

Woodstock Board of Finance Minutes

Monday May 16, 2022

7:00 pm

Town Hall Room 1

Special Meeting

1. **Call to order:** Chairman Michael Dougherty called meeting to order at 7:00 pm

2. **Roll Call**

- a. **Members Present:** Michael Dougherty (Chairman)
Michael Bernardi
David Fortin
Fred Chmura
Philip Parizeau, Alternate
Julie Marcotte, Alternate
Michele Woz
Asa Scranton, Alternate

Members absent: Jeffery Kelleher, excused

- b. **Others Present:** First Selectman Jay Swan, Finance Director Karen Fitzpatrick, Selectwoman Charlene Perkins Cutler, Selectman Chandler Paquette, Tax Collector Linda Bernardi, Woodstock Public Schools Business Manager Janice Thurlow, Superintendent of Schools Victor Toth, Woodstock Middle School Principal Kristen Elliot, Woodstock Elementary School Principal Jenna Demers, several members of the public including Woody Durst, Suzanne Woodward, Jessica Weaver Boose, Amy Vinal, Emily Hayden, Holly Dearborn, Joeseeph Adiletta, Megan Bard Morse, Mary Patrella, Paula Wilmot, Glen Lessig, Dale Lott, John Dlugosz, Ron Braaten, Recording Secretary Amy Monahan.
- c. **Noted for the Record:** Quorum

3. **Seat Alternate if Necessary:**

- a. Jeffery Kelleher has selected Asa Scranton to be seated in his absence.

4. **Public Comment**

- a. Glen Lessig stated that the voter turnout was low and many citizens did not know about the referendum. He would like to see the budget go back out \$1 less and have a re-vote in order to not cut further services or education funding in town.
- b. Victor Toth updated the Board of Finance on 3 areas of concern for the upcoming budget. The health insurance plan had warned of 5-8% increase and just came in at 10% increase for the upcoming year. The Board of Education has yet to begin negotiations with para professionals leaving that increase unknown at this time. The Board of Education has not adjusted for current high cost of fuel for heating and busses. Victor Toth also mentioned the unique situation of not being able to cut the high school budget meaning all cuts will have to come from grades K-8.
- c. Dale Lott confirmed concerns with the low voter turnout and feels that more communication is needed surrounding votes and referendums. He is new to town, unfamiliar with the process and concerned with the budget as he does not want further cuts made.
- d. John Dlugosz asked if this meeting was being broadcast. He stated that it should be and that would help with the communications concerns within the town if there were public broadcasts for all meetings. He also stated a concern with prop 46 and how that affects our budget every year. He noted that updating prop 46 has been previously mentioned and no actions taken to do so have been taken by the town.

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- e. Megan Bard Morns agrees with Mr. Lessig and would like to see the \$1 decrease. She is concerned with the Board of Education budget and also wants the citizens to be aware of all cuts to be made including Education and General Budgets. She also would like to see a more educational campaign in place about activities and decisions being made in the Town of Woodstock.
- f. Suzanne Woodward commented on property value increases and how many are concerned about the significant tax increases but noted that everyone was treated equally and the appraisals seem fair. She also hears constantly that people do not know about referendums but feels that the town does try to inform citizens. She would like budget added to the referendum signs around town in the future. She also mentioned concerns with salary increases and the fact that there are many avenues to look at. She also agrees with reduction of \$1 for the next vote.
- g. Ron Braaten asked if there are any unfunded mandates required by the state. Michael Dougherty reminded him that this can be addressed by contacting the town hall along with any other specific questions.
- h. Woody Durst recapped the concern brought up by many about lack of communication and information in the Town of Woodstock.
- i. Holly Dearborn supports the Board of Education and does not want additional BOE cuts. She also does not want any additional town services cut and agrees with bettering the communication within the town.
- j. Jay Swan noted that the Town of Woodstock also budgeted for an 8% increase for health care and will have to adjust for the 10% rate. The Town is still in negotiations with teamsters at this point as well.
- k. Jaren Fitzpatrick commented on the email communication concern. Anyone who would like to be added to the Town of Woodstock email information list should contact Crystal Adams or sign up to get notifications on the town website.

