

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hicks Municipal Center
Council Chambers
Tolland, CT 06084

REGULAR MEETING

7:30 – 10:00 P.M.

AGENDA
March 22, 2017

VISION STATEMENT

To represent education at its best, preparing each student for an ever-changing society, and becoming a full community of learning where excellence is achieved through each individual's success.

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting – March 8, 2017

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2 minute limit)

The members of the Tolland Board of Education welcome members of the public to share their thoughts and ideas at this time. When appropriate to do so, members of the Board and the administration may respond to comments during "Points of Information". However, in consideration of those in attendance and in an effort to proceed in a timely manner, follow-up discussion may need to take place outside of the meeting setting.

D. POINTS OF INFORMATION

E. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT - Charles Perosino and Andrew Harger

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S FINAL REPORT

- F.1 Meet Mary Grande, Principal of Tolland Middle School (no enclosure)
- F.2 Healthy Food Certification Statement
- F.3 Construction Program
- F.4 Communications to Connecticut Legislators and appropriations
- F.5 2017-2018 Budget

G. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

H. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

I. BOARD ACTION

J. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2 minute limit)

Comments must be limited to items on this agenda.

K. POINTS OF INFORMATION

L. CORRESPONDENCE

Town Council-Special Meeting – March 9, 2017

Town Council-Special Meeting – March 15, 2017

Town Council-Special Meeting – March 16, 2017

M. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

N. NEW BUSINESS

O. ADJOURNMENT

TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hicks Municipal Center
Council Chambers
Tolland, CT 06084

REGULAR MEETING – March 8, 2017

Members Present: Mr. Patrick Doyle, Vice Chair; Ms. Kathy Gorsky, Secretary; Ms. Michelle Harrold, Ms. Karen Moran, Ms. Colleen Yudichak, Mr. Jeff Schroeder, Mr. Robert Pagoni, and Ms. Susan Seaver.

Administrators Present: Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools; Mark McLaughlin, Business Director

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Doyle called the meeting to order at 7:33 P.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting –February 22, 2017

Ms. Gorsky motioned to accept the minutes of the February 22, 2017 regular meeting. Ms. Yudichak seconded the motion. Changes: none. All were in favor. Motion carried.

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Katrin Hinrichsen, 192 Goose Lane, commented that she is distressed about the current budget situation and how it affects the schools. She would like suggestions regarding how the public can become more active and have their voices heard. She would like to know how the public can mobilize.

Annabella DeFaria, 52 Bucks Crossing, commented that she is a senior options student at Birch Grove. Testing is bogging down the teachers and the students which impacts learning. It is a stressful environment and she would like to know why there is so much testing and how this issue can be improved.

Correspondence: Ms. Gorsky noted that a few letters were received. Two were in support of maintaining the Board's proposed 2.14% budget. Another letter was received that inquired how the word could be spread throughout the schools regarding the current budget crisis without violating any rules. Lastly, another letter was received that was written by a THS paraprofessional. The author inquired if it would be possible for the paraprofessionals to have a higher wage. While it is nice that the Board says kind words about them and thanks them publicly, the current salary is not sufficient to live on.

D. POINTS OF INFORMATION

Dr. Willett responded to Ms. DeFaria's comment regarding testing. He explained that it is a complicated situation. There is a feeling that the tests are used for accountability – the tests point out the achievement gap and make people aware so society is able to respond. He believes there are good intentions behind the testing but agrees with Ms. DeFaria. He added that there is a federal test, the NAEP, which is a randomly sampled test and he believes that it would be sufficient to identify achievement gaps and other items that could be addressed. It is a matter of making the state and federal legislators aware of the testing concerns.

Dr. Willett spoke in regard to the Ms. Hinrichsen's comment. He explained that effort now should be on communicating with the state and federal representatives on what the community finds acceptable and unacceptable. Everyone present is well-meaning but people need to reach out to those with the power, the ones creating the legislation and making the decisions. This is the most important thing that can be done now. Mr. Doyle added that today several of the Board members went to the CABE Day on the Hill to speak with some of the legislators. They heard remarks from several leading members of the education and finance committees. It was noted during the discussion regarding the Governor's proposed budget that it is not the final budget. The public needs to speak to their elected representatives and look to them for relief. Further, he recommended submitting public testimony on education bills. Testimony may be submitted in writing and it will be included as part of the public record. Ms. Seaver added that testimony can be submitted via the CT General Assembly website under the Education tab. It was also noted that the Facebook page Supporting Public Education in Tolland has resources listed as well. Ms. Harrold would like to see the information posted somewhere other than Facebook for those who are not members.

E. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT

- The representatives thanked the Board for inviting them to the CABE event today. They learned a lot.
- Cupcake Wars will be held in the spring
- THS musical, "*Singin' in the Rain*" will be held on the evenings of March 10th and 11th. Tickets are \$10 for students and \$12 for adults. They can be purchased at the door.
- Mr. THS Pageant will be held on March 17th at 7PM. This supports the senior class.
- The Snowball Dance was recently held. While a lot of work went into it, the consensus was that it would have been more enjoyable if it had been held in the gymnasium rather than the cafeteria which is not as spacious.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- F.1. Meet Mary Grande, Principal, Tolland Middle School (no enclosure) - none
- F.2. Monthly Financial Report – February 2017
Dr. Willett reviewed the financial report for February 2017. The available balance is \$1,891,428 or 4.81% of the budget. It was noted that the first excess cost payment has been received. Dr. Willett gave kudos to Mr. McLaughlin and noted that the district has not had to freeze a budget in two years thanks to great fiscal management.
- F.3. Superintendent Evaluation
Dr. Willett reviewed the attachment. This paragraph is required to be presented to the Board prior to April 1st of every year.
- F.4. Cooperative Opportunity
Dr. Willett presented and reviewed attachment F4. He explained that one of the facets of the Governor's budget is to have high schools at certain enrollment levels consider sending students to other schools. Dr. Willett believes Tolland is in a perfect position to receive some of these students and this would be an opportunity for the district to expand its programs. Currently, one of the struggles is the balancing of the needs of the

current students. By bringing in tuition, the district would have the opportunity to maintain programs that otherwise would have to be reduced. Further, if the budget coming from the state is an indicator of what is to come, the district needs to consider what it means and how Tolland should be positioned. He sees Tolland as being at a fork in the road in regard to its educational system. It could be an expansion model - a lighthouse that attracts students and resources or it could be a consolidation model. A choice will have to be made in the next couple of months and years. If consolidation is the choice, he will work with everyone to go forward with this option. He believes expansion, which will bring revenue to the district, will provide many of the opportunities the students would like to see and more desired programs. These opportunities are arising and he would like the Board and the community to start thinking about this topic.

Ms. Gorsky commented that she is very excited about this possibility. It is a great opportunity to increase enrollment, make the schools stronger, and bring back programs. She inquired if there are districts that have committed to closing and sending students elsewhere. Dr. Willett noted that he has been speaking with others and exploring this possibility but there have not been any decisions as yet. He added that Tolland is in a special place. It has an excellent district, good facilities, a great student base, and in a position where tuition could be brought in which would provide great opportunities. Further, for those who live in Tolland, they will be able to keep local control of their schools and will have the benefit of the school being in town. He added that other districts are also interested in receiving students.

Mr. Perosino inquired if the budget passes as the Town Manger has recommended if this opportunity would still be available for the community. Dr. Willett responded that one reason to think about new ways of generating revenue and support is that people are struggling to find answers. They are afraid of what is going to happen. This fork in the road is real for Tolland. One of the worst case scenarios is that there is a \$2M reduction. This could impact the ability for the district to be a lighthouse. Those who are interested in having Tolland be the place that people come and having local control will have to pay close attention to what happens this year and next. The school system will need to be seen as an investment and as having some economic benefits. Dr. Willett explained that Towns with regionalized schools tend to have characteristics like Ashford and Willington. Whether this is desirable or not is really not up to him. Regional schools generally have a good resource base for the receiving location. In addition businesses in Towns are supported by students, their parents, and staff. So there are benefits to having the receiving school(s) in Town.

Ms. Moran commented that she agrees with Ms. Gorsky. She wants to give Tolland the opportunity to be proactive rather than reactive. Mr. Schroeder agrees that it is better to bring students into Tolland than to send our students to other schools.

Mr. Pagoni asked what the downside is to selecting the path of expansion. Dr. Willett explained that it is about perspective and what the community wants. The populous will decide and he will execute that vision. He added that Tolland has some unique characteristics that make people want to be here. It is a great school system and expansion would lead to even greater opportunities. We just need to do a better job of

promoting the district. Mr. Pagoni inquired if the Board positions would need to be shared with other communities. Dr. Willett replied that in some cases they would.

Mr. Doyle supports exploring expansion. He would like to have residents share and weigh in as well. Too often economic development is discussed apart from the school system but they are linked. Some of this is long term work but it would be helpful to explore this option in the short term.

Ms. Harrold commented that there is a lot of chatter on social media regarding regionalization so she supports exploring this opportunity but noted that the district needs to be realistic about what can be done. Ms. Yudichak agreed that this is a great opportunity to keep control in town and does not see why it would be a negative unless it is going to cost the town money.

