



THOMPSON Board of Finance
Regular Meeting – Minutes
Thursday, December 15, 2022
Town Hall-Merrill Seney Room
and via Zoom from remote locations

1. The call to order by Chair Aaron McGarry was at 7:01 PM with all 6 Members present.
Roll call: In person- Aaron McGarry, Laurent Guillot, Dave Johnson, Rob Mann. Via Zoom- Steve Herbert and Rob Werge. Finance Director William Steglitz, Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith, First Selectman Amy St Onge, Thompson Schools Student Delegate Kaylee Beck, Board and Commission members. Recording Secretary Dotti Durst.
2. Approval of minutes:
 - a. **Motion L. Guillot seconded by R. Mann to approve the October 24, 2022 Special Meeting minutes with a modification carried unanimously:** (modification: agenda item #4: ... Aaron McGarry joined the meeting after the vote was taken ~~but did not vote on the question~~).
 - b. **Motion D. Johnson seconded by L. Guillot to approve the November 17, 2022 Regular Monthly Meeting minutes carried unanimously.**
3. Correspondence:
 - a. Tax Collector's November report
4. Citizens' comments: none
5. Selectman's Update-First Selectman Amy St Onge: * Putnam EMS is working very well. There were 82 calls in October and 75 in November, with appropriate response times throughout; no mutual aid calls were needed. Communications services will be changed on January 1 to QV Dispatch, resulting in better data collection. * The Salt Shed/Public Safety Complex survey work is complete; a site walk will be conducted in January. * Schools HVAC: the BOS voted to send the question to referendum; a grant with 68.2% reimbursement to the town upon project completion is being sought. Legal notices are being prepared. The BOS 12/20 agenda will finalize the process. * Ad Hoc school safety committee: the BOE unanimously did not lend support on the question of armed security at the schools. The committee will look into the possibility of a Resident Trooper.
Questions for the First Selectman:
D. Johnson- has the HVAC replacement process moved forward without action by the BOF?
B. Steglitz: the referendum will be to approve the project and to fund it in total through bonding, with the expectation of future reimbursement. After discussion: the BOF unanimously determined that they will hold a Special BOF meeting, to address the HVAC replacement project and to consider action on this matter, with the agenda to specify the cost in terms of a "not to exceed" all-inclusive project. **A Special BOF Meeting will be held Wednesday, December 21 at 5 PM, using the hybrid format (Merrill Seney Room/Town hall and via Zoom).**
6. School District Update- Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith: * The BOE sends a "Happy Holidays" greeting to the BOF and thanks First Selectman A. St Onge for attending the Winter Concert. * Student sicknesses resulted in a high absence rate; the schools are closed Friday, 12/16 as a result. * Safety concerns has resulted in closing the Mary R. Fisher playground, the one used by the public, the Recreation Department, as well as the students. The PTO has looked for solutions, including an upgrade to ADA compliance. A former student employed by Verizon proposed a grant corporate to address the safety concerns; a \$10,000 award has been made to the PTO which will convey the funds appropriately for use on the project. Other business/corporate grants are being sought for the remainder of the work, estimated at requiring in excess of \$50,000 not including the ADA upgrades. * School enrollment is down by 1 at 900 students. * Special Education costs, especially for out-of-district students, are exceeding budget: over by \$454K (Tuition out-of-district), by \$392K (In-house contracts) and by \$286K (Student transportation). M. Smith reviewed the ways these additional costs are being addressed such as by cutting costs in other departments, implementing a purchasing freeze and other measures. 23% of Thompson students are identified as

needing Special Education services, in a wide variety of ways. The count increased this school year as families moved to Thompson. As part of the diligence of the Special Education department, each identified student has been confirmed to actually reside in Thompson. It was discovered that some did not, and that matter was addressed. * In addition to these increased costs, paper goods and fuel have both seen dramatic price increases which were not factored into the budget.

Questions for the Superintendent:

D. Johnson asked the process for purchasing these items. B. Steglitz reviewed copy paper purchases. M. Smith: usually a consortium approach is used, to gain the advantage of volume purchases.

A. McGarry confirmed the shortfalls in the three categories and asked about the State reimbursement last year for Special Education costs; B. Steglitz confirmed \$384 came in.

A. McGarry noted that at the end of the year, any shortfall has to be addressed, yet the town's bond rating will be impacted by any reductions in Surplus. The town is required to cover the costs of State unfunded Special Education mandates; voters press for the shortfall to be covered within the current fiscal year budget.

7. Financial Report- Finance Director William Steglitz: Next fiscal year budget request worksheets/templates are distributed to departments. A spreadsheet for payroll budgeting is developed. The Building Committee has several items in their workload; they seek funding for 64 school doors security measures. Schedule IV, Surplus, factoring in anticipated reimbursement looks positive. However, the reimbursement will not arrive in the current fiscal year, creating a less than desirable outcome. The Cemetery budget line was clarified per BOF request; grant income was a factor. Tax collection rates are strong, and earnings are boosted by higher interest rates. The audit is underway and going well; B. Steglitz praised the firm and the members working in Thompson.

Questions for the Finance Director:

A. McGarry asked for audit timelines. The goal is for the audit report to the BOF to occur in February. B. Steglitz—all parties are working toward that goal.

Discussion of the unexpected \$122K income: where does that show in the financials? B. Steglitz used the historical record of how this sort of matter was handled; a zero-deficit budget is the goal.

A. St Onge added a comment, praising the work of the Finance Director, D. Guillot concurred, and R. Mann added with a smile that he is so careful in his work that he actually audits himself.

8. Tourtellotte Fund update – Board of Trustees: none
9. Board of Finance Member Comments: Discussion of utilizing the hybrid meeting format took place; all members agreed that it not only facilitates BOF member attendance but allows the public ease of access and participation. The consensus was to continue the hybrid format indefinitely.
10. Adjourn: **Motion R. Mann seconded by L. Guillot to adjourn carried unanimously.**
Chair A. McGarry adjourned the meeting at 8:14 PM.

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To access ZOOM to see and hear this meeting, click on this link or copy/paste it to your Search bar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/Sz01hzLYb_loGqPFefO1tNvbgnFwuryUIXgGMPJmbmd7qi8fgMCTrm2XgcAlc4o_QWJglwcGtnv7GsX0 Passcode: cf3%8Hh1

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.