

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

REGULAR MEETING

7:30 – 10:00 P.M.

AGENDA  
August 9, 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 – July 26, 2017
- Special Meeting - August 2, 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 - Alexandra Simon and Mallory Goldsmith.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

F.1 2017 – 2018 Budget (No Enclosure)

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 Meeting- July 25, 2017  
Special Joint Meeting – July 31, 2017

M. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

N. NEW BUSINESS

O. ADJOURNMENT

## **TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Hicks Memorial Center  
Council Chambers  
Tolland, CT 06084

### **REGULAR MEETING – July 26, 2017**

**Members Present:** Ms. Colleen Yudichak, Vice Chair; Ms. Kathy Gorsky, Secretary; Ms. Michelle Harrold, Ms. Karen Moran, Mr. Jeff Schroeder, Ms. Susan Seaver, and Mr. Cliff Vachon.

**Administrators Present:** Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools

**A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Ms. Yudichak called the meeting to order at 7:34 P.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Ms. Yudichak reviewed the Board's vision statement.

**B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Regular Meeting – July 12, 2017

Mr. Vachon motioned to accept the minutes of the July 12, 2017 regular meeting. Ms. Seaver seconded the motion. Changes: none. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr. Andy Powell, 21 Clearbrook Drive, asked for clarification of the cost per student. *Dr. Willett responded it is approximately \$14,500.*

Correspondence - Ms. Gorsky noted that four letters were received in the last two weeks.

- One was from an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student who is concerned that the Tolland Public Schools (TPS) would close and this would be bad for students. The student also expressed concern that teachers would lose their jobs and provided a list of reasons she likes TPS.
- A letter was received that stated that if the schools were to close then the residents would leave town. Residents came to Tolland because of its school system and if they leave it would weaken the Town overall. She added that she would be willing to pay more taxes if it meant that the schools would remain strong and in Town.
- A letter was received that was a list of questions regarding the Town Manager's proposed 10% tax increase.
- A letter was received that noted that that Town's largest investment is in education and families should be encouraged to come to Tolland to keep the Town strong. Further, the author asked what lobbying efforts have been done at the state level and what kind of efforts residents can make. Lastly, the writer asked if there is any information on the proposed Democratic budget for the state.

**D. POINTS OF INFORMATION - none**

**E. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT - none**

**F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Schroeder motioned to address item F.4 first. Ms. Moran seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**F.4. 2017-2018 Budget (no enclosure)**

Dr. Willett explained that there are many positive initiatives the district has undergone to work to offset the burden on taxpayers.

- The LEAP (Learning Excelling and Progressing Program) Academy is ready and the district is receiving requests from other districts for information regarding “tuitioning” into the program. LEAP is a way of better serving student needs, helps offset special education costs, provides cost avoidance opportunities, and potentially brings tuition into the district.
- The Lighthouse Concept is experiencing success. District enrollment as of today is up over 2,500. Ten students have returned from magnet schools and the Tolland Business Academy initial planning has begun. The latter will function much like a magnet program with Tolland students and tuition students from outside the district.

Dr. Willett explained that the budget situation in Tolland is complicated. Because of the situation with the state, there is no state budget and there is a lack of confidence that one will be in place by the end of the month. There has been an effort to review possible scenarios. The Town Council instructed the Town Manager to proceed along a path of a possible reduction to the Town of \$3.7M. In communication with Mr. Werbner and the Town, the Town Council has requested that the Board consider its percentage of this amount to be 80% or approximately \$3M. This brings the Board to a \$36M budget. Initially, the budget was planned to be \$40,514. After a number of workshops, this number went to \$40,299 ultimately to the proposed Superintendent’s budget of a 2.45% increase. The Board reviewed the budget and reduced it to 2.14% (\$40,175). On or near June 22<sup>nd</sup> a notification came from the Town that the Town Council had rescinded previous actions and was postponing any action on the budget until more information on the state’s budget was available. As we approached the end of the year the district needed to operate from a zero percent increase going from 2.14% to a 0% (\$39,333,948). The \$3M recommended adjustment would go below the 0% budget. This would equate to a reduction of approximately 35-40 positions and will have a massive impact on the school system.

