



**THOMPSON Board of Finance
Regular Meeting - Minutes
Thursday, October 21, 2021
Hybrid format: Town Hall Merrill Seney Room
and via Zoom from remote locations**

1. The call to order by Chair A. McGarry was at 7:00 PM.
Roll call: Aaron McGarry (Chair), Robert Werge (via Zoom), Steve Herbert, Jim Bellavance, Rob Mann. Absent: Rhonda Rooney (out of town).
Others- First Selectman Amy St Onge, Selectman Susanne Witkowski. Orla McKiernan-Raftery (Finance Director). Melinda Smith via Zoom (Superintendent of Schools), Board/Commission members. Members of the public. Recording Secretary Dotti Durst
2. Approval of minutes:
Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Mann to approve the September 16, 2021 meeting minutes carried unanimously.
3. Correspondence:
 - a). "Walking School Bus" from Thompson Schools
 - b). Draft: 2022 BOF Meeting Schedule
 - c). Tax Collector's report (emailed; paper copies distributed at the meeting)
4. Citizens' comments: none
5. Selectman's Update-First Selectman Amy St Onge: *Listed the grant applications which are in process, thanking Planner Tyra Penn-Gesek for her consistent work. * Reviewed the activities of the DPW and pre-winter goals. *Brought the BOF up-to-date regarding Community Fire/Ambulance and the use of K-B Ambulance for the short-term for 24/7 coverage, utilizing the current budget line item for Ambulance services; 3 months of payments went to Community Ambulance services this fiscal year. Data collection/analysis is underway by consultant Bob Holdsworth, leading to a possible merger with Putnam EMS Services. An annual stipend of \$80,000 is anticipated; income to the EMS service comes primarily from users. Of the 5 Fire Departments, 4 have R1 designation, required of first responders; the Community Fire application is submitted. At this week's BOS meeting, two Community Fire Department Board leaders discussed the town's purchase of the 3 Community Ambulances and all associated materials and supplies for \$168,000, utilizing ARPA funds, which Community will use to stabilize the floors at their fire station. All parties agreed; the Board of Community Fire will meet to ratify.
BOF member questions:
R. Mann- confirmed that if merged, the EMS service will be its own entity.
R. Werge- verified that the ambulances themselves would be insured by the town and remain property of the town
J. Bellavance- asked for locations of ambulances. A. St Onge clarified that one ambulance is at the Hill Fire Station, staffed by EMS personnel. Others are in central locations. Once the new Public Safety structure is ready, ambulance space will be available there.
A. McGarry asked the reason for R1 status for Community Fire. A. St Onge explained, adding that state law requires the town to provide ambulance service but does not require a

fire station to provide R1 coverage. With it, as first responders, perhaps the number of hours of contracted service with K-B Ambulance could be examined.

S. Herbert asked about Bridge grants. A. St Onge- they will cover a substantial percentage of the costs but not 100%.

A. McGarry praised the efforts of the First Selectman regarding the ambulance situation, providing an incredible service to the town under demanding circumstances. Is a higher authority is available for consultation if the 5 Fire Departments' meeting does not ascertain 100% coverage for the town, in the absence of R1 status at Community Fire? Perhaps the town attorney should be involved if it is not immediately resolved.

6. School District Update-Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith: *The autumn events were successful, including the Homecoming dance and wins by the football team. *Town Planner Tyra Penn-Gesek collaborated to attain the Walking School Bus grant which utilizes school security staff through the month; not all residents fully understood the concept, but it seems to be working well. *Teachers and students responded to the Animal Shelter call for assistance, partnering with the First Selectman to spruce up the interior. *Thanks go to the BOF and BOE for the shared HR position, which is working smoothly, with an outstanding job being done. * Bill Birch (Facilities) is about to complete the roofing project, the new security gates are on their way, and the Dust Collection as well as Phone System upgrades are completed, thanks to grants funding. * The new Vision To Learn Program offers a full eye exam and glasses if needed through designation as an Alliance District. Given the amount of on-screen time students have had, this has made a difference.

