



TOWN of THOMPSON
Board of Selectmen/Board of Finance
Joint Special Meeting – Budget Presentations
Wednesday – February 07, 2024
Minutes
Merrill Seney Room, Town Hall
And via Zoom from remote locations

1. The call to order by First Selectman Amy St Onge was at 6:01 PM.

II. Roll Call (revised):

Selectmen <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ken Beausoleil via Zoom- Susanne Witkowski- Amy St Onge	Board of Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Robert Werge via Zoom- Stephen Herbert- Nicola Chrzanowski/ 6:04	BOF (Continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Laurent Guillot /6:04- David Johnson (not present)- Brian Lynch (not present)
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Also in attendance, in person or virtually: Finance Director William Steglitz, Department Heads who will review their Budget Requests at this meeting and other Department Heads, Members of Boards and Commissions, Members of the public, Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

III. Citizen Comments: none at this time

IV. Budget Presentations: First Selectman Amy St Onge and Finance Director Bill Steglitz will collaboratively discuss the budget requests, provide the draft budget proposal visually via “screen-share” and answer questions from the Board members and from the public. The Board of Finance Chair and First Selectman will alternate conducting the 4 Joint Budget Workshops.

The Zoom recording of each Budget Workshop will be available to the public, providing direct access to what each Department Head has proposed and the questions asked/suggestions put forward by the BOF/BOS members.

The First Selectman and Finance Director noted that the salary increases in all departments are tentative, in that a Union contract is not in place and any salary increase agreed upon is not known. The 2.5% increase is a placeholder, based on history.

The Finance Director created a budget worksheet that will transfer to the final Budget Book.

All present shared the consensus that if a Citizen wants to comment after a Department Head’s presentation, that could be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

A. Proposed budget section 6000- Development & Planning Tyra Penn-Gesek 6:06 PM: the activities in Planning and Development were reviewed.

B. Proposed budget section 6205- 6:08 PM: Economic Development includes a request for a portable bandstand for concerts/events in the park encouraging greater use of the park. Currently a DPW trailer is used. A line-item reduction for Branding Initiatives is proposed, but there is a shift. She constantly seeks Grant opportunities; the town benefits when “match.” funds are already available. An EDC Statute permits a % of the Grand List set aside.

**** Citizens' Comment-** Valerie Clark, Alm Road, on line 5222234- asked for modification of the name of the Park to the historically appropriate one; the terminology may be simplified to Airline Trail for clarity to the public.

C. Proposed budget section 6101- Planning & Zoning Commission/ Zoning Enforcement Officer Cindy Dunne 6:35 PM: a part-time office staff position is proposed, to be shared between the ZEO Office and Inland Wetlands (which also does not have support staff) to review incoming business, handle routine matters and provide access to the public. A ZEO increase in hours is proposed. Data for the previous fiscal year for this department and income from fees for violations will be provided to the Boards by C. Dunne and B. Steglitz.

D. Proposed budget section 6202- Zoning Board /Appeals: submitted a flat budget request

E. Proposed budget section 1303- Assessor Paul Hopkins 7:05 PM. Not part of today's discussion: The Capital Expense for revaluation will be reduced by \$10K due to work by the Assessor and confidence in his skills (not officially part of the budget proposal being discussed at this time but the Boards should know). Line item: A corporate merger will increase the costs of on-line property searches, but the Department has found ways to minimize that cost. The Assessor noted that Cindy Dunne found about 200 not-registered vehicles, which will result in an addition to the property records and thus about \$25K in additional property tax income.

F. Proposed budget section 2301- Emergency Management Steve Benoit and John Szamocki 7:12 PM: A budget increase is requested for First Aid/CPR Training (12 constables) as well as reflexive vests and other gear for them. Not part of today's discussion: A Capital item vehicle request, which will be off-set by Revenue to the Department, will be budget neutral.

G. Proposed budget section 1501- Fire Marshal Jamie Seney 7:20 PM: A detailed electronic presentation of the Department and the details of several Statutory requirements was "screen-shared" and explained. The new fee schedule for inspections (12/2023) is resulting in higher revenue. A tracking system has been created which is reducing admin time. Not part of today's discussion: A Capital item request, removing all Fire Marshal functions and equipment from a personally owned vehicle to one owned by the town, allowing the equipment to be secured.

****Citizens' Comment-** Jessica Bolte, Riverside Drive, speaking from her professional experience: a town-owned vehicle would remove possible liability/culpability to the town related to public safety. If equipment is not kept securely stored, there would be no insurance coverage for missing/stolen items.

H. Proposed budget section 5301- Recreation Director Brian Lievense 8:04 PM: provided a broad overview of the activities of the Department which has rebounded in participants to the pre-Covid level, at 3,213 citizens. More "senior" programs and those for working parents are offered/proposed. Many programs are self-funded through fees, but labor costs and especially transportation costs are up, impacting the budget. Software for Registrations is the major budget increase. Not part of today's discussion: 2 Capital item requests ****a public safety concern with failing boards on the footbridge in Riverside Park which need replacement **the replacement of the park light fixtures which had to come down last year due to rotted supports, causing many sports activities in the evening to be cancelled.**



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I. Proposed budget section 2401- Animal Control Officer Erin Impellizeri 8:25 PM: There was review of many aspects of the ACO's responsibilities (32 animals adopted, several re-claimed /found, and some deceased), the permitted uses of the Dog Fund such as for Veterinarian fees, the significant role of volunteers at the Animal Facility, and other matters. Note: about 150 more dog licenses were paid than previously, due to the ACO presence.

**Citizens' Comments: Valerie Clark, Alm Road, asked about the new line item for Contracted Services. In order for the ACO to be able to take the allotted vacation time, a contracted, certified person would need to be available or on stand-by for coverage.

J. Other Budgets As Needed: none

V. Adjourn:

Motion to adjourn S. Herbert seconded by N. Chrzanowski to adjourn at 8:53 PM carried unanimously.

The next Joint Special BOS/BOF Budget Workshop will take place on Tuesday, February 13 at 6 PM in both formats-- virtually and live at the Merrill Seney Room, Town Hall.

Use this link to see/hear the full BOF meeting:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/GF9XurShwghuslolYq9tNcz87QXfNdqg2szjy2W0Wb5kwvPnYzVqLXUdxH7FD1QO.2kd0r_mUpt1tNP67 Passcode: N7.g5P4b

Respectfully submitted by Dorothy Durst, Recording Secretary *Dorothy Durst*

These minutes have not yet been approved by the Board of Selectmen. Please refer to a future meeting's minutes for approval of and/or amendments to these minutes.