



**TOWN of THOMPSON**  
**815 Riverside Drive**  
**North Grosvenordale, CT 06255**

**THOMPSON Board of Finance Regular Meeting**

**Thursday, September 17, 2020**

**via Zoom from remote locations**

**Minutes**

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1. The call to order by Chair Aaron McGarry was at 7:00 PM

Roll call: Members- Aaron McGarry (Chair), Jim Bellavance, Rob Mann, Rhonda Rooney, Robert Werge, Steve Herbert. Chair A. McGarry noted all Members are present.

Others- Orla McKiernan-Raftery (Finance Director), Melinda Smith (Superintendent of Schools), First Selectman Amy St Onge and Selectman Susanne Witkowski. Bob Gentes (Schools Finance Director), Board and Commission members, Members of the public, Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

2. Review/approve minutes: **Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Mann to approve the 08-20-2020 Regular Meeting minutes carried unanimously.**

3. Correspondence:

- Memo re: Teacher Contract Negotiations

- Superintendent M. Smith September 16, 2020 letter reviewing the anticipated Schools deficit

4. Citizens' comments: none

5. Selectman's Update-First Selectman Amy St Onge: \* Animal Control is launched, returning to Thompson. \* The DPW has completed two major road projects last week and will immediately begin a third. \* At the 09-01 BOS meeting, it was unanimously voted to increase fees at the Transfer Station, due to income shortages and cost increases. The changes were read into the record. \* Water Pollution Control held a Public Hearing (there were no attendees) and subsequently voted for a rate increase. \* Artie Gerard has decided to retire after 52 years working in the Town of Thompson, his only employer ever. Best wishes were extended to him. Questions for the First Selectman: S. Herbert- asked for a review of the selection of an auditing firm. Two have been contacted and indicated an interest in submitting bids. Probably an extension request will be needed. S. Herbert-asked the sources of the assets in the Animal Control fund. About \$60,000 came from donations and from the town's share of the tag fees.

6. School District Update-Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith: \*on August 31, the full school opening was successful, with 990 students. 268 are using distance learning, with some returning to campus daily. 26 transferred in from St Joseph's of the 110 new students. 51 withdrew mostly for home schooling. \* She extended heartfelt and extended praise for staff efforts during the Covid months, listing several categories of extraordinary effort. \* Traffic control was the major issue but through adjustments inside and outside the schools, parent drop-off and pick-up has been streamlined. \* There were significant expenses due to Covid, estimated at about \$776,000, of which the State has sent about one third; on September 4 the



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schools budget was frozen, held to essential purchases only. Staffing is the major issue at this time; overall, the reopening was successful. Question: R. Werge- how does the budget shortfall due to Covid look at this time? The major issue occurs when a staff person requests time away from school and continues to receive pay (such as sick pay) while simultaneously a substitute teacher is paid. A. McGarry- thanked the Superintendent and praised the hard work which has taken place resulting in a successful reopening. R. Rooney- asked for a review of the 09-16-2020 letter to the BOS which covered the timeframe for the schools fy 2020 finances. M. Smith reviewed the sequence of events, of which the BOS was kept informed, regarding the projected shortfall in the Schools budget, which finally, as of 09-16, showed a projected fy 2020 budget shortage “after the dust has settled” of \$129,062.

7. Financial Report- Finance Director Orla McKiernan-Rafoery: looking at the first two months of this fiscal year, property taxes collected at the end of August are \$7.602 M. While no major grants have come in, Town Road Aid of \$122 K will go to the DPW for their work. Compared to last year, cash is higher by \$5.764 M. The FY 2020 expenses show a \$588K surplus, but after the deficit of about \$288K is factored in, there will be about \$190 K actual surplus, some of which is encumbered and the remainder will go to the General Fund.

8. Tourtellotte Fund update: no report.

9. New Business:

a. Appropriation request for Animal Control: clarification was made as to the source of the accumulated funds, and the restrictions on their uses, included proposed maintenance activities.

**Motion A. McGarry seconded by R. Rooney to appropriate not more than \$10,000 from the “Dog Fund” moving it to Animal Control for deferred maintenance carried unanimously, 6-0.** The vote: Jim Bellavance –yes Robert Mann-yes Rhonda Rooney-yes Steve Herbert- yes Robert Werge-yes Aaron McGarry- yes

b. Fiscal Year 2020 Audit: O. McKiernan-Rafoery reviewed the bid process for securing an auditing firm; bids did not come in and an extension may be filed. The State expects a filing delay by many towns due to Covid; no negative impacts are forecast. Contact with auditing firms which handle towns in the region is underway. S. Herbert- the amount budgeted? For FY 19 the contract was \$50,000. Bids are based on the anticipated number of staff hours.

10. Old Business

-Safety Grant Project update: no discussion

11. Board of Finance Member Comments:

A. McGarry- the informal Fire Advisory Committee dialogue, which he attended, included the Committee’s preference to move ahead with what is termed “the Woodstock Model” of funding fire safety. He advised that the townspeople be fully advised of this change and the different way in which funds will be apportioned. Concern with a possible failure at referendum makes



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fully informing the public essential.

R. Rooney- asks if future BOF meetings will be conducted on Zoom. A. McGarry- for the remainder of this year, a hybrid is possible, with some BOF members together in the room and others utilizing Zoom from remote locations. The public in that scenario would all participate via Zoom. A. St Onge- live streaming from the library meeting room incorporating all the Zoom participants is possible with current technology. A. McGarry- let's move ahead with this plan for November, and be ready to pivot if there is an uptick.

12. Adjourn:

**Motion R. Rooney seconded by J. Bellavance to adjourn carried unanimously.**

Chair A. McGarry adjourned the meeting at 7:58 PM.

To hear the meeting in its entirety, click, or copy/paste to your search bar

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/C-cSoaXoGj-TjiOl3LGCJyrJhvki8\\_nWoyEwxo5Gbw0KXdZY8Wech-5gM09YgJvd.P0WDTffFwlsr4frQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/C-cSoaXoGj-TjiOl3LGCJyrJhvki8_nWoyEwxo5Gbw0KXdZY8Wech-5gM09YgJvd.P0WDTffFwlsr4frQ)

Passcode: XH?D43H4

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.*