



**TOWN of THOMPSON
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255**

**THOMPSON Board of Finance Regular Meeting
via Zoom Thursday, May 21, 2020**

MINUTES

The call to order by Chair Aaron McGarry was at 7:02 PM.

1. Roll call: Members-Aaron McGarry (Chair), Jim Bellavance, Rob Mann, Rhonda Rooney, Robert Werge, Steve Herbert. Chair A. McGarry noted all Members are present. Others- Orla McKiernan-Raftery (Finance Director), First Selectman Amy St Onge, Selectmen Susanne Witkowski and Ken Beausoleil, Christopher Jones (Schools Director/Pupil Services), Melinda Smith (Superintendent of Schools), Bob Gentes (Schools Finance Director), Board and Commission members, Town Officials and Department heads, Members of the public, Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

2. Approve minutes:

- a. **Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Rooney to approve the minutes of the April 06, 2020 Special Meeting/Budget Workshop carried unanimously.**
- b. **Motion J. Bellavance seconded by R. Werge to approve the minutes of the April 16, 2020 Regular Meeting/Budget Workshop carried unanimously, as modified.** An ambiguous sentence at the bottom of p.2 should read: "Members of the BOF added evidence that the revaluation has *resulted in disparate impacts on taxes, with some but not all increasing.*"
- c. **Motion S. Herbert seconded by R. Mann to approve the minutes of the April 20, 2020 Special Meeting/Budget Workshop carried unanimously.**
- d. **April 23, 2020 Special Meeting Cancelled-n/a**
- e. **Motion J. Bellavance seconded by R. Mann to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2020 Special Meeting/Budget Workshop carried unanimously.**
- f. **Motion J. Bellavance seconded by R. Rooney to approve the minutes of the April 30, 2020 Regular Meeting/Budget Workshop carried unanimously.**
- g. **Motion J. Bellavance seconded by S. Herbert to approve the minutes of the May 04, 2020 Special Meeting/Budget Workshop carried unanimously.**
- h. **Motion J. Bellavance seconded by R. Mann to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2020 Special Meeting/Budget Workshop carried unanimously.**
- i. **Motion J. Bellavance seconded by R. Werge to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2020 Special Meeting/Budget Workshop:** Discussion: modifications to the text- P. 2 "*Motion to reduce the Town budget line for health insurance...carried 4-2 (not 4-1).*" *The footer date should be May 11. P. 3—"A. McGarry- after reviewing the March 4 BOE History of Budgets presentation, he researched back 5 years to determine the average increase ~~reduction~~ the voters have put in place at referendum, finding that the increase ~~reduction~~ from the proposed was \$287,000, averaged over that time period. Currently, the BOF is considering an increase ~~reduction~~ of \$370,000."*
Motion to approve carried unanimously with the specified modifications.
- j. **Motion J. Bellavance seconded by S. Herbert to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2020 Public Hearing carried unanimously.**

3. Correspondence: none was received except a BOE memo and a Revision (see #9, below)

4. Citizens' comments: Chair A. McGarry noted that a series of emails sent to the town hall Public Comment email special address did not reach the BOF in time to be read into the record



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at the Public Hearing (05/14/2020) and he accordingly read them aloud. Addresses were not required by the email site; the Chair assumes each Comment to be from a Thompson resident.

- Christian Proulx
- Jennifer Baublitz, 15 S. Shore Rd
- Erin Peckham
- Geoffrey Bolte, 1081 Riverside Dr
- Justin Yong, 12 Fairway Dr

A petition "Responsibly Fund Thompson Public Schools and Town Employees" is being circulated through the on-line *change.org*. As of May 18, petition originator Justin Yong, 12 Fairway Dr, verified around 500 to be Thompson residents of the 791 enrollees. The petition text was read into the record; it may be heard in its entirety utilizing the Zoom link below.

Citizens' Comments: to hear the Comments utilize the Zoom recording, below

- Jessica Bolte, 1081 Riverside Dr
- Brittany Charboneau, 56 Juliette Ave
- Christine Campbell, 851 Thompson Rd
- Sylvie Hanshaw, 33 Blackmer Downs Rd
- Shawn Brissette, Whittemore Dr
- Kathleen Herbert, 122 Wilsonville Rd

5. Selectman's Update-First Selectman Amy St Onge:

*Town hall staff have determined that public safety must be maintained; keeping all the spaces sanitized with current staffing does not seem attainable. It will therefore remain closed until June 29, then be open by appointment. The current methods of handling the needs of the public will continue. * A long-term planning committee has been formed to identify gaps in service during the crisis, then mitigate and find solutions. All Thompson residents are encouraged to use the town hall on-line 5-question survey so data collection will be as accurate as possible regarding the Covid19 effects. * The BOS this week recognized EMS Week, thanking those dedicated individuals and commending them. It has since been learned that it is also Public Works Week; thanks go out to the phenomenal crew which keeps the town beautiful while handling all the road and other infrastructure work they do. * On Memorial Day weekend, a not-quite-traditional automobile parade (in part, recognizing the ratification of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote) will take place, along with the important ceremonial recognition of Veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice.

