

MINUTES

1. **Call To Order:** M. Dougherty called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm

2. **Roll Call:**

Michael Dougherty (Present)
Fred Chmura (Present)
David Fortin (Present)
Ronald Cabana (Present)
Roy Bradrick, Jr. (Present)
Glen Lessig (Present)
Michael Bernardi, (Alternate) (Present)
Jeffery Kelleher, (Alternate) (Present)
David Richardson, (Alternate) (Present)

Others Present: Michael Alberts, Cindy Alberts, Frank Olah, Chandler Paquette, Karen Fitzpatrick, Victor Toth, Janice Thurlow, Megan Bard Morse, Mr. & Mrs. Durst, Terri Lasota, WINY reporter, Marla Butts, William Rewinski, and 8 others.

3. **Seat Alternate if Necessary:** None

4. **Approve Minutes from March 12, 2019 Regular Meeting:**

F. Chmura **MOTIONED** to **APPROVE** the March 12, 2019 meeting minutes as **AMENDED**;
D. Fortin **SECONDED**;

R. Bradrick requested the following correction:

Agenda item #7.B pg. 4, last paragraph: "nothing in the Board of Education's budget" should be "nothing in the Board of Selectmen's budget"

M. Bernardi and G. Lessig requested the following correction:

Agenda item #9 pg. 4, paragraph 3 should be: "G. Lessig thanked the Board of Selectmen for their hard work in preparing the budget. M. Bernardi and G. Lessig agreed with S. Woodward's concerns regarding the present state of the Town Hall and were also concerned over the recent resignations of two key staff members."

Agenda item #8 pg. 4, paragraph 3, second sentence: "He was also" should be "She was also"

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY; F. Cabana ABSTAINED

5. **Public Comment:**

Greg Kline thanked R. Bradrick for his letter which was published in The Villager, noting his points made were on target and he was the first public official to speak up about the problem.

6. Unfinished Business

- A. Update on State Budget:** None
- B. Update on Local Bridge Project:** None

7. New Business

A. BOE Budget and Five Year Capital Improvement Plan Presentation:

V. Toth said at their last meeting, the Board of Education discussed making \$485,000.00 in cuts to their proposed budget which included lowering salaries by \$58,000.00, reducing sports by \$20,000.00, tuitions by \$148,000.00, and reducing the supply account by \$110,000.00. This totals \$481,000.00 in reductions for a 2.45% budget increase. Of that 2.45%, \$274,000.00 is Woodstock Academy tuition and \$140,000.00 is contractual obligations. He also respectfully requested that the BOE be allowed to take \$145,000.00 from the Health Insurance Reserve fund which would help in preserving as many programs as possible.

V. Toth noted the Five Year Capital Plan highlight for the 2019-2020 is the \$212,000.00 Capital Assessment as per the recommendation of K. Fitzpatrick and the First Selectman. He also pointed out 2 highlighted items: under Woodstock Elementary School, \$46,000.00 for security system updates, and also for Woodstock Middle School. V. Toth said this was part of the State security grants that were received a year ago which totaled \$178,000.00, and since this is a matching grant we need to contribute 40% of that.

G. Lessig asked V. Toth if the final numbers included the passthrough from the maintenance project; V. Toth said it does not in the proposed budget but is in the Capital Improvement Plan.

D. Richardson commented that regarding the \$145,000.00, the reserve account was part of the general fund, and whether that money comes from the reserve account or the general fund was irrelevant because either would be violating Prop46; he added Prop46 is a spending cap, and it would also be a violation of the policy of the Health Care Reserve. D. Richardson also said capitalizing the \$212,483.00 was a problem because capital expense is an asset and there is no asset, it can not be depreciated; it is a period expense and other towns are addressing it that way publicly.

D. Fortin commented that Prop46 not a spending limit, it is an increase limit; the budget can not be increased beyond certain items. He added that after the leftover self insurance costs for claims are paid, the remaining money resides in the health care reserve ~~there~~ to be utilized by the Town as part of the budget process; they are proposing that we use that money, but the total amount that the budget goes up meets the spending requirements if we approve what's been presented to us.

D. Fortin and D. Richardson further discussed their views and interpretations of Prop46.

M. Dougherty said according to the auditors, that money could be spend because it was a reserve account and considered a separate account. He added that the attorney agreed this to be doable, as long as it was spent for the specific purpose of payment to cover claims, or to defer a cost of insurance premiums. D. Richardson disagreed and referred to the June 2018 letter and December 2018 audit review.

