



TOWN of THOMPSON
815 Riverside Drive
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255

THOMPSON Board of Finance Regular Meeting

Thursday, October 15, 2020 7:00 PM

via Zoom from remote locations

AGENDA

1. Call to order: Chair A. McGarry called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Present: Aaron McGarry, Steve Herbert, Rhonda Rooney, Robert Mann, Robert Werge.

(Jim Bellavance informed the Chair that cannot attend). The Chair noted that a quorum is present via Zoom. Others: Orla McKiernan-Raftery (Finance Director), Amy St Onge (First Selectman), Susanne Witkowski (Selectman), Kathleen Herbert (Chair, Board of Education), Melinda Smith (Superintendent of Schools), Bob Gentes (Director, Schools Finance). Rich Benoit (Director, DPW), Board and Commission members, Members of the public, Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

2. Review/approve minutes: 09-17-2020 Regular Monthly Meeting:

Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Werge to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2020 Meeting carried unanimously

3. Correspondence:

- Virtual Forum: Measuring Disparities in Cost/Spending across Connecticut School Districts
- Budget Ordinance #10-005 memo with attachments
- Fire Advisory Committee invitation to BOF members to attend their November 18 meeting

4. Citizens' comments: none

6. Selectman's Update-First Selectman Amy St Onge: *the town has been focused on critical situations and infrastructure, in particular a pond owned by Centerville Bank which is near failure, a fact of which, as a newer owner, they were not aware. * Bridge inspections from the DOT of spans 20 feet and longer list critical situations; the bridges of less than 20 feet are not included in this report but data of concern regarding several of them is available.* The Salt Shed project was launched this year with \$20,000 to begin the engineering study. * Town-owned Langer's Pond (Wilsonville) needs a current inspection as professionals have observed a safety concern necessitating an action plan. * The Planning and Development office, addressing the sidewalk upgrade on RT 200 to Rawson Avenue, has a letter of commitment for the \$2M project * Superior Bakery wants to expand employment by 75-100 jobs and upgrade/modernize equipment for efficiency. Comment R. Werge- praised progress on the Bridge project to determine the precise need; he encourages attention to the dam that was previously found to be a safety concern. He asked that the town look at Salt Shed options, the goal of which is to prevent salt from entering the groundwater. S. Herbert asked if there is a trigger for mandated action. Yes, documentation of the rise in salt in nearby water.

7. School District Update-Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith: Several items of good news! * As an Alliance District, the town is eligible a grant targeting the school environment,



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of a max of \$477K, which includes the telephone system which has been inadequate since 2006; the updated system will include outdoor speakers in case of an emergency; Dust collection from a Manufacturing Tech program; Floor replacement in an older section of the high school; and ideally, upgrade of the locker rooms. * Earl Rosebrooks and Jill St Cyr have donated Tiger-designed face masks. * Superior Cake in Southbridge donated 5,000 cookies which have been frozen for use during the holiday season. * The Free Breakfast and Free Flu Shots programs were reviewed as well as the distribution of several new coats. * Thanks were extended to Recreation Director Lesley Munshower for various ways she provided day care during the first six weeks of school, and to A. St Onge for working it out. * Enrollment on this date is 958, with enrollment at Killingly Vo-Ag a little lower. * The Budget is over-expended, with hope that the stimulus funds will be forth coming. S. Herbert confirmed that the grant may be used only for physical improvements to the Schools.

8. Financial Report- Finance Director Orla McKiernan-Raftery: Review through September shows a major tax collection month, (property taxes: \$9.121 M). No major grants have been received, but as previously reported, Town Road Aid (\$26K) did come in. Local revenue (Town Clerk, Conveyance and Building fees) are 50% higher than the previous year at this time. Compared with last year, cash on hand is higher by \$998K. The 19-20 audit materials are still being prepared. The General Fund may end at about \$200K over due to a reduction in fringe benefits. S. Herbert: expenditures seem ahead of last year at this time? Yes, because the previous budget passed so late. R. Werge: how is the pace of tax collection? R. Morin has reported that he is very busy, with taxes arriving by USPS to a greater degree than previously.

9. Tourtellotte Fund update- O. McKiernan-Raftery: the window replacement project will move ahead, with \$200K used from the investment fund. Recent storms caused some damage.

