

TOWN of THOMPSON
Board of Finance Meeting - Minutes
Thursday – March 21, 2024
Merrill Seney Room, Town Hall
And via Zoom from remote locations

1. The call to order by Board of Finance Chair Rob Werge was at 7:01 PM.
Roll call: Nicola Chrzanowski, Stephen Herbert (7:05 via Zoom), Brian Lynch, David Johnson, Robert Werge. Not present: Laurent Guillot. Schools' Liaison Kaylee Beck (7:05).
First Selectman Amy St Onge, William Steglitz (Finance Director), Melinda Smith (Superintendent of Schools), Kathleen Herbert (Chair, BOE). Department Heads, Board and Commission members and of the public. Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

2. Approval of Minutes:

. A. **Motion D. Johnson seconded by N. Chrzanowski to approve the minutes of the 03-14-2024 BOF Meeting carried unanimously.**

3. Correspondence:

- Letter from the Democratic Town Committee Chair, Erica Groh, notifying the BOF of the resignation of Laurent Guillot from the BOF as of March 17, 2024
- Tax Collector's report as of February 21: collections are tracking ahead of the prior year

4. Citizens' comments – three minutes per person maximum:

- Brian Santos, 77 Hagstrom Road, noted the decrease in the Education budget last year. The budget proportions were 70% Education and 30% General Government; he advocates for the BOF to dedicate time to the same proportion of time to Education needs.

5. New Business: Consider the BOS request of \$41,215.49 for Town Hall for elevator repairs.

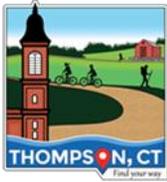
*A. St Onge reviewed the sequential steps in the pricing the 3 aspects of the elevator repairs.

Motion B. Lynch seconded by S. Herbert to authorize the Selectmen to appropriate \$41,215.49 to be taken from Contingency for identified elevator repairs at the Town Hall carried unanimously, 5-0.

B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.

6. Optional Updates from Board of Selectmen, Board of Education, Finance Director:

- First Selectman Amy St Onge * Union contract negotiations are in the final stages
- * Provided an update on the status of bids for the Salt Storage Facility: the bid amounts exceeded the ARPA funds available for the project. Follow-up work by the Building Committee and herself will include a break down the details of the proposals which have come in.
- * Light snowfall this winter has resulted in savings.
- Superintendent Melinda. Smith: *The Phase One (Preliminary) NEAC accreditation visit took place on March 5 and 6. Of particular note will be the category of "Community Support and Resources."
- *The school play, *Peter Pan* begins tomorrow. Over 70 students across all grade levels are involved.



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Board member comment: R. Werge, with other community members, attended the Leadership Roundtable and he praised the involvement of the students.

– Finance Director Bill Steglitz provided a written monthly report: *Reviewed the financials as of March 20 as being largely on track * Expects the draft of fy 2022-2023 Audit next week. Two areas of focus will be details of grants postings at the Schools, and the Surplus position at about 5.5% which is far below what is expected (16% guidance number) and will be noted as a failure of oversight; R. Werge noted that could have a potential impact on the town's bond rating, just as some bonding is anticipated for major projects.

7. Budget Workshop:

Chair R. Werge 1). reviewed the process for public comments, both for those attending via Zoom and those present in the meeting room. 2). Noted the BOF will meet next week, March 28, **at the Library Community Room** 3). The schedule for the month of April will include some Tuesdays and Thursdays 4). He stated that good progress has been made on the Budget, in part based on the success of 4 the Joint BOS/BOF Budget Workshops.

The Finance Director provided updates to the work at the previous Budget Workshop.

1). The Dog Fund (current balance: \$19,010) is from donations from the public and adoption fees and is not part of the town budget; it is targeted to address capital needs at the dog facility. The past three years, funds have been transferred out to the budget line, Canine Operations.
* The ACO keeps a log of calls/hours: about 25 calls per month (more than one each workday).

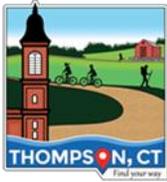
2). Electricity analysis shows costs will be down, impacting several budget lines, for a total reduction of \$4,004 net. After discussion.

Motion D. Johnson seconded by N. Chrzanowski to approve reductions of “Electricity” as listed from all the appropriate lines in for a total of \$4,000 carried unanimously, 5-0.
B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.

3). Interest costs to finance a DPW loader: A 5-year term= \$60K. A 7-year term = \$107K.

D. Johnson: the change from a 7-year lease, approved at the previous BOF meeting to a 5-year results in significant overall savings of \$47K. Since obtaining the piece of equipment will be in a future year due to availability, there will be no impact on the 2024-2025 budget.

Motion D. Johnson seconded by N. Chrzanowski to change the DPW Loader lease from a 7-year period to a 5-year period, payments beginning in fy 2026, carried unanimously, 5-0.
B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.



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4). A citizen had suggested indicating net-zero items in the budget sheets, and that has been achieved, with those budget lines in colored soft green.

5). Uncollected Tax (Revenue): the tax department's excellent collection rate brings the estimate of Uncollected down, reducing the anticipated Uncollected down by \$45K.

Motion D. Johnson seconded by B. Lynch to approve a reduction of \$45K of anticipated Uncollected Taxes, taken from Education and General Town Budgets, carried unanimously, 5-0.

B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.

Budget Workbook Page 52, Contingency: discussion- \$20K set-aside for a possible salary

Motion D. Johnson seconded by B. Lynch to reduce Contingency from \$110K to \$90K eliminating the \$20K for a possible salary need, carried, 3-2.

B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -no S. Herbert-no R. Werge- yes.

