

**TOWN OF WILLINGTON
SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE**

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

September 20, 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 Wiczenski	Member ExOfficio (non-voting)			X

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Makuch called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

PRESENT TO SPEAK

There was no one present to speak

CHAIRPERSON REPORT

Chairman Makuch stated that there was concern with the language at the end of the report they will be providing on their findings in the SBC, he said he feels that they have to address how the process went and what they learned so anyone looking at the report in the future has the most clear information.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Subcommittee: A. Grosjean asked that if when the report was finished if they could put it in the Willington Wire so townspeople who wanted to see it could.

P. Stevens said that they could e-mail it to those who signed up for the Willington Wire and post it online.

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OLD BUSINESS

a. Draft Final Report - Discussion - Possible Action

Chairman Makuch said that the most current report is not very different language wise but the format has been changed.

P. Stevens noted that he did try to clean up some language in the recommendations section. He showed how things have moved around or stayed the same.

Chairman Makuch said he believed the document flowed a lot better up until the Site Matrix section and wants to clean that area up.

P. Stevens said that they could easily do a site selection matrix explanation section to clear it up.

A. Grosjean asked if all the site selections were included in the report.

P. Stevens responded saying it included the top four site selections. He noted that they were going to take out the project cost summary graphic, but he did leave it in for now. He said he spent the most amount of time in the community involvement communication section and tried to make feedback and recommendations for the future.

A. Grosjean asked if they should include information about the mill rate.

P. Stevens said that there was only an estimate of what the mill rate would have been and that the information is already stated. He noted that there was an added line in feedback that the charge should include flexibility for all costs to be considered, not just school costs.

Chairman Makuch said that they should possibly recommend as an option pursuing the legislature changing reimbursement approval. So that they can get approval before the referendum instead of after. That way voters can get a much better idea of the cost to the taxpayers.

P. Stevens noted that reimbursement rate percentages for towns in the state are all going down.

A. Grosjean asked if they should include concerns about plumbers not wanting to work on old plumbing.

P. Stevens responded saying he did not know if it was an important factor for this report, because it did not necessarily affect the SBC.

A. Grosjean said only getting one estimate for repairs that were needed made her nervous and wondered if that information should be included in the report.

J. Marshall noted that there could be concerns from professionals without having information on where the town wants to go and that the process became a little toxic at the end and that there are professional concerns with that. He said he believes the Board of Ed. needs professional guidance.

Chairman Makuch said that some people had submitted estimates once and did not want to go through the process again.

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B. Ross stated she thinks that those things should be added because part of what they did was find out where the schools were now and that information on professionals was information that they discovered.

J. Marshall suggested adding it to the consideration section of the report.

P. Stevens noted that he will add a part about challenges engaging professionals who do not want to work on aging facilities.

A. Grosjean also noted that every year there would probably be a 6-8% inflation and that they are looking at a ten year plan of improvement so that is something that needs to be taken into consideration in the next steps.

P. Stevens confirmed that the information was included.

J. Marshall said that they should add future school building committees and BOE should consider the impact of escalating costs and phasing in capital planning.

P. Latinsics asked about reimbursement information in the Collier report, asking if the numbers were reality.

P. Stevens clarified that the report states that the reimbursement could be asked for by the town and that the intention was that they felt that they had a very strong argument on getting the potential reimbursement.

R. Tulis added that the SBC considered building a new school on a school property, rather than the alteration/extension of the existing facilities. He said he did not think they did a deep enough dive on what could be done with Hall School. He also noted that in the funding section members of the committee would be concerned about reimbursement as well as townspeople.

B. Ross asked how they know that many townspeople were concerned about reimbursement because it is not solid information.

Chairman Makuch said that he was going off of what happened in town meetings.

B. Ross suggested changing the language to townspeople who expressed concern. She noted that what the townspeople thought were important, but there needed to be information on how that information was found.

R. Tulis said that he thought that they should include that spending more money upfront that is not reimbursable will get you farther than penny pinching at the beginning.

Chairman Makuch said it was important to include that information in the report.

P. Latinsics said that he did not believe that the reimbursements were not the biggest town concern, but it was that they should be looking at more options which was a concern. He said people needed a clear understanding of the funding and money involved. He said that the town needed the charge needed to include evaluating best possibilities as well as building a new school.

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Chairman Makuch suggested changing the language to care should be taken to clarify if early costs are not reimbursable.

P. Stevens said it was important to get the information on what they were trying to do to the public and more money could have been spent earlier on to communicate the goal with the public.

Language in the funding section of the report was agreed upon.

B. Ross questioned the referendum results section where many taxpayers did not understand how the question was worded as such, she asked how they knew that and asked if they could reword the section.

Chairman Makuch suggested adding that the text of the question on the ballot was very specific for legal reasons and that it led to confusion.

P. Stevens expressed that this information could have been communicated better to the public.

A. Grosjean stated that she thinks part of the problem was the people who were confused were the ones who did not get accurate information and were not at the workshops and did not read information.

J. Marshall suggested adding language that said to clarify the total cost of the project and the total cost to taxpayers.

Chairman Makuch said maybe some of the information should be in recommendations to make costs more clear to taxpayers.

R. Tulis said he still objected to the statement that said the committee should also address the clarity between individuals and their roles as members.

