

Woodstock Board of Finance Minutes

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

7:00 pm

Town Hall Room 1

Regular Meeting

1. **Call to order:** Michael Dougherty called meeting to order at 7:03 pm
2. **Roll Call**
 - a. **Members Present:** Michael Dougherty (Chairman)
David Fortin
Michael Bernardi
Jeffrey Kelleher
Michele Woz
Julie Marcotte, Alternate
Asa Scranton, Alternate
Members Absent: Fred Chmura and Philip Parizeau (both excused)
 - b. **Others Present:** First Selectman Jay Swan, Finance Director Karen Fitzpatrick, Woodstock Public Schools Business Manager Janice Thurlow, Superintendent of Schools Victor Toth, BOE Chair Hans Frankhouser, Sonia Greene, Woody Durst, Pam Minella, Molly Thienel, Megan Bard Morse and Recording Secretary Amy Monahan
 - c. **Noted for the Record:** Quorum
3. **Seat Alternate if Necessary:**
 - a. Michael Dougherty announced that the following would be seated - Asa Scranton at the request of Fred Chmura
4. **Approve Minutes**
 - a. January 10, 2023 Regular Meeting
 - i. Michele Woz made a ***Motion** to approve the January 11, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. ***Seconded** by Michael Bernardi. ***Motion passed** with one abstention (Woz).
 - b. January 26, 2023 Special Meeting
 - i. Michele Woz made a ***Motion** to approve the January 26, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes as presented. ***Seconded** by Jeffrey Kelleher. ***Motion passed unanimously.**
5. **Public Comment**
 - a. Molly Thienel, representing Crystal Pond Park, addressed the concern surrounding the compromised state of the dam on site. Her request is to get information to address this concern to the right person in the Town to take action on the financial needs. Michael Dougherty referred her to see the First Selectmen. Karen Fitzpatrick noted that money has been set aside in the CNR funds for the dam at Crystal Pond Park. Jay Swan asked that all documentation related to the dam be forwarded to him for reference and to be added to his records.

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6. Old Business

- a. Update on State
 - i. Karen Fitzpatrick discussed the FY 24 Governor's Proposal for State Aid. She noted that numbers seen to be the same with exception of the ECS Grant. She also noted the free lunches have been extended through June and this will be an additional burden on the school budget.
 - 1. Dave Fortin asked if these are the proposed numbers from governor and still needs to be voted upon by the legislature. Karen Fitzpatrick confirmed that these are proposed numbers but are the only numbers available at this point in time.
- b. Update on Local Bridge Projects
 - i. Jay Swan stated that there are no updates at this time. Efforts for permitting and easements continue moving forward.
- c. Update on ARPA
 - i. Karen Fitzpatrick has distributed the current ARPA report to the Board of Finance for review.
 - 1. Phase 2 obligations were approved on January 26th for Highway Department Dump/Plow Truck and Muddy Brook Tanker. All other projects have no updates. There is currently \$598,600.03 available in the unassigned fund balance for future obligation.
- d. FY 23 General Government Budget Update
 - i. Linda Bernardi is officially retiring after 16 years of service and Charlene Perkins Cutler has resigned as Selectman.
 - ii. Budgets requests are coming in and the Board of Selectmen will hold a Special Meeting to start the review of budget requests on Wednesday, February 15, 2023 at 3:30 pm.
- e. FY 23 Board of Education Budget Update
 - i. Janice Thurlow has submitted Woodstock Public Schools budget report and additional page showing FY 23 budget expenditure concerns to the Board of Finance for review. She is most concerned with the fuel costs being an overage in the budget.
 - ii. Victor Toth noted that the pandemic significantly impacted Special Education Services and inflation has impacted and the school budget resulting in the education budget no longer being a sustainable budget.
 - 1. Dave Fortin noted that Special Education increases are not a new item to consider for adjustment and fuel has been discussed previously. He noted there is not mechanism that he is aware of in the town to do anything about the current over expenditures.
 - 2. Michael Bernardi noted that Janice Thurlow said she will be making adjustments the best that she can. He knows the Board of Education will try their hardest and do the best they can.
 - 3. Jeffery Kelleher asked what the options are if the Board of Education is short money.
 - a. Dave Fortin noted that not much can be done unless the Board of Selectmen transfers from one budget to the other. There is \$70,000 in the contingency fund for emergencies that certain items need to be drawn from. There is still \$50,000 left to spend under the Prop 46 cap that could be used but it would have to go to vote to be used. He feels that using the \$50,000 voted out of budget should not be used as it was the will of the citizens.
 - b. Michael Dougherty agrees and would like to see expenses reduced. Contingency funds can be used. Any funds from general budget would have to be approved before spending and go to vote.
 - c. Dave Fortin noted that when you have a budget, you need to make every effort to stay within that budget.
 - d. Michele Woz noted that the Board of Education has not had money to put in non-lapsing fund for many years and is running on a very thin budget.