Budget Workbook Page 50: Retirements (Line 9): there are no known retirements

Motion D. Johnson seconded by B. Lynch to reduce Retirements (Line 9) by \$10K from \$20K to \$10K, carried unanimously, 5-0.

B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.

R. Werge asked for Budget worksheet data: Debt Service is now down \$1.59M to \$1.56M due to rolling the Bond interest into the note. Local Revenue, Finance, was increased by \$70K.

Budget Workbook Page 53 (Capital Expense and Transfers): There was discussion about the difference between Library Maintenance (Page 39, Line 13) and Library Capital Expense.

Motion B. Lynch seconded by D. Johnson to reduce Capital: Library Maintenance page 53, from \$39,275 by \$19,75 leaving \$20K in that line, carried unanimously, 5-0.

B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.

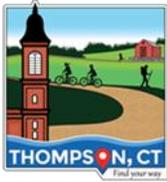
**The Finance Director was asked for the impact on the Budget Workbook of decisions made so far: it shows a mil rate of 28.37 (down from 28.98), a projected increase of 2.37 mils, rather than the previously proposed increase of 2.98 mils.

Budget Workbook Page 53(Capital Expense and Transfers): Riverside Park Lights

Replacement. Discussion 1).the need for the lights 2). the impacts on the community and other factors 3). the additional costs if the work was split over two years

Motion R. Werge seconded by D. Johnson to remove from Capital \$25K for Riverside Park Lights Replacement and add \$25K to Transfers, specifically earmarked for Riverside Park Lights Replacement carried unanimously, 5-0.

B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.



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Budget Workbook Page 53 (Capital Expense and Transfers) DPW Mower: After review Motion N. Chrzanowski seconded by S. Herbert to remove \$54K for the DPW Mower, Page 53, Capital Expense and Transfers, carried, 4-1.

B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –no N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.

R. Werge: all pages including the budget proposal pages as well as votes taken by the BOF may be revisited at any time before the final vote on a proposed budget.

Budget Workbook Page 23 Fire Departments, Line 9 (Grants): R. Werge reviewed the obligation to adequately fund the Fire Departments. B. Lynch noted the previous budget year they were “flat-lined” and the current year stands at \$71K each; the request was for \$83 for each of the five departments. After consideration:

Motion B. Lynch seconded by S. Herbert to reduce Fire Departments Grants, Page 23, line 9, by \$5K for each of the five Departments for a total reduction of \$25K, with each Department to be allocated \$78K, carried unanimously, 5-0.

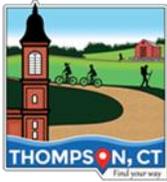
B. Lynch- yes D. Johnson –yes N. Chrzanowski -yes S. Herbert-yes R. Werge- yes.

**The Finance Director was asked for the impact recent BOF decisions. 28.23 mils. Capital Expenditures appears to be high, but this number is impacted by the major cuts last year.

EDUCATION BUDGT REVIEW

R. Werge and D. Johnson asked Superintendent M. Smith and Finance Director B. Steglitz to provide some details for specific budget lines. * Health benefits apparent swings, overall appearing to be increased by 10%. * Salaries fluctuate based on the Step of each faculty member. * The number of teachers in particular content areas varies, as some teachers fall into more than one academic content area. * Para-professionals were decreased under the previous budget, but provide classroom support for identified students. Noting the \$185K increase in Lines 150, 169 and 181: details will be provided.* Vocational Agriculture students are at \$6K for each of about 26 students. Other Career Pathway students (Culinary, Welding, Health professions) will provide out-of-District educational opportunities which their community does not provide, thus bringing tuition revenue to TMHS. * Using the PowerPoint presentation to the BOF on March 7, the Superintendent reviewed the primary drivers of increases in the BOE budget, which include Transportation and Health (current and new staff).

* A. St Onge: the Union negotiations are underway and the impact on the proposed budget should be known by next week.



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* B. Steglitz will review the projected Revenue line items, with the possibility of any further reductions. * At this point, the proposed budget shows at 26 mils (+2.23). or an 8.5% increase

8. Citizens' Comments:

-Melinda Smith, speaking as the Superintendent of Schools, noted that on April 2, interviews for the school principals will take place.

-R. Werge advised those present at the meeting that on March 28, the BOF will determine if to schedule a meeting on April 2, a Tuesday; if so, the meeting will be at the Library Community Center as the Town Hall will be in use.

-K. Beck, Student Liaison from the Schools, thanked the BOF for being welcoming to a student such as herself representing the student body, noting the budget creation process went well.

– Valerie Clark, Alm Road, stated that an increase in the budget of almost 9% is a lot for Thompson, reminding all present that 17% of the town's population requires assistance with food and/or shelter through TEEG. She asked for specific data and a possible spreadsheet modification. She posed questions about the impact of the mini-split on Dog Shelter operating costs, about the DPW Loader impacts until 2026, and the status of the Rivermill tax collection.

9. Board of Finance member comments: none S. Herbert balance the cuts against the magnitude of each cut.

10. Adjourn: **Motion to adjourn B. Lynch seconded by N. Chrzanowski to adjourn at 9:08 PM carried unanimously.**

Some April BOF meetings may be conducted at the Library - Faucher Community Room, and others at the Town Hall - Seney Room. Verify with each meeting's posted Agenda.

The link to see/hear the BOF meeting: Closed captions are at screen bottom: click on the thin black bar

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/nVwcFLzuN3E1e18NP9Snpr57NhjkQldLYBZe9eATU9mZp1UzOJr41G2_VeD8IKB.Dk-JZaFB9skSUB4G Passcode: ^@C6F5S&

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

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