



TOWN OF WILLSBORO

5 FARRELL ROAD WILLSBORO, NY 12996

518-963-8668

TOWN OF WILLSBORO TOWN BOARD MEETING WILLSBORO VISITORS CENTER July 17th, 2025

ATTENDES- Polly Belanger, Win Belanger, Don Mace, Terry Pulsifer Jr., Lori Franke, Jonathan Franke, Trevor Sheehan, Allen Alterie, Daniel Koenig, Nicole Crowningshield, Dereck Crowningshield, Cathay Alden, Ashley Murphy, Rhonda Sloper, Trisha Sheehan, McKinley Belzile, Jenna Ford, Victor Putman, Michael Carson, Richard Stockwell, Kathryn Stockwell, Tina Belzile, Cindi Waldron, Lloyd Wilson, Pete Sowizdrzal, Barbara Paye, Tracie McGill, Mark McGill, Robin Belzile, Michael Phinney, Travis Crowningshield, Laura Carson, Jessie Morgan

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

Excused- Lane Sayward

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Public hearing CALLED TO ORDER @ 6:30pm

Public Hearing on the Town of Willsboro Local Law #1 of 2025. A local law temporarily increasing the salary of the lone town justice for the Town of Willsboro. This local law was introduced on June 11th, 2025 at town board meeting.

Comments-

Lorilee Sheehan

-asked for clarification on section #3 the effective date? Gilliland stated it would be 45 days after today.

Win Belanger

-asked if the town board could require the judges to work all four Thursdays? Gilliland stated that they are totally another branch of government and he could not state what the plans were for the court.

Sheehan

-stated that she assumed that if they were there for 2 or 4 nights a month, it would be the same amount of hours worked consolidated to less days.

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Jessie Morgan

-Stated that since Judge Dickerson's resignation that she has been at court every Thursday night.

Laura Carson

-Stated that Judge Morgan is correct that they have been there every Thursday night and taking advantage of having only one judge, organizing, paring down paperwork and they have gathered 13 boxes of shreddable paperwork. She has applied for new furniture, archive shelving and boxes, fireproof cabinets through a grant and needs to completely go through all the files down stairs. They have to work with the District Attorney's Office and the public defenders office and both of these offices are short staffed and they consolidate the cases to make it easier on everyone.

Public Hearing Closed @6:38pm

Regular Meeting called to order@6:39pm

Presentation was given from the Willsboro/Essex Summer Program directors, Jenna Ford and McKinley. They updated the board and the public of all the fun, exciting and educational things the children had been doing and what was coming in the next few weeks.

Supervisors Report

Correspondence-

Water/Wastewater Superintendent Patrick McCauliffe has presented a letter of resignation to the Town Board.

Town-

The dog kennel should be arriving at the beginning of August.

The roofing bids for the Visitors Center, Bandstand and Noblewood have gone out and are due by July 31st @ 2:00pm

Hathaway Park septic deep hole test was certified by the County engineer. The Park design after approval by the board will be sent off to OHRP to get approval and then construction can begin.

The APA and the Core of Engineers will be reviewing the draft plans of the New water plant and then the final permitting needs to be done. Those permits are expected to be done by late fall. Engineers are finishing up the final stamped plans for the permits now.

County-

A press release was issued today for a strategic shift in the County EMS program. The plan is more based on support to the EMS squads rather than maintaining them.

The County Emergency Services has completed the FEMA County Hazard Mitigation plan.

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

Roll Call-

Benway, Sheehan, Christian, Gilliland

Ayes-4

Nyes-0

Absent-1 Sayward

Minutes of the June 11th, 2025 Town Board were accepted as written.

