

***Thompson Board of Selectmen  
Special Meeting at Town Hall  
Meeting Minutes***

February 21, 2016

**I. Call to order**

First Selectman Ken Beausoleil called to order the special meeting of the Board of Selectmen at 11:20 AM on February 21, 2016 at the Merrill Seney community room.

**II. Roll call**

The following persons were present: Ken Beausoleil, First Selectman, Shaina Smith, Selectwoman, Steve Herbert, Selectman.

**III. Budget Review/workshop**

The board began reviewing the departments and outside organizations which submitted budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year. The board agreed to the 2.25% salary increase for the tax collector. Projected pay at \$62,159. Veterans service proposal remained as proposed, so did the zoning board of appeals. Under planning and community development, selectwoman Smith noted that she believed the position was promised increases upon hire but the increases did not occur, hence the need to play “catch up” with the increase and a 4% jump. Beausoleil stated he would look back at her contract to verify and make sure we are on target with our contractual agreement. Economic development commission shows a 2.5% increase for the recording secretary; it was noted that the EDC did vote on this increase during its January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016 meeting. The board came to the consensus that all increase proposals for the recording secretary positions would be revisited later in the meeting. Planning and zoning commission was looked at in terms of the secretary’s salary; the 2.25% increase was agreed upon for continuity’s sake to other position being considered.

Animal control operation discussion was brought up. Selectman Herbert had questions and wanted to discuss this program further. He noted that medical and worker’s compensation is not reflected within the salary. The total for department is \$29,119 with a total of about \$37K for the operation of the program. Herbert said what he has heard and this is no reflection on the individual, but this compares to potential services that may cost less and provide better services. Similar costs would provide at least 16 hours per day service if not 24 hours and staffed with crew of 4-5 people so has back up capability. We may get better service for less money is what we may have in front of us. For the town we may have an issue with better service for less money if we join other towns. Smith noted that the response time for the Thompson program has been great in terms of personal experience with having dogs go missing. Smith noted that as

a past volunteer for NECCOG's animal control service, it can be overcrowded at times. NECCOG would charge \$3.15 per capita. This would amount to about \$29,320.

Herbert said medical costs do not include worker's comp. and should not be but all figures included, Herbert said the animal control operation exceeds the cost of NECCOG. Herbert added it would be a reduction of about \$10,000 for the town.

Herbert proposed that we maybe go this way. Herbert said NECCOG is aware of Merry and speaks highly of her. Beausoleil said he will sit down with the Finance Director to obtain those additional costs in terms of medical costs the town pays for the ACO position as well as worker's compensation. Discussion was had concerning euthanasia and burial costs to propose \$1,000, though originally the department felt it could function on \$800. It was noted by the Board that the department is already over the current year's budget and felt comfortable increasing to \$1,000. Salary is at 2.25% and the board felt comfortable with that increase.

Under building official department, the board will revisit salary and telephone line items. The department proposed increase is currently at \$17,237 or a 20.5% increase. Assessor budget was looked at, unsure part Beausoleil stated was the additional clerk but maybe let's look at finding a full time position. At the BOF meeting the members noted it was a work in progress. Herbert asked what we will propose in this budget to which Beausoleil said the full time assessor was budgeted at \$49,000 and \$36,912 for Assessor's clerk at 30 hours. Beausoleil looked at past budgeted amounts. The full \$102,000 for salaries Herbert said should be enough. Beausoleil noted it would include more fringe benefits with an additional assessor's clerk. Beausoleil said we will know more in terms of our needs once we go out for the position of the Assessor. Herbert wanted to know what amount to place in the assessor's line item for the board's proposed amount to which Beausoleil said application process closes on March 1<sup>st</sup>. The board left that salary alone for the present time, pending the tentative hiring process. GIS maintenance showed a reduction as there was no need to update at this time. Office supplies went down from \$990 to \$750.

