

# Woodstock Board of Finance Minutes

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Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Town Hall Room 1

7:00 pm

## SPECIAL MEETING

1. **Call to order:** Chairman Michael Dougherty called meeting to order at 7:04 pm

2. **Roll Call**

- a. **Members Present:** Michael Dougherty (Chairman)  
David Fortin  
Philip Parizeau  
Charlene Perkins Cutler  
Marilyn Barker  
Michele Woz

**Members absent:** Jeffery Kelleher, excused  
Julie Marcotte, excused  
Fred Chmura

**Others Present:** Finance Director Karen Fitzpatrick, First Selectman Jay Swan, Woodstock Public Schools Business Manager Janice Thurlow, Superintendent of Schools Viktor Toth, Selectman Chandler Paquette, Selectwoman Kate McDonald, Hans Frankhouser, Sonia Greene, Adam Keser, Jessica Weaver Boose, Kevin Withers, Amy Vinal, Matt McCabe, Brian Salvas and Recording Secretary Amy Monahan.

- b. **Noted for the Record:** Quorum

3. **Seat Alternate if Necessary:**

- a. Charlene Perkins Cutler was seated by request of the absent Jeffrey Kelleher.

4. **Approve Minutes**

- a. February 6, 2024 Special Meeting
- i. Michele Woz made a **\*Motion** to approve February 6, 2024 Special Meeting minutes as presented. **\*Seconded** by Charlene Perkins Cutler. **\*The motion passed** with 1 abstaining (Woz).
- b. February 28, 2024 Special Meeting
- i. Phil Parizeau made a **\*Motion** to approve February 28, 2024 Special Meeting minutes as presented. **\*Seconded** by David Fortin. **\*The motion passed unanimously.**

5. **Public Comment**

- a. None

6. **New Business**

- a. BOE FY 25 Budget Presentation
- i. Viktor Toth noted that 3 handouts that have been distributed for review.
  - ii. Janice Thurlow reviewed information from current year to show how the increase in current budget was distributed.
  - iii. Viktor Toth went through presentation including 24-25 and 25-26 improvement plans.

# Woodstock Board of Finance Minutes

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1. 24-25 items include: Math Coordinator, Literacy Coach K-8, continuation of LA Series Consumables at WMS, Social Studies Curriculum Alignment, Science Curriculum Alignment and Technology Refresh.
2. 25-26 items include: Health & Wellness Teacher at WMS, 2nd Math Coach, 2<sup>nd</sup> Literacy Coach, Spanish Teacher, Literacy Coordinator K-8, Social Studies Series at WMS and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Technology Refresh.
- iv. Known increases for Mandated Programs
  1. The mandated program of special education is estimated increase to \$6,234,915 (including contingency for unexpected costs).
  2. SRBI and ELL program costs total \$1,247,582 for the upcoming year.
- v. Mandated costs from transportation, High School tuitions, utilities, insurance, administration and software in the upcoming year total \$8,442,258.
- vi. Contractual obligations including contract increases, planning time, mandated class teachers, custodial & facilities staff and medical insurance is expected to total \$6,688,787 for upcoming year.
- vii. New items being requested this year include the technology refresh, a Business Manager Assistant, a Language Facilitator and 2 paraprofessionals.
- viii. Total budget requested is \$23,396,128 that includes a 1.27% discretionary fund amount of \$298,194.
- ix. Michele Woz asked about kindergarten age requirement change. CT is only state with current entry age of December 31<sup>st</sup>. New entry age date is September 1<sup>st</sup> to transition with other states. The upcoming year will have one kindergarten class that will be a transitional pre-K to Kindergarten class for the transitional year.
- x. Marilyn Barker asked for clarification surrounding “coaching” positions. Currently the educational “coaches” are visiting professors. The plan is to have the coaches become employees of the schools.
- xi. Michele Woz asked what the drivers are for the math positions. It was stated that analytics on test scores and student performance (benchmark testing scores) are the current drivers. Viktor Toth noted that a solid foundation at elementary level will hopefully drive down Special Education costs at the high school level.
- xii. Michele Woz asked about the social/emotional impact on Special Education. The WES does plan on a new health wellness teacher next year and has already implemented multiple programs to address mental health and wellness.
- xiii. It was noted that K-8 Enrollment has changed with numbers dropping off in the younger grades.
- xiv. Dave Fortin requested the enrollment projections for both high schools and district be provided to the BOF.
- xv. Marilyn Barker asked if the current discretionary fund is a lapsing account. It was clarified that the discretionary fund is for supplies, not additional funding,
  1. Michael Dougherty noted that up to 2% of any unspent funds can be placed into a non-lapsing fund.
- xvi. Michele Woz asked the BOE if they have discussed possible budget cuts (i.e. enrollment decreases). Adam Keser noted the administration has been asked to request what they need and cut what they do not in order to spend as responsibly as possible.
  1. Marillyn asked how they plan to review and assess? Will it be regularly scheduled? Hans noted that Janice reviews all concerns regularly with the BOE. Adam noted that there is no fat in the budget to pull back on at this time. It will be easier to assess as the budget as it is built back up over time.