5. New Business

- a. Discussion and Approval of FY 23 Adjusted Budget
 - i. Michael Bernardi agrees with the population in the room about voter attendance and lack of communications and education to the citizens in the town.
 - ii. Michelle Woz agrees with the population in the room and Michael Bernardi. People need to vote and the community component needs to be present advocating for people to participate in the voting process.
 - iii. Julie Marcotte feels that more than \$1 increase is needed to get people to come out to vote.
 - iv. Phil Parizeau feels that the release of new inflation numbers show that cuts cannot be made. He feels that minimal cut should be made before budget returns to vote.
 - v. Asa Scranton stated that he town of Woodstock is 2nd largest in state with infrastructure that needs maintenance and repair. He noted the different types of public information available and the affect that factual information has on the vote. He addressed the importance of looking at the budget as a whole taking into consideration the specifics of our town. He agrees on lack of communication and involvement in the town.
 - vi. Fred noted that the same system has been used for a number of years in terms of communication. He is not looking for a significant decrease but more than \$1.
 - vii. David Fortin stated that 582 people participated in referendum and majority wanted cuts. Because of this, there should be more than a \$1 decrease made.
 - viii. Michela Dougherty thanked all in attendance and all that voted at the referendum. Heavy advertising is needed between now and next referendum including signs, ads in local papers and emails, etc.

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- ix. Asa Scranton suggested sending out a postcard notification to residents to inform of budget referendum.
 - 1. Michele Woz made a ***Motion** to consider adjusted FY23 budget reduction of \$50,000 resulting in the total amount of \$25,701,111 to be split 80/20 between Board of Education and General Government. ***Seconded** by Fred Chmura.
 - a. Asa commented that a small number like 50,000 will have little effect on the mill rate.
 - b. Michael Bernardi is worried about cuts to be made and state that the amount to be cut should not be large.
 - c. Board of Finance ***voted 5 to 1 in favor** of the new budget amount as presented above
 - 2. Dave Fortin made a ***Motion** to approve the General Government Budget in the amount of \$5,267,876 and to approve the Board of Education Budget in the amount of \$20,135,619 for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023. AND, to recommend the approval of the Town of Woodstock budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023 in the amount of \$25,701,111 and appropriate said sum to meet the recommended expenditures. ***Seconded** by Asa Scranton. ***The motion passed unanimously.**
- b. Warn of Public Hearing
 - i. According to the Town Attorney, there is no need for an additional public hearing.

6. Other From Board

- a. Phil Parizeau stated if everyone currently in the room talked to 5 nonvoters and persuaded them to vote in the next referendum, it would increase voter turnout by 30%
- b. Michael Dougherty noted an additional consideration is to run an all-day referendum
- c. Asa Scranton brought up the post card notification option. Karen noted that it would have to come from the BOF contingency fund as there are no additional postage funds available in the General Budget for this year.
- d. Dave Fortin shared information about additional funding concerns to be considered in the next year's budget process. He wanted the people in the room to know of the challenges to the next FY. He also thanked everyone for coming out tonight.
- e. Michael Dougherty also thanked everyone again for their attendance at this meeting and votes at the referendum.

7. Correspondence & Announcements

- a. The Board of Finance will next meet immediately following the next referendum and the next scheduled meeting is June 14, 2022.

8. Adjournment

- a. Michele Woz made a ***Motion to Adjourn**. ***Seconded** by Michael Bernardi. ***The Motion Passed Unanimously**. Meeting Adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Amy Monahan, Recording Secretary. DISCLAIMER: These minutes have not yet been approved by the Board of Finance. Please refer to next month's meeting for approval/amendments.