

Woodstock Board of Finance Minutes

Regular Meeting Room 1, Town Hall Tuesday, January 9, 2018

1. The Call to Order was by Chairman Michael Dougherty at 7 PM, who introduced the temporary Recording Secretary, Dotti Durst. He then asked Selectman Paquette the status of an advertisement by the Town seeking a Recording Secretary, to which the reply was that it had been discussed but he did not know the current status. Chairman Dougherty asked him to follow-up.

2. Roll Call

Michael Dougherty (Present)
Fred Chmura (P)
David Fortin (P)
Ronald Cabana (P)
Roy Bradrick, Jr (P)
Glen Lessig (P)
Michael Bernardi, Alt (P)
Jeffrey Kelleher, Alt (P @ 7:08 PM)
David Richardson, Alt (P)

Guests/Others: Selectman Chandler Paquette, Treasurer Karen Fitzpatrick, Board of Education Chair Megan Bard-Morse, Highway Foreman John Navarro. Also: Wayne/Woody Durst, Kevin Withers, and Ernest St. Jean.

3. Seat Alternate if Necessary not required as all members were present

4. Minutes from December 12, 2017 Special Meeting: Motion to approve, Fortin/Chmura. Discussion: K. Fitzpatrick stated that the Disclaimer is not correctly worded and suggested the Board of Education model be modified/utilized. The consensus was that the modification of the disclaimer is to be worked out by Fortin and the Recording Secretary. **Motion passed unanimously.**

December 12, 2017 Regular monthly meeting minutes: Motion to approve, Fortin/Bradrick. Discussion: Fortin noted 3 misspellings. 1). P 1, Audit Finding should have been Findings. 2). A name was misspelled in 2 places. P. 4 and P. 11, the letter "s" was missing from the name of First Selectman Alberts. Fitzpatrick noted that the name of an auditor was incorrect in 2 places: the name should Lauren Blair. **Noting the misspellings, motion passed unanimously.**

5. Report of Committees: none

6. Public Comment: none

7. Unfinished Business

A. Update on State Budget: Reviewing the letter from Governor Malloy dated December 13, 2017, the Board noted that the State may decide on further cuts; we cannot at this time anticipate the actual impacts on

Woodstock. The Municipal Aid budget is unknown. First Selectman M. Alberts has been asked if he had more current information, he stated that he had no updates at that time.

B. Review Fund Balance Policy: Chairman Dougherty recommended continuation of the suspension. **Motion, Fortin/Chmura to continue suspension of the Fund Balance Policy for another month. Motion passed unanimously.**

C. Update on Solar Project: Chairman Dougherty has met with First Selectman M. Alberts to discuss electrical rates. It was noted that there is a locked contract in place. Selectman Paquette noted the 5 deadline dates, which do not coincide. Fortin asked if this applies to the School District as well, to which Paquette replied in the affirmative. Bernardi asked about a neighboring school district, of which he learned through Selectman F. Olah, which appears to have knowledge of a lower rate. Even going from 9 cents per kilowatt hour to 7 cents, given the number of kWh used per year, would benefit the town. Richardson noted that there are reports that in the Southeast part of the state, 2 towns jointly negotiated a lower rate. Woodstock being a significant user of electricity at 1.5 million kWh per year, a favorable rate, better than at a household, should be available to the Town. In July, the penalty clause lapses. Members Dougherty, Bernardi, Richardson and others suggested the search begin now to obtain the most favorable rates.

Richardson noted that the Town website has been modified regarding the projected savings from the Landfill Solar Array. A link to a press release stating the incorrect projection is still visible, however. Dougherty and Lessig commented that the Selectmen are evidently aware and are handling the matter.

D. Review of Audit Report: Chairman Dougherty asked if there were any questions about the auditor's report or presentation. Hearing none, **Motion, Fortin/Lessig to accept the audit report as presented.** Comments: Dougherty noted the auditors worked well with Treasurer Fitzpatrick. Lessig noted they did a very good job in answering questions. **Motion passed unanimously.**

E. Discuss CNR Status: Fitzpatrick noted the numbers in the Capital NonRecurring Fund are updated through July1. Highway Foreman J. Navarro will plan the upgrades to the Town Hall parking lot, light fixtures, sidewalks and stairway, and drainage systems (catch basins) if funds in the CNR can be moved from the Uncommitted Capital-Project-Fund for use on this major project. He states that it may not take all of the \$118,894 which is today's uncommitted balance, but it may be best to make it available, in case. If the actual costs are below the moved amount, the balance would be re-designated to the CNR Funds, for any future need. Allocating these funds would require a Town Meeting; action toward that end by the BoF is the first step toward that goal.

Several members of the Board asked Navarro to obtain official quotes on the component costs of this project. The full scope of the project, timelines and costs are necessary and were requested to be provided at the next BOF meeting. Given the liability to the town with crumbling sidewalks, the consensus of the Board is that they would consider moving ahead next month if presented with a complete package. Work could then commence as soon as spring weather permits.