Clerks Report- verbally by Susan Thompson

The clerk's office in the month of June took in \$8,337.97 paying \$1.00 to NYS Ag and Markets and \$22.50 to the NYS Health Department. Decals for the month took in \$763.00 of which \$719.43 went to the state and the town's commission was \$43.57. Water/Sewer took in \$8,337.97. I have reviewed the procedures outlined in the Town Clerk's handbook and consulted with several other town clerks. Based on that guidance, I would like to inform the Town Board and the public that, beginning with this meeting, Town Board meeting minutes will be posted online in draft form within two weeks of each meeting. The draft minutes will remain available to the public until the next Town Board meeting, at which time they will be reviewed and amended if necessary. Any amendments will be reflected in the minutes of the following meeting as well. This process will ensure transparency and timely access to information for the public while maintaining accuracy in our official records. There has been some talk around town and I've been approached by several individuals with questions about the town hiring an accountant to "straighten out" the books in my office. I want to clarify, on the record, that is not the case. The accountant currently working with the town was hired solely to complete the Annual Financial Report (AFR) for the year of 2021/2022. She is not working on, auditing or adjusting any of the regular financial records or books within my office. I hope this clears up any confusion. If anyone has further questions, I'm happy to address them directly.

Christian made the motion to accept the Clerks Report. Benway seconded the motion.

All in Favor

DPW-Verbally by Travis Crowningshield

- Roadside mowing has been completed on all the roads and they will continue to mow to get it back further as usual.
- Gravel has been put down on Woodlawn and Coonrod Roads for the shoulders.
- A pad was put down next to the sewer plant for a DEC trailer. This trailer is for the fish and wildlife and DEC project to track the salmon.
- Youth Commission is not allowed to use the Point Soccer field any longer. The DPW will be in the process of getting the fields behind the old school up to date.

WATER/SEWER- No Report

Youth Commission-No Report

Travis Crowningshield stated that the Willsboro Youth Commission could not use the Point soccer field any longer. The Town is going to try to get the field behind the old school back in shape for the 5th and 6th grades to use and this would be purchasing new goals that would be portable. Gilliland is looking into the cost of these goals through a state contract pricing. The youth commission was going to try to work out an agreement with Willsboro School for the younger grades to use the school fields. This meeting happened this afternoon and there will be more details next month.

Sheehan stated that the Essex Community fund provided a grant for the summer program of \$5000.00 and because of the Health Department requirements for children going to the YMCA for swimming requires that they have to be retested. The YMCA trips will most likely be cancelled due to this. Sheehan is working with the Essex Community Fund to possibly shift the cost of the 2 swimming trips to the Youth Commission to help fund the goals.

Cathy Alden asked if that money was only slated for these trips and Sheehan stated that it was and that is why she has reached out to see if the money could go toward the soccer goals.

Parks Commission -

- Bud Wilson stated that although all of the parks have work to be done, the focus has been on Hathaway Park and getting that to completion. Much work and a lot of time has gone into making this park safe and accessible for all ages. Lorillee Sheehan showed the Florence Hathaway Park design.

Old Business:

Christian made the motion to approve Proposed Local Law #1 of 2025-

A Local Law temporarily increasing the salary of the Lone Town Justice for the remainder of 2025. Sheehan seconded the motion.

Roll Call-

Benway, Sheehan, Christian, Gilliland

Ayes-3

Nyes-0

Abstained-1 Benway

Absent-1 Sayward

Sheehan made the motion for Willsboro Comprehensive Plan Committee to accept the bid for Lake Champlain/ Lake George Regional Planning Board for the comprehensive plan update consulting which is grant funded. Benway seconded the motion.

Roll Call-

Benway, Sheehan, Christian, Gilliland

Ayes-4

Nyes-0

Absent-1 Sayward

New Business-

Benway made the motion to appoint Justin Drinkwine as the Water/Waste Water Superintendent at the hourly rate of \$31.90. Sheehan seconded the motion.

Roll Call-

Benway, Sheehan, Christian, Gilliland

Ayes-4

Nyes-0

Absent-1 Sayward

Benway made a motion for Public Works to advertise / interview for a prospective wastewater trainee position at the hourly rate of the union contracted rate for the current contract for water/wastewater trainee position. Sheehan seconded the motion.

All in Favor

Sheehan made a motion to pay Willsboro Development Corporation fee for \$200.00. Benway seconded the motion.

Discussion-

-Sheehan asked how they came up with the amount of \$200.00?

-Win Belanger stated he was vice-chairman of the Willsboro Development Corporation and they have reorganized and they now have a website and sent out approximately 1600 postcards. There are no dues, they are fees. Individuals- \$25.00, Business- \$50.00 and that 5 years ago the Towns of Essex and Willsboro were approached and agreed to pay \$100.00 per year. The fees were not paid last year from Essex or Willsboro. That is why the \$200.00 amount.

