



TOWN OF WILLSBORO

5 FARRELL ROAD WILLSBORO, NY 12996

518-963-8668

**TOWN OF WILLSBORO
TOWN BOARD MEETING
WILLSBORO TOWN HALL
October 8th, 2025**

ATTENDEES-Win Belanger, Polly Belanger, Barbara Paye, Darren Dickerson, Lloyd Wilson, Justin Drinkwine, Cathy Alden, Susan Fayhee, Ashley Murphy, Greg Gordon, Tracie McGill, Felix Lawrence, Michael Busone, Victor Putman, Travis Crowningshield, Mark McGill, Thomas Doolittle, Margery Doolittle, Justin Drinkwine, Jennifer Medler, Monique Hines (court reporter)

BOARD MEMBERS- Steve Benway, Lorilee Sheehan, Lane Sayward, Scott Christian, Shaun Gilliland

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Meeting CALLED TO ORDER @ 6:30pm

Minutes of the September 10th, 2025 Town Board meeting were accepted as written.

Supervisors Report-

Correspondence-

- Felix Lawrence- 2nd Banner Proposal

Town-

-Hathaway Park Plan was provided by GPI and went through an extensive independent review by the county engineers and they feel it is a good plan. The APA still has the GIF and do not expect to hear back from them for 30 days because of their back log.

-The tentative budget was submitted and the board had their first workshop on October 7th. They went over the General and the EMS part of the budget and on October 14th they will go over Highway, Water and Sewer at 6:30 at the Town Hall. A Special board meeting will be held on October 30th at the Visitors Center at 6:30 to approve changes to the tentative budget and accept it as the preliminary budget. A public hearing will be held on the preliminary budget on Thursday November 6th at 6:30 at the Visitors Center. The Preliminary budget will be up for adoption on November 12th (Regular Board Meeting) at 6:30 at the Town Hall. If an agreement is not adopted then the preliminary budget will become the final budget on November 20th.

Sayward made the motion to accept the warrant. Benway seconded the motion.

Roll Call-

Christian, Sayward, Sheehan, Benway, Gilliland

Ayes- 5

Nyes- 0

Clerks Report- verbally by Susan Thompson

The clerk's office in the month of September took in \$3248.92 . Paying \$45.00 to NYS Department of Health and \$1.00 to NYS Ag & Markets. Decals for the month took in \$4608.00 of which \$4353.03 went to the state and the town's commission was \$254.97. Water/Sewer took in \$3,088.50. That's my financial report.

I want to say something that has weighed heavily on my mind for quite some time. The Town Clerk's job is not by any means simple. It is not just selling landfill tickets, fishing and hunting licenses, or collecting

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taxes. The Town Clerk's Office is, in many ways, the hub of our town. We receive calls and inquiries about everything—from reports of dead animals on the side of the road, to requests for birth certificates needed to help a loved one transition into a nursing home.

We are also the first point of contact for concerns about assessments, road conditions, water bills, zoning, and codes—as well as the decisions made by the Town Board. Of course, not all communication is negative. We also receive compliments and expressions of gratitude, and it is those moments of appreciation that give us the strength to keep going through the more difficult days.

My office is responsible for collecting money for fishing and hunting licenses, landfill tickets, death certificates, codes, road signs, taxes, water and sewer payments, and more. Each month, I reconcile four bank accounts and prepare a detailed monthly report outlining all receipts and disbursements. That report, along with a check for the total amount collected, is submitted to the Supervisor, who signs off and deposits it into the general fund to be appropriated as needed. I also provide a monthly report to the Town Board and include copies of all four bank statements for transparency.

When I took office in 2022, I inherited an office with no guidance—no records, no books, no system to follow. I assisted the auditor for several hours opening years' worth of unopened bank statements. While I do not wish to dwell on the past, I do believe it is important to acknowledge the progress that has been made since then.

