



TOWN of THOMPSON
Board of Finance
815 Riverside Drive
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255

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2020 JAN 24 A 9:11

Linda Paradise
TOWN CLERK, Asst

THOMPSON Board of Finance Regular Meeting

Thursday, January 16, 2020

Louis P. Faucher Community Center Meeting Room

MINUTES

1. The call to order by Chair Aaron McGarry was at 7:01 PM.
Roll call: Members-Aaron McGarry (Chair), Jim Bellavance, Rob Mann, Rhonda Rooney, Robert Werge, Steve Herbert
Others- Orla McKiernan-Raftery (Finance Director), Melinda Smith (Superintendent of Schools), Amy St Onge (First Selectman), Susanne Witkowski (Selectman), John Rice (Building Committee), Bob Gentes (Schools Finance Director), Kathleen Herbert (Board of Education), John Sharpe (Fire Chief/Community and Fire Advisory Committee), Charlene Langlois (Planning and Zoning), Rene Morin (Tax Collector)
Members of the public, Recording Secretary Dotti Durst,
2. **Motion R. Mann seconded by R. Werge to approve the December 19, 2019 Regular meeting minutes carried unanimously.**
3. Correspondence- reminder that the FOIA Workshop is Wednesday, January 29, 6 PM
- assessor's office memo: Supplemental Motor Vehicle has come in above anticipated at \$302,299 (\$72,299 over)
4. Citizens' comments:
*Jessica Bolte, 1081 Riverside Dr- requests an additional *Citizen's Comments* near the end of the BOF agendas. She asks for greater visibility by BOF members at community events. She asks for a BOF response to the presentation by Education regarding the cost of outsourcing, and she asks for consideration in the upcoming budget preparations of purchasing video-taping equipment to be used for Board and Commission meetings
*Kathleen Herbert, 122 Wilsonville Rd- asks for the addition of Citizen's Comments near the end of the BOF agenda, especially during budget workshops
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5. Selectman's Update-First Selectman Amy St Onge:
* the roofing referendum was successful; she thanked the many who participate in the cooperative effort, including Justin Young among others
*Millsite and BAR Grant funds have been awarded for use for redesigning the awkward intersection of Blain Road near the Belding mill site
*in February they hope to open the bidding process for engineering for the sidewalk project
* union negotiations will begin by early February
*budget workshop dates being proposed by the BOS include 2 review dates, including evening opportunities for public attendance; they are working on setting up live streaming

* Suggests a Tri-Board meeting during the days prior to the March 5 public hearing
Comments/questions for the First Selectman: S. Herbert- praised A. St Onge's poise at the recent town meeting. He asks that the budget workshop dates be put on the town calendar and asks the BOF to attend the BOS workshops to understand how the numbers were derived. R. Werge- safety is very important at the Blain Road intersection; if funding allows, landscaping along the fence in front of the overgrown mill property would improve the area to passers-by. R. Mann-complimented the cooperative effort for the Roof Replacement town meeting, noting Justin Young's work. R. Rooney- asks about the scheduling of participants in the budget workshops, asking if there are any in particular to attend. A. St Onge- February 5 will be the basics of the budget by the Selectman's office; in addition, the DPW presentation will be a key. Once completed, she will send the entire schedule out to the BOF.

5. School District update-Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith- providing handouts of the data, she noted that enrollment is in the 985 range. She thanked the citizens who supported the Roof Replacement referendum; the grant details will be filed on February 1. The BOE will be negotiating three contracts this year. The Department of Education has created a Pathways System with support for five career paths, which add credentials to the high school diploma. Some other smaller districts have participated successfully and provide a model. Cohorts have been formed to work together. The anticipated funding as an Alliance School District has skipped two districts in the state, Thompson being one. The purpose is to provide additional professional development for teachers, in order to increase test scores in English as a Second Language and math, as well as to reduce absenteeism and improve the drop-out rate. Steps are being taken to resume the Alliance funding. The budget for Special Education is over-spent by \$537,105, projected for the fiscal year. Several additional students, some needing out-placement, could not be anticipated and were not budgeted for. The first education budget workshop will be soon; the principals have been carefully monitoring the bottom line.

Comments/questions for the Superintendent of Schools: A. McGarry- noted the importance of the pathways to student career success; he asked if the cohorts in the Pathways are similar school districts to Thompson. No, they are intentionally mixed as other districts can provide insights. And this is managed by the state, with 12 in each. A. McGarry- is the Custodian and Secretary's Contract resolved? Not yet. Administrator's is complete. The Para-Professionals, Cafeteria Staff and Nurses' contract has outdated language and is under review. A. McGarry- asks about the Municipal Stabilization Grant of \$200,000 which was received. It was for summer enhancement of reading at the middle and a teacher at the high school. M. Smith – TEEG is working with the schools to go out and bring in truant students.