The annual membership meeting is July 28th at the Visitors Center.

Benway made an amendment to the motion to pay the Willsboro Development Corporation a total of \$200.00 for fees. \$100.00 for 2024 and \$100.00 for 2025.

Roll Call-

Benway, Sheehan, Christian, Gilliland

Ayes-4

Nyes-0

Absent-1 Sayward

Public Comment-

Barbara Paye-

-Thanked the Town Clerk for posting the draft minutes on the website.

-Asking the Town Board to consider going back to putting the meetings on live.

-Stated that the Zoning and Planning Board minutes need to be posted on line 2 weeks after meeting.

-Asked what happens to a home if destroyed, does it automatically go to vacant land for tax purposes?

-Asked why we can't use the soccer fields on the Point fields? The Town no longer has the lease with the Paine family and the school needs to use them for practices, due to their fields being redone this year.

Win Belanger-

-The Hometown hero flyer has been updated and asked if the Town Board had seen this?

-Who owns the nets at the Point soccer fields? Travis Crowningshield stated they are permanent and he believes the school bought them years ago.

-Richard Morgan asked Belanger to speak regarding Constitution Day. Asked why the Town Board removed themselves from participation with the Fish & Game Club and asked if they would come back on board with them? Morgan had met with Gilliland and asked for the support from the town of hanging the banner and the tent and porta Potties. Belanger stated that the only thing that they were asking for was to assist a little bit financially and with the help of the tents and porta potties also trophies. Gilliland asked Morgan to come to the board with what they needed. Belanger stated if they don't respond then don't follow through and that he was asked to just say a few words about it. Sheehan stated she has been every year

and it is a wonderful activity and that suggestions have been made because of the decline of attendants to switch it to a Sunday and it has been ignored. There is a County wide soccer tournament on that Saturday every year and the population is limited with the local children. She stated she feels it is more of a political event. Belanger stated that Constitution Day was brought to the Fish and Game Club from the Town Board and it happened to be a Saturday September 17th, the day the constitution was signed. The only reason it is on that day is the Town Board had originally requested that day. He also stated he has never seen a request for change on this day and there is no politics.

Laura Carson-

Asked how much did the dog kennel cost? Gilliland stated \$20,000.00. How many dogs does it hold? Gilliland states it holds 3 dogs. How many dogs have we had at one time and for how long? Crowningshield stated that we can no longer contract with the SPCA or Eagle Feather and we would always transport to another facility. Sometimes 3-4 days. If it is a dog bite and the home owner can't keep it, we would have to keep it up to 10 days.

Victor Putman-

-He stated he could not come to the last meeting due to family and showed up on the normally scheduled time to find out there was no meeting and that it was not posted and he spoke with the Town Clerk and looked in the press republican and could not find it. Sue Thompson stated that it was posted in the Press Republican and posted on the bulletin board as well as on the website.

The Executive Director had an accident in February and he is doing much better now and hopefully BRASS is getting back together for the second time.

-Upper culvert bridge they received a grant of \$77,000.00 for a redesign of that bridge. They are in the process of requesting proposals and get a proper design and would like to include the town.

-looking for funding including the Lake Champlain Basin program grant.

-Lampery treatment has been postponed.

Derick Crowningshield-

Presented a folder with 100 signatures regarding the purchase of the Lilly Property. Asked what is going on with it? What is our plan for it? Is there a plan for it? Also asked about the plan for Noblewood? D. Crowningshield stated he has spoken with a person from the Nature Conservancy and he stated it could be rehabilitated to get it back to the way it was in the early 2000's. Gilliland stated he would address Noblewood first and asked what Would you like done with it? D. Crowningshield stated that he would like everything fixed. There used to be 4 handicap parking spots down below, there was a bath house, beach, life guards and rangers. He had a copy of the deed and there are supposed to be 76 parking spots, tent sites, firewood supplied by trees that have fallen down. The Conservancy person was Doug. He