It is easy to place blame, but the truth is, the Supervisor has no direct way of knowing if funds are being mishandled in the Clerk's Office. As I have explained, I provide full reports and checks monthly, documenting all incoming revenue. Since taking office, I have worked diligently to improve accountability—creating detailed paper trails, implementing daily reports, eliminating problem areas, adding more specific line items in the clerk system rather than using “miscellaneous,” and issuing receipts for all cash transactions.

That said, no system is perfect. For example, if someone were to come in and fax a ten-page document, pay in cash, and decline a receipt, that payment could theoretically disappear. That potential risk exists in any office, but I continue to take every measure possible to ensure integrity in every transaction.

Recently, through a survey conducted among other town clerks, we learned that many offices have three or four people performing the same work that Willsboro does with just two—and those towns often serve smaller populations.

Each of us, as elected officials, has clear responsibilities. I was fortunate to have the State Auditors present when I first took office, and they continue to be a valuable resource for me. However, it is the duty of the Town Council to perform an annual audit of the Town Clerk's Office. In three years, this has never occurred. I have never been questioned about the policies, procedures, or financial safeguards in place within my office.

The theft that occurred under the previous Town Clerk has never been addressed at a board meeting or in any discussion with me, even though all five members of the board know that I testified before the grand jury in that matter.

With the upcoming election, we already know that there will be a new Supervisor, and possibly a new Council member and Town Clerk as well. Regardless of the outcome, I believe it is time for things to improve—for greater communication, oversight, and collaboration among all elected officials.

Rather than working against your Town Clerk, I ask that you work *with* me. You are welcome to visit the office at any time—two at a time if necessary—and review any aspect of my operation, day or night. I have nothing to hide, and I welcome transparency.

It has been discouraging to hear reports of council members publicly criticizing my office, particularly when it is clear that many may not fully understand the scope and responsibilities of the work we perform. I mention this not out of resentment, but because it has been brought to my attention numerous times in recent weeks.

I care deeply about this town and take great pride in serving the residents of Willsboro. I simply ask for cooperation, understanding, and accountability—from all of you for The town clerk job no matter who is in this office. Let's do better—because that is what our community deserves.

**Benway made the motion to accept the Clerks Report. Christian seconded the motion.
All in Favor.**

DPW- verbal report given by Travis Crowningshield

-interviews were done for the water/sewer trainee and Crowningshield has recommended George Edwards for the position at the rate of pay of the union contract for a water/wastewater trainee.

Sheehan made the motion to hire George Edwards as a Water/Wastewater trainee at a rate of pay of the union contract for a water/wastewater trine. Benway seconded the motion.

Roll Call- Christian, Sayward, Sheehan, Benway, Gilliland

Ayes-5

Nyes-0

-Crowningshield stated that they had also interviewed a very good candidate that was not able to do full time. He asked the board to entertain this idea as this candidate could work the weekend that the town now pays to the DPW employees and it is overtime. This position would not have benefits paid out and this would be a big savings to the town. Crowningshield will check with the union and do numbers to bring back to the board.

-October 28th the NYS Ag and Markets are holding a training for the dog regulations on a shelter. Christian, Crowningshield and John Mitchell will be attending. Gilliland will check with Eagle feathers on the cost of holding a dog and the board will have to come up with prices and regulations.

WATER/SEWER- written report submitted by Justin Drinkwine

Christian asked where the town was at with meters. Gilliland stated that they needed to be at 75% and they were at approximately 65%. Delivering of the meters was out to bid and no one applied.

Youth Commission- No report

Sheehan stated that because of an emergency that Leerkes had text and gave a report to her that the youth soccer program is in full swing and the Florence Hathaway Park fields have been working out for now.

