

TOWN of THOMPSON
Board of Finance - Minutes
Thursday – July 20, 2023
Merrill Seney Room, Town Hall
And via Zoom from remote locations

1. The call to order by Chair A. McGarry was at 7:01 PM.

Roll call: Aaron McGarry, Steve Herbert, Rob Mann, Dave Johnson, Robert Werge. Absent: Laurent Guillot. 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), Tyra Penn-Gesek (Director, Planning and Development), Board/Commission members and members of the public. Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

2. Approval of minutes:

a. **Motion R. Werge seconded by S. Herbert to approve the June 15, 2023 Regular Meeting minutes carried with abstentions by R. Mann and A. McGarry.**

3. Correspondence

a. Superintendent of Schools letter: details were provided- the letter's topic was the highly regulated process for Teacher Contract Negotiations; the BOE is required to let the BOF know the negotiations are taking place and to ask for a BOF delegate.

4. Citizens' comments:

- Valerie Clark, Alm Road, re Agenda item #11, noted the types of work performed and the quality, praising what she has seen at their meetings. A. St Onge: the current Agent supports the request.

5. Selectman's Update-First Selectman Amy St Onge: * Roads projects are well underway, with everything on-track. * A public presentation about the Brownfield remediation at Rivermill was live-streamed, providing full details about how the \$2M DEEP grant will be utilized. *She also detailed the structure of incremental phase-in of taxes on the property, which remain at the current amount for the first 10 years, increasing as the development begins and as it is underway, and when it reaches completion. At that point in time, the building's \$31M value (with higher taxes than any current structure @\$600K) along with the taxable assets owned by the commercial tenants and tax on resident's personal vehicles will have a substantial impact on tax revenue. * A D.A.D. Ordinance will need to be updated to accommodate this. In August, there will be a town meeting to bring to the public all the details of the tax abatement schedule and resulting impacts on town finances. * There will be 300 residential units at market rates with 10% deemed "affordable." The developer commented that typically these renovated mill sites attract both older tenants who are down-sizing and younger ones who have not started a family. *Rob Mann asked for confirmation that water and sewer service are adequate for that size of a development and in particular for fire suppression if needed. *A. McGarry asked about the \$2M Brownfield Grant paperwork requirements. T. Penn-Gesek confirmed that the town serves in a pass-through roll yet monitors the process. The full clean-up costs are anticipated to be about \$1.7M higher than the Grant will cover, which will be born by the developer. Once this project is underway, it serves as a model for the Belding site (630 Riverside drive) brownfield remediation.

* Another topic: The road work/bridges primarily covered by a \$870K grant will need additional bond funds in about a year; the goal: combine the river and canal bridges into one project.

6. School District Update-Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith: * Summer Special Education programs (mandated extra support, 40 students). Certified teaching staff provides more than remedial preparation for another 40 students. CT Water is bringing the waterline downhill, due to the repaved driveway, as authorized by the Town. *The new Grant-Funded Culinary Arts program is being outfitted with equipment: It appears to be very interesting to the students as 50% asked to enroll in Culinary Arts 101! Seniors will be given preference with freshmen filling the program up in order to take advantage of the sequence of Culinary classes. * Electric Boat (welding) and Day Kimball Hospital and QVCC (medical careers) are working to establish career-pathway programs and School Bus Driving will be offered in the spring. * Since at least ½ of the students go into the workforce or the military after graduation, these courses meet student needs directly, often at excellent pay rates. Grant funding has provided several positive impacts. * Designated an Opportunity/Alliance School District, the State seems to be pleased with indicators of student growth. D. Johnson asked the status of the water tower, given that the water line is being run. The Tower was mandated for fire protection. CT Water agreed in the past (2007 or so) to continue to maintain the water level for safety.

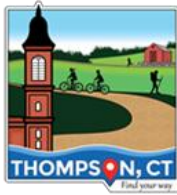
7. Financial Report- Finance Director William Steglitz: as of 06-30-2023, with encumbered expenses not yet fully distributed * Property taxes collected YTD (97% of budget) are \$19.1M.
 * Collection of prior year taxes: \$276K with a scheduled property tax sale not yet conducted.
 * Income from the Pequot Indian Grant: \$12,769, for a total Grants income of 101% of budgeted.
 *Local revenue is \$1.2M YTD (103% of budget). * Interest earnings are strong due to increased interest rates (\$173K or 1,730% of budget). Expenses: Tourtellotte Trust Transfers were not made due to low balance. *Line items for Finance/Treasurer are over budget, but the interaction of Schools and Town compensation for the newly combined position are underway; fringe benefits reduction for a single individual where there were formerly two will also reduce total Finance Department costs. * Due to the mild winter, Snow Removal is at 56% of budget, Town Garage is at 65% and Public Works is at 97%.
 * Cash is lower than last year by \$2.6M, with the Fund Balance at \$2.3M (up \$384K from June, 2022).