6. School District Update-Superintendent of Schools Melinda Smith:

*Schools enrollment is down by one, at 971. *Thanks are offered to A. St Onge and many others for the Teacher Recognition parade. * Meals are being provided at pick-up points (215 breakfasts, 250 lunches per day, with extra for weekends, totaling 26,664 meals since March 16). *Distance Learning continues, thanks to teacher creativity. * The Commissioner of Education released a Summer School advisory memo, which may foretell what Fall school requirements could be; she reviewed several provisions. The BOF posed several questions, seeking details and ramifications. * Funding through the CARES Act will come in; the schools are tracking all costs specific to the crisis, in order to qualify for the maximum amount. * Technology for every student, brought direct to their homes, beginning with Kindergarten, is underway; the Alliance District budget may be amended. * Sports in the fall is a question, given the logistics of sanitizing and disinfecting spaces and equipment.



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7. Financial Report- Finance Director Orla McKiernan-Raftery provided a 10-month-to-date review *Property Taxes are coming in at 98.24% of the budget forecast (\$16, 941M)
* ECS Schools funding arrived ((\$3,767,352) * Local revenue is lower than last year by \$44K (\$780K) *Compared to last year, cash on hand is lower by \$1.86M
8. Tourtellotte Fund update: there has been no meeting/no report
9. New Business: Board of Education request for a supplemental \$351,477.00 appropriation. The BOE memo (May 11, 2020) advised the BOF that there is a projected shortfall of \$351,477.00 in the BOE budget and that a supplemental appropriation will be needed; a subsequent revision (May 20, 2020) stated that the DATTCO school bus contract will be revised downward by about 20% (\$92,851); now the BOF is being advised that the estimated shortfall will be \$258,626. BOE Chair K. Herbert: the BOE is giving the BOF 30 days advance notice of a possible shortfall, as required,. Extended discussion took place, with BOF members seeking detailed information. Pupil Services is over-spent by 100%. C. Jones provided Special Education data including transportation costs for out-placed students, noting that 22% of the school enrollment is receiving some sort of special services.

Pointing out that the additional \$55,931 allocated to the BOE for Spring sports and other activities, in addition to the budget, brought the BOE financial resources to \$18,693,503. Question: how much is expended to date? K. Herbert: \$14,155,167. Question: how much are open purchase orders? B. Gentes: \$4,889,813. Some contracts continue across into the next fiscal year (summer projects); he reviewed the split between payroll /benefits remaining this year (\$3.443M) and supplies/services and other costs. BOF confirmed: \$3.443 M is employee-related, with \$1.4M not. Question: Did the Municipal Stabilization (Alliance District) funds arrive? M. Smith: Yes, A Special Ed and a Reading teacher were hired; all funds are required to be expended by June 30. Question: did the Special Education reimbursement (\$342,284) come in? B. Gentes; Yes. Question: are possible Covid19 FEMA emergency funds due before September? B. Gentes: Yes. It is mostly for disaster relief/emergency management. Usually FEMA serves the needs of a town, not just Education. Funds target specified expenses.

Question: The \$258K being requested is 1.38% of the School's current FY 19-20 financial resources of \$18,693,503. What current expenses are being moved ahead to FY 20-21 to help balance the Education budget? M. Smith: the numbers were examined before the May 20 memo to the BOF. Some additional reductions in spending before June 30 can take place but the difference cannot drop to zero. Question: there are expenses of \$1.4M *not* payroll related; how can spending be reduced? K. Herbert: what is pending are Special Education services and DATTCO payments, as well as utility costs, custodial overtime, supply purchases. A. McGarry: If expenses exceed the budget, is it appropriate to still pay custodians overtime and to purchase supplies? The voters in previous years have told the BOE and the BOF at referendum what they are willing to pay. They have the final say. Question: of the encumbered items, are there areas that could be re-negotiated due to not using a full school year of services? M. Smith: No.



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A. McGarry asked for data to be prepared for the next meeting: What steps have been taken to ward off the looming deficit that the Schools predicted back in August? To what extent is there a hold on non-essential purchasing and projects? To what extent have budget changes been made for non-essential contractors (excluding those with written contracts in place)? This will be a list of dollars not spent, of reductions from line items. B. Gentes: Yes. Pest control was cancelled in April. Pre-purchased transportation fuel was under-utilized; the line item stands, but there is a possible credit. R. Werge: the BOF will want to see what has already been done and what can still be done, especially re-negotiations. R. Rooney: thank you for taking the time to provide the BOF with the requested details. As a Board, we must represent the thinking of the people—who have not passed an Education budget, time and again.

