ADJOURN meeting.*

*Seconded by M. Makuch*

*All in favor, motion carried unanimously.*

*Meeting adjourned at 9:01 PM.*

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT  
Received for record November 20 2020<sup>13</sup>  
At 1:27 PM Rm  
CTC