

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

THOMPSON Board of Finance Regular Meeting

Thursday, January 21, 2021

via Zoom from remote locations

MINUTES

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

Roll call: Members- Aaron McGarry (Chair), Jim Bellavance, Rob Mann, Robert Werge, Steve Herbert. Chair A. McGarry noted that Rhonda Rooney is out of state; 5 Members (a quorum) are present. Others: Orla McKiernan-Raftery (Finance Director), Melinda Smith (Superintendent of Schools), Kathleen Herbert (Chair, BOE), Bob Gentes (Schools Finance Director), First Selectman Amy St Onge and Selectman Susanne Witkowski, Tyra Penn-Gesek (Town Planner), Board and Commission members, Members of the public, Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

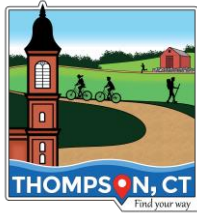
2. Review/approve minutes:

Motion J. Bellavance seconded by R. Werge to approve the 12-17-2020 Regular Meeting minutes carried unanimously. S. Herbert noted with a smile that the Army/Navy game score was incorrectly stated at 12-0 but rather was 15-0.

4. Correspondence: an email inviting the BOS to attend the BOE meeting was received

5. Citizens' comments: John Rice, 39 E. Thompson Rd- with a smile, asked about the score of the Army/Navy game the previous year.

6. Selectman's Update-First Selectman Amy St Onge: *The state's "Commitment To Fund" the sidewalk improvement project came through at \$2.1M; this will address broken surfaces, including an upgrade near the schools and public services. * The BOS, praising the work of the volunteers who comprise the Fire Department and EMS Services, has voted to increase the Firefighter's tax abatement to the statutory amount of \$1,500 per year, sending it to a town meeting. *The BOS legal notice for the next hybrid Town Meeting and Referendum: 1). Since the legal notice for the Roofs Referendum was not in compliance, a re-vote will be needed. 2).The question will be posed about making the Firefighter's tax abatement the amount of \$1,500. 3). The question will be posed to drop the bifurcated Schools and Town Budgets at referendum, instead combining them into a single budget number, based on the "one town, one vote " concept. 4). The question will be posed to shorten the time period between the appearance of a legal notice warning of a Town Meeting/Referendum to 21 days rather than 30, as is permitted by Statute. * The First Selectman praised the collaboration between the various departments of the Schools as well as with the Superintendent of Schools, citing numerous examples, but in particular the recent successful hybrid-model town meeting, at which residents could "attend" in various ways. *The BOS budget workshops will begin in February. * J&D Engineering is ready to send out RFPs for Bridges work (Buckley Hill Road,



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then Inspections for all less-than 20- feet-wide bridges. * Rich Benoit, Director/DPW, was praised for the large volume of work that was achieved in the past 2 years, with 10% of all road area re-surfaced.

Comments/questions by BOF:

R. Werge confirmed the statutory provision for posting Town Meeting notices

S. Herbert * asked all BOF and BOS members to consider attending the BOE budget planning meetings, in order to understand the reasoning behind each line item decision. * He noted that in the corporate world, each entity of the enterprise states the ways that cost reductions have been found or are planned in preparation for budget creation.

7. School District Update-Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith: offered reciprocal thanks to the First Selectman for collaborative efforts, seeking efficiencies, thus creating a win-win. *Student count is 948, down by 9 as of January 01; on the 11th, full school was to resume but the elementary school staff size did not permit this, so those student are using remote learning. Some students who were previously Home Schooled have returned to enrollment, causing an up-tick. * The work on *A Portrait of a Graduate* continues. * The Middle and High School schedules have been modified so 8th grade students are able to take a high school-level class (Financial Literacy, Music/Art or Tech Ed.) * Budget workshops begin soon * Discussion of requirements for providing Transition Services to age 18-21 Special Education students will be an agenda item at the BOE meeting; BOF members are invited, as the Special Ed budget is a major part of the total Schools budget. * The BOE is examining the subject of Winter Sports and possibly inter-district events. * Spending is on-track with last year. * The sidewalk upgrade project could result in fun exercise in an adult-supervised "Walking School Bus" activity.

8. Financial Report- Finance Director: O. McKiernan-Rafoery reviewed the 6-months budget as of December 2020. Property taxes brought in \$11.7M. Due to the increased mil rate, this is up by \$561K. December Grants came in from Veterans Affairs, Disability allowances and Covid relief (\$82K), with extended time allowed for allocation. Local revenue is higher than last year by \$307K but of that \$250K is a pass-through amount for the Tourtellotte Trust project. Data Processing expenses are higher but will be off-set by Covid relief funds. At this time, the Surplus is estimated at possibly \$2.315M at the end of June, but there are other factors which may play in. The auditors have completed the second round and expected to finish by February.

Comments/Questions by the BOF:

R. Werge- asks that future reports designate the non-recurring Covid expenses and income separately. Finance Director: Yes, she will set up separate columns.

S. Herbert- asks if the uses for Covid relief funds are designated or open-ended. Yes, designated, with FEMA quite specific looking at incurred expenses while the state will allow future expenses such as cleaning the air ducts in the town hall, an anticipated project.