also stated it is time to move forward and rehabilitate it and there is a group of volunteers that would go done with the guidance of the conservancy and the town's help and that would solve the problem to try to form a new town beach. He said its the best beach on Lake Champlain. Gilliland stated he disagreed that it was under cover in the afternoon, very shallow and that after Covid that they could not get lifeguards. D. Crowningshield stated I am not saying you need life guards but it looks like after 2019 you abandoned it, the stairs are rotten, the walking paths are being made in different areas and it is a safety concern. Gilliland said there was a study done to stabilize the bank and that it would cost \$1,000,000.00 to fix it. Sheehan stated she remembers something about \$350,000.00 and Benway stated that there were three recommendations and that the primary was to not disturb the bank and the bank could be controlled and stabilized with vegetation. Benway stated his personal opinion was that it cannot be stabilized through vegetation, D. Crowningshield asked if there is a study done on the bank and is it stabilizing itself?

Trevor Sheehan-

T. Sheehan stated he walked it all just recently and he does a lot of retaining wall work. He said it would probably cost \$75,000.00 if hired by a contractor to fix it. He said that it would be approximately \$18,000.00 if done by the Town because they have an excavator. The walk path would be approximately \$4,000.00 if hired by a contractor. He said that it would probably cost the town \$1,000.00. He agrees that the beach is shaded in the afternoon. He would be happy to get engineering quotes and quotes from other companies for this project. Gilliland stated to make sure when he gets the quotes that they have to be prevailing wages. Sheehan stated that even with prevailing wage rate for a couple people and using the town's equipment and volunteers signing off insurance and all it would still be only a \$40,000.00 budget. Christian stated that he went to Noblewood with Sheehan and even if you put the bank stabilization and the beach aside, that they literally walked past the bathhouse because it's so overgrown. He said it is totally unacceptable even if the beach is not in use. There is a plaque on the side of the building that the bathhouse was donated by NYCO. He stated the town needs to step up and take care of it even if the beach is open or closed. That building should be taken care of the same as the other buildings. Christian feels that they as the Town Board have dropped the ball on Noblewood and hopefully they can make a plan to do this. He stated that the bank project he remembers was close to \$1,000,000.00 and it would take a lifetime to stabilize the bank with trees and he respects Benway's opinion on the bank because it is his line of work.

Barbara Paye-

Stated that the beach on the Bay should have never been sold and she is happy that the younger generation is taking an interest. She feels that Willsboro has to have a beach no matter where it is.

Pete Sowizdrzal-

He feels the in kind work for the DPW is a great idea but they don't have time to do it all. Ie: the pavilion at Hathaway Park was supposed to be put up two years ago and the ditches have not been done in a few years in Buena Vista.

Win Belanger-

Reminded Victor Putman that if he signed up for the notifications from the town he would get all the meeting changes, etc,

Gilliland asked to address the questions asked from D. Crowningshield regarding the Lilly Property. The Adirondack Land Trust does currently own the Lilly Property. He had a relationship with the Adirondack Trust company because he sold an agricultural conservation easement to them and worked with them with the removal of the dam. He called them when he found out the Lilly Property was for sale and asked them to look into it and that the town has no public access to the most densely populated part of our town and to a beach. They looked at it and put a bid on it. Gilliland immediately brought it to the board to seek grant money to purchase it. He met with the Land Trust people and asked if we purchased it if we would be able to haul in sand to make a beach and they said no problem. They came back with a draft purchase agreement that was contingent on the Town of Willsboro receiving a 100% grant for the purchase. The town board agreed. This was released to the press. The grant agreement was signed for \$1,079,000.00 this is enough to cover the interest and to form a landscaping plan. There is no plan and in the 1890's this land was open to the town's people as a town beach. Last month the bond resolution was past and an estoppel notice was published on June 18th and there were 20 days to allow anyone to file suit against the bond. The next step would be to find a bond at the best rate, this is done by Robert Haufner, bond counsel and Champlain National Bank has consistently come up with the best bond interest, That is the reason why the Town goes with this bank. Gilliland stated he was invited and nominated to be on the Adirondack Land Trust board, he stated that he is a conservationist and won a national award for being one. He is on the board with approximately 50 other people and that he is not allowed to even be in the room for any votes on the Lilly Project. He also stated for the record that Benway has done work on his farm. His son in law received a grant for the soil and water conservation district to build a composting business and Benway's company won the bid for this project with the lowest bid.