There was a general consensus by the Board that the Superintendent should further explore the option of expansion. This item will be on future agendas for further discussion and to learn more specifics as information becomes available.

F.5. TIS Partial Roof Replacement Project

Dr. Willett reviewed the attachment.

Ms. Gorsky motioned to move item F5 to item I1 for action. Ms. Yudichak seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

F.6. Budget Presentation/Discussion/Workshop (no enclosure)

Dr. Willett reminded everyone that the joint Town Council/BOE meeting is scheduled for March 15th. This is an important session and the school administrators will be in attendance as well.

Dr. Willett presented three plans for how to bring the district to a place where revenue is coming in that does not burden taxpayers.

1. Reduce the number of students (and tuition) that goes out of the district.
2. Increase incoming tuition and revenue.
3. Build SRBI

Dr. Willett believes these three items are the most important considerations for Tolland in relation to the fork in the road scenario. Changes are happening in the state so Tolland will either become a lighthouse and a regional place where students come or it will be consolidated and more students may make choices to go out of Town for education, taking funding with them. He believes the three initiatives listed will allow Tolland to retain what it has, build upon it, and become a lighthouse. Between now and next week he will formalize these initiatives and provide further information to the Board.

The Town Council will hold a budget meeting tomorrow night at 7PM.

G. COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

Finance and Facilities – The Committee discussed safety personnel and public safety officers at events. This will be discussed further at a future meeting.

Policy – The next meeting is scheduled for March 22nd at 2:30PM.

Negotiations – Negotiations with the nurses have been completed and are ongoing with the secretaries and the custodians.

Town Council – Town Council member Kristen Morgan noted that at the last meeting the Council discussed the partial roof replacement project at TIS.

CABE – Mr. Doyle thanked Mr. Perosino and Mr. Harger as well as three parents for attending today's Day on the Hill event in Hartford. He went on to thank Ms. Yudichak for arranging for the opportunity for the attendees to speak with the legislators. Ms. Yudichak commented that it was a good day but wanted to thank Ms. Laura Roberts for doing a lot of the background work to make the meeting possible and Dr. Willett for attending and assisting in expressing the Board's concerns. Dr. Willett noted that he appreciated the opportunity to speak with State Representatives Ackert and Belsito. It was an excellent opportunity to present the town's perspective and he asked them to challenge items that have long been part of the paradigm. Dr. Willett added that he looks forward to speaking with federal representatives as well and noted that it was the Board members and parents who made the greatest impact. Ms. Moran added that many of the legislators mentioned that hearing from students is very important as well.

H. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mr. Doyle commented that he hears the Superintendent's three initiatives and noted that these are the very things the Governor and state want districts like Tolland to be doing and the actions that they are taking right now to solve the current budget problem are actively preventing us from these goals and being that lighthouse district. Thus, it is important to share what we are doing with them and these actions may not be possible due to the actions taken during this legislative session. Right now the community needs to look to the future.

I. BOARD ACTION

I.1. TIS Partial Roof Replacement Project

Ms. Gorsky motioned to approve the Educational Specifications for the TIS Partial Roof Replacement project and to accept and authorize this project to be executed. Ms. Moran seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

It was noted that the work will begin in the next couple of months and will have as little impact as possible on the student body. Dr. Willett confirmed that this project was always scheduled to be completed in phases.

J. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Amber Edwards, 43 Barbara Road, inquired if a regional program would include only Tolland County or other counties. Would it include towns such as Willington? How would it be decided with whom the district would partner? Lastly, she would like to know how the information could be passed on to other parents in the district. She did not hear an answer to this question.

Bettina Herrler, 32 Bakos Road, expressed appreciation for what the Board is doing for the students. She is a parent of two children and is excited about the proposed idea of creating a regional school district in Tolland. It is important to bring this idea to the community and let it know how important it is to make decisions that will have a profound effect. Additionally,

previous discussions regarding economic activity have revolved around preserving the small-town character of Tolland and noted that this may come up again in discussions and should be kept in mind.

Amanda Forshey, 27 Summerwood Ridge, commented that from a student's perspective she believes the expansion model is a very good idea economically. Further, personally, when many of the students leave high school they experience a culture shock. Tolland is a good community but there are many people out there that the students do not experience. Bringing in other experiences would be a good way to go.

Thera Velez, 36 Old Kent Road North, inquired how much the tuition would be per student. Wouldn't a high school be similar in expense to going to college given transportation, supplies, and other costs?

Ashlyn Larsen, 127 Cedar Swamp Road, commented that the town takes pride in the schools leading up to high school. If people are coming from different towns, they may have a different preparedness level for the THS curriculum which is rigorous. How will we be able to determine if they will be successful at THS?