6. Financial Report- Finance Director Orla McKiernan-Raftery: a written report was presented for the six months ending December, 2019. Revenue sources are lower than last year at this point in time, as is cash on hand, due to a later start than usual due to the



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budget cycle. She will let the BOF know when the audit is completed and ask for a place on the agenda at the February meeting, or perhaps March. S. Herbert asked for clarification about the use of overtime by the DPW for snow removal. Clarification: the *discussion* at the last meeting was to fund the school needs was for \$60,000 but the *motion* was for \$55, 931.

7. Annual Report of the Tax Collector for the Fiscal year ending June 30, 2019: Tax Collector Rene Morin distributed copies of the Annual Tax Collector's Report, noting all good news in several segments of the report for the year which ended on June 30, 2019. However, in the current budget year, the numbers will not likely be positive, given that the tax bills went out later than customary, causing a delay in receipts by the town and the earnings on the deposited taxes will therefore be less this fiscal year. Looking at the final report, Suspense Accounts, it becomes evident the town will have to conduct a sale on some properties for tax delinquencies. 35 properties have been identified, but some will be resolved previous to the actual auction date.
Comments/questions for the Tax Collector: R. Werge- explain the impacts of the delay in mailing the tax bills. Yes, the impacts are significant. The first mailing but also the subsequent mailings were delayed, causing a slower collection rate. In addition to the commonly-known costs of holding referendums, there is also about a \$250,000 loss in revenue/earnings on the tax dollars collected, as well as re-printing and other expenses.
8. Tourtellotte Fund update – Board of Trustees: Orla McKiernan-Rafertry noted the Trustees have met, including R. Mann from the BOF. Their investment firm (Crestwood Advisors) gave a report. On February 3, 6 PM, a public hearing will be held at which plans will be developed for the next 3-4 years.
9. Old Business
 - a. Fire Advisory Committee update: J. Sharpe thanked Orla McKiernan-Rafertry for the templates which are being used to set up budget proposals for each of the five departments. A set of proposed bylaws for a Thompson Fire Protection Association is being developed, and will be used if the decision is to create a tax district system or a "Woodstock model" association. The Advisory Committee will meet with the BOS/BOF to determine the next steps.
 - b. Community Fire Department update: J. Sharpe- Town Planner Tyra Penn-Gesek is looking into a Small Cities Grant program; the grants are almost always for new construction, however. Conversations regarding demographics and geographic data seem to make the grant a possibility, but they are highly competitive, with only \$12,000,000 for the entire state. Should that be the best path, about 19,000 square feet (at about \$8,000,000) would be needed. A site would be needed; there is a possibility of a fairly flat town-owned parcel, behind the K of C building or possibly another.

10. Board of Finance Member Comments:

*R. Rooney- thanks for all the detailed reports *S. Herbert- on the BOS agenda, *Citizen's Comments* does appear twice. I am going to make a motion to add Citizen's Comments at the end of the BOF agenda. A. McGarry- as a point of order- this is coming up now under the BOF agenda item # VI, Board Member Comments; it may be appropriate to move this discussion to a formal Agenda item. J. Bellavance suggests it be added to the agenda next month; S. Herbert agrees to add it to next month's agenda. R. Rooney asks does he mean regular meetings and budget workshops? S. Herbert- it seems to belong at both but leave the agenda item open-ended. R. Werge noted the Chair did not contact him about the Citizen's Comments matter. A. McGarry – my exact words at the last meeting were that 5 of the BOF members are fine with the agenda as it is.

11. Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Rooney to convene an Executive Session at 8:17 PM for the purpose of discussion of the Legal matter/ MERS (Municipal Employee Retirement System, to be attended by the six selectmen, Finance Director Orla McKiernan-Raftery, First Selectman Amy St Onge and Selectman Susanne Witkowski carried unanimously.

12. Possible action following Executive Session: Executive session concluded at 8:55 PM and the regular meeting resumed at that time. **Motion S. Herbert seconded by J. Bellavance to allocate up to \$50,000 to finalize the legal matter/MERS, these funds to be taken from the General Fund balance. A. McGarry- yes R. Werge-yes J. Bellavance-yes R. Mann- yes S. Herbert-yes R. Rooney –yes Motion carried unanimously, 6-0.**

13. Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Rooney to adjourn carried unanimously.
BOF Chair A. McGarry adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Dorothy Durst, Recording Secretary *Dorothy Durst*

These minutes have not yet been approved by the Board of Finance. Please refer to next month's meeting minutes for approval of and/or amendments to these minutes.