

Woodstock Board of Finance

Regular Meeting

Room 1 - Town Hall

Tuesday, March 5, 2019 - 7:00 PM

Minutes

1. **Call To Order:** M. Dougherty called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

2. **Roll Call:**

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

Others Present: K. Fitzpatrick, V. Toth, J. Thurlow, F. Olah, M. Bard Morse, T. Lasota, WINY reporter, and 8 others.

D. Fortin noted for the record that the 02/12/2019 Board of Finance meeting had been cancelled and has requested for the clerk's office to reflect the cancellation on the Town website.

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

4. **Approve Minutes from January 8, 2019 Regular Meeting:**

D. Fortin **MOTIONED** to **APPROVE** the 01/08/2019 meeting minutes as **AMENDED**;
F. Chmura **SECONDED**;

D. Richardson requested the following corrections:

- 1) agenda item 7, pg. 3 item C, 3rd paragraph, 4th sentence: "D. Richard" should be "D. Richardson"
- 2) agenda item 8, pg. 4, 4th paragraph, last sentence: "D. Richardson" should be "D. Fortin"

MOTION CARRIED 5:0:1; R. Bradrick ABSTAINED

5. **Public Comment:** NONE

6. **Old Business**

- A. **State Budget Update:**

K. Fitzpatrick said a briefing received from CoST (Council of Small Towns) indicated there would be no steep grants. She also noted a payment from ECS of \$1,287,961.00 on January 30, 2019, and also some excess costs for the Board of Education in the amount of \$391,957.00. K. Fitzpatrick added there will be some aid funds that could be expected from the State Budget Proposal but had no definitive numbers at this time.

F. Chmura asked if the steep grants pertained to this fiscal year; K. Fitzpatrick said the steep grants were awarded several years ago for specific bridges and the transfer station, but they were not utilized. She added that now that the projects were underway the hope was to have some of that money, however COST stated that no steep grant money is being funded. K. Fitzpatrick went on to say that she had not heard from CCM but had met with the Lt. Governor to discuss but had not yet heard back.

D. Fortin asked if the ECS grant was coming in as anticipated; K. Fitzpatrick confirmed that it was, and said the 2018-2019 budget had proposed \$4.6 million. To date the amount is \$5.1 million, which is a \$477,000.00 increase over what was budgeted. K. Fitzpatrick added that the 2 payments received were 50% of the \$5.1 million.

B. Update on Local Bridge Project:

K. Fitzpatrick said CME has already begun looking at the bridges and appears to be starting their preliminary engineering. She added they were still attempting to get the Butts Road Bridge into the State bond program, and Rep. P. Boyd asked for a more definitive breakdown of costs. K. Fitzpatrick felt it would be at least another year before they were ready to get bids or financing.

C. School Cost Comparison:

D. Fortin **MOTIONED** to **TABLE** the School Cost Comparison until the April meeting;
G. Lessig **SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. CNR -open space:

M. Dougherty referred to the letter included in the board members packet stating that the anticipated program fell through, and the \$11,000.00 that would have been used to pay for the property assessments should be moved back to Capitol Non-Reoccurring as now not needed. K. Fitzpatrick provided an update on CNR stating there is \$149,894.00 in Uncommitted Capitol Non Reoccurring fund with the \$11,000.00 returned.

G. Lessig **MOTIONED** to remove the \$11,000.00 committed to open space and return to Uncommitted Capitol non reoccurring fund; R. Bradrick **SECONDED;**
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

E. Solar Update:

D. Richardson said based on the first 6 months they should be expecting near a \$40K margin for the next year, and approx. \$35K for next few years barring any dramatic changes and/or generation rates. He added that the numbers are expected to start to drop slowly after 2 years, and at the end of 15 years could be approx. 55% (\$18K-\$20k). D. Richardson noted that the original numbers at the beginning of the project, in reality, had no basis.

D. Richardson suggested the Board of Selectmen should have the contract reviewed by the Town attorney due to liability concerns under certain conditions and cost of insurance. K. Fitzpatrick commented that the owners of the solar panels pay for the insurance.

D. Fortin asked D. Richardson if he had created a degradation chart based on the output; D. Richardson explained there was not enough hard data at the time.

7. New Business

A. 2018 Grand List:

M. Dougherty talked about the 2018 Grand List increase and Tax Abatement Exemptions for Farms and briefly explained the program details and process, noting the process had not been correctly followed over the past many years. He went on to say the new assessor didn't take this into consideration because it had not been implemented, and the previous assessor had reduced the property values accordingly rather than giving a percentage abatement. M. Dougherty said that would account for an approximate \$13,000.00 difference in growth than what the grand list actually is.

K. Fitzpatrick said per the new assessor, the difference is approximately \$11591.00, which attributes to over \$400,000.00 in assessments; the original grand list generation estimate was approximately \$180,209.00 which will now change (down) to approximately \$168,000.00.

K. Fitzpatrick said there were approximately 31 applications that were submitted by the October 1st deadline, but per the ordinance the BOS and the BOF are supposed to approve them every 5 years, but that did not take place over the last 10 years. The prior assessor was providing lower assessments to make up the difference instead of obtaining board members approvals.