K. POINTS OF INFORMATION

Dr. Willett noted that he was impressed with the questions from the Civics students.

He explained that they would reach out to districts which are interested in sending students to Tolland and there will be consideration in regard to capacity. Tolland does have capacity and with those students, they will hire more staff.

He agreed that it is important to keep the aspect of the town's character in mind and noted that students would be coming to Tolland.

In response to Ms. Forshey, this has been discussed in a Board workshop and many agree that there is a "bubble" in Tolland. Many students are very supportive of this.

In regard to the tuition, Dr. Willett explained that the students would not be paying the tuition. The sending district would contribute the dollars they would have spent. Funds for special education and transportation would be the sending district's responsibility.

In regard to curriculum, there is a rigorous curriculum in place in Tolland. There are some elements of what is executed that could use further development. In that process, bringing in and expanding these resources is part of the plan.

Mr. Doyle invited residents to submit ideas to get information out to the community. They should e-mail any of the Board members with suggestions.

L. CORRESPONDENCE

- Special Meeting – Town Council/Board of Education – February 28, 2017
- Town Council Meeting – February 28, 2017

M. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Cooperative opportunities
- Mastery-based learning

N. NEW BUSINESS - none

O. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Schroeder motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:14PM. Ms. Yudichak seconded the motion.
All were in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Pascuzzi
Clerk

SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND

ITEM: Healthy Food Certification Statement

ITEM SUBMITTED BY: Walter Willett, Ph.D., Superintendent

For BOE meeting: March 22, 2017

ITEM SUMMARY:

Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes allows public school districts (including the vocational-technical school system, charter schools, inter-district magnet schools and endowed academies) that participate in the National School Lunch Program to receive additional funding if food items sold to students meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. Eligible districts that opt for the healthy food certification are currently receiving 10 cents per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches (paid, free and reduced) served in the district in the prior school year. Last year the School Lunch program received \$18,121 for meals served in the prior 2014/2015 school year.

The two considerations for the vote by the board of education/governing authority are whether to implement the healthy food option and whether to allow food exemptions.

- **Consideration 1 – Healthy Food Option:** Pursuant to Section 10-215f of the C.G.S., the board of education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups.

- **Consideration 2 – Exemption for Food Items:** The board of education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

.10 cents per lunch

Reimbursed \$18,121.00 to district for meals served in the 2014-2015 year (update to this year)

BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:

N/A

BOE ACTION DESIRED:

First reading, or if the board feels so inclined, move to action.

Recommended Motion: *Motion to authorize the Superintendent to support and authorize the 2017-2018 Healthy Foods Certification Certification.*

SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:

Healthy Food Certification Statement

SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND

ITEM: Construction Program

ITEM SUBMITTED BY: Walter Willett, Ph.D., Superintendent

For BOE meeting: March 22, 2017

ITEM SUMMARY:

As part of the school grant administration process through the Department of Administrative Services the Board of Education is required to approve the project specifications and plans drafted by the chosen architect for the Tolland Intermediate School Partial Roof Replacement Project. The School Building Committee has already approved the plans and cost estimates drafted by Hibbard & Rosa "Architect" for this project but the Board of Education must also approve the plans drafted by the Architect for this project. The motion to approve the plans by the Board of Education represents the support for the installation of a Modified, 2-ply built-up style roof that the School Building Committee has already agreed would be the best style of roof for this particular project based upon product longevity, cost, puncture protection, UV light resistance, and 2 layers of protection. This chosen style of roof based upon current estimates is believed to fall within the initial budget forecast that was developed and voted on during the November 2016 bond referendum.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW: [N/A or put in a summary]

BOE ACTION DESIRED:

Motion: "The Town of Tolland's Board of Education approves the reviewed final plans and project manual Dated March 19, 2017 for the Tolland Intermediate School Partial Roof Replacement Project #TMP-142-SXJL as prepared for bidding and dated March 19, 2017 as well as the corresponding professional cost estimate developed in accordance with Classification of Building Elements and Related Sitework- Uniformat II"

SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:

Available upon request, documents are large.

SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND

ITEM: Communications to Connecticut Legislators and Appropriations Committee

ITEM SUBMITTED BY: Walter Willett, Ph.D., Superintendent

For BOE meeting: March 22, 2017

ITEM SUMMARY:

The Board of Education worked with me to create attached letters to state Appropriations committee chairs and Connecticut legislators.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

N/A

BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:

N/A

BOE ACTION DESIRED:

Review and discussion about future correspondence or actions the BOE may wish to execute.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:

Letter to Legislators

Letter to Appropriations Chairs

March 17, 2017

Dear Senator Formica, Senator Osten, and Representative Walker,

As Tolland residents, we are deeply concerned about the current proposed Governor's budget, as well as some initiatives the state compels school districts to comply with that **waste** precious educational time and resources. Specifically, we are concerned about how this budget will impact our schools. We know you realize the importance of investment in education. Of particular concern for us are the unfunded mandates, standardized testing requirements, and burden of proof requirements put upon the local public schools. These factors are doing harm to both our Town's economic condition, and the school district's overall ability to educate children.

Over the years, the Connecticut state government has imposed over 380 mandates (please see attached *Position On Unfunded State Mandates on Local School Districts*). Many of these are not directly applicable to education and have constituted a considerable financial and logistical burden, including the allocation of more staff. When such significant reductions are being required of a municipality and school system like Tolland, this is totally unacceptable. Please carefully review the document attached, and work in the legislature to free our school system, Town, and children from at least some of these unfunded burdens.

State required standardized testing (SBAC and SAT) also demand an undue burden on the children, and on the finances of the state and the school system. **Please note** that over \$13.5 million is paid to AIR (American Institutes of Research) to administer the SBAC test, with another \$15.3 million allocated over the years 2016-2019. The SBAC contract is renewed annually for \$2.7 million, with yet another \$1.9 million allocated in 2016-2017 for "state-administered assessments". The newly-redesigned statewide SAT for 11th graders is promoted as "free" to the parents, but truly costs the taxpayers \$4.4 million as the state has a three-year contract with the College Board. As the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) eliminates the federal role in teacher evaluation and no longer requires standardized assessment scores be included in them, it eliminates yet another reason for the State of Connecticut to *force* these tests on the children. Finally, the NAEP or National Assessment for Education Progress is a randomly sampled test from the federal government (<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>) that provides more than enough data to identify an achievement gap and to see how the country is doing without testing *every single child* grades 3-8 and 11, and which does NOT include the science CMT and CAPT days, for upwards of four to five *additional* days. In addition,

the opportunity cost of the *labor* of diverting teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to the task of administering these assessments is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Finally, the current "burden of proof" law forces School Districts to make a business decision about a child's education to protect the financial interests of the district. This requirement diverts increasingly underfunded resources away from *all* students in the district. Please see the attached *Superintendents' Statement on Burden of Proof*. Once again, given all of the financial constraints and reductions put upon towns like Tolland, this mandate is unacceptable.

As you can see, there are things that can be done in the HERE AND NOW – opportunities to reduce items that exist in next year's budget - that would facilitate meaningful education, ease the budget challenges, and end cruel test and punish, rank and sort, testing politics. Please help us stop pitting parents against school systems, with Superintendents fearful of parent's opting out because of threats of lost state funding, or being identified for special assistance and losing many hours in mandatory training.

How can \$250 million be bonded for the XL Center when \$1.934 million is asked of Tolland residents to compensate for the state's failure to act responsibly in funding teacher pensions? If a bond is to be done, let it be done to address that burden. In a similar sense, how can the state provide \$500 dollars extra for every child in charter schools, when that model has been demonstrated to not only underperform most local public schools in Connecticut, but also across the country? It is putting more funds in a failed model of education and is truly unacceptable.

Please take action now on the aforementioned. The times require it, and your constituents expect it.

Tolland Board of Education:

Sam Adlerstein

Patrick Doyle

Colleen Yudichak

Karen Moran

Kathy Gorsky

Michelle Harrold

Robert Pagoni

Susan Seaver

Jeff Schroeder

Walter Willett, PhD, Superintendent of Tolland Public Schools

March 14, 2017

Representative Sam Belsito and Tim Ackert
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Building
Hartford, CT, 06106

Dear Representative Belsito and Representative Ackert,

We want to thank you for meeting with us Wednesday, March 8th in the Capitol. As Tolland residents, we are deeply concerned about the current proposed Governor's budget, as well as some initiatives the state compels school districts to comply with that waste precious educational time and resources. Specifically, we are concerned about how this budget will impact our schools. Mr. Belsito, as a Tolland resident who raised a family in this Town, we know you realize the importance of investment in education. Of particular concern for us are the unfunded mandates, standardized testing requirements, and burden of proof requirements put upon the local public schools. These factors are doing harm to both our Town's economic condition, and the school district's overall ability to educate children.