EMS Report- Written by Kira Crowningshield

Parks Commission -

-Lloyd Wilson stated that Several members of the committee met with the Nature Conservancy representative at Noblewood and spent several hours down there. They gave recommendations on making the park more accessible and safer. He will be getting back to them on these items. A budget request was given to the supervisor from the committee and it included recovering the tennis court at Florence Hathaway Park. In the new plan, the tennis court will become a basketball court. It also included a safety fence for Noblewood. They were hoping that the construction could begin at the Park but with the delay of the APA it doesn't look that way until spring. The Lily Property is with the attorneys working toward closing. Sheehan added the Nature Conservancy representative was very receptive of the potential changes that the Paks commission wanted for Noblewood and mentioned that the potential of bringing the summer program back to Noblewood has been suggested. A survey will be sent out to parents as to what they would like to see regarding swimming. The beach cleanup, porta potties, fences, moving the beach, etc all were discussed and they will get back to the town. Christian stated that he was upset that he was not invited to this meeting and was told at an earlier meeting that the Parks Commission was not involved with Noblewood and that he was the Town Board Liaison for Noblewood. Sayward agreed she was under the same impression.

Old Business-

-Felix Lawerance spoke on a 2nd proposal of a banner project for the town regarding hanging banners in Willsboro and gave the board the following:

Prepared Remarks in support of a 2nd Banner Project

To: the Town Council of Willsboro N.Y. From: Felix Lawrence, Wednesday October 8th, 2025 *Contact: 602 680 0139 Flexi_Lorenzo@yahoo.com*

Good evening, I'd like to thank Supervisor Gilliland for inviting me here tonight; I'd also like to thank him for all his years of work & dedication to the town and the county. Soon you will get a vacation from all the hassles involved with running this town, I hope you enjoy it!

To start, I'd like to search for common ground we can all stand on. I'm going to assume we are all big fans of the U.S. constitution, and a large part of our patriotism comes from our enthusiasm for this document. One of the great things about the constitution is: it limits the power of government at all levels, and requires all citizens be treated equally under the law.

So, in the case of these banners, the Town Council has the power to say "Yes we will allow citizens to hang banners" or "No we won't allow it". But legally, it cannot allow some people to hang banners, while censoring others. I'm not trying to convince you to *like* our proposal, but rather that it is a legal obligation for the Town. I'm sure this has happened before: This council has voted for things it didn't like, simply to comply with the law.

To be clear, this proposal comes from me personally. I am a parishioner at St. Philip's, but the church is not sponsoring this proposal. For about 3 years, I've been in conversation with Father Justin, Bishop Terry, and Father Clement about this; they have given me moral support, but not practical support. For example, they have not allowed me to present this idea to my fellow parishioners, so I assume most of them are not aware of it. A few of them are aware, and support this idea.

I realize the Catholic Church has plenty of problems; I'm not here to defend the church, and of course I can't fix it myself. Instead, St. Philips is a motivation for this proposal: I want to give my fellow parishioners, and the general public, the freedom of expression that the American Legion has enjoyed for more than a decade. By honoring someone on a banner, you can say a lot about your values & philosophy. The American Legion has one particular philosophy about war, and they are advertising their philosophy up & down all the main roads in this town. The Catholic Church has a different philosophy about war, and currently we cannot advertise our values in this way..

Everyone has their favorite part of the constitution; mine is the First Amendment, and this is the focus of our proposal. It is designed to maximize freedom of expression for each banner owner, while maintaining a few guardrails to keep it civil. Let's look at the details of this proposal.

Outline:

1. Thank supervisor Gilliland
2. Common ground: US constitution limits power, requires equality
3. Council can only say yes/no, not discriminate. Not convince to like it, but that it's a legal obligation, like others.
4. Proposal from me personally, not church
5. St Philips is motivation. Legion advertising its philosophy, different than Catholic
6. First Amendment is focus on proposal, review details.

Lawrence stated he really hoped for a vote on this.

Benway made the motion to appoint David Galarneau for a six year term as assessor to work 2 days a week (part-time). This Term will start from October 1, 2025. Sayward seconded the motion.

