

**BOARD OF FINANCE MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2011  
TOWN HALL**

**Members Present:** David Hosmer, Glenn Converse, Ronald Cabana, George McCoy, Elizabeth Murphy; Alternate Michael Dougherty

**Others Present:** Allan Walker, Chandler Paquette, Mitchell Eaffy, Donna Stefanik, Linda Bernardi, Judy Walberg, Christine French, Tina Lajoie, Julie Woodland, Barbara Rich; Frank Baran, Karen Munroe, Victor Toth, Lindsay Paul, Kirsten Rigney, Kevin Ford, Steve and Dale Froehlich, Roy Chandler, Ed Larson, Richard Wisneski, Susan Jankot, Everett Cowley, Kevin Withers, Avis Spalding, Wayne Spalding, Susan Fleck, Melita Monahan, Michelle Woz and other residents

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Hosmer.

**Motion** by Converse/McCoy to seat Michael Dougherty as a voting member. Unanimous.

**#1. Approve Minutes of March 15, 2011 Meeting**

**Motion** by Murphy/McCoy to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2011 meeting as presented. Unanimous.

**Motion** by Converse/Dougherty to amend the minutes of the March 8, 2011 meeting as follows: Under Correspondence/Announcements: "approximately ten percent of Woodstock taxpayers who are unable to pay their taxes in full are now making monthly payments". Unanimous.

**#2. Approve Tax Collector Suspense List**

Linda Bernardi, Tax Collector, gave an update on tax collections to date and stated that she expects to make budget, however, she reported on some trends that she has observed lately such as an increase in credit card use, more bankruptcies and owners of house lots not paying their taxes until they are able to sell the lots.

**#3. Review Estimated Revenues for 2011-2012**

Estimated revenues were reviewed with Town Treasurer, Barbara Rich. The loss of a \$55,000 state reimbursement and the fact that the Governor has asked for legislation allowing him to decrease municipal aid by 10% if the state revenues do not come in were discussed. This could result in over a half-million dollar loss even after the town's budget has been adopted. To date, the estimated revenue is \$674,682 short of funding the maximum allowable Proposition 46 budget. Revenues will be constantly monitored and updated as further information becomes available.

**#4. Review Combined Budgets for 2011-2012**

Hosmer reported that four leadership meetings had been held beginning in October in preparation for the coming budget year. Those in attendance were First Selectman, Treasurer and Asst Treasurer, Supt of Schools, School Business Manager, Board of Education Chairman, WA Headmaster, WA Trustee Chairman, Board of Finance Chairman and Member. At those meetings the drastic reduction in available revenues was discussed. In addition, a letter was sent in November to both boards from the Board of Finance requesting a zero percent increase for 2011-2012 and indicating that it would be a "best case scenario". The budget submitted by the Board of Selectman was "close" to what was requested, however, the Board of Education budget was "way out of the ballpark" with a 3.72% increase, he stated.

If the Board of Finance were to stay with no mil rate increase, the 2011-12 budget would need to be reduced below the 2010-11 budget by over \$200,000. A .26 mil rate increase will be

required to stay level funded with the current year. Since board members feel that any increase above one-half mil will not be acceptable to the taxpayers, Hosmer recommended that the board consider a .42 increase in the mil rate. He reminded the board members that the auditor had warned about keeping any increases to a minimum and being careful not to use the fund balance.

Converse asked the board to consider putting forward the entire allowable Prop 46 budget to the voters which would require approximately a .88 mil rate increase. Dougherty pointed out that the .88 mils would equate to a 5% increase in taxes and .42 mils would be a 2.4% increase in people's taxes. Murphy suggested addressing the disparity in the budgets submitted and taking all of the cuts from the Board of Education budget. McCoy stated that the economy and the taxpayers' ability to pay dictate drastic cuts this year. He remarked that, as a single parent, his family's lifestyle has significantly changed in this economy as has that of most town residents.

**MOTION** by Dougherty/Converse to move forward to the public hearing with Option #3 on the worksheet being discussed. This option is estimated to require a .42 mil increase in taxes and will require cuts to both budgets. Unanimous.

#### **#5. Citizens Participation**

Lindsay Paul expressed her displeasure with the Board of Finance for not allowing citizens to participate prior to their budget discussion and for not providing copies of their worksheet to the audience. She asked if all members understood what they had just voted on and how it would affect the K-8 system. Several others talked about the demands on the public school system and asked the board to reconsider its action and take the full prop 46 budget to the voters.

Converse proposed rescinding the previous vote and reconsidering. All others indicated that they had understood what was being proposed and that they stood by their action. Murphy stated that we are "one town/one budget", that the realities of the economy dictate that this is not the year to add three new teachers and that a .88 increase in the mil rate is not acceptable.

Other citizens thanked the Board of Finance for recommending a more reasonable budget to the voters and stressed that in the current economy taxpayers cannot absorb huge increases in their property taxes in addition to all of the additional taxes proposed by the Governor. Members of the audience suggested that the fact that large increases are still being requested each year and the teachers have not been asked to consider a wage freeze, indicates that the Board of Education is out of touch with the townspeople and that they need to "tighten their belts".

McCoy asked Dr. Baran if, during his tenure, there had ever been a formal request made to the teachers to consider re-opening their contract. Dr. Baran said there had not.

#### **#6. Correspondence/Announcements**

Hosmer read the letter he had received from the State in reply to his letter re: the MBR. The Public Hearing is scheduled for April 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

**Motion** by Converse/Cabana to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted,  
Barbara Rich

