

TOWN of THOMPSON
Board of Finance Special Meeting - Minutes
Thursday – December 28, 2023
Merrill Seney Room, Town Hall
And via Zoom from remote locations

1. The call to order by Vice Chair Robert Werge was at 7:03 PM.

Roll call: Steve Herbert (via Zoom), Brian Lynch (via Zoom) Dave Johnson, Robert Werge. A quorum is present.
Absent: Laurent Guillot. Excused: Nicola Chrzanowski. Others: First Selectman Amy St Onge, Bill Steglitz (Finance Director), Kaylee Beck (Schools Liaison), Michelle Giammarinaro (HR Director), Selectman Susanne Witkowski. Board/Commission members and members of the public. Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

2. Election of Officers for a period of two years:

Nomination for Chair of the Board of Finance by D. Johnson/seconded by S. Herbert: Robert Werge.

Motion to closed nominations for Chair by B. Lynch/D. Johnson carried unanimously.

Motion to elect R. Werge as Chair of the Board of Finance for a period of two years carried unanimously, 4-0. Steve Herbert- yes Brian Lynch- yes Dave Johnson- yes Robert Werge-yes

Nomination for Vice Chair by R. Werge/seconded by B. Lynch: Stephen Herbert.

Motion to close nominations for Vice Chair by B. Lynch/D. Johnson carried unanimously.

Motion to elect Stephen Herbert as Vice Chair of the Board of Finance for a period of two years carried unanimously, 4-0. Steve Herbert- yes Brian Lynch- yes Dave Johnson- yes Robert Werge-yes

3. Approval of minutes:

a. **Motion S. Herbert seconded by D. Johnson to approve the modified October 19, 2023 BOF Meeting minutes carried (B. Lynch abstained): Agenda item #7...asked budget audit questions**

4. Correspondence:

- Monthly Tax Collector's report 12/28/2023, Scott Antonson

5. Citizens' comments: none

6. Selectman's Update: First Selectman Amy St Onge offered Happy 2024 to all. * Bids for the school security project were opened. The accepted \$457K bid was lower than the \$500K anticipated. * The Track bidding process: one submission, now under review. The reason for this seems to be the STEAP Grant State delay, and the contractors were already booked. * The Salt Storage facility bid is going out. DEEP was at the site, toured the entire facility, and was pleased to learn about the proposed upgrade; there were no other comments. * Negotiations for town staff salaries will begin next month. * December 18's Town Meeting approved the Tax Lien Transfer Sale for the 929 Rivermill; the BOS on 12-15 entered into the tax abatement with the building's owner. * The BOS approved looking for further bids for elevator repair when the bid came in higher than anticipated. **Question** R. Werge about EMS space at the new Public Safety complex. No, it is not part of the plan as the cost is pushed too high if it is included.

7. School District Update-Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith: due to the re-scheduling of the BOF meeting, the Superintendent could not be present.

8. Financial Report- Finance Director William Steglitz reviewed the written report he had prepared for and distributed to the BOF. * A new process with the creation of the Budget Worksheet will lead directly to the final Budget Book at the end of the Budget process.

* Matters regarding the audit are quiet. The auditing firm has filed for an extension. * After review of the Covid 19 funds which had come to Thompson, both for the schools and general government, it was found that custodial and payroll costs due to Covid remediation could be considered, and \$204K has been realized from that review. This amount will go into the General Fund. B. Steglitz praised the combined finance department staff for their diligence.

Question S. Herbert: Unrestricted Fund. There is \$1.7M or about 6.5%. The auditors like about 10-15%. With \$153K in state revenue this year, \$238K in the School Security Grant and the additional \$204K in Covid relief funds just mentioned, this revenue brings the Unrestricted closer. The Finance Department may receive other revenue but does not include anticipated amounts in projections.

Comment R. Werge: Praised the Finance Department for their diligence, especially given Covid 19 funds' conditions/restrictions.

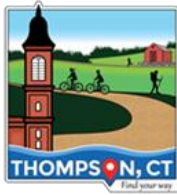
9. Tourtellotte Fund update – Board of Trustees/W. Steglitz: the balance on hand is \$2,456,000, close to the required floor, is however up by 3.5% as of the end of November.

10. New Business

a. Discussion: BOS request for \$40,000 for Town Hall elevator repairs: A. St Onge reviewed the history of the 2010 elevator, the cause of the failure and why the repairs are not covered by insurance. Details of the damage were explained. When bids came in, they were significantly higher than estimated, at \$66K. Other firms will be approached for a bid submission. The roof has been repaired and inspected. No further damage is anticipated. Access to the upper level of the town hall, including for handicapped individuals, is through the parking lot/door at the rear of the building.

b. 2024 BOS Budget Workshop procedure discussion, led by Finance Director Bill Steglitz: After the previous year's budget process was concluded, he considered the duplication of presentations to the BOS and then to the subsequent BOF by Agencies, Department Heads and others who presented a budget proposal; however, some of those individuals were not available for the BOF budget workshops. A streamlined process would allow the budget proposal to be completed weeks earlier in the spring, providing a margin before the Town Meeting and referendum deadlines in case a second referendum is needed. The tax bills would be more certainly sent out on time, with this margin available.

The proposal: the BOS and BOF would meet jointly during the BOS Budget Workshops, utilizing Zoom for Member and for public access, over a four-week period, from 6 PM- 9 PM which would: * improve efficiency, * allow all of the BOS/BOF members to hear directly from



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the person proposing a budget, *facilitate the BOS and the BOF members asking questions of the presenter and all parties hearing the response, *create the opportunity for all Board members to jot down notes as the presentations move forward, and *expedite the budget creation process by shortening the number of weeks of meetings needed for BOS then the subsequent BOF Budget Workshops. A. St Onge confirmed that these four Special BOS Meetings will be for budget request presentations only, with no other agenda items. All Board members may ask questions, but no action would be taken. After these joint meetings, the BOS will meet independently to determine the final budget request to subsequently be presented to the BOF. The consensus of the Board of Finance was to test the process for a year. It was noted by the BOF to be collaborative, to provide a time buffer for getting the final budget to the town meeting, as well as the opportunity to hear all budget requests either at the meeting itself or, if needed, on the Zoom recording. D. Johnson expressed concern about the process.

Motion S. Herbert seconded by B. Lynch to add the four BOS February Budget Workshop meetings to the 2024 BOF schedule as joint meetings carried 3-1.

Steve Herbert- yes Brian Lynch- yes Dave Johnson- no Robert Werge-yes

11. Old Business: none

12. Board of Finance Member Comments:

- S. Herbert welcomed the two new BOF members and announced the positive results of the Army/Navy Football Classic.
- B. Lynch looks forward to serving on the BOF and to working together.
- R. Werge wished one and all a Happy New Year.

13. Adjourn:

Motion S. Herbert/B. Lynch to adjourn at 8:02 PM carried unanimously.

Use this link to see/hear the full BOF meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/-J2HqfeXI2KEQNR96oFkaQqXTutB3CPMjPDfeRsX7R3iYIIFCkO0-6brm46Tmqp.x1eS-Nm5dA0fOnwq> Passcode: 6&GC!*0G

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.