

Town of Thomaston Board of Finance

Regular Meeting Tuesday May 11, 2010

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

Also present: First Selectmen E. Mone, Finance Director Sue Smith

Also: Members of the public, press.

1. Call to Order

D. Colavecchio called the meeting to order at 7:04pm

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge was recited by those present.

3. Minutes:

i.) Meeting of April 13, 2010

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded by F. Treglia the minutes of the meeting of April 13, 2010 were accepted as presented. Vote: 5-0-1 K. Mosimann O'Sullivan abstained because she was not at the meeting.

ii.) Meeting of May 3, 2010

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by S. Turner, the minutes of the meeting of May 3, 2010 were accepted as presented. Vote: Unanimous

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by S. Turner, it was voted to move New Business item

i.) Opera House forward on the agenda. Vote: Unanimous

8. New Business:

i.) Opera House Budget

Opera House Commissioners Julieanne Torrence and Matt Kamens represented the Commission. Ms. Torrence reported that the Opera House Commission had taken seriously the Board of Finance's comments and advice on the 2010 Budget first proposed by the Opera House Commission. She noted that the Strategic Planning and Budget Committees of the Commission have been meeting in a "parallel process" to determine the best course for the future of the Opera House. The Commission held a Special Meeting on May 10, 2010 and voted to suspend operations of the Opera House as of December 30, 2010. The Strategic Planning Committee is drafting a request for proposals for an outside entity to lease the Opera House and eliminate the Town's liability. Ms. Torrence assured the Board that the Commission will present a new budget to the Board of Selectmen within the month.

4. Communications

The Chairman reported that the following communications were received:

- i.) A letter of April 20, 2010 from Town Attorney Michael Ryback stating that the Town has a right to have a surplus; the Town is not obligated to spend it. He opined that the Board of Finance is responsible for the fiscal policy of the Town and has discretion over the surplus as it sees fit.
- ii.) Financial Director Sue Smith was awarded an Excellence in Financial Reporting Award again this year.
- iii.) Will Cumming of High St. wrote to recommend that the Town eliminate “luxuries” such as curbside pick up to help pay for public education. He also proposed the following measures: compost leaves at the Transfer Station, put the police on bikes to patrol the Town, eliminate the position of Animal Control officer, and seek a new insurance provider.
- iv.) Peggy Duffy, Tax Collector wrote to ask that no White Collar Union employees be cut and that the Assistant Tax Collector be spared because the tax office is a revenue generating office and the loss of this position will result in a loss of tax revenue.
- v.) Tony Durso wrote regarding the percentage increases in other town budgets; he noted that all were below a 2.7% increase. He suggested the use of surplus to reduce the impact on the taxpayers.

5. Financial Director’s Report-No Report

6. Selectman’s Report

E. Mone reported that he has investigated the various recommendations of the Board of Finance regarding the minibus. He recommends that \$12,000 be allocated to repair the Town’s bus to provide transportation 2 days per week. The Board recommended that Mr. Mone determine the number of seniors who use the service by week and by year. The Board also recommended that Mr. Mone contact area towns to see if they will share their vehicle with Thomaston.

7. Old Business

i.) Ambulance Building Energy Audit:

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded K. Mosimann O’Sullivan, it voted to hire Advance Energy Management to retrofit the lighting fixtures at the Ambulance Corps Building, at a cost of \$5,989.60 to be paid over 27 monthly payments, subject to approval at a Town meeting.

Vote: Unanimous

At this time Chairman Colavecchio proposed that the Board move Public Comment forward on the agenda for the purpose of hearing the public’s views on the Town Budget before making cuts, an action required by the defeat of the proposed budget at referendum.

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded by K. Mosimann O’Sullivan, it was voted to move item 10.Public Comment forward on the agenda. Vote: Unanimous

10. Public Comment

1. Rae Ann Walcott read a letter written by the Assistant Tax Collector, Darryl Hotaling, who reported that the department achieved a 100% collection rate to date. She said that the elimination of her position will hinder efforts to collect taxes and will result in a loss of tax revenue.

Rae Ann Walcott recommended that the Board of Finance ask each department head to recommend where their budgets should be cut.

2. K. Yoos talked about the impact on private parking that will result if the Opera House opens for mid-week performances.

Response: D. Colavecchio said this issue is not within the purview of the Board of Finance.