10. Old Business:

- Citizens' Comments on the BOF monthly meeting Agenda: S. Herbert advocated for a second agenda item nearer the send, allowing public comment regarding what took place during the meeting. Extended BOF discussion took place. Possibilities for conducting and managing a second Citizens' Comments section were reviewed in detail; after considering various options, Chair A. McGarry noted that Roberts Rules does not provide for curtailing or managing any public comment. He pointed out that the current town hall email address specifically for public comment provides the opportunity for feedback after an agenda item has been addressed. BOF members noted that the public has access to the agenda in advance of a meeting, and can make comments in advance of any agenda topic. The consensus of the BOF was to leave the agenda as is, with Citizens' Comments early in the meeting.

Motion A. McGarry seconded by R. Mann to resume New Business carried unanimously.

- the Finance Director proposed posting a Request for Proposals for auditing; the BOF agrees.
- R. Werge: asks the Superintendent of Schools/BOE about contracts which provide a clause for "extenuating circumstances" providing the possibility of re-negotiation. None are known.

11. Motion R. Werge seconded by R. Mann to adjourn at 9:20 PM carried unanimously.

To hear this meeting on Zoom, click on the link below or copy/paste it into your search bar.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/uu10Muz6sTxIWwPuq17mHZ46BKnsT6a8hiJNrvQEneHHSKvklgclckA7X91oxwPo>
Password: 4G\$&+5?0

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.



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Emailed

> From: JUSTIN YONG <justinayong@gmail.com> >

Date: Thu, May 21, 2020 at 4:33 PM >

Subject: Absentee Citizens comment for regular meeting 05/21/2020 >

To: Aaron McGarry <aaron.j.mcgarry@gmail.com>, Jim Bellavance <a_j_manufacturing@sbcglobal.net>, Rhonda Rooney <r_rooney@charter.net>, rob mann <robkmann@yahoo.com>, Rob Werge <robertwerge@gmail.com>, Steve Herbert <steve@xfirepaintball.com> > Cc: Amy St.Onge <firstselectman@thompsonct.org>, Susan Witkowski <susannewit@att.net>, BOF@thompsonct.org

From Justin Yong, 12 Fairway Dr. Thompson, CT. 06255 >

> To the Thompson Board of Finance,

>> I am not be able to attend tonight's meeting but wanted to present > some comments to the board and the community members that are > attending. Over the last several weeks there has been a lot of discussion with regards to the school budget. A petition was started on change.org [1] by me, in an effort to persuade you, the BOF to change your direction with regards to the cuts to the school and the town budgets. As of this afternoon there are 791 signatures. So far about 500 are those of vetted, registered voters in the town of Thompson CT. I have included a PDF of the petition and the signatures to be entered into the record.

>Although we are not able to have a referendum this year, this petition along with the comments and attendance of the BOF meetings and workshops should serve as an indicator of where the voting citizens of Thompson would be on the issues. I believe if we were to have a referendum on the budget this year the citizens would have voted in favor of responsibly funding the school and the town, even if it meant an increase in the mill rate and subsequent tax burden. To the citizens, regardless of the outcome please don't give up on the Town of Thompson or its schools. We should be proud of the involvement that we have had this budget season and should continue to push for the future growth and prosperity of Thompson CT.

>> Respectfully, >> Justin Yong >>

Link: > <https://www.change.org/p/thompson-board-of-finance-responsibly-fund-thompson-public-schools-andtown-employees>

>> Attachments: Thompson BOF Petition.pdf, Thompson BOF Petition > Signatures.pdf



< Go to my petition's dashboard

Responsibly Fund Thompson Public Schools and Town Employees



Justin Yang started this petition to Thompson Board of Finance and 1 other

Citizens of the Town of Thompson, Connecticut: This petition is to urge the Board of Finance to adequately fund our schools and town with the minimum necessary obligations. This petition proposes to add \$500,000 to the overall budget for the Town of Thompson Fiscal Year 2020-2021—\$448,000 of which to cover the faculty/staff of Thompson Public Schools' insurance obligations, with the balance of \$52,000 towards the town's general budget to restore the town employees' insurance. This will result in a mill rate of 24.94. The Board of Finance is currently proposing a mill rate of 24.23. By adding \$500,000 to the budget, this will allow the Thompson Public Schools and the Town of Thompson to support our children and our town operations. For reference, a home appraised at \$200,000 and therefore assessed at \$140,000, would cost the tax payer an additional \$1.91 per week above the Board of Finance's proposed mill rate. These are tough times. In tough times, divided communities fall; however, UNITED communities thrive.

We the undersigned, unite to support the Town of Thompson, Connecticut. We support a mill rate of 24.94 as outlined above.

791 have signed. Let's get to 1,000!



Thompson Board of Finance: Responsibly fund Thompson...

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