



TOWN of
THOMPSON
BOARD OF FINANCE

Minutes: Budget Meeting
Thursday, April 23, 2015
Thompson Library/Community Center
7:00 PM

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Chairman Ray Faucher, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

- I. Roll call and seating of alternates
 1. Members Present: Raymond Faucher, Jr., Paul Dery, Larry Groh, Jr., Laurent Guillot, Aaron McGarry, and Susanne Witkowski.
 2. Members Absent: None.
 3. Staff Present:
Tina Fox, Recording Secretary
Orla McKiernan-Rafferty, Finance Director
 4. Also Present: Kerstin Forrester, Dr. Michael Jolin, Paul Lenky, Members of the Public
- II. Correspondence
 1. Information from Orla McKiernan-Rafferty regarding a paving explanation.
 2. Letter from Danielle Pederson which was a forward from Neal Breen regarding healthcare and benefit costs.
 3. Letter from Dr. Jolin stating that they are projecting a deficit in special education costs.
 4. Information for Ray Faucher, Jr. regarding Town Clerk salary survey in Connecticut.
 5. Information from Paul Lenky regarding paving of roads.
- III. Citizen's Comments
 1. Lauren Langlois, Lowell Davis Rd., stated that she is a parent and teacher in Thompson. She wanted the budget to be proposed to the Town at the 1.5 mill increase. She believed that the Town can't afford any more budget cuts. She mentioned that there are areas of the Town that are neglected, and the budget needs to include money to fix those things to attract people to Thompson. She stated that limited funding in the school is causing higher class sizes, which makes her hesitant to send her kids to the school because research shows that students in smaller sizes perform better in larger classes. She also stated that she was offended by the statement that teachers are mercenaries. She believes that there is a lot of loyalty in Thompson and it is important to keep the teachers that we have, so salaries need to improve. She concluded by reiterating that she hopes the Board will propose the budget as is, and the support of parents and teachers will get the budget passed.

2. Paul Baer, Thompson, asked why Paul Dery seems to be the only person who is calculating accurate numbers. He stated that at the last meeting, it was said that the State got rid of its rule that the school couldn't reduce its funding. In relation to that, he stated that anyone giving a presentation before the Board of Finance should have to be under oath. He believed that the numbers given at the last meeting regarding the ambulance services did not seem accurate. He stated that a member of the Board of Education who identified himself as a Thompson resident stated at the last Board of Selectmen meeting that \$100,000 has been spent on attorney fees for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) complaints, and if that is true, then an audit needs to be done. He mentioned that education is important, but waste is unacceptable, and that the school has turned into an employment system for adults. He said that there are businesses in the Town that cannot do business with the school system, because the school is doing business in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. He stated that they like to make comparisons with other Towns when it is convenient, such as when they want to keep a Business Manger who lives in Hartford. He reiterated that education is important, and that the Board needs to find ways to fund education but get a good return.
3. Tom Angelo, 640 Fabyan Rd., stated, again, that while he is a member of the Board of Education, he was at the Board of Selectmen meeting as a taxpayer. He further stated that he would like to see Paul Baer have to pay for attorney fees when he creates a FOIA complaint and the Town wins.
4. Shawn Bassette, Fairway Dr., stated that his wife is a school teacher in Thompson. He believed the Board has done a good job discussing the budget and talking to each other and dealing with how the cuts will effect each department. He stated that sooner or later, the Board would have to handle the school budget. He further mentioned that he has not heard the Board ask the Selectmen or the Town Planner what the Town does to generate revenue. He stated that the Economic Development Commission (EDC) only has \$2,500 in their budget, and perhaps some of the money for road improvements could be used for the EDC. He also mentioned that Thompson and Woodstock were the only Town that didn't listen to a presentation by Putnam for a tech (industrial) park.
5. Paul Baer, Thompson, stated that while EDC could use more money, 50% of their budget currently goes to paying a Recording Secretary. He stated that there are other entities that also have a Recording Secretary that do not need one. He further stated that the Board of Assessment Appeals minutes are a quarter of a page long. He mentioned that there is an attitude in the Town that says that if it's in the budget, they should spend it. He concluded by adding that employees in Town Hall seem to make their own rules after they have a contract.
6. Paul Lenky, First Selectman, stated that in order to buy into the Putnam Industrial Park that another resident had mentioned, the Town had to come up with \$80,000 up front, which would not pay back immediately. He stated that Dunkin Donuts and Dollar General are both coming to Thompson, a building is going up in the industrial park, and another one will be going up soon. He believed that once the first businesses start coming in, others will follow. He also mentioned that Xtramart is planning to move out of Town, which would cause the Town to lose close to \$60,000 in taxes.