## Woodstock Board of Finance Minutes

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2. Both Michele Woz and Marilyn Barker noted the importance of our community voice that needs to be heard at the state legislature when the opportunity arises. Mike Dougherty agrees that all Boards of Education in rural areas need to work together to resolve mandate issues.
- xvii. Dave Fortin noted the transportation increase and asked what drove that increase. Janice Thurlow noted the expected new special education runs and stated the proposed budget includes those new runs.
- xviii. Charlene Perkins Cutler asked if the Special Education contingency was % or dollar amount.
  1. Janice Thurlow noted that contingencies were based on program type costs and can be found in outplacement tuitions in the BOE budget. Dave Fortin suggested it listed as contingency fund to better show how the funds are moved and spent.
- xix. Charlene Perkins Cutler asked about the increase in WES and decrease in WMS budgets. Viktor Toth noted it was reflected in purchase of programs for the schools.
- b. BOS FY 25 Budget Presentation
  - i. Jay Swan presented the proposed General Government budget and changes made to get to the proposed number.
    1. Original requests submitted to the Board of Selectmen amounted to an increase of 7.3% or \$413,225 from the current budget.
    2. The Board of Selectmen reduced the requests by \$146,032 from several areas including salaries, open space, public works, pensions & benefits.
    3. The proposed General Government budget for FY 24-25 reflects a \$267,193 increase over last year. This is an increase of 4.73% with debt of 3.2% to result in total request of \$6,432,672.
    4. Increases are for salaries, Fire Protection, EMS Service, NECCOG, data processing, contingency, elections (new mandate), insurance & benefits and changes in the Land Use office.
  - ii. Charlene Perkins Cutler asked about the transfer station's proposed revenues for next year. Karen Fitzpatrick noted that the transfer station operation costs are estimated to be close to even to the revenues with the increased permit price. She will know more next week and after this year with the increase rate impacts.
  - iii. Marilyn Barker asked if there is state funding for new early voting mandates. It was noted that \$10,500 has been allocated but town costs will be almost twice that amount.
  - iv. Dave Fortin requested that Karen Fitzpatrick review the report as some columns are negative. Karen Fitzpatrick noted that the report will change when final budget is inputted. She will try to adjust formulas to meet the request of BOF.
  - v. Charlene noted that there are several different rates for salary increases and asked if there were performance reviews this year. Jay Swan noted increases were based on responsibilities of jobs, not performance review. Karen Fitzpatrick noted that several salaries in Woodstock are not competitive rates when compared to other towns and increases reflect the attempt to bring salaries closer to comparative town's rates. Kate McDonald noted that the need for performance reviews was discussed by the Board of Selectmen.
    1. Several Board of Finance members noted that performance reviews should be done for more than just salary decisions.
- c. Public Hearing Notice
  - i. Michael Dougherty read the following-

# Woodstock Board of Finance Minutes

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*TOWN OF WOODSTOCK  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
APRIL 9, 2024 @ 7:00 P.M.  
Woodstock Middle School*

*The Board of Finance of the Town of Woodstock will hold a Public Hearing at the Woodstock Middle School on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in accordance with section 7-344 of the Connecticut General Statutes.*

*Itemized estimates of the expenditures of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education will be presented and the Board of Finance will hear all persons who wish to be heard in-regards to any appropriation which they are desirous that the Board of Finance shall recommend or reject for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.*

*Dated at Woodstock, CT this 12<sup>th</sup> day of March 2024*

*Michael Dougherty, Chairman  
Woodstock Board of Finance*

## **7. Public Comment**

- a. Chandler Paquette noted the financial state of Connecticut is in its current good position because several issues are being passed down to municipalities.
- b. Brian Salvas asked if BOE will have data to support that improvement plan requests are successful. It would be nice to see progress is being made with funding being spent. It would also be more palatable for the public when it comes time to vote.
- c. There will be a Community Forum of Board of Education before the budget vote (date not yet confirmed).

## **8. Other From Board**

- a. None

## **9. Correspondence & Announcements**

- a. The next Board of Finance Meetings will be held March 19<sup>th</sup> to present and discuss the proposed budget revenues.

## **10. Adjournment**

- a. Michele Woz made a **\*Motion to Adjourn. \*Seconded** by Charlene Perkins Cutler. **\*The Motion Passed Unanimously.** Meeting Adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Amy Monahan, Recording Secretary. DISCLAIMER: These minutes have not yet been approved by the Board of Finance. Please refer to next month's meeting for approval/amendments.