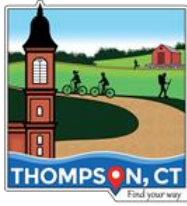
Board of Finance member questions:

S. Herbert asked the Special Education count. The count is up and the budget under which the Schools function could not anticipate this. There are 29 Out-of-District placements with 2 of those in residential placements. This school year, 17 new, additional Special Education student enrolled. It is possible that the BOF may be asked for additional funding through use of some school budget funds not utilized last fiscal year. She confirmed that 29 are outplaced in Special Education only. The enrollment at Killingly Vo-Ag is down by about 1/2 . On the positive side, some class re-alignments have resulted in more students able to participate in certain classes such as Manufacturing Technology; some 8th graders can get high school credits.

J. Bellavance- on this his last night of service to the town on the BOF, thanked Superintendent Smith for the work she has done; he believes that fresh air was needed, and M. Smith stepped up.

7. Financial Report- Finance Director Orla McKiernan-Raftery: since there was no August meeting, the provided report covers the first quarter of the fiscal year. Tax income as well as revenue from fees and permits are increased, in addition income from the sale of 1395 Riverside Drive. The audit is nearing completion. She reviewed that a couple of departments will be negative in fy 2019-2020 because of one-time expenses due to Covid-19, such as for elections. At this time, there is a surplus showing, but all accounts and transfers are not yet completed. Various Covid-related funds have come in, mostly managed outside the regular reporting mechanism.

Questions by BOF Members: it appears that in the current budget, some departments have spent a high percentage. Yes, some do have a front-heavy spending cycle, such as fringe benefits.



**THOMPSON Board of Finance
Regular Meeting - Minutes
Thursday, October 21, 2021
Hybrid format: Town Hall Merrill Seney Room
and via Zoom from remote locations**

Question: should the budget request full funding for fringe benefits for 100% of the staff, when historically not all staff sign up? Yes, that is the prudent approach.

8. Tourtellotte Fund update – Board of Trustees: Melinda Smith stated that the windows project is nearly complete, and the new clock is installed.
9. New Business:
Presentation by Finance Director of end of FY budget transfers: although the Finance Director could not attend this week's BOS meeting, she reviewed the proposed transfers for the BOF, and answered member's questions. In order that the audit for the previous fiscal year be completed, the proposed transfers must be approved by the BOS and BOF.
Motion S. Herbert seconded by J. Bellavance to approve the proposed transfers as presented, subject to BOS approval, carried unanimously, 5-0.

b). Discussion: BOF 2022 meeting schedule, attached. S. Herbert- meetings previously named Budget Workshops can be re-classified as Regular meetings, providing flexibility.
Motion A. McGarry seconded by S. Herbert to approve the 2022 BOF meeting schedule with Special Budget Workshops eliminated and reclassified as Regular Meetings, the dates being read aloud into the record, carried unanimously, 5-0.
10. Board of Finance Member Comments
 - a). Memo from Board of Finance Member: Chair A. McGarry read Rhonda Rooney's parting comments, as she is away and is not standing for re-election next month.
"To the residents of Thompson and to all boards: It has been a pleasure to serve as a member of the Board of Finance. I am very grateful to have been elected and to serve the people of Thompson for the past 6 years. It has certainly been a learning experience for me with many ups and downs. My decisions have all been based on what I felt best benefited the majority. I realize that my decisions, perhaps, were not favored by all boards, but I gave it my all. I would like to welcome the new members that will be taking our places in November and wish them all the best. It was a pleasure working with you all. Kindest regards, Rhonda Rooney
 - b). Jim Bellavance thanked these BOF members, as this is his last meeting as a Member. He noted that both the DPW and the Schools have seen substantial upgrades during his years on the BOF. He is honored to have served the town .
 - c). Chair A. McGarry thanked Jim Bellavance and Rhonda Rooney for their 6 years of dedicated service on the Board of Finance, even during adverse moments.
11. Adjourn **Motion J. Bellavance seconded by S. Herbert to adjourn at 8:49 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/j/8446121269> Passcode: 8446121269

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.

Attachment: **Thompson Board of Finance 2022 Meeting Schedule**

The Board of Finance meets on the third Thursday of each month
at 7 PM in the Merrill Seney Room of the Thompson Town Hall
unless otherwise scheduled.

Regular meeting dates for 2022:

Thursday, January 20	Thursday, July 21
Thursday, February 17	Thursday, August 18
Thursdays, March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31	Thursday, September 15
Thursdays, April 7, 14, 21, 28	Thursday, October 20
Thursday, May 19	Thursday, November 17
Thursday, June 16	Thursday, December 15

Approved by the Thompson Board of Finance October 21, 2021