7. Kristen Creighton, 354 Sand Dam Rd., stated that she is a parent in Thompson who is nearing the time to decide if her kids will continue in Thompson schools. She hoped there would not be any cuts to the education budget. She stated that she would hate to see a teacher's position eliminated. She mentioned issues she had with certain expenses in the education budget, specifically the expenses for math textbooks, and chrome books for the high school. She asked the Board to look at those expenses carefully.
8. Mary Poulin stated that she is also worried about the e-books at the school. She did research and discovered that comprehension levels drop when work is primarily done on computers. She asked the Board to let the budget go to a vote at the 1.5 mill increase.

IV. Budget Workshop

1. Orla McKiernan-Rafferty updated the Board on changes made to the budget to compensate for the Union contract being settled, and to fix the fuel income (because it was being offset by expense). She also mentioned that the Sand Dam bridge repair was currently in the budget in two separate locations. There was a consensus amongst Board members (with Paul Dery and Laurent Guillot disagreeing) to remove Sand Dam bridge repair from one location in the budget.
2. Orla McKiernan-Rafferty mentioned that the Board of Selectmen voted to decrease the Town Clerk salary by 10%, to take effect on January 1, 2016. The Board discussed the Town Clerk pay, including the possibility of reducing the current Town Clerk's pay before he is at of office, reducing the next Town Clerk's pay, and budgeting for training. **There was a consensus amongst Board members to reduce the Town Clerk salary line by \$4,000 (to \$56,780).**
3. The Board further discussed possible training for a new Assistant Town Clerk. The Board decided to wait for a determination from Attorney St. Onge before adjusting the budget for the Town Clerk/Assistant Town Clerk any further.
4. The Board briefly discussed the education budget. Larry Groh, Jr. asked Dr. Jolin for clarification on enrollment numbers. Larry Groh, Jr. suggested reducing the education budget by \$99,000, to bring the mill rate increase to .99. Paul Dery asked for clarification on district longevity. Susanne Witkowski asked about retirements, and what specifically is included in the Middle School General Salary line.
5. **There was a consensus amongst Board members (with Susanne Witkowski disagreeing) to decrease the education budget by \$99,000, putting the mill rate increase at .99.**
6. The Board asked for information from P. Lenky regarding the paving of roads. P. Dery asked about using the railroad system to haul out materials (rather than hauling the materials using trucks on Reardon Rd.) P. Lenky responded that the company doing business there is already using the railroad system. The Board discussed the possibility of not doing all of the proposed roads, and the possibility of the Highway Department doing the work. **Aaron McGarry suggested reducing road resurfacing by \$50,000. There was not a consensus to do this.**
7. Kerstin Forrester provided information to the Board in regards to what other ambulance companies charge for private services. The Board discussed the possibility of adding a new ambulance to the budget. K. Forrester agreed to work with John Sharpe on getting a cash flow statement from the ambulance department's accountant.

8. The Board discussed the possibility of using volunteers in the library.
9. The Board briefly discussed the special education deficit with Dr. Jolin.
10. **Larry Groh, Jr. moved and Laurent Guillot seconded the motion to send the budget as presented to Town Meeting.** L. Groh, Jr. added the contingency that the budget would be presented as is, so long as the numbers and arithmetic are all accurate after being checked by the Finance Director.

Raymond Faucher, Jr. – No

Paul Dery- No

Larry Groh, Jr. – Yes

Laurent Guillot- Yes

Aaron McGarry- No

Susanne Witkowski - No

The motion did not carry.

11. The Board discussed the possibility of further reducing the education budget. S. Witkowski asked Dr. Jolin what the effect would be of the school budget being reduced a further \$140,050. Dr. Jolin answered that the each school would lose a teacher, plus cuts to technology and textbooks.

V. Adjournment

1. **Paul Dery moved and Larry Groh, Jr. seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.**
12. Chairman Ray Faucher, Jr. adjourned the meeting at 9:42 PM.

Tina Fox
Recording Secretary