K. Fitzpatrick said an updated letter from the attorney and the auditor was received regarding how to port the \$212,000.00 increase from the academy, noting that it was the auditors who advised to put this on the capital plan and also said that the reserve in the CNR funds could be used. Therefore, if it

is on the Capital Plan and is approved at referendum the CNR funds can be utilized to accomplish the payment. K. Fitzpatrick read the letter from the auditor which was forwarded to Attorney Rich Roberts; she also read R. Roberts reply. K. Fitzpatrick, D. Richardson, and D. Fortin discussed further.

M. Dougherty, the board members, and K. Fitzpatrick agreed to contact the attorney and ask for an official written opinion and clarifications.

J. Kelleher said the academy requested \$212,000.00 for capital improvements so it seems reasonable to accept those as capital improvements. D. Fortin and M. Dougherty replied that there has been no official request at this time.

M. Alberts said he felt the head of school wanted to create the opportunity to meet with the First Selectman and talked about what the Capital Expenditure needs were for the upcoming fiscal year and future needs; based on conversations prior he felt there was a request of the Town. V. Toth added that both amounts have been approved by the Board of Trustees. M. Dougherty said the Board of Finance should have been officially notified.

M. Dougherty strongly felt this was a poor business decision on the part of the academy, and because they have a shortfall the sending towns end up being responsible to recoup that money. He added that their poor planning shouldn't be passed down to the Town.

R. Bradrick said there cannot be capital expenditure with no capital; he added as a municipal entity the Town is not a shareholder in Woodstock Academy and was very displeased about the use of tax payers funds to repair a private high school, and the Board of Trustees should have had some insight.

Regarding the questions raised at the previous BOF meeting about the contract between Woodstock Academy and the Board of Education, M. Alberts said information obtained by Attorney Rich Roberts suggests while the contract makes reference to tuition, it makes no reference to the capital expenditures; the bottom line is that the Academy can simply roll the capital expense into tuitions.

M. Alberts suggested the Board of Finance draft a list of questions and concerns to be sent to the attorney so he can answer them directly, and also noted that replacing the underground storage tanks and fixing the roofs are typically mandated by a State agency.

M. Dougherty asked what the bottom line budget request of the BOE was at this time; J. Thurlow said the recommend number is \$18,640,501.00 but is not yet BOE approved.

B. General Government Budget and Five Year Capital Improvement Plan Presentation:

M. Alberts said several adjustments have been made to this proposed budget since the last meeting; as per the Registrar of Voters an expense should be reflected on page 6 of the General Government budget which has not yet been incorporated into the budget. This was to cover Presidential Primary expenses as anticipated in 2020; the previous estimate of \$3700.00 should now be \$4757.00. Changes were made mainly to the election page (page 6); The original request of \$23,994.00 is increased to \$28,566.00. Also, on page 17 the Board of Assessment Appeals, \$500.00 requested by the Assessor was added for secretarial support due to the higher number of appeals.

M. Alberts said the total recommended General Government budget is \$5,374,916.00, which is composed of government operations of \$4,848,632.00, and total redemption of debt of \$526,284.00; this is an \$8,619.00 increase over the previous year but still below what was expended in 2017/2018.

He added there is no change to the Five Year Capital Improvement Plan.

M. Alberts went on to talk about the Impact of 2 long term employees leaving, resulting in significant expenses incurred in payout of benefits, on a gross level approximately \$14,000.00 for J. Cullan, and approximately \$10,000.00 for T. Lajoie. He added this was not an expense that is budgeted for and felt it is prudent to look at benefits plans offered to employees. Under the ASME contract the Town is obligated to these expenditures. M. Alberts said he is formally notifying the BOF that their assistance may be needed, as there may be over spending in department budgets as result of this expense.

M. Dougherty made a recommendation to direct BOE to come forward at the public hearing with budget of that number, \$18,640,501.00 as that would meet the limit of Prop46 without entertaining the idea of the \$212,483.00, which would be a good starting point. He added it would be good to have that information available to the public at the public hearing.

R. Bradrick **MOTIONED** to direct the Board of Education to come forward with a budget of \$18,640,501.00; D. Fortin **SECONDED; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. Estimated Revenues:

K. Fitzpatrick explained the estimation process and also explained the handouts she had distributed. She noted the most difficult to budget for revenues was motor vehicle prior taxes, interests and leans. Her current guestimate to fund the next fiscal year over the budget is \$710,600.00.

K. Fitzpatrick also briefly discussed the estimates for Education block grants, In lieu of Taxes, Mashantucket Pequot, and Conveyance taxes.

F. Chmura asked if there was reimbursement for State grants revenue; K. Fitzpatrick replied that was discontinued 2 years ago. F. Chmura also asked how the loss of revenue was accounted for; K. Fitzpatrick said when calculating the Grand List increases, that amount is backed out and not included. K. Fitzpatrick and F. Chmura also discussed the renters program and landfill permits.

