

THOMPSON BOARD OF FINANCE
TOWN OF THOMPSON

Library Community Center
April 24, 2014
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Raymond Faucher, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Members present: Paul Dery, Aaron McGarry, Larry Groh, Jr., Susanne Witkowski, Raymond Faucher, Jr.

Members absent: Laurent Guillot

Also present: Mike Martin, Dr. Jolin, Paul Lenky, Kirsten Forrester

II. APPROVE MINUTES

Motion by Paul Dery seconded by Susanne Witkowski to approve the minutes from the April 3, 2014 Board of Finance Budget Workshop Meeting. Mr. Faucher noted Mr. Baer's name is spelled wrong on page 2 in the second paragraph. **Motion—Passed. Unanimous.**

III. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Faucher noted the Board received information from the Library Director regarding financial comparisons to other libraries.

Mr. Faucher received information from Jeff Barske regarding the proposed ballot for the referendum.

A packet of information from Paul Lenky was received.

IV. CITIZENS COMMENTS

Paul Baer provided the Housing Authority minutes from its last meeting which shows generous giveaways to employees.

Paul Baer stated the voters were told they were approving a \$150,000.00 STEAP grant for the West Thompson fire house roof and did not approve the spending of tax dollars for this work.

Paul Baer asked why the Board of Education and its mechanic are allowed to create hazardous conditions at town garage. Mr. Baer stated he feels there is a lot of waste at the Town garage which should be addressed.

Paul Bear stated employees have the windows open when the heat is on at the Town Hall.

Mr. Faucher noted the Board of Finance has little to no authority to address the concerns expressed by Mr. Bear and those concerns should be brought to the Selectmen.

Mike Lajeunesse stated he is concerned about the possibility that \$10,000.00 could be cut from the Library's budget. Mr. Lajeunesse explained the Board of Trustees has worked hard to put forth a reasonable budget and have decided not to fill a vacancy in order to save money. The last time the library budget was cut it effected hours at the library. Mr. Lejeunesse stated he supports more funding for the fire departments and suggested the Board add money into the budget for the fire departments and allow the citizens to vote on the budget.

Sally White stated she is perplexed that the language of referendum for the STEAP grant for the West Thompson roof was approved by voters but then the Town funds were expended to pay for it. Ms. White suggested a second referendum is in order to correct the procedures on this given the dollar amount involved. Mr. Faucher responded he has not done the research on this issue.

Paul Baer stated the library budget does not include any benefits for employees, electric, heat and telephone. Mr. Baer stated the library says it is hurting for money but eliminated fines. Mr. Baer stated the fines should be reinstated as it teaches responsibility and provides some revenue for the library.

Robert LaChance responded fine money that was collected went into the general fund and did not go directly to the library. Mr. LaChance noted no other departments in the Town include other expenses such as electricity and heat in their budgets. Mr. LaChance stated he is offended that the library budget would become suspect as the Trustees worked hard to prepare a reasonable budget.

V. PAUL LENKY-SELECTMAN'S UPDATE

Mr. Lenky provided the Board with an email from Mary Ann Chinati indicating the West Thompson reimbursement will not be coming from the State.

A grant has been awarded from the DECD for the Belding Corticelli Phase I and Phase II study.

A report from the Building Office for permits issued in March 2014 was distributed.

A Departmental Report from Mary Ann Chinatti was distributed.

Mr. Lenky stated he spoke with Charles Lee regarding weed control at Quaddick and they are going to do a minimum weed control this year to try to stretch the remaining grant money.

Information regarding renewable hydro energy was distributed.

Mr. Lenky explained the Town owns property at 1395 Riverside Drive which is known as the Stove Shop. The building on that property is an eyesore and will be taken down and the property will be cleaned up. The building next to it at 1391 Riverside Drive is up for tax sale and the Selectmen are considering acquiring this piece to be owed by the Town and the Trials Committee would like to put in a boat ramp. This is in the early stages of discussion.

Mr. Lenky stated he met with DOT officials to discuss plans for the Quaddick Bridge repair.

Mr. Lenky stated he will continue to work with Dr. Jolin regarding concerns at the Town Garage.

VI. DR. MICHAEL JOLIN—SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Jolin reported he received notification that the 10% estimate on health care costs is not accurate and an increase of 12.3% or 12.4% is more likely. Currently the comparability study is being conducted with respect to the State plan.

Paul Dery stated he has not yet received the TEG information he previously requested. Dr. Jolin will get that information for Mr. Dery.

VII. MICHAEL MARTIN—FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Martin reported the upcoming tax sales should result in the collection of a significant amount of money for the Town. There should be no or very little shortfall in tax collections which will result in an increase in surplus. Revenues are currently ahead of budget due in part to an increase in scrap prices. The expenses are in line with the exception of snow removal which is over budget by \$40,000.00 due to a recent emergency salt purchase. Money to cover this will be transferred from contingency and fringe benefits. The year end surplus will be 9 ½%. \$125,000.00 of surplus will be used in the 2014/2015 budget.

