

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order:** M. Dougherty called the meeting to order at 7:00 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: First Selectman Mike Alberts & Mrs. Alberts, Selectman Frank Olah, Selectman Chandler Paquette, Karen Fitzpatrick, Janice Thurlow, Victor Toth, Megan Bard Morse, Linda Bernardi, Terri Lasota, and 6 others.

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

4. **Approve Minutes from March 19, 2019 Board of Finance Regular Meeting:**

R. Bradrick **MOTIONED** to **APPROVE** the meeting minutes of 03/19/2019 as **AMENDED**;
F. Chmura **SECONDED**;

F. Chmura requested the following edit on pg. 4 item 7.C, 4th paragraph: "MEETS" should be "MEATS"

D Richardson requested the following edit on pg. 3 item 7.A, 6th paragraph: "no capital;" should be "no capital asset;"

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. **Public Comment:** None

6. **Old Business**

- A. **Update on State Budget:**

M. Alberts said he had communications with Rep. Pat Boyd; the remainder of the town aid road funds were bonded earlier this month and the information will be coming soon. M. Alberts also said, as a collective group of communities they are working together to make the Governor aware of the unique aspects of the communities. He added Rep. Pat Boyd and State Senate Member Dan Champagne have scheduled a meeting for them with the Governor on April 23, 2019.

B. Update on Local Bridge Project: None

C. School Cost Comparison:

G. Lessig distributed a cost comparison between Woodstock Public Schools and Woodstock Academy. He noted this issue arose during the Tri-Board meeting in November 2018 from comments from the audience regarding Special Education and transportation cost comparisons between Woodstock's different school systems. G. Lessig said D. Richardson made a good point about the audited budget, and there are some other expenses that are included, and this information was captured as well.

G. Lessig explained the columns and items in the comparison and noted the costs for the public schools are significantly less per pupil than for the academy.

D. Fortin commented that he and G. Lessig met with J. Thurlow and V. Toth, and it is not an easy thing to grasp. He noted in example, that the bonding costs were reflected in both columns, but really reflected against the town and wasn't sure this should be included in the comparison, adding that there were other debatable items. Overall D. Fortin felt this was a great starting point.

D. Richardson felt the numbers are not as different than previously talked about, and are reasonably in proportion. G. Lessig felt they were getting a good deal with both school systems, and it's money well spent.

M. Dougherty thanked G. Lessig and D. Fortin for the work that was put into the comparison.

7. New Business :

A. Suspense List-Tax Collector, Linda Bernardi:

Linda Bernardi said as mandated by State Statute she seeks approval for the 2019 Suspense List, and explained how the list is compiled noting that the dollar amount is removed from the collectable revenue. L. Bernardi stated the 2019 Suspense List total is \$21,093.42.

D. Fortin **MOTIONED** to **APPROVE** the 2019 Suspense List as presented; G. Lessig **SECONDED**; **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. Approve Final FY 19-20 Combined Budgets:

G. Lessig **MOTIONED** to **APPROVE** the maximum allowable amount under Prop46 of \$24,015,417.00;

D. Fortin **SECONDED**;

R. Bradrick said in the last several years they have gone to the Prop46 maximum and have seen surpluses on both the side of the BOE and general government which could be due to either expenses less than anticipated or incoming revenues are better than expected. R. Bradrick said this results in the budget amount never fully spent, and over taxing of the people in Woodstock; he felt that given the uncertainty of the State budget and what's to happen with Woodstock Academy, now isn't the time to continue with the process of going to the max allowed in Prop46.

M. Bernardi asked what the tax mill rate increase would be; K. Fitzpatrick replied there was no mill rate increase in this budget.

D. Fortin commented that any surplus revenues from the general government side, or the BOE side, will go into allowable accounts, CNR accounts for general government i.e. roads and local bridge projects, and for schools it will go into a non-lapsing account used only for capital projects at the schools. He added that these are costs that they otherwise would need to bond and pay interest on. D. Fortin felt because the mill rate is not increasing this year it shows the two sides of the government is being frugal in their actions.

D. Richardson noted the surpluses could also go into the general fund. He felt they previously had been over taxing and revenues had been high, which is why there is no mill rate increase this year.

J. Kelleher said in the past year the Town Hall has made many cuts in hours and staffing, and the schools end up not being able to fund all of their proposed programs. He felt with all of the cuts that have been made they were not over taxing.

G. Lessig agreed with D. Richardson and J. Kelleher; he added residents want services, but Woodstock doesn't have industry or retail so revenues come from personal property taxes, and in comparing the mill rates of other towns felt citizens were not being over taxed.

F. Chmura agreed with the previous speakers and felt to try cutting the budget more would do a disservice to the tax payers.

D. Richardson noted the attorney's opinion and felt the Board of Education needs to made the necessary adjustments to meet the \$18,640,501.00 budget which should include the \$212,000.00 construction to the academy, without outside funds to cover the \$212,000.00. J. Kelleher felt that the BOE cutting \$300,000.00 to go below the max allowed by Prop46 and cover the costs D. Richardson referred to would do a disservice to the town and voters.

G. Lessig and M. Dougherty agreed this was not a part of the current motion.

R. Bradrick **OPPOSED; MOTION CARRIED**

D. Fortin **MOTIONED to APPROVE** the General budget in the amount of \$5,374,916.00;

G. Lessig **SECONDED; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

D. Fortin **MOTIONED to APPROVE** the Board of Education budget in the amount of \$18,640,501.00;

R. Cabana **SECONDED; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. Approve Final FY 19-20 Combined Five Year Capital Plans:

D. Fortin **MOTIONED to APPROVE** the Capital Improvement Plan for the Town of Woodstock for a Five Year period ending fiscal year 2023-2024, in the amount of \$9,947,456.00;

G. Lessig **SECONDED;**

M. Dougherty reminded the Board members that the capital plan is basically a wish list, there are no guarantees, and there are rules in place for when money is spent.