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- f. Update on Woodstock Academy Assessment
 - i. A new letter has been received from Chris Sanford, Head of School with the proper documentation requested at last Board of Finance meeting. With this official documentation, funds in the amount of \$\$215,441 have been appropriated for WA Capital Assessment.
 - ii. This item is planned to be called to Town Meeting at tomorrow's Board of Selectmen Meeting.

7. New Business

- a. 2022 Grand List
 - i. The grand list has been determined and sent to Board of Finance members. There is an increase of 1.6533 or 1.7 % from last year.
- b. Review Fund Balance Policy
 - i. There have been no changes requested for this item.
 - ii. Dave Fortin made a ***Motion** to continue with Fund Balance Policy adopted February 10, 2015 and revised January 14, 2020 as written. ***Seconded** by Michael Bernardi. ***The motion passed unanimously.**
- c. Quarterly Reports Ending 12/31/2022
 - i. Karen Fitzpatrick noted that the interest earned is much higher than expected due to interest rates.
 - ii. Janice Thurlow noted that projections for end of year are included in the report submitted.

8. Public Comment

- a. None

9. Other From Board

- a. Michele Woz noted that after the two public hearings and the presented challenges of our current financial situation, she feels that action is needed.
- b. Michele Woz made a ***Motion** that Board of Finance formally request that the Board of Selectmen bring forth to public meeting the option of an 1 year override (also referenced as a suspension and moratorium in discussion) of Prop 46 for Fiscal Year 2024 to be presented to the voters. ***Seconded** by Jeffery Kelleher. ***The motion passed** with a vote of 5 in favor to 1 opposed (Fortin).
 - i. Jay Swan noted that a special meeting will be warned tomorrow including the item of repeal to Prop 46.
 - ii. Michele Woz noted that the reason she brought this idea forward is that if the repeal fails, the repercussions will be severe. She thought that an override would allow for a commission to be formed to research concerns and do real work to bring information to the town and start corrective actions with the budget concerns.
 - 1. Jeffrey Kelleher noted that voters may have more appetite to override for only one year.
 - 2. Michael Dougherty noted that the Board of Finance would have to do its job of deciding what is palatable with the public if Prop 46 restrictions are no longer in place.
 - 3. Michele Woz noted that we need to reset now and start doing the hard work now to start repairing the financial situation. She wants to be able to look at the budget in a way that allows evaluation of what is truly sustainable.
 - 4. Michael Dougherty noted that people do not understand the all the items that are exempted are the only items being met in our budget under Prop 46.
- c. Dave Fortin noted that based on Karen Fitzpatrick's comment during the discussion of the motion that preliminary numbers show there is approximately 1.2 mils available under the Prop 46 cap, he sees no reason to suspend the ordinance.

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10. Correspondence & Announcements

- a. The next Board of Finance Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 7 pm.

11. Adjournment

- a. Michele Woz made a ***Motion to Adjourn. *Seconded** by Asa Scranton. ***The Motion Passed Unanimously.** Meeting Adjourned at 8:10 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.