3. P. Foley, member of the Library Board, asked that the library not be cut any further. He noted that the library has not had an increase in several years and sustained a “drastic” cut last year.

4. T. Durso recommended that the Board take money from the surplus to get the budget down to a 2% increase.

Response: E. Mone replied that the surplus is operating revenue needed to pay bills in anticipation of the tax revenue. He noted that the WPCA also uses the surplus to pay bills until the user fees come in.

5. John Perucci, Principal, Thomaston High School, asked the Board of Finance to re-examine its priorities. He observed that the library, senior citizens, and education have been cut, while garbage pickup, a luxury has been spared. He reported that the high school has no Business teacher, which is a requirement for a comprehensive high school.

6. Peggy Duffy, Tax Collector reported that the collection rate closed at 100% in April and that the staff is responsible for this achievement. If the staff is cut, the collection rate will go down, resulting in higher taxes.

7. Diane La Bonte said the Town has a \$3million surplus and it should be used to cut the tax burden.

8. Carolyn Morrison, member of the Library Board, said she was “shocked and dismayed” to see more cuts proposed for the library while nonessential services are still in the budget.

9. Unidentified person- If curbside pickup is cut, residents will have to pay more than 5% on their own.

10. Fran Savage asked, “Doesn’t the Town have to provide an area for disposal of garbage if pickup is not provided?”

Answer, D.C.: Don’t know.

11. Tim Scatena: Asked the Board to cut “luxuries.

12. Julianne Torrence exhorted the audience to “ go to meetings and let your voice be heard.”

13. Tim Quinn said he collects delinquent taxes in his business. He reported that that the Winsted tax office closed on Wednesdays and their tax collection rate “plummeted.”

7. Old Business continued

ii.) Budget Discussion

G. Seabourne recommended that the Board of Selectmen look into the possibility of getting an operating line of credit as businesses do to meet their expenses in anticipation of payment for goods or services. S. Smith said the Town takes out Tax Anticipation Notes in November and December to borrow money in anticipation of the tax revenues that it will receive in January.

E. Mone reported that the Board of Education cut \$174,000 as recommended by the Board of Finance.

The following actions were taken to reduce the proposed FY2011 Budget:

On a motion by M. Galbraith, seconded by F. Treglia it was voted to take \$100,000 from surplus to balance the proposed 2010-2011 Budget. Vote: Unanimous

Following further discussion, M. Galbraith withdrew the motion, and F. Treglia withdrew his second.

On a motion by G. Seabourne, seconded by S. Turner it was voted to take \$150,000 from surplus to balance the proposed 2010-2011 Budget. Vote: Unanimous

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan it was voted to cut \$7800 from Assessor's Revaluation. Vote: Unanimous

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by M. Galbraith it was voted to cut \$13,000 from Police Severance line (K. Nelson) and use Town Sick Pay Reserve to fund that expense.

Vote: Unanimous

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by S. Turner, it was voted to take the following monies from Town Wide Sick Pay Reserves: \$72,115 for Board of Education severance and \$68,583 for Board of Education early retirement incentives. Vote: Unanimous

The Board of Education budget was reduced by \$105,517.

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, it was voted to cut \$39,025 from Public Works (Highway Mechanic). Vote: Unanimous

Note: S. Smith will reduce all affected departments including FICA, health, wages, and unemployment.

On a motion by G. Seabourne, seconded by S. Turner, it was voted to cut \$12,000 from Recreation. Vote: 5-1-0 M. Galbraith voted against the motion.

On a motion by G. Seabourne, seconded by S. Turner, it was voted to take \$10,000 from Contingency . Vote: Unanimous

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by S. Turner, it was voted to add \$25,000 in increased revenue from interest and liens collected by the Tax Collector. Vote: Unanimous

On a motion by M. Galbraith, seconded by F. Treglia to restore \$12,000 to the Recreation budget was defeated. 3-3-0 F. Treglia, M. Galbraith, D. Colavecchio voted for the motion.

On a motion by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, seconded by G. Seabourne, it was voted to send the proposed 2010-2011 Budget of \$23,867,317, which equals 26.98 mils and represents a tax increase of 2.66% to a Town Meeting . Vote: Unanimous

8. New Business

11.) Kenea Park Fund: No action taken

On a motion by S. Turner, seconded by K. Mosimann O'Sullivan, it was voted at 9:15pm to adjourn the meeting.

Marie Galbraith, Secretary
Thomaston Board of Finance