10. New Business:

a. Thompson DOT Bridge Inspection, Director R. Benoit, asked for questions regarding the materials sent to the BOF members. *A major goal is to pull up the Town's DOT rating. Several of the minor projects will be handled in-house; planning is underway. R. Rooney- how many bridges are in Thompson? 15 under-20-feet and about 20 which are longer. A. McGarry thanked R. Benoit for being present and for the work he is doing. R. Rooney- and added thanks for the development of a long-term action plan. R. Mann supports being proactive about safety.

b. Appropriation request for road repair on Main Street, not to exceed \$70,000: A. St Onge asked R. Benoit to sit in on this preliminary discussion; a proposal has not yet been developed. R. Benoit reviewed that when CT Water completes most of their Main Street project, the DPW offered to be of assistance with the completion of the paving in lieu of CT Water doing it, and compensation would thereby come to the Town, with the idea that since other road work is planned for Main Street, having CT Water complete their paving would be wasteful. A refund from them will be directed to the BOS and BOF to determine its use; ideally, it will be directed



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to completion of the Main Street work. A. McGarry thanked the First Selectman and Director for the update; the agenda had been set up so in case a proposal was ready, the BOF could act.

c. Proposed change to the Budget Ordinance 10-005(written 1997 and subsequently revised: A 9/23/20 email sent by Donna Hall on behalf of the Ordinance Review Committee to the First Selectman, the BOF Chair and other Board Chairs was read into the record by A. McGarry. On 10-08-20 the First Selectman asked that the BOF review this matter prior to the next BOS meeting. The memo proposes an Ordinance change in how the BOF would modify a budget after one aspect of it failed at referendum (Town General Government or Education), in terms of allocating funds to the failed proposal from the proposal which carried. R. Werge- the attached minutes state that the Ordinance Committee voted 2 in favor and 2 against the motion; later in the meeting, the vote was to send the letter out. A. McGarry questions the sentence in the email which states that taxpayers "become upset" when the BOF makes a budget decision under those circumstances. R. Rooney- doe the public understand the financial mandate of the MBR (a town's Minimum Budget Requirement for annual school funding) and how it impacts the BOF decisions? A. McGarry reviewed the history of the Ordinance and the changes to it; he observed that this process seems to create tremendous tension within the Community. Several alternative models were discussed. R. Rooney asked how many other towns split the vote by Schools/General Government. K. Herbert- including Thompson, 43 (of 169 towns); not all have the same structure of how Schools are funded, as some are in Regional Districts or send their high school students elsewhere. The BOE has seen the emailed proposal and is not in agreement. A. St Onge reviewed the customary process for an Ordinance change, which initiates with the BOS, and is then referred to the Ordinance Committee. R. Werge calls for foundational reasons why the change is being proposed, which should include real data rather than opinion. A. McGarry notes for the record that discussion of the concept did take place; no official action was taken by the BOF.

d. Appoint King & King as auditors for FY 19-20: O. McKiernan-Rahtery reviewed the detailed proposal from King & King, the only bid received which met the town's timeline requirements. Reference checks by B. Gentes, M. Smith and the Finance Director in nearby towns and from OPM were positive. The firm would begin work in early November through December, with filing in late January or early February. \$25,000 is budgeted for the General Government part of the audit; that line on the proposal is \$29,000; the additional will need to be allocated. Including the BOE and WPCA the total proposal is \$56,600, Should the actual number of hours required for the audit exceeds the itemized amounts, an adjustment could be needed. R. Werge asked that the Finance Director monitor the process and advice the BOF accordingly. **Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Mann to retain the auditing firm King & King to perform the Thompson audit for the fiscal year through June 30, 2020 carried unanimously.**



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e. Review of proposed 2021 BOF meeting schedule:

Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Rooney to approve the 2012 BOF meeting schedule as presented carried unanimously. Note that the Budget Workshops are scheduled to begin on March 4 at the Schools Auditorium.

11. Old Business: Additional appropriation- funds for Dog Kennel, not to exceed \$10,000- The State Animal Control Officer has listed several additional electrical and structural requirements which must precede re-opening; the building has gone un-used for several years. The costs will be lower than another \$10K. The \$61K Dog Fund has \$10K appropriated already

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 needs at the Dog Kennel carried unanimously, 5-0. Robert Mann-yes Rhonda Rooney-yes Steve Herbert- yes Robert Werge-yes Aaron McGarry- yes

12. Board of Finance Member Comments: none

13. Adjourn:

Motion R. Werge seconded by S. Herbert to adjourn carried unanimously.

Chair A. McGarry adjourned the meeting at 8:50 PM.

To hear and see this meeting, click or copy/paste to your search bar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/lvuNo6l_rVhv3X_yXI3GptAJOrC8OCYV0CaecVQMww7prJ07KHAWk_m3pFa6ZFcb.FLe6f2KzZD7-sDjH Passcode: &3SW+\$!%

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.