

Woodstock Board of Selectmen Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

4:00 p.m.

Selectmen's Conference Room

1. Call to order: First Selectman Jay Swan called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

a. **Members Present:** Jay Swan, Chandler Paquette, Kate McDonald

b. **Others Present:** Finance Director Karen Fitzpatrick, Michael Dougherty

2. Review and Discuss FY 25 General Government Budget

a. Karen Fitzpatrick presented the FY 25 General Government Budget Requests. The budget has increased in the amount of \$413,225 over the current FY 24 budget which represents a 7.3% increase. Debt has decreased by \$54,472. The significant increases are as follows:

Public Safety:

Fire - \$29,700

EMS - \$37,292

NECOGG Services:

Paramedic Intercept \$8,400

Town Planner \$6,500

Animal Control \$3,000

Open Space - \$40,500

Salaries - \$129,269 – includes hiring a full-time zoning/wetlands agent

Insurance/Benefits – \$123,063

Data Processing - \$15,793

Contingency - \$10,000

Elections - \$10,000

b. The Selectmen are concerned with such a high increase in the FY 25 budget. Discussions took place on how to reduce the budget.

c. Kate McDonald asked Michael Dougherty why the increases in EMS and Fire are high. Mr. Dougherty explained in-order-to maintain 24/7 ambulance coverage they need to be competitive with wages. Putnam and other area ambulance companies are increasing their wages. WFPA operations need new computers and hardware upgrades and maintenance on the equipment.

d. Karen Fitzpatrick suggested reducing Open Space to \$10,000 since there is a \$645,000 cash balance in the Open Space savings account. Open Space Commission can also request CNR Funding in the event more funding is needed.

e. The Selectmen all agreed that salary increases will be no more than 3.5% for all town employees with the exception of the newly hired full-time ZEO/Wetlands Agent as this position will start on March 1. This change will also reduce the increase in pension, social security, and medicare liability.

f. Jay Swan and Karen Fitzpatrick spoke with Jason Scranton the new Director of Public Works on reducing the highway budget and they decided to remove part-time fill in staff and reduce the roads budget by \$25,000.

g. There will be one new item included in the FY 25 General Government Budget and that is the Commission on Aging. The budget request is \$5,400. All three Selectmen agreed that this commission is already making positive changes for seniors.

h. Karen Fitzpatrick noted that the Arboretum and Quassett School Committees did not send in a FY 25 budget request by the January deadline. Chandler Paquette commented that in-order-to be considered for funding there must be a request. Karen Fitzpatrick asked to keep both line items in this budget request in the same amount as this current FY 24. The Selectmen agreed for now.

i. All three Selectmen agreed to have the Planning & Zoning Commission ask the Board of Finance for the use of funds in the Capital and Non-Recurring Fund for the additional \$6,000 needed to update the POCD in 2025.

j. Chandler Paquette made a Motion to approve all adjustments as discussed to reduce the FY 25 General Government Budget. *Seconded by Kate McDonald. The Motion passed unanimously.

3. Adjournment

a. Chandler Paquette made a ***Motion** to adjourn. ***Seconded** by Kate McDonald. ***The motion passed unanimously.** The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Finance Director Karen Fitzpatrick. DISCLAIMER: These minutes have not yet been approved by the Board of Selectmen. Please refer to next month's meeting for approval/amendments.