



TOWN of THOMPSON
Board of Finance – Minutes
Thursday- March 23, 2023
Merrill Seney Room, Town Hall
And via Zoom from remote locations

1. The call to order by Chair A. McGarry was at 7:03 PM.

Roll call: Aaron McGarry, Steve Herbert, Rob Mann, Laurent Guillot, Dave Johnson. Via Zoom: Robert Werge. First Selectman Amy St Onge, Melinda Smith (Superintendent of Schools), Bill Steglitz (Finance Director), Joseph Tkacik, Jr (Public Works Director), Kaylee Beck (Schools Liaison), Michelle Giammarinaro (HR Director), Alison Boutaugh (Library Director), Janis Smith (Animal Control Officer), Board/Commission members and members of the public. Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

2. Approval of Minutes: **Motion R. Mann seconded by L. Guillot to approve the 03-16-2023 Regular Meeting minutes carried unanimously.**

3. Correspondence:

- 03/17 Library Director's PowerPoint Budget presentation

Through the BOF Contact site:

- 03/17, Linda Jarmolowicz, 7 Denis Drive, Subject: "Why school budget shouldn't be cut"

After the agenda was posted: -03-23 (2:14 PM) Tricia Turbert "BOF Meeting"

-PowerPoint from Thompson Little League treasurer via the First Selectman

4. Citizens' comments: 3 minutes per speaker, please

- Peter Beck, 685 Fabyan Road, made comments about the budget process

- Kathleen Herbert, BOE Chair, referred to the graph and data distributed at the previous BOF meeting. She noted that the Special Education population is 24% as compared to 16% which is the State average. Thompson is not only an Alliance District but also designated an Opportunity District, thus ranking among the 10 lowest-performing in the state

- Jessica Bolte, 1081 Riverside Drive, (BOE), commented about the budget, providing statistics

- Josh Kinsella, 395 Fabyan Road, Capital request for the poor Thompson Little League playing fields

- Danielle Carlson, 3 Rachel Drive, (BOE), made comments about the budget

- Wayne O'Brien, 108 Fabyan Road, made comments about the budget & the school capacity/population

- Jessica Bolte, 1081 Riverside Drive (second comment): 2019- The Woodstock Academy review notes

- Kaylee Beck, Thompson Schools Liaison, made comments about the budget

-William Warner, Lowell Davis Road, made comments about the budget and the economy

- Christine Campbell, 861 Thompson Road, made comments about the budget

- Wayne O'Brien, 108 Fabyan Road (second comment), asked for per pupil costs by school

- Amber Comptois, Sunset Hill Road, made comments about the budget

- Shawn Brissette, Lowell Davis Road (second comment), noted previous considerations/evaluation of sending students to an adjoining town's schools

- Linda Charlton, 9 Paula Lane, made comments about the budget

- Marci Seney, 1 Brickyard Road, made comments about the budget

- James Fairmount, 113 Labbe Road, made comments about the budget and the BOF responsibilities

- First Selectman Amy St Onge reviewed the Town survey results (491) and distributed the document to the BOF noting support for the DPW's roads work, and support for the Schools budget

- Sally White, 308 E Thompson Road, made comments about the budget and to consider demographics

- Heather Santos, 71 Hagstrom Road (Member of the BOE), made comments about the budget

**** BOF Chair Aaron McGarry reviewed the three-minute per public comment rule, printed on the agenda and stated aloud at the opening of each meeting.**

5. Budget Workshop: Chair A. McGarry opened discussion with an overview, confirming that the Security (Line 299) is the cost to the Town for this shared responsibility

Resume Budget Workshop Canine Operations Line 305: Time stamp 7:55 PM

- D. Johnson asked the number of calls per day/per month by the AOC, as well as the mileage per day/per month for the town vehicle.
- ACO Janis Smith was present and detailed the use of the Town vehicle as compared to her own vehicle. Data has been collected but better software is needed to sort and tabulate it (Line 313). A review was provided of the private donations, fundraisers and other sources of income that go into the Dog Fund, and the permitted uses. Donations are frequently received of dog food and other supplies, but the dog food for dietary restrictions or urinary issues are purchased (Line 320). Needed kennel repairs and safety upgrades were identified (Line 317).
- R. Werge asked to see department ownership of the vehicle/responsibility for its maintenance
- A. McGarry confirmed that the ACO is budgeted currently for 32 hours per week
- R. Werge noted that the ACO has been working in excess of the hours currently being paid for (24/7/365). Moving ACO pay up to 40 hours per week should cause the pay to level out in the future

Department of Public Works Line 324: Time stamp 8:13 PM

Director of Public Works Joseph Tkacik, Jr answered the BOF's questions, detailing several line items.

- R. Werge asked if some Line 329 items should be in the Capital Budget
- S. Herbert asked about the staffing that will require overtime (as the ambitious road work and paving move forward, and people have to be hired for high-level mowing/clearing, and even when outside contractors are hired, town crew members must be on-site).
- S. Herbert observed that this planned work will result in a 21.4% budget increase. The necessity to cut back and reduce work in the over recent years resulted in a lower-than-ideal completion rate for the roads/culverts/bridges, thus the per centage of increase.
- It was confirmed that permit fees for the transfer station are under review. Hazardous Waste Day is held every other year (thus was not in the previous budget)
- Playgrounds: as staffing could not be found for Parks work last year, the budget was reduced (Line 374). Certified Playground Mulch is required at all 5 locations (Line 379).
- R. Werge proposed a re-naming of the staff position, Line 386, for clarity
- Line 409, Cemeteries, is reduced due to partial grant funding
- Discussion Line 419: salt and sand usage and planning for next year was reviewed in detail; the construction of the new Public Works Complex will have an impact on timing. The BOS reduced last year's budget request, as there were supplies remaining.

Building Official (Line 424):

- D. Johnson asked the projected Building Department fees income. As interest rates rise, predicting income will be less certain. The interaction among this Department staff was clarified. After discussion: **Motion S. Herbert seconded by D. Johnson to reduce Building Official Overtime (Line 425) from \$7,000 to \$5,000 carried 6-0.**

R. Werge- yes L. Guillot- yes S. Herbert- yes R. Mann- yes A. McGarry-yes D. Johnson – yes

Human Services (Line 451):

- Discussion the Gladys Green senior complex will need sewer upgrades (Line 456); per WPCA increases.

- Discussion clarified the social service agencies involved with Thompson residents; the budget requests are largely stable with the current year; United Services had requested an increase, but the BOS voted to keep their funding flat.

Public Health Nursing (Line 477): NDDH charges a per capita rate; discussions are underway in hopes of holding the increase to \$1.00, down from their proposed increase of \$1.75

Budget Workshop review ended with Line 481.

6. Adjourn:

Motion D. Johnson seconded by S. Herbert to adjourn carried unanimously.

Chair A. McGarry adjourned the meeting at 9:10 PM.

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/j/84451234567> Passcode: 2N2!W.9=

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.