Over the years, the Connecticut state government has imposed over 380 mandates (please see attached *Position On Unfunded State Mandates on Local School Districts*). Many of these are not directly applicable to education and have constituted a considerable financial and logistical burden, including the allocation of more staff. When such significant reductions are being required of a municipality and school system like Tolland, this is totally unacceptable. Please carefully review the document attached, and work in the legislature to free our school system, Town, and children from at least some of these unfunded burdens.

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the opportunity cost of the *labor* of diverting teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to the task of administering these assessments is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Finally, the current "burden of proof" law forces School Districts to make a business decision about a child's education to protect the financial interests of the district. This requirement diverts increasingly underfunded resources away from *all* students in the district. Please see the attached *Superintendents' Statement on Burden of Proof*. Once again, given all of the financial constraints and reductions put upon towns like Tolland, this mandate is unacceptable.

As you can see, there are things that can be done in the here and now – opportunities to reduce items that exist in next year's budget that would facilitate meaningful education, ease the budget challenges, and end cruel test and punish, rank and sort, testing politics. Please help us stop pitting parents against school systems, with Superintendents fearful of parents opting out because of threats of lost state funding, or being identified for special assistance and losing many hours in mandatory training.

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Please take action now on the aforementioned. The times require it, and your constituents expect it.

Tolland Board of Education:

Sam Adlerstein
Patrick Doyle
Colleen Yudichak
Karen Moran
Kathy Gorsky
Michelle Harrold
Robert Pagoni
Susan Seaver
Jeff Schroeder
Walter Willett, PhD, Superintendent of Tolland Public Schools

Tolland Parents:

Rachel Axler
Liz Costa
Brenda Falusi
Laura Roberts

CC: Senator Anthony Guglielmo
Lena Halloran

SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND

ITEM: 2017 – 2018 Budget

ITEM SUBMITTED BY: Walter Willett, Ph.D., Superintendent

For BOE meeting: March 22, 2017

ITEM SUMMARY:

The Board of Education has posted web-site resources and information relative to the budget, communications to legislators, and other materials.

Please see the *regular* budget page (improved):

<http://www.tolland.k12.ct.us/cms/One.aspx?portalId=891651&pageId=27021803>

Please see the Budget FAQ and information page with supporting documents:

<http://www.tolland.k12.ct.us/cms/One.aspx?portalId=891651&pageId=27712561>

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

N/A

BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:

N/A

BOE ACTION DESIRED:

Review of sites and information, input and advisement regarding content and any other materials or information the board desires posted.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:

See web-sites.

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL
HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER
6th FLOOR COUNCIL ROOM
MARCH 9, 2017**

Present: Richard Field, Chairman
William Eccles, Vice-Chair
Robert Green
Kristen Morgan
Joseph Sce
David Skoczulek
Paul Krasusky

Also Present: Steven Werbner, Town Manager
Michael Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services
Kevin Eklund, Admin. Resident Trooper
Heidi Samokar, Director of Planning and Community Development
Beverly Bellody, Director of Human Services
Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance and Records
Scott Lappen, Public Works Director
Bruce Watt, Recreation Director
Lori Sherwood, Law Enforcement Admin. Secretary
State Rep. Sam Belsito
State Rep. Tim Ackert

Meeting called to order at 7:01 pm.

Town Manager Steven Werbner started the meeting by talking about the \$6,907,156 reduction in State aid from the Governor's Budget. In addition the cap on the car tax is scheduled to go from 37 mills to 32 mills. Depending on the actual mill rate adopted this is a loss of tax revenue in the amount of \$300,000 to \$800,000. There is a new proposed Special Education Grant in the amount of \$2.5 million which goes directly to the Board of Education. The impact of these changes alone with no other budget changes is approximately 6 mills or a 17.8% increase.

Reductions to the budget include but are not limited to: reduction by two our current compliment of Resident Troopers from 4 to 2. The Governor's recommended budget places 100% of the cost for Resident Troopers on the Town whereas in previous years the State assumed some of the cost recognizing that at times the Troopers assigned to Tolland are required to perform non-Tolland functions or be available to Tolland due to State mandated training requirements. The additional cost to assume 100% of salary would be \$62,000. Currently we pay between \$155,398 to \$207,683 for a Resident Trooper. The savings is \$256,956. I am recommending that we hire, from current year available funds, a consulting firm specializing in police services to work with a Study Committee appointed by the Town Council to consider future options for providing police services to the Town.