8. Tourtellotte Fund – Board of Trustees: Bill Steglitz- the accounts are up, with Weiss/Hale/Zahansky increased to \$2,414,000. The total holdings of \$2,552,000 are above the required minimum.

9. New Business: Teacher Negotiations Discussion- the subject was covered somewhat in Agenda #3. Work on negotiations begins in August; it is a long, arduous process. Hopefully a BOF member will attend. Last year contracts were settled at about 12 % over a 3-year span. A. McGarry suggested that any BOF member who is interested in serving as the BOF representative so indicate previous to 08-06.

10. Board of Finance Member Comments: **Motion A. McGarry seconded by S. Herbert to skip to agenda #11 then to return to # 10 carried unanimously.**

11. Request from the Board of Selectmen: To appropriate an additional \$15,000 as salary to the Wetlands/Conservation Department. Present for the discussion: First Selectman Amy St Onge, Finance Director Bill Steglitz, HR Director Michelle Giammarinaro, and Director of Planning/Development Tyra Penn-Gesek. The part-time Conservation Officer was hired to fill the slot following a retirement. Now the Inland Wetlands Agent is preparing for retirement. Ideally, one person will handle both roles, as is common in towns this size; the Inland Wetlands Agent researched Statute and prepared a document detailing the process an applicant could take and the consequences to the town for failure to take timely action on a matter. When she retires, a person must be in place to facilitate a smooth transition in a town with substantial wetlands areas; Thompson's current Conservation Officer has



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performed the duties of an Inland Wetlands Agent elsewhere and would be able to handle matters seamlessly. The salary offered for the combined position, however, is under the prevailing rate for a person with these credentials. The 3 Directors and the First Selectman (who are all in attendance) met, working collaboratively to review the situation and the current salary, and determine a solution. The current Inland Wetlands Agent is revising the Regulations; she will retire from her position but continue this work. R. Mann confirmed that the individual being considered has the credentials for both positions. The proposed combined salary increase of \$10,240 would cover both the individual handling the Conservation Officer and Inland Wetlands Agent roles. After discussion:

Motion D. Johnson seconded by R. Mann to create a combined Conservation Officer and Inland Wetlands Agent position with an increase in compensation of \$10,242 over budgeted, the funds to be taken from Contingency. Motion carried 5-0.

Steve Herbert - yes Rob Mann - yes Dave Johnson - yes Robert Werge - yes Aaron McGarry - yes

Further discussion: R. Werge noted the increase in the number of hours the combined position would necessitate, and the responsibilities the person will assume. He asks in what month the transition will take place (months into the new fiscal year). After further discussion of the Regulations update:

Motion D. Johnson seconded by R. Mann to approve \$4,800 (funds to come from Contingency) to allow for completion of the update of the Inland Wetlands Regulations by the current Inland Wetlands Agent carried unanimously, 5-0.

Steve Herbert- yes Rob Mann - yes Dave Johnson - yes Robert Werge -yes Aaron McGarry - yes

****Board of Finance member comments:**

- The Chair confirmed with the First Selectman, Finance Director and Superintendent of Schools that they do not foresee business that will need to come before the BOF in August. As may be determined by the Chair, the August BOF meeting is cancelled, with the provision that a special Meeting can be called.
- A. St Onge, with the Chair's permission, reviewed the work of the new Animal Control Officer, using the word "phenomenal and professional" and detailing the spreadsheet that Erin Impellizeri has created to track data; she will be invited to a BOS September meeting to give a report. Thanks go to the Schools for donating a desk for the ACO's use.

12. Adjourn: Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Mann to adjourn at 8:43 PM carried unanimously.

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/PTINSAc2QpXdhUnpOuO0JmLaaTA37EywOXmsNSNjVW9G17PwcU9beHezU7zw_uca.0vvig7ABObfgEYtw Passcode: iM+QG640

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.