Chairman Makuch said it may not have been worded well, however even the Board of Education clarifies what you do and how you represent the Board which provides clarity on the role of each member.

A. Grosjean said once the Board makes a decision it is a decision represented by the entire board.

P. Latinesics said that it had to be something that was voluntary on any member's part. He said that saying that everyone agrees with a decision, if they do not, is a clear violation of rights.

Chairman Makuch responded by saying that there are Rules of Engagements and expectations when you are a public official. He said that there is a public expectation of certain behavior from town officials such as honesty. He said he wanted to clarify expectations without violating anyone's freedom of speech. He suggested taking out the part that mentions that members should sign an agreement on expectations.

P. Stevens said that the issue is the clarity of roles and that the committee only works when they follow votes.

It was agreed that taking out the line of signing an agreement should be taken out.

P. Latinesics said that with any democratic process that there would be disagreement and a big deal should not have been made about a no vote.

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Chairman Makuch said it was not the no vote that was made a big deal of, it was the regurgitating of misinformation from meeting to meeting. He said he felt that there were continual efforts to take a path the committee did not agree with and that is inappropriate and wants to make sure that did not happen.

B. Ross said that it was more about working in a group. She stated it was important to work towards a common goal even if there is disagreement.

R. Tulis stated that there were a number of things throughout the process that he disagreed with and offered constructive criticism of. He stated he was speaking for himself at this point and did not fight with anything on the committee. He stated that it should not be said that things should be done a certain way just because that is the way other committees do things.

Chairman Makuch responded by saying that if it is atypical it's worth noting that they had an atypical experience. He said it is an observation of how things went. He said that it was pointing out that this could be a problem and could be managed.

P. Latinsics said he agreed it was atypical for a school building committee to not be unanimous, and it's worth noting that it caused confusion. However he said consideration of dissent should be included. He said there was a single mindedness to the new project and that restraints should not be created to make sure there is not dissent.

Chairman Makuch moved on to the next paragraph suggesting two committees saying it splits up the work and time so people do not get burned out from working on the project for years.

J. Marshall said he is not sure that it addresses some of the issues that they just discussed.

Chairman Makuch said that if the charge was limited to just making a choice then different people would have been interested in being on the committee that did not involve construction.

J. Marshall said that he does not believe two committees would not solve a lot of the issues that they had. He said it is hard to make a recommendation about it.

Chairman Makuch said that the recommendation could get people working in the part of the project they are interested in and that it could bring clarity to a charge.

B. Ross suggested moving the suggestion of two committees to the charge area.

R. Tulis said he had a comment on where it states the town should consider it's land inventory and perhaps sell the unneeded parcels to purchase a more suitable lot for a future school, he thinks specifically mentioning the Youngerman property is not right because it is used by the town and buses. He said that the town should consider the land inventory if it is not a used space.

Chairman Makuch said he was fine with taking the Youngerman property part out.

B. Ross said that a part from the 1992 document should be more clearly identified so people knew where it came from.

J. Marshall noted that in the Estimated Capital Improvement Project Cost Section the language should

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be rephrased to add costs due to phasing repeated contracting and procurement requirements and additional explanation, He noted his edits to the paragraph and they were made. He suggested reworking the paragraph, which was done.

A. Grosjean asked if Colliers inflated the number from the original report.

Chairman Makuch answered that they did, and that they continued it out to 2025.

J. Marshall asked if the Collier report included was considered final.

Chairman Makuch said it was the same version they have been looking at for a while, but it is still labeled a draft. He asked anyone who sees a typo to email it to him and he will confirm with Colliers that they can be changed.

P. Latincsics stated he liked the way the charge was re-written but was confused by the last sentence in capital letters. He said that he thinks that the real issue with townspeople was the context of this project in the overall fiscal picture of the town.

P. Stevens added to the report that it would have been beneficial for the SBC to consider a more comprehensive financial impact of both school and non-school related projects in town.

A. Grosjean said that it came across from the public that it was not a good economic time to do this and asked if they should take that recommendation and move it to next steps and say that this project should be considered as part of the town assessment of all the properties.

Chairman Makuch said that he believed that is in what they just said. He also noted that there was never a good economic time to spend over \$60 million. He said they could consider it, however he wasn't sure how to capture it.

B. Ross said that she thinks that it goes along with communication.

J. Marshall said that the project never gets cheaper and that there is never a good time for it.

P. Stevens noted that in the communications and recommendations section, he could go through it again and possibly move some things to other parts of the report. He noted that there were some land comments in the area that do not have a proper heading. He stated he would go through that section and make sure everything was properly labeled and in the right place.

Chairman Makuch said he felt like a lot of progress had been made and that they were getting close to a final draft. He suggested Phil clean up the document and at the next meeting vote to approve a final version.

b. Final Financial Report

Chairman Makuch asked if there was anything they anticipated that they had to spend any more money on.

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P. Stevens said that he could not think of anything.

P. Latincsics noted that they would have to pay the recording secretary.

P. Stevens said that was a good note and he would speak to her about it.

Chairman Makuch said once they know that he would reach out to the financial office, make sure everything was paid and close out any POs so they could see how much money they would be returning.

Future Business - Items for Future Agendas

Chairman Makuch said future items included minutes, the final report, and the final financial report.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by P. Latincsics to ADJOURN meeting.

Seconded by Chairman Makuch

All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT
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