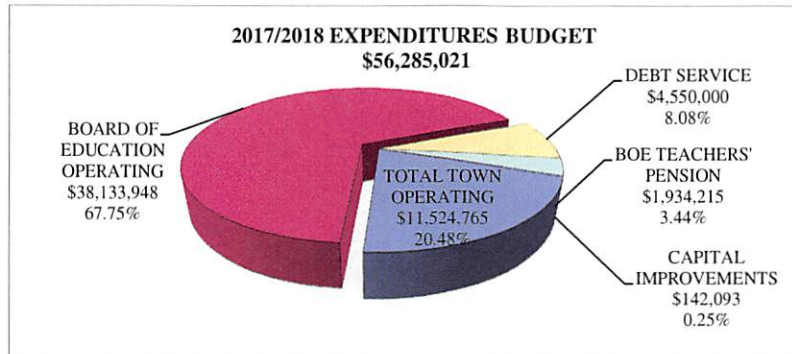
Eliminate the currently vacant position of Assistant Director of Public Safety at a savings of \$73,392 and an additional savings of \$70,000 in the Capital Budget as a result of the elimination of a vehicle and associated equipment for the position. A portion of the savings has been set aside in this year's budget for administrative changes which will be made in the department following completion of union negotiations

Additions to the budget include: \$20,000 for Economic Development consulting services; \$20,000 to increase the stipend for volunteer firefighters which has not been increased for over six years; \$19,000 to begin the Plan of Conservation and Development.

The Town Manager's overall budget numbers and recommendations are highlighted as follows:

Therefore, based on the impact of the Governor's budget, I am presenting you with a budget which reduces basic services, both in the Town as well as the Board of Education, while at the same time increases overall expenditures to 0.857% with Town operation expenses being a decrease of -2.89%, the Board of Education a decrease of -3.05%. The decrease in Board of Education funds will be offset by a new Special Education Grant in the same amount making the impact on the Board of Education no increase over current year expenditures. Other changes include a Capital Improvement Fund increase of \$142,093 and the new category of Teacher Retirement Pension which is budgeted at \$1,934,215. The tax increase necessary to support this budget is 4.81 mills or a 14.069% increase in the mill rate.

Without the impact of the Governor's budget, the mill rate for the Town, with the budget I am recommending, would be a decrease in the mill rate.



Each year as part of this budget message I show the tax impact to the average low-middle-higher assessed homes. After Revaluation the average assessment for these categories of homes was \$117,093 - \$188,285 - \$360,369.

Property Tax Impact of the Town Managers Proposed Budget for Three Average Assessments				
2014 Assessment	Market Value	Taxes at 34.19	Taxes at 39.00	Difference
\$117,093	\$167,276	\$4,003	\$4,567	\$564
\$188,285	\$268,979	\$6,437	\$7,343	\$906
\$360,369	\$514,813	\$12,321	\$14,054	\$1,733

The Town Manager also talked about the concern of a high mill rate in comparison to the other Towns in the area and a discussion on fund balance and the negative effect on our bond rating if a large portion of our fund balance was used to offset lost State aid. Our Financial Advisor indicates a lowering of our bond rating could result in an additional interest cost in the amount of \$1,410,000 for our debt management plan. The Town Manager also talked about the drawbacks of our current Town referendum system.

Throughout the presentation there were questions from Town Council members and statements of residents on the following topics: charter needs changing; ways to bring economic development to Town; how to refund taxes if State gives more than we budgeted; the changing demographics in Tolland; why eliminate the Asst. Fire Dir. and hire the Asst. Finance Director; among other questions.

Both State Rep Sam Belsito and State Rep. Tim Ackert talked about the challenges of this year's budget process and that they are currently in the public hearing phase for bills in the legislature.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Wilkinson
Director of Administrative Services

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL
HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER
6th FLOOR COUNCIL ROOM
MARCH 15, 2017**

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Shelia M Bailey

Present: Richard Field, Chairman
Robert Green
Kristen Morgan
Joseph Sce
David Skoczulek
Paul Krasusky

Also Present: Steven Werbner, Town Manager
Michael Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services
Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance and Records
Walt Willett, School Superintendent
BOE staff
Board of Education members

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm.

BOE Superintendent Walt Willett went through a presentation on the BOE budget: "Tale of Two Tollands". There are 380 unfunded mandates and enrollment is down. Over 10 years staff positions have been reduced by 37. Dr. Willett believes we are at a crossroads or consolidation vs. expansion. He wants to maintain what we have to create a "lighthouse" concept to seek partnerships and draw students from other districts to Tolland over the next five years. Consolidation would only bring a loss of control for our schools. We need to maintain our SRBI/RTI programs so that we prevent kids from going into special Ed. Dr. Willett wants to create a PR campaign to bring these new students to Tolland.

Town Council members, BOE members and residents had questions and comments such as: How do we recruit students? What is the timeframe to bring students to Tolland? Do you have a 5 year plan? A letter on funding should be sent to State leaders from BOE and Town Council.