G. Lessig and M. Alberts discussed Seniors fees for the transfer station. F. Chmura suggested using a MEETS test to help determine discount eligibility for various services and programs. M. Bernardi asked what the current transfer station discount was for seniors, K. Fitzpatrick replied it was half price at age 65.

8. Public Comment:

Adam Keser thanked everyone for their hard work and time and talked about the disparity and spend between Woodstock Academy and the K-8, noting 40% more is paid per academy student compared to the K-8. He added that with the roof (if it gets rolled into tuition) and tuition increase, the disparity becomes greater and if we cannot control that, those cuts must come from the K-8; he also referred to the statute that requires equitable allocations of resources amongst the town schools, which in certain scenario could result in the town getting sued. M. Dougherty said this was something that is on the April meeting agenda.

Marla Butts (representing IWWA) said the commission reviewed the Board of Selectmen's budget and referred to the January 16, 2019 letter sent from the IWWA Chairman to the BOS and BOF. She said the IWWA determined a minimum of 6 hours per week was necessary for a wetlands agent. When Terry Bellman was present, he was the wetlands agent and that duty fell upon T. Lajoie when he left, though she was not paid for it. M. Butts went on to say the commission felt it needed to get the staffing monies

in its own account to pay at least 6 hours of a wetland agents time. M. Butts said in reviewing the BOS budget, the commission found the funding for the wetlands agent was listed in the budget as part time staff which also included the ZEO, and the BOS executive secretary, and there was no way to identify what was going to the Inland Wetlands Commission, wetlands agent, ZEO, or to the executive secretary.

M. Butts said the Inland Wetlands Commission feels abandoned by the Town, adding the same has happened to P & Z, leaving no one to help the building inspector or receive applications. She also noted that until the positions were restaffed, per State statute the Town clerk is required to receive all applications and petitions. Any questions normally handled by the wetlands agent or ZEO would need to be directed to the Selectman's office, and was disappointed by the lack of direct communication from BOS regarding IWWA needs.

M. Alberts explained that there was communication at the BOS meetings and requests were listened to, the BOS also looked at what they previously budgeted for this position.

M. Alberts said for the record, the 31.5 hours for the assistant to the building official that were budgeted for the current fiscal year included time as the inland wetlands agent, and there were 6 hours allocated for ZEO responsibilities. He added the budget they are proposing increases the ZEO's responsibilities to as much as 15 hours and dedicated 31.5 hours to the assistant to the building official with no direct responsibilities for IWWA. The new budget also dedicates 3 hours weekly to the inland wetlands agent. Due to software restrictions the budget line items cannot be broken down any further; nothing is being buried. He added that in the absence of a wetlands agent, the agency itself is empowered to police and address their responsibilities.

G. Lessig questioned the line item and location on the proposed budget; K. Fitzpatrick addressed and explained how it was grouped.

Greg Kline commented on the lack of fairness regarding the Town of Woodstock paying for municipal services for Woodstock Academy while the other sending towns do not. He also commented that it is unfair to have to pay their tuitions when they are living in tax exempt housing. M. Dougherty commented that there was going to be a discussion on shared services; M. Alberts said it is uncertain that an opportunity would be found for Woodstock Academy to voluntarily make a contribution.

9. Other from Board:

G. Lessig commented on the issue raised by G. Kline and asked whose responsibility it is regarding the students residing in the houses on the south campus property attending the academy and the public schools; F. Chmura said it was the Town of Woodstock's responsibility because it is the Town's responsibility to educate the students. F. Chmura and M. Dougherty discussed this briefly.

J. Kelleher commented on the increasing use for Center for Arts after its rehabilitation and wondered when it would transition from an educational stage to a place to rent out for events.

G. Lessig inquired about the list of questions and obtaining a legal opinion regarding the passthrough, and asked what was needed to move forward on this.

G. Lessig **MOTIONED** for D. Fortin and M. Dougherty compile a list of questions for the Town Attorney; F. Chmura **SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

G. Lessig, M. Alberts, and M. Dougherty discussed the need for microphones at the meetings to make it

easier to hear the public when they are speaking, and vice versa.

Megan Bard Morse requested that the list of questions and the answers from the attorney be shared with the BOS and BOE. M. Dougherty agreed to share the list and asked for the BOE to do the same in the future.

10. Correspondence and Announcements:

M. Dougherty reminded everyone about the public hearing on April 2, 2019, and the meeting on April 9, 2019 to set the final budget. He also noted the annual Town meeting is scheduled for May 7, 2019, and referendum the following week on May 14, 2019.

11. Adjournment:

G. Lessig **MOTIONED** to **ADJOURN**; D. Fortin **SECONDED**; **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was **ADJOURNED** at 8:56 pm.