Town clerk budget included a 2.25% salary increase and decreases to the professional services. Conservation commission came in flat, according to Beausoleil. Increases were made for election and registration with advertising. Library administration budget was looked at with Beausoleil saying the department wants another clerk. Herbert said he has and others stressing the volunteerism discussion. Beausoleil followed up that discussion with correspondence on TVCCA allowing volunteers, saying volunteers are out there and interested. Herbert said as he tried to make clear at our meeting, the library can make it fail if it wants to and that is the fear Herbert. He is frustrated with the attitude and would like them to be more supported with helping themselves. Herbert added the salary should be at 2.25% instead of 2.5% to which the board concurred. Under community center building budget, salary requests were adjusted from 2.5% to 2.25%. There was an increase under repairs was increased from \$15,000 to \$25,000.

Herbert said he heard some departments may have a budget of X amount and may spend less and others will spend the exact amount it is given. The line item of repairs building and equipment was discussed and \$25,000 seemed like a high amount to Herbert. Smith questioned if some of those items would be considered more of a capital improvement project. Beausoleil said he would look at what has been charged within that line item with the Finance Department. Probate court and NDDH saw no changes made by the board from what was proposed. Under Inland Wetlands commission, salary increase reflected a 2.25% to which the board was in agreement. Raised office supplies by \$5.

Historian (historical society grant); there are funds for a grant but will not come until the fall, according to Beausoleil. There were proposed repairs made by the historical society, Beausoleil noted and the roof may be above the estimated amount. To borrow \$200,000 would cost \$350,000 over 40 years. The only way out would be to take out a low interest loan, Beausoleil said as the town cannot afford the \$200,000 cash on its own at this point in time. Herbert said we should go out for grants for two major repairs to the roofs and Beausoleil said if we did get the grant we would know in the fall, but may not begin work until the following spring; there are already leaks which have been discovered. The discussion of if the town has to take action prior to the notification of a grant and if so, where the amount would come from or how it would be funded. As it stands, the budget for the historical society would show an increase for the heating problem to amount to \$2,000.

Board of selectmen budget shows a proposal of \$1,000 for salaries for the members of the board (second and third selectmen), according to Beausoleil which covers meetings, fuel and what-not. Beausoleil said he did not gain an answer with annual and special town meeting. Herbert asked about council of small towns as it was reduced to \$0 and the board placed \$1,000 for COST. Total annual for memberships is \$16,061. Then Beausoleil stated COST may be only \$825. Herbert said we are asking everyone else for 2.25% of an increase and to ask for a 25% increase. Beausoleil stated he added it back to restore the amount that it was in the past. Herbert said he has traveled to other places and has not asked for reimbursement but asked if that should be a line item. Smith stated she was unsure if the wages for the board included or was created with travel in mind. The consensus was made to leave those numbers up to the board of finance and made the cut back to \$4,000 for salary.

First Selectman budget included salary discussion for the secretary clerk. Selectman Smith asked if we could have a recording secretary for special meetings as it is difficult at times to be fully engaged with the board meetings if one of the selectmen is responsible for recording the minutes. Herbert agreed and Beausoleil said now that the transition has taken place with the office positions, the executive assistant will be responsible for recording special meetings in the future.

Data processing budget shows the website and webmaster items and Smith asked if we

are going to have a discussion with the town's website because this has been an ongoing issue and we need to make an adjustment sooner rather than later. Beusoleil stated we have 4 months under that current contract. Software line item was left blank as the board is waiting on final numbers for a new program, according to Beusoleil. We should have actual numbers in the coming week. Herbert said there are google docs available as well and Beusoleil said we may look at that as it is free.

Town counsel department shows legal increases in the area of general town for \$5,500 and \$3,000 for zoning legal advice.

Town hall building had a question on telephone as well as heating and building repairs/maintenance. After looking at necessary repairs, it was concluded to increase the repairs from \$12,000 to \$15,000.

Fire marshal rounded off numbers to make it easier for budgeting purposes which still saw no increase. Celebrations budget was left alone.