8. New Business

A. Review BOE FY 17-18 Budget Projection: Megan Bard-Morse, Chairman of the Board of Education, reviewed a document the Board members had received, indicating the status of the line items in their budget for 2017-2018. She answered several questions and stated she would research and be able to more fully respond to others. Among other points, she noted that Transportation is increased because a rise in enrollment of young students necessitated another bus. The number of paraprofessionals for the fourth grade has risen due to increased enrollment; the salaries for this increase are not in the current budget but will be reflected in the 2018-2019 budget, adding about \$19,000 for these part-time staff members. David Richardson asked how the BoE plans to mitigate these shortages. Bard-Morse will ask Superintendent of Schools Victor Toth for more information regarding this question.

Dougherty and Richardson noted that there seems to be a consistent pattern, since 2014, of deficit issues surfacing at this time of year. By June, though, a surplus develops, amounting to \$300,000 last year, for example. Fortin noted that today's financial statement is a short-term view, but that understanding the numbers takes a longer perspective; transient families impact the numbers but only the numbers known at that time can be used at budget creation. The discussion was for the BoE to mitigate these shortages.

Dougherty and Fortin noted that it would be helpful to the BoF if this financial statement from the BoE is available for review monthly so as to be able to make projections, and spot trends and patterns. Bernardi suggested the report go to Treasurer Fitzpatrick every month. The BoE has modified its meeting schedule so as to take place within the same week as the BoF, making this feasible.

Bard-Morse noted that enrollment at Woodstock Academy as of October has increased by 33 students beyond the projected number. This will impact the 2018-2019 budget by at least approximately \$500,000 even before any increase in tuition is factored in.

Chairman Dougherty asked Bard-Morse if she can attend the BoF meeting each month, noting that it is very helpful. She noted that it will often be possible. He asked if a delegate could attend in a month when she couldn't.

9. Communication and Correspondence: a copy of a letter from Victor Toth was emailed as part of the BOE information package to the BoF members today. In it, First Selectman Alberts was asked to check with the Town Attorney to determine if the increase in students at Woodstock Academy and the resulting impact on the current budget could be considered an Emergency Expense, therefor exempt, under the terms of Proposition 46. In fiscal 2018-2019, this will result in a budget increase a \$537,000.

10. Public Comment: Selectman Paquette stated that BoF member Richardson sent a memo advising the BoE to examine contracts related to charges for electrical service. He asked if Richardson did that in an official BoF capacity. Richardson responded that he alone initiated the correspondence. Discussion of procedural matters ensued. Fortin: advocated for the formal approach with a BoF motion, decision and subsequent letter, asking if that is what the selectmen would prefer. Dougherty: agreed that is the most effective approach, with precedent already established. Bradrick: it is regrettable that needing a formal motion/letter to another Board or Commission is the only avenue for communication. There should be open communication between a citizen or a Member of the BoF and the Board of Selectmen. Lessig: as individuals, every member of the community

has the right to make a suggestion. But at the BoF, these discussions have a different weight. The best course of action is to create a letter and state an expectation for action.

11. Other from Board: W. Durst was asked to look into a plaque which can be used to recognize the 20 years of service by Dave Hosmer to the BoF and the town. The question was raised about a gift certificate at a local restaurant, but the consensus was that an object (plaque) is permanent and is seen by many people. **Motion, Fortin/Bradrick to move ahead with a plaque or other object in recognition of Dave Hosmer.** Fortin and Durst will work out the verbiage and proceed, with the cost to be covered by the individual members of the BoF. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Member of the community E. St. Jean noted that another person in the audience left the meeting early; the sound quality in the room is so poor that the person could not hear well enough to follow the discussions. Others noted struggles with hearing in this room. Selectman Paquette noted that the town's P A System does not adequately address the problem, as it would require every Board member to step to the podium for every comment, and is therefore not a solution. He noted that there is a similar problem at Town Meetings. Fortin asked if a process could be started to bring in an expert consultant to prepare a free evaluation of the situation and to make a proposal for a solution. Selectman Paquette agreed to bring the subject to the BoS at an upcoming meeting. Fortin offered to attend this meeting if it would be helpful to advocate on behalf of this improvement.

Lessig, thinking about the recognition of Dave Hosmer's service, wondered about contacting Representative Boyd about an official Commendation for the state. When asked, Selectman Paquette was not aware if the Town was addressing this.

Bernardi asked about the FOI Act regulations regarding emails between BoF members. He asked if REPLY ALL could constitute an illegal meeting. Dougherty: members sharing procedural info (ex: call to the meeting) by email has been confirmed as legal. Should there be any reason for a response to something sent out, it should be directed exclusively to the sender. Richardson confirmed that at the FOI training, it was expressed that sharing info is legal; discussion of BoF matters is not.

K. Fitzpatrick excused herself from the meeting at 8:25 PM.

12. Motion to adjourn; Fortin/Lessig was at 8:27 Pm. Motion passed unanimously.

Notes taken by Recording Secretary Dorothy Durst

Minutes submitted by David Fortin, Woodstock Board of Finance Clerk

These minutes have not yet been approved by the Board of Finance. Please refer to next month's meeting minutes for approval of and/or amendments to these minutes. A video recording of this meeting is available on the Town of Woodstock website (see Boards and Commissions/Finance).