D. Crowningshield

-asked if they were going to send it to a town vote because that is what the petition asked for?

Allen Alterie

-Asked if there were any restrictions on the Lilly property? Asked if Gilliland has seen the access where he wants to build a beach? Gilliland stated it can not be developed or sold. It is open land to help preserve water quality. He stated he has walked the property and that it is open waterfront land and not restricted like Noblewood. Gilliland stated if the town doesn't get it for future generations it will be lost.

Gilliland went on to explain what would happen if they don't move forward on this. The Adirondack Land trust will have a legal problem because the Town of Willsboro has signed a contract to purchase the land. On the Champlain Basin side, they have awarded the town a grant for this property and it will be a long time before we will ever get another grant from them if we do not go through on the contract. The grants the town has gotten from them were almost one million for the dam removal and \$250,000.00 for the physical screen for the sewer plant.

Allen Alterie asked if the town has looked into the money it will cost for the future use of this land? Gilliland stated there is over \$100,000.00 in the grant for future planning. Christian stated that he was advised to abstain from the vote to purchase this land because they were the lease holders on this property and that is not why he is against it, He is against it because he feels the Town can't maintain a beach on one end of town and we certainly won't be able to find life guards for that beach either and the town doesn't keep the building that we have up, how can we add more work to be done. He also stated that there will be easements with the land trust.

Trevor Sheehan

-stated back in 1933 with the Hatch subdivision there were 5 designated beach front areas on the point. T. Shehan said he is aware of 4 but asked if we could use those beaches? And questioned taking the \$840,000.00 off the tax map. Gilliland stated that the mission of the Land Trust is to preserve the land and they would not sell it to be developed.

Laura Carson

-Asked if we bought it, would it be to maybe someday have a beach? Discussion was had that the DPW already had too much work. She stated this is not a good idea.

Gilliland asked what would you like the town to do?

D. Crowningshield stated he would like to see it go to vote.

Benway stated the land will never be able to be developed.

Bud Wilson

-He stated he has walked the land and there is no plan but it is beautiful land to have a pavilion and picnic areas, etc.

Allen Alterie

-asked if Gilliland has a vision why doesn't he share it? Gilliland stated his vision was to have a waterfront park much like the one in Wilmington on the Ausable River, to have a pavilion with BBQ areas and mostly grassland to keep it a bird conservancy and to cut trails to use for mountain biking and cross country skiing.

Tracie McGill

-Will there be an opportunity to have a representation to have it become the community's vision? Gilliland stated that yes there will be and the Parks Commission would be part of this or they could have a separate committee for the Lilly property.

Barbara Paye

-Why can't we do both? Why can't we be the best town on Lake Champlain? We have volunteers to rehab Noblewood and it could be a 5 year plan. Lets come up with a plan for the future. She feels that the board has already made a commitment to purchase, why can't we have both. If this land is turned over to the state.

Sheehan asked T. Crowningshield if you would have to hire more people to maintain these properties? T. Crowningshield stated that there was an adult and 4 rangers that kept up Noblewood before and in the past they could find rangers to work. She stated that the board needs feedback from the public and asked if there was 2 years and a few months to come up with the money for the Adirondack Land Trust Company. Gilliland stated they had enough time to put it on the ballot.

Christian made a motion to put the purchase of the Lilly Property on the November ballot. Sheehan seconded the motion.

Roll Call-

Benway, Sheehan, Christian, Gilliland

Ayes-3

Nyes-1 Benway

Absent-1 Sayward

D. Crowningshield

-asked if they could get Noblewood cleaned up in the meantime? T. Crowningshield stated that he would want to meet with the Nature Conservancy with him.

Trevor Sheehan

-Asked if they could change the location of the beach? This will be discussed with the Nature Conservancy also.

Christian made a motion to enter into executive session to discuss a personal issue with the board. Sheehan seconded the motion,

Entered into executive session @ 8:30pm.

Entered back into regular session @ 8:35pm.

Adjourned @ 8:36pm

Submitted by Susan Thompson