Under general services, waiting for a answer on transit. TVCCA came through and the town is waiting on some final numbers. United services is another one we are checking on TEEG on. Herbert looked up records that are public for United Services with some salaries being large and isn't against making money but seemed a lot for a nonprofit. Beusoleil said the organization wants \$11,696 with \$5,480 coming for youth services. Herbert said all in all it is a lot of money from an organization which pays its people very well and isn't against the salary but is not excited about funding. Herbert would refer to do this locally. Going to seek out clarification from Donna Grant about TEEG being able to provide the youth services. Community kitchens moved to Woodstock, with Beusoleil saying Woodstock does not contribute for that program and Thompson pays \$1,000. Given the change in location, \$500 seems fair, the selectmen noted. Under additional programs that the town funds, the board felt it could offer a little more for some programs which have not received an increase in the past. Access was increased from \$50 to \$100, sexual assault prevention at \$100, NECASA at \$200. QVSCC Herbert stated is out of Brooklyn and was not sure how many senior citizens from Thompson utilized that program as it is far away. Beusoleil said in 2012/2013 it was at \$50. The board opted to not contribute this year.

Treasurer and Finance department has a 2.25% salary increase to which the board agreed with the proposed numbers.

Board of assessment appeals budget reflected a request for a 3% salary increase. The board adjusted to 2.25% for salaries.

Emergency Management department shows hummer line item at \$500 increase as it is a new piece of equipment. Smith asked if other towns provide a salary for emergency management directors as she thinks he puts in a lot of time and energy for the town in terms of drills and obtaining grants. Beusoleil compared to other towns of the same size and noted some are paid \$2,000 or more. Beusoleil said he has no problem adding a stipend, saying there are two individuals who operate the department. The board

added \$2,000 total with \$1,500 for one and \$500 for the other.

Recreation commission was left as proposed by the department. Beausoleil questioned the 2.25% increase for a new hire. Beausoleil asked Herbert for his business background expertise with regards to this area. Herbert said he can do a case by case basis with modest increase after a few months if doing well, but typically on an annual basis. The proposed increase was adjusted to remain flat.

Public works budget shows numbers that need to be looked at further, gasoline and diesel. The budget as a whole the board was in agreement on, the salary item and request for two additional hires will be looked at later on in the meeting. Nothing changed under the ground supplies parks budget. Transfer recycling centers showed a 2.25% salary increase which the board agreed with. Cemeteries remained as proposed. Snow removal budget shows a proposed snow overtime as \$55,000.

Looking back at some of the increases that the board questioned, the first department was planning/community development under the Director's salary increase of 4%. The board was in agreement.

Building official salary line item shows a proposed increase of 13%, with discussion had regarding past amounts and comparing to other towns with a building official. Smith said it seems his number is lower than others when comparing to other towns, but wasn't sure about asking the townspeople for a \$13,000 increase. Herbert suggested 4.5% increase as it is double what others are receiving to recognize his service and argument for the increase.

Under public works, Beusoleil will ask public works director what priorities are for projects and equipment. For salary, the director is at \$71,529 and proposed \$75,105. Beausoleil said when you look at the hours he puts in for paving and snow days, he does put in his hours. All board members felt the director is a hard worker. All board were proposed with the proposal. Looking at two hires for highway maintainers, Beausoleil said he felt comfortable asking for one; Herbert said he was not excited even having to ask for one. Beusoleil said he wished we didn't have to ask, but there are things falling by the wayside when you look at the town and projects that have not gotten done. One maintainer was kept in the proposed budget.

For fire departments, the board discussed the presentation given by the department Chiefs recently. Beausoleil said we have to have a compelling argument to the Board of Finance to receive increases, as the board was not provided sufficient numbers to date. Solid working numbers would allow the board to accurately determine what the needs were, according to Beausoleil. The board was in agreement to support the fire service with an increase to \$48,000.

First Selectman budget shows the exec. Assistant making \$21/hr and Beausoleil said with the responsibilities and anticipated future responsibilities in the area of personnel and assistance with paperwork for union negotiations and whatnot, that the position be increased. Currently at \$43,848. Beausoleil recommended \$23/hr to budget so that

depending on job performance, etc. the raise could be given. A 9.5% increase amounts \$48,024. The board was in agreement.

**IV. Discussion of/possible action on the aide to the Recreation Director Position**

The board did not take action or discuss this item.

**V. Adjourn**

A motion was made by Shaina Smith and seconded by Ken Beausoleil to adjourn the special meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

All in favor:

Beausoleil: yes

Smith: yes

Herbert: yes

**Motion Carried.**

The Board of Selectmen adjourned its meeting at 3:14 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Shaina Smith, Selectwoman