VIII. BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE TOURTELLOTTE FUND

Joe Lindley provided an update on the status of the Tourtellotte Fund.

IX. RENE MORIN—TAX COLLECTOR

Mr. Morin explained how the tax sales are conducted. Mr. Morin stated it has been about 5 years since the last series of tax sales were done. The process was started in January with 19 properties and 5 of those accounts have been paid in full with 14 accounts being turned over to the tax attorney. All fees, including advertising and attorney's fees, are paid by the property owner. Mr. Morin stated \$27,800.00 has been received for two of the properties and he anticipates several more will pay in full before the June 12, 2014 sale date and \$150,000.00 to \$160,000.00 should be received by June 30, 2014. Mr. Morin noted none of the properties included in the sale are homes. The property adjacent to the Stove Shop was discussed by Mr. Lenky. The other three properties have generated a lot of interest and Mr. Morin is expecting those properties to be sold

on June 12, 2014 and the money from those sales will be considered revenue for next year's budget.

X. NEW BUSINESS

None.

XI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

The Board took a short recess.

XII. BUDGET WORKSHOP

The budget currently stands at .674 mil increase.

Mr. Martin suggested increasing worker's compensation by \$12,000.00. The consensus was this increase must be made.

Mr. Martin suggested increasing prior year tax collection in light of the upcoming tax sales by an additional \$20,000.00. The consensus was to make this change.

After these changes the budget now has a .661 of a mil increase.

The ambulance service provided to the race track was discussed. Worker's Compensation and library insurance was discussed. Mr. Faucher stated he has trouble with the Town subsidizing discount ambulance service for a private entity and suggested the Selectmen look into being reimbursed by Community for these expenses. Mr. Martin stated he can come up with the figure for reimbursement but then the Town would need an agreement with Community on how those funds would be repaid. Mr. Lenky will contact Community about this and Mr. Martin will come up with the proposed figures.

Raymond Faucher acknowledges many citizens have spoken passionately about the library and have requested the library budget not be cut further. Mr. Faucher noted the fire departments need money and he feels the volunteer public servants and fire safety in our community are a higher priority than the library at this time.

Motion by Paul Dery to take \$10,000.00 from the library budget and distribute that money to the fire departments. No second was made.

Mr. Groh stated money has been taken from all departments so that the pain is spread out among every department. Capital expenditures were cut from almost every department. The Selectmen cut each department before it even comes to the Board of Finance and the school is trying to cut expenses and save money. Mr. Groh stated he is in favor of increasing the fire departments budgets and is comfortable with the budget as it is and presenting it to the public.

Susanne Witkowski stated the Town is very lucky to have the Library Community Center and she is not in favor of cutting any part of the library's budget. She feels they have presented a reasonable budget of what is needed and the Board should respect that.

The education budget was discussed. Continuing declining enrollment is a concern. Dr. Jolin reported there have been 3 or 4 retirements and there is a possibility that a position in the Elementary School could be eliminated if necessary. Dr. Jolin stated he has been requested by the Board of Education to come up with several proposals to address the declining enrollment.

Mr. Faucher suggested taking \$25,000.00 from the Board of Education's budget.

Susanne Witkowski stated she agrees with Larry Groh to send the budget as it currently stands to the citizens however she encouraged the Board of Education to consider reorganization for next year's budget as major changes need to be made.

Aaron McGarry stated if there is an opportunity to not replace a teacher then he is favor of cutting the budget by that amount right now.

Paul Dery stated he wants the TEG information before he makes any decisions.

The Town Meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2014 with a tentative referendum date of May 28, 2014. The Town Meeting notice must be published in the newspaper by May 9, 2014. The Board of Finance could have a meeting next week to finalize the budget and still make the deadline.

Motion made by Aaron McGarry to cut the Board of Education's budget by \$100,000.00. No second was made.

Motion made by Aaron McGarry seconded by Raymond Faucher to cut the Board of Education's budget by \$25,000.00. **A roll call vote was taken. Paul Dery—abstained; Aaron McGarry—yes; Raymond Faucher—yes; Susanne Witkowski—no; Larry Groh—no. Motion—Failed.**

After discussion it was decided another meeting will be held on May 1, 2014.

Mr. Faucher noted the sample ballot which would include questions in order to obtain information from voters would create confusion and doesn't give accurate feedback. The consensus was to leave the ballots as is and not include additional questions.

The newspaper advertisement must be submitted for publication by May 5, 2014. The Board of Selectmen authorizes the notice of the Town Meeting.

XIII. ADJOURN

Motion by Aaron McGarry, seconded by Suzanne Witkowski to adjourn. **Motion—Passed. Unanimous.**

There being no further business to come before the Board the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Baublitz
Clerk of the Board