



TOWN of
THOMPSON
BOARD OF FINANCE

Minutes: Regular Meeting
Thursday, April 16, 2015
Thompson Library/Community Center
7:00 PM

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Chairman Ray Faucher, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

I. Roll call

1. Members Present: Raymond Faucher, Jr., Paul Dery, Aaron McGarry, and Susanne Witkowski.
2. Members Absent: Larry Groh, Jr., and Laurent Guillot.
3. Staff Present:
Tina Fox, Recording Secretary
Orla McKiernan-Rafferty, Finance Director
4. Also Present: Kerstin Forrester, Dr. Michael Jolin, Paul Lenky, John Sharpe, Members of the Public.

II. Approve Minutes

1. **Aaron McGarry moved and Susanne Witkowski seconded the motion to approve the February 12, 2015 minutes with the following correction:**
 - a. Page 2, section 16, 'volunteer fire insurance' rather than 'voluntary.'**The motion carried unanimously.**
2. **Aaron McGarry moved and Susanne Witkowski seconded the motion to approve the March 19, 2015 minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.**
3. **Aaron McGarry moved and Susanne Witkowski seconded the motion to approve the March 26, 2015 minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.**

III. Correspondence

1. The Board received correspondence from various sources.

IV. Citizen's Comments

1. Sally White, East Thompson Rd., asked if the absence of the Middle School Principal would have an impact on the upcoming budget. She also commented on the impact that increases in taxes have on Thompson residents. She noted that taxes seem to continuously go up. She stated that she was curious about the ratio of number of businesses and taxes they bring in compared to what the citizen's can bear. She further stated that decades ago, there were more businesses and the population numbers were very similar to today, yet taxes continue to go up. R. Faucher, Jr. stated that the Board has not been made aware of any issues regarding the Middle School Principal, and that if there is anything to be discussed, it will be brought up during the school portion of the workshop. He further stated that in 2004 or 2005, 50.1% of the Town's budget was subsidized by the federal or state government, and by 2013, that number was down to 36.1%; taxes go up because of the reduction

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- in federal and state revenue. Sally White responded that it seems an artificial budget was created previously, and that now there needs to be some compression of the budget, because citizen's shouldn't have to support all of the revenue cuts.
2. Mary Poulin, 257 Reardon Rd., asked the Board to consider leaving the school budget as is. She stated that there needs to be an attraction to get people to the school, and that kids need extracurricular activities. She asked that the Board let the budget go to a vote so that the parent's can decide if they want to pay more.
 3. Paul Baer, Thompson, stated the following:
 - i. The school had money for a public relations firm.
 - ii. The school started a communications academy and hired an outside firm to revamp their website, when students could have done that as a school project.
 - iii. The school budget included a 17.5% raise for the business manager who has been there for less than a year.
 - iv. The Zoning Enforcement Officer received a 14% increase.
 - v. Increasing hours in tax office.
 - vi. Library continues to resist the urge to use volunteers.
 - vii. The Board of Education is running a deficit; they shouldn't be spending more money than they have in the first place.
 - viii. The school is graduating students two days shy of state mandated requirements. How much of their revenue will be cut because of low enrollment those days?
 - ix. 50% of the Economic Development Commission's budget pays the recording secretary.
 - x. The Board of Assessment Appeal's minutes are generally a half-page long, but they pay a recording secretary.
 - xi. There are offices in Town Hall that now are open on Friday by appointment only.
 - xii. Why did the \$500,000 for the oil spill not go to an insurance claim first? If the Town gets reimbursed, will there be a tax rebate?
 - xiii. The \$800,000 request from the WPCA was supposed to be borne by the rate payers of the WPCA. Statute states they need to increase their rates to cover payments of principle and interest on the bonds.
 - xiv. Loss of equity in properties and population loss.
 - xv. Loss of state and federal aid is going to continue, so there better be decisions made.
 - xvi. Salary for Town Clerk should not be compared to other Towns; it should be what the Town can afford.
 - xvii. A letter from the Town Attorney was presented that included the quote "The Town of Thompson is not a wealthy community."
 4. Kevin Walsh, Blain Rd., stated that he agreed with a comment made by R. Faucher, Jr. at a previous meeting regarding the focal points of the budget. He stated that in the past, the Board has tried to do a decent job, but the Board seemed to be trying to cobble a budget together that would pass. He further stated that if the Board removed a lot of the distractions that take place during the budget process, more cuts could be found.

V. Paul Lenky: Selectman's Update

1. Paul Lenky gave a brief update related to the Marianapolis sewer project. He stated that the following Tuesday, April 21, 2015, the Zoning Board of Appeals was to hold a special meeting to further the Dollar General and Dunkin Donuts applications. He mentioned that the foundation for the building for the industrial park has been poured, and they expect to be in operation by the end of July. He stated that the TWPCA Water Director provided him with the school's usage. He described a program that Eversource has regarding the leasing of equipment. He stated that he is working with the Town Planner to get a federal grant focused on economic development. He provided information that was relayed to him through Rene Morin that Thompson has the second lowest mil rate in a 16 town area, not reflecting revaluation.
2. R. Faucher, Jr. asked if Marianapolis is current in their repayments back to the Town, to which Orla McKiernan-Rafferty replied affirmatively.