G. Lessig questioned whether or not this has anything to do with Planning and Zoning; M. Dougherty replied the ordinance is specific as to who qualifies and who does not, and is currently being reviewed for others that may qualify, but at this time current qualifications have not been changed. M. Dougherty and the board members discussed their potential involvement in adjusting the new application guidelines.

K. Fitzpatrick said the point that should be stressed is that the Board of Selectmen were in favor of approving the abatements along with the Board of Finance's approval. No matter whose fault it was they would like to honor the abatements this one time, and moving forward, follow the ordinance.

M. Dougherty said the Grand List is currently a \$168,000.00 increase.

B. Board of Ed FY 19-20 Budget Presentation:

M. Dougherty noted that this is the first presentation of the Board of Education's budget, and there is opportunity to ask questions and make recommendations before the town meeting. The people will then have their say, and after our final meeting we'll set the budget.

V. Toth thanked the Board of Finance for the opportunity to meet with them; J. Thurlow presented the Board of Education's budget.

J. Thurlow first provided a proportion overview:

Salaries - 36% of budget.

Benefits - 11% of budget.

Special Ed (excluding salaries) and Additional services – 9% of budget.

Maintenance - 2% of budget.
Curriculum – 3% of budget.
High School tuitions – 33% of budget.

J. Thurlow broke down all of the categories and reviewed each; the final page summary reflected a \$954,000.00 budget which is a 5.24% increase over last year's budget. She added they were still in discussion as to how the academy assessment was to be paid for; placed in the BOE budget would add to the MBR, a 6.41% increase. The Woodstock Academy planned capital improvements assessment charge will be a 2-year project, and next year the town would be paying more as the school population will be approx. 444 students in the high school. The population number decreases thereafter.

R. Bradrick asked how the contract between the Board of Education and Woodstock academy provides for the tuition increase of 3.65%, and the assessment for the roof repairs. V. Toth replied that the contract says the BOE is required to pay for the tuition increase set by Woodstock Academy Board of Trustees and have not had the capital assessment previously. R. Bradrick also asked if there was a limit to the tuition increase that the academy could assign to the surrounding towns; J. Thurlow indicated there was not. M. Bard Morse explained that the BOE signed a contract 3 years ago that agreed to pay the tuition the Woodstock Academy, and there is no defined increase percentage limit. The contract is valid until 2021. V. Toth added there was no language that pertains to capital improvements.

R. Bradrick also asked if at some point a cost differential between half day and full day kindergarten could be provided, as well as the cost of the current Pre-K program. J. Thurlow noted that birth to age 3 is a requirement for Pre-K but that is Special Ed.

D. Richardson and J. Thurlow discussed the breakdown of costs (tuition and construction) for Woodstock Academy; J. Thurlow replied that she did not break down the tuition in the same manner as Karen Monroe, and further explained the State said the construction cost needed to be broken out of the tuition cost when reporting to the State. They also briefly discussed the calculation methods for this cost.

V. Toth, J. Thurlow, and the Board of Finance members also discussed the assistant principal cost, cost savings by redoing the ~~HBA~~ heating system and rebalancing the equipment, and Dabbco transportation costs.

D. Fortin, V. Toth, and J. Thurlow further discussed the Woodstock Academy break down of tuition and construction costs. K. Fitzpatrick said the Board of Selectmen from Woodstock and the other surrounding towns met with Chris Sanford to discuss the construction costs and break down for the following year and include this in the BOE budget without increasing the MBR. She added that currently the focus is on the roofs, removal of the underground storage tanks, and installation of the above ground tanks over the next 2 summers. The cost is approximately \$1,069,000.00. The 945 attending students from surrounding towns and 135 exchange students help to pay for this over the 2 years. D. Fortin was concerned about the large bill with no sunset clause or enabling clause within the current contract and paying the bill with no discussion. M. Bard Morse noted

there is one representative from the Woodstock Board of Education on the Woodstock Academy Board of Trustees for voting and discussion purposes.

8. Public Comment:

Greg Cline commented on there being only one representative on the Woodstock Academy Board of Trustees and felt there should be someone from the Board of Finance as well. He also felt the town could be saving almost \$220,000.00 of tuition money because of children going to the high school who live in tax-exempt housing owned by the Academy.

Preston Shultz commented about lack of funds received by the Town from the Woodstock Fair.

Michelle Falvo commented about the Academy assessment and roof and tanks assessment. She also felt the Board of Education did good job with their budget presentation.

Steve Smock felt the Board of Education was looking out for the best educational needs of Woodstock's children.

9. Other from Board:

D. Richardson inquired about resolution of the \$74,000.00; M. Dougherty said this was still being looked into by the auditor and attorney.

10. Correspondence and Announcements:

M. Dougherty noted the next Board of Finance meeting on Tuesday March 12, 2019, which will include the initial Board of Selectmen Budget presentation.

11. Adjournment:

G. Lessig **MOTIONED** to **ADJOURN**; D. Fortin **SECONDED**.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. The meeting was **ADJOURNED** at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Terri Lasota, Recording Secretary.

DISCLAIMER: These minutes have not yet been approved by the Board of Finance.

Please refer to next month's minutes for approval/amendments. Please note that the audio record is the legal record of the meeting.