Town Council Members Joseph Sce presented the TC with a letter talking about the Fire Dept. budget and the need for a Fire Study. The budget has gone up 27% in the last 4 years compared to other expenses that have gone up 8.9% over the same period. The letter is attached. Town Manager Steven Werbner asked for and received consensus approval from the Town Council on the changing of the recycling program to every other week pick-up and the vendor contract extension, as well as the format for the Budget Mailer.

Various residents made the following comments: Put 2.1% to referendum; support Dr. Willett; vote down budget that holds us disproportionately harmed compared to other towns; need to be realistic high mill rate will bring down property values; harder to sell voters on no vote on zero increase then to go up to 2.14%; if we have a high mill rate like 39 mills people will not come here.

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Wilkinson
Director of Administrative Services

Before beginning this recommendation, I would like to make it clear my opinions are not based upon the performance of any member of the Ambulance or Fire Prevention service providers but rather the stark reality we are dealing with as a result of the state's current fiscal situation and its impact on our town. In fact nothing but praise can be given to the hard work the mostly volunteer group does for this town.

However, due to the position we have been put in, it's important to look at every aspect of costs this town incurs, what is driving those costs and the trends we see in respect to these services. Steve's budget recommends a 50% reduction in the town's police security through a reduction of 2 resident troopers partly attributable to additional costs for the town's assumption of 100% of the troopers' salaries. Considering the resident trooper program cost the town approximately \$773,000 for the current year, it is only reasonable to examine the other public safety services of the town.

The ambulance and fire prevention services for the 2017 fiscal year are budgeted for \$1,088,000. The current year budget represents a 27% increase in costs over the past 4 years with an average of 6.8% per year increase. This compares to an 8.9% increase in total expenditures over the same 4 year period with an average of 2.2% increase. A significantly greater increase in costs is being incurred for these services relative to total costs of the town. In addition, the following increases in expenditures are recommended over the next 5 years:

Year 1	Stipend for volunteer firefighters	20,000
	Replace ambulance	214,000
Year 3	Building Upgrades	3,000,000
	Replace rescue and ET truck	1,500,000
Year 5	Replace ambulance	285,000
	Refurbish ET truck	130,000
		<u>5,149,000</u>

Some of the ambulance costs come out of the ambulance reserve fund, but that only represents at best 10% of the total costs noted above. As Steve has pointed out, the costs of fire equipment is outpacing that of inflation. With these significant costs and significant reductions in the BOE budget and other town services, it's time to re-think how we are providing these services.

For comparison, the town of Vernon has approximately \$1.4 million budgeted for its fire and ambulance services. Of that budget, approximately \$688k is spent on water from the fire extinguishers leaving approximately \$685k for the remaining services. This is a town with a much denser population and greater variety of structures to deal with. We are also surrounded by towns, each with their own fire departments servicing all the same equipment our town is servicing.

Since I am not aware of any one on the Town Council with experience to determine if there are efficiencies that can be gained with our services or if we are spending our funding in the most efficient

manor, I strongly recommend the Town Council direct the Town Manager to seek a consultant or consulting firm to audit the Ambulance and Fire Rescue services with the goal to see how expenditures are being incurred and what areas of efficiencies can be gained considering the town's needs and surrounding resources available. There could be several opportunities for savings such as regionalizing certain aspects of services provided.

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL
HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER
LIBRARY PROGRAM ROOM
MARCH 16, 2017**

Present: Richard Field, Chairman
William Eccles, Vice-Chair
Robert Green
Kristen Morgan
Joseph Sce
David Skoczulek
Paul Krasusky

Also Present: Steven Werbner, Town Manager
Michael Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services
Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance and Records
John Littell, Public Safety Director
Heidi Samokar, Director of Planning and Community Development
Barbara Pettijohn, Library Director
Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance and Records
Jim Paquin, Building Official
Bruce Watt, Recreation Director
State Senator Tony Guglielmo
State Rep. Sam Belsito
Board of Education members

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm.

State Senator Tony Guglielmo talked about the State budget situation and the 1.5 billion plus shortfall including an overall large pension liability the State owes.

Various Town Council and BOE members and residents made the following comments and questions: Why is Governor's Budget so regressive with the tax increase? The Budget should be stalled or charter changed. Why is Tolland penalized for being fiscally sound? What is the current capacity of the schools? Use the rainy day fund (fund balance). State should not force Towns to pay teacher pension.

Each Town Council member spoke on the budget and the general feeling was to put a budget out with the hope it will fail so we can get more information from the State before the second referendum.

There was a motion to approve the resolution format in agenda item (3) by Eccles, seconded by Green, unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 9:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Wilkinson
Director of Administrative Services