VI. Dr. Michael Jolin: Education Update

1. Dr. Jolin updated the Board on a question that was asked in regards to school buses. He stated that the Town did purchase two new buses last year, and that there are two older buses (old bus 3 and old bus 4) still on sight being used for parts.

VII. Orla McKiernan-Rafferty: Financial Report

1. Orla McKiernan-Rafferty gave a verbal financial report.
2. R. Faucher, Jr. asked why the Town Garage line seemed off. K. Forrester stated that two of their trucks needed major repairs, and Orla McKiernan-Rafferty explained that they are \$17,000 over budget in truck repairs.
3. R. Faucher, Jr. stated that the surplus would likely be impacted by the money the Town gets back from the state for the oil tank removal and replacement; he wanted to know when that money is expected to be received. Dr. Jolin responded that while it is a possibility to receive that money this fiscal year, it is not likely and he wouldn't make a promise to that effect.

VIII. Board of Trustees of the Tourtellotte Fund

1. Dr. Jolin stated that there was nothing new to report.

IX. New Business

X. Old Business

1. WPCA request for \$800,000/Resolution
 - a. Samuel Stilwell stated that a rate increase of 20% took effect in August 2014 to cover the anticipate costs for this project.
 - b. Orla McKiernan-Rafferty explained that the Town would apply for a short-term bond for \$800,000, reimbursable by the State for \$30,000.
 - c. R. Faucher, Jr. asked what percentage of the costs would be borne by the WPCA. Orla McKiernan-Rafferty answered that 100% of the costs will be covered by the WPCA, including all fees and interest payments; there would be no effect in taxes to Thompson residents.
 - d. S. Stilwell stated that the money the WPCA received as a result of the increase is slightly more than needed, but the rest is being kept for a 'rainy day fund.' He stated that the estimate for the project was \$750,000 two years ago; after discussion with bond counsel, that number was increased to approximately \$790,000, which they decided to round to \$800,000.

- e. R. Faucher, Jr. read the resolution aloud.
- f. **Aaron McGarry moved and Paul Dery seconded the motion to approve the resolution as read. The motion carried unanimously.**

XI. Budget Workshop

1. Orla McKiernan-Rafferty stated that the mil rate was 25.91 as of the last meeting, but that she had made changes through the week based on payroll and health insurance, dropping the rate to 25.90.
2. R. Faucher, Jr. stated that he contacted Attorney St. Onge regarding Mr. Groh being a part-time employee of the Board of Education, and that Attorney St. Onge has not gotten back with an answer yet.
3. Paul Dery stated that he looked at past budgets and discovered that the Town did pay for training for the Town Clerk and Tax Collector in the past. R. Faucher, Jr. mentioned a talk that he had with current Town Clerk Jeffrey Barske, who provided information about Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk training.
4. The Board discussed the community ambulance, with financial updates for K. Forrester and J. Sharpe. Both K. Forrester and J. Sharpe agreed to provide the Board with more information at the next meeting.
5. The Board discussed Worker's Comp increases, with information provided by K. Forrester. R. Faucher, Jr. asked if the Town has an adequate system of monitoring claims. K. Forrester stated that the Town needs to put much more emphasis on safety.
6. R. Faucher, Jr. asked about a clerk position in the Tax Collector's office being increased from 30 hours a week to 35 hours a week. Rene Morin, Thompson Tax Collector, explained that that position covers 15 hours per week in the tax office, 10 hours per week for the WPCA, and 5 hours per week covers various departments. R. Morin stated that he had suggested to the Board of Selectmen that position's hours be increased by 5 hours, all of which would be to increase coverage for other department's because of the uncertainties occurring in the Assessor's Office and Town Clerk's Office, but that increase in hours is no longer in the budget.
7. The Board briefly discussed the balance in transfer funds. R. Faucher, Jr. suggested possibly removing \$50,000 from each account. He asked P. Lenky to provide the Board with a realistic scope of work that will take place between now and October so that the Board can determine if any amount can be removed from those accounts.
8. Paul Dery asked about the District Longevity line in the school budget. Dr. Jolin stated that he will check on that and provide the Board with more information.
9. Aaron McGarry asked if there has been an update on health insurance numbers, to which Dr. Jolin replied that there was no update.
10. The Board discussed the increase in pay to the Business Manager. Dr. Jolin explained that the person in that position requested a 17% increase, and the Board of Education approved a 7.9% increase.
11. The Board discussed the difficulty of retaining teachers, with input from Bill Witkowski and Tom Angelo, both members of the Board of Education, and Dr. Jolin. It was clarified that there are no new positions in the school budget. Dr. Jolin agreed to provide the Board with more information regarding the middle school general salary, specifically whether or not that line includes administrators.

XII. Adjournment

1. **Aaron McGarry moved and Susanne Witkowski seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.**
2. Chairman Ray Faucher, Jr. adjourned the meeting at 9:01 PM.

Tina Fox
Recording Secretary