

Thomaston Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, March 31, 2010 7:00pm

Present: D. Colavecchio (Chairman), G. Seabourne, F. Treglia, M. Galbraith, S. Turner,
K. Mosimann O'Sullivan.

Also present: First Selectman Ed Mone; Finance Director, Sue Smith

Also: Members of the public, press

1. Call to Order

D. Colavecchio called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Because there was no flag, the Pledge was not recited.

3. Communications

a. Police Dept overtime for special events including the Memorial Day Parade, Carnival etc is \$5932.

b. Board of Education: From Sue Laone, Deficit reductions are due to cost cutting through a budget freeze in December; no overtime pay policy etc.

c. Thomaston Historical Commission: letter from Joseph Wassong stating the legal obligation of the Town for the upkeep, legal fees, heating etc of the Seth Thomas Bradstreet House.

4. Finance Director's Report

Sue Smith reported that the data on the Volunteer Service Awards Program is not accurate; it needs further study.

5. First Selectman's Report

Selectman Mone asked the Board of Finance to request that the Board of Selectman freeze the Volunteer Service Awards Program this year so that the Board of Selectmen can research the consequences of terminating the plan. He noted that the Board of Selectmen's plan is to freeze the accruals and maintain the call money this year.

E. Mone recommended that \$60,000 be cut from the proposed pension budget. He noted that if the Town terminates the plan all volunteers are automatically vested and the fund would be divided among the eligible volunteers.

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by S. Turner, it was voted to request that the Board of Selectmen freeze the accruals for the Volunteer Service Awards Program.

Vote: Unanimous

E. Mone recommended the following reductions to the FY2011 Budget:

Computer Technology	\$660
Software	\$750
Insurance: E &T	\$1000
Town Hall Maintenance	\$4473
Pension	\$1755
Police-Travel	\$400
Fire Marshall	\$350
Tree Removal	\$2000
Highway signs	\$4000
Street Lighting	\$12,000 (207 lights removed; 20 installed)
Susan B. Anthony	\$1000
Groundwater Remediation	\$25,000
Land Use Printing & Binding	\$1000
CIP-stair treads	\$18100

Total FY2011 proposed budget is \$24,054,559 which represents an increase of \$390,009, a 1.31 mill increase and a 5% tax increase over FY2010. Debt service is \$143,149 of the increase. General government spending in proposed FY2011 budget is below FY2010 Budget. The Town will receive \$258,000 less income from conveyance taxes, revenue investments, and the state government than in FY2010.

E. Mone reported the following:

- a. He has initiated talks on the reorganization of communication services with Watertown and Middlebury.
- b. The Transfer Station cannot handle garbage disposal at this time. E.Mone will apply for a STEEP grant to upgrade the Transfer Station so that residents have the option of bringing trash to the Transfer Station or having curbside pick-up.
- c. He spoke of the need to engage the unions in pension reform "in a climate of respect."
- d. He would consider closing Town Hall one day a week (Monday) which could save \$20,000 in heating and electricity.

6. New Business- No new business

7. Old Business- Budget Discussions

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, the Thomaston Volunteer Ambulance Corps was added to the agenda under New Business. Vote: Unanimous

Thomaston Volunteer Ambulance

Richard O'Connell and David Bernagel reported that \$10,000 in pension funds has been exhausted on calls and that another \$10,000 is needed for shift money because more people opted out of the pension program and into the increased call option. Mr. O'Connell also reported that the ambulance needs repairs to the manifold; it will not pass inspection in its current condition. Of the four quotes that were obtained TVAC recommends the quote of \$5,000 received from Litchfield Ford.

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded by G. Seabourne, it was voted to transfer \$10,000 from the Contingency Account# 1-001-10-142-570-805 to the Per Shift Stipend Subsidy-TVAC Account # 1-001-20-212-510-266. Vote: Unanimous

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by M. Galbraith, it was voted to transfer \$5,000 from Contingency Account # 1-001-10-142-570-805 to Vehicle Maintenance Account # 0-001-20-212-520-430. Vote: 4-2-0 G. Seabourne, S. Turner voted against the motion.

Energy Audit: E. Mone reported that the costs of the energy audit and replacement of fixtures etc. will be realized by the savings in utility bills over a 27 month period.

Education: D. Colavecchio reported that the \$300,000 cut to the Education Budget resulted in a 2.18% budget increase to date. He noted that health care costs are up and state reimbursements for Special Education are down.

Chairman Colavecchio called on the Superintendent of Schools Linda Mitchell for comment on the Education budget and proposed cuts. Ms. Mitchell observed that the Education budget has been cut every year for the last 10 years. Her goal is to try to hold on to the programs, however, it will not be possible to maintain programs as the staff is cut.

On a motion by M. Galbraith, seconded by F. Treglia it was voted to present a proposed a FY11 budget of \$24,054,559, which represents a 5% tax increase and a 1.31 mill increase to a Public Hearing. Vote: Unanimous

Finance Director Sue Smith reported that in order to get to a 3% increase, \$309,148 would need to be cut from the total proposed increase in spending which is \$390,009.

D. Colavecchio announced that the Public Hearing will be held on Wednesday April 7, 2010 at 7:00pm at the Thomaston High School Auditorium.

8. Member Comment: none

9. Public Comment:

1. Sal Santa Maria noted that tax abatements do not affect the current Grand List.
2. Pat Santa Maria read a letter from the White Collar Union Employees which included the following information: the Union is made up of 8 dedicated employees (there are 2 vacant positions) who have given up wage increases and who will take a week furlough this year. The letter reported that more layoffs would have a "devastating" impact on services.
3. Fire Chief James Wilson reported the Fire Dept volunteers were assured that they had a choice of accruing a benefit or taking a per call stipend. He called the action of the Board of Finance "shameful". He reported that the department has trainees who cannot finish fire school training because they do not have the proper gear to go through a house burn training. He said that the department's equipment is unsafe.
4. It was suggested that a full time zoning officer could go after people who "owe the town a lot of money."
5. Kevin Green: If we keep cutting no one will want to live here.
6. A. Rossi: Board needs to change the whole process; needs a task force to reengineer what we do.
7. The town could easily fund \$200,000 budget gap. Does it need a negotiation with the unions?

Answer: D. Colavecchio: Yes.

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

Marie Galbraith, Secretary
Thomaston Board of Finance