Roll Call- Christian, Sayward, Sheehan, Benway, Gilliland

Ayes-3

Nyes-2 Christian, Sheehan

Benway made the motion to authorize the Supervisor to pay for Title Insurance for the Lily Property at a cost of \$2892.00 from Centennial Title Company. Sayward seconded the motion.

Roll Call- Christian, Sayward, Sheehan, Benway, Gilliland

Ayes-4

Nyes-1 Christian

Benway made a motion to have Big Al's Sealing seal the Townhall and the Visitors's Center parking lots for a cost of \$2,000.00. Christian seconded the motion.

Roll Call- Christian, Sayward, Sheehan, Benway, Gilliland

Ayes-4

Nyes-0

Abstain-1 Sheehan

Board Comments-none

Public Comment-

Tom Doolittle-asked if any other banners have ever been proposed or denied? Gilliland stated No, the only other program is the American Legion and the town's level of support for this program is mounting and dismounting of the banners, storage and maintaining the permit with NYSEG.

Doolittle asked why is this issue being raised? Lawrence stated that his grandfather's banner was rejected some years ago. Gilliland stated that was not done by the town board. Lawrence stated that it was rejected by the American legion and that means that a private organization is in charge of expressive activity in the public right away. Christian stated that Lawrence said everyone has a right and then in his proposal listed off rules to follow. Christian then stated that he doesn't understand why Lawrence feels he was treated unfairly by the American legion and now wants to propose to hang banners and not allow everyone to be included. Christian went on to explain that his family grew up in Essex and then later moved to Willsboro, although he would like to have his family's banners hung in Willsboro, he understands the guidelines that the legions in the area set forth and has his family's banners hung in the towns they lived in. Christian concluded by saying to Lawrence, you said you wanted this proposal to include everyone, however you have set up all these guidelines for this proposal. Lawrence stated that he is open to suggestions for change in his criteria, but no one had any. He stated that since the board has refused to take a vote that he is fairly disappointed but he feels functionally it is the same as rejecting the proposal.

Win Belanger

-Is the budget meeting open to the public? Gilliland stated that all the budget meetings are open to the public.

-Asked if Hathaway Park plan had a barricade to stop cars from entering into the park from the road. Wilson stated he would look at the plan and let Belanger know for sure.

Barbara Paye

-Stated that the Planning/Zoning boards are all volunteer and she feels that the most important thing that the town can make sure of for the best interest of all involved is training opportunities and that the town makes sure of this. Since 2007 the state has required that each board member have at least 4 hours of training. She stated that after witnessing several board meetings she is not convinced everyone has the same or adequate training. She gave the Town Clerk a FOIL requesting information on every planning and zoning board members and alternates, that they have proof of their 4 hours of training since taking office and a copy of their last 2 oaths of office. Also requesting a list of members and their terms expiration date.

-Paye also stated to Mr. Lawrence that the proposal he is offering eliminates anyone that is not Christian and this is a country of religious freedom.

Win Belanger

-stated that he was one of the members of the legion that voted against Mr. Lawrence grandfather's banner being put up. He asked if it was correct that Lawrence was allowed to hang his grandfather's banner in another town? Mr Lawrence stated that it is hung in Moriah. Belanger stated that he believes he should be happy and feels Lawrence's grandfather would be proud and that Lawrence should stop trying to force himself into something. Belanger questioned the pride of Lawrence's grandfather with him bringing the church into the veteran's audience. Belanger stated he did not serve 30 years and go to Vietnam, watching his friends die because they were black, christian, jewish or anything else. He did it

for his country as he is sure Lawrence's grandfather did. He asked Lawrence to be respectful of all veterans and to stop this proposal.

Victor Putman

-Cold brook bridge culvert replacement update. BRASS has been actively working with the county to flag the contractor Atlantic Testing. This should be happening in the next few weeks.

Gilliland noted to everyone for full disclosure that the microphones on the board table were placed there by the court reporter that was hired by Felix Lawrence to record the meeting.

Adjourned @ 7:32 pm

Submitted by Susan Thompson