D. Richardson said the \$212,483.00 listed on a five-year capital plan for Woodstock public schools as pointed out by Mr. Bradrick and himself at the 19th meeting, and the attorney, is not appropriately a capital expense as it is not an asset, it should be a period expense, and should be stricken from the capital plan. M. Dougherty said they are still waiting for a final decision on this.

D. Richardson, M. Dougherty, G. Lessig, and D. Fortin discussed their views on the timing of the decision; G. Lessig noted the problem was not discovered until November 27, 2018. R. Bradrick said based on the preliminary opinion from the Town attorney and his understanding of what a capital assessment is, he doesn't want to legitimize this and vote to put \$212,483.00 on their side of the capital improvement, adding this is the only part of this plan he disagrees with.

D. Fortin didn't feel the intent was that they would spend the money on that and noted the capital plan can't be added to after the budgeting process. M. Dougherty added they nor the tax payers have to allow them to utilize the money, but it has to be there. They would still have to go through the Board of Finance and still go to a referendum.

M. Dougherty **CALLED the QUESTION;**
R. Bradrick **OPPOSED; MOTION CARRIED.**

D. Appoint Auditor for OPM-Mahoney Sabol:

R. Bradrick **MOTIONED to APPROVE** Mahoney Sabol as appointed Auditor for the upcoming fiscal year; R. Cabana **SECONDED;**

D. Richardson was concerned about using Mahoney Sabol as their auditors didn't point out the missing \$74,000.00 from the reserve account as an irregularity, and it has not yet been addressed.

F. Chmura inquired about Mahoney Sabol's fee for next year; K. Fitzpatrick indicated it remained the same as last year.

MOTION CARRIED

E. Approve Tax Abatements as recommended by the Board of Selectmen:

M. Alberts talked about abatements, stating the premise of the ordinance had not been followed. He noted that in 2012 another 5 year abatement should have been done, but the new Town Assessor found that the provisions to the current ordinance had not been followed correctly. He added there had been no follow up for a number of years going back to the previous assessor who appeared to have been making individual assessment changes to the properties to come up with an equivalent dollar total, rather than an abatement, without oversight from the Board of Finance or the Board of Selectmen.

M. Alberts said the Board of Selectmen met last week to vote on abatements, and have worked with the Woodstock Ag Commission to insure reaching the greatest number of people possible, although there were 2 individuals who had not yet submitted paperwork. He added there may be several additional applications and wanted to create a mechanism for those added applications to be approved. M. Alberts suggested that the wording of the motion by the Board of Finance allow for additional submissions and recommendations meeting the requirements of the ordinance.

M. Alberts and the Board of Finance members discussed the ordinance and the timeframe of the approvals; M. Dougherty noted the approvals are typically done in October with a term of 5 years, and can be renewed unless the property is sold or there was a change of use for the property.

F. Chmura asked how this can be kept open since the deadline has passed; M. Alberts said they had approached Attorney Roberts and they believe this conforms with the intent of the ordinance. F. Chmura requested to review Attorney Roberts' opinion. R. Bradrick said he supported this but

was concerned with the authority to make this decision since the ordinance was not followed. M. Alberts noted he did have the attorney's opinion in writing but did not have it with him.

D. Fortin suggested addressing this at a subsequent meeting; D. Richardson suggested addressing this at the night of referendum during the regular meeting. M. Alberts said he would forward the information to the BOF.

F. Chmura advised having a clearer process when the ordinance is rewritten; he also noted there is nothing showing the BOF that these applicants are qualified.

F. Chmura **MOTIONED to APPROVE** the Dairy Fruit Farm Tax Abatement for the property owners on the list before them; D. Fortin **SECONDED**; R. Bradrick **ABSTAINED**; **MOTION CARRIED.**

F. Quarterly Reports ending March 31, 2019: No Discussion

8. Public Comment:

M. Alberts said they were interviewing the final candidates for the Building Official position and Office Manager position tomorrow evening. He noted if decisions were made at that time there is 120 days after their start date before eligibility for insurance benefits, so there would be a current year budget savings for those expenses.

M. Alberts also said the BOS would be meeting with a perspective Zoning Officer, and although the PZC must approve of the ZEO candidate, that person would work for the BOS. M. Alberts added there is a proposal from CME to provide ZEO and Inland Wetland services, but the per hour bid cost is \$100.00 per hour. The budget for ZEO is \$27.00 per hour, so the hope is to avoid having to use a professional firm. M. Alberts said if the position is not filled it is likely the BOS would need to request \$8000.00 of expense from the contingency fund on a quarterly basis to cover the cost of the professional services.

M. Alberts noted the Transfer station would hopefully be addressed in May.

9. Other from Board: None

10. Correspondence & Announcements:

M. Dougherty reminded everyone of the following:
Town Meeting on Tuesday May 7, 2019 at 7:00 pm;
Referendum on May 14, 2019, *tentatively from 12:00pm to 8:00pm*
BOF meets directly after referendum votes are totaled, at which time the mill rate will be set.

11. Adjournment:

G. Lessig **MOTIONED to ADJOURN**; R. Cabana **SECONDED**; **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
The meeting was **ADJOURNED** at 8:03 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.