Dr. Willett explained that there is a conundrum. The District needs to ensure that they will be able to open the doors on the first day of the school year. In order to do this, teachers need to be in place, schedules need to be completed and distributed, and plans need to be ready. If the Board goes with the request of the \$3M reduction, it will mean that RIF (reduction in force) notices will have to go out to teachers by the end of the first week in August and the beginning of the second week of August. It would be irresponsible to the students, families, teachers and the District not to do so. Further, the principals will need to time to plan for the schedule reductions. Dr. Willett explained that there is not an option to wait until October to make the reductions.

In a way, they are starting the budget process now. They will not be able to do the same diligence of offering multiple workshops and other outreach opportunities as the Board does in a typical year because there remains only three to four weeks from the beginning of school.

Dr. Willett commented that the other option is not to send the RIF notices. The problem is that if there is a 10% referendum and there is a \$3.7M reduction (\$3M of which would impact the Board) sometime in September to October and it passes, the District would have to make 30-40 or more reductions in October. This would mean terminating jobs in October, combining classes, eliminating and combining sections across schools. At THS, transcripts would have to be changed because courses may be dropped, and total chaos would be created. It would be extremely negative for the students, staff, parents, and the community. Further, people would take notice of this poor management and students in Town would seek out charter and magnet schools. It would be a total disaster.

Given this, Dr. Willett noted that it is important that people understand the impacts. He has shared a number of different levels of impact and at this point they are at a place where action needs to be taken based on the best available information at this time. The District will do the morally correct thing by not letting people go in October and the logistically and organizationally appropriate items to ensure things are in place at the beginning of the year. Dr. Willett has done a tremendous amount of work on the budget and has tried not to be dramatic. At this point, he needs to be direct so there are not any surprises.

*Ms. Harrold noted that the meeting needed to be moved to another room. The number of people in Council Chambers exceeded its capacity. The meeting was moved to the program room in the Library.*

Ms. Moran motioned to move item J (Public Participation) so that it followed item F.4 on the agenda. Ms. Harrold seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Dr. Willett is meeting with the union on Friday to discuss bumping. Of the projected 35-40 position reductions, 20+ would be teaching positions. He explained bumping as the person in the position that is reduced may have seniority over another individual so the person with less seniority may be the one RIF'd.

Dr. Willett listed potential impacts that are currently on the radar.

- Full Pay to Participate Sports – no subsidization
- No World Language at TMS
- ELA blocks would be reduced at TMS
- Grades 1-5 class sizes would be as high as 26
- Reduction in THS counselors
- Schedules would be redesigned
- Music programs may be effected/eliminated
- Snow removal may take additional days
- No new PD funds

- No online math resources
- SRBI and RTI personnel would not be available in grades 6-12 and there would be reductions in K-5
- No curriculum director
- Reduction of THS Assistant Principal
- Reduction of BGP Assistant Principal
- Reduction in grant applications
- PBIS efforts would be diminished
- Dr. Willett will take on 20 teacher evaluations at Birch Grove due to no assistant principal for a total of 37 evaluations done by the Superintendent directly.

Dr. Willett explained that if there is a better situation in October they will recall staff. That said, there are two problems with this. First there are the expenses incurred with paying unemployment and second, once reduced the effected person will have already started looking for a job. By the time they do a recall, those positions where someone has already found a job will take 6 weeks before someone new can come into the position. Thus, this is a complex situation with a lot of impact. Dr. Willett wants people to understand what all of this means and what has to be done in 3 weeks.

Dr. Willett commented that Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman lives in Town and likes to hear from people. Additionally, the members of the Board and the Town Council want to work with the community. He also identified Rep. Ackert, Rep. Belsito, and Rep. Guglielmo as resources. A joint meeting of the Town Council and the Board of Education will be held on July 31<sup>st</sup> in the Library Program Room. Dr. Willett added that he is working hard and trying to do things in a responsible and morally correct fashion.

#### J. Public Participation

Jen McLarney, 237 Kozley Road, noted that she is an employee of the Board. She commented that Dr. Willett noted that there would be 25 lost teacher positions and inquired if he could provide other staff numbers. *Dr. Willett replied that in a situation like this every bargaining unit would be impacted. The numbers are difficult to say because a lot will have to do with the salaries in the positions and there may be modifications. All staff would be notified in the next two weeks and he will try to meet with everyone being reduced and transferred.*

Edward Gervasi, 351 Old Post Road, commented that he has been trying to follow the information on the apartment building which is to be built in Tolland. Layoffs of any kind are never good for anyone but especially in the school system. He has heard that with the building the Town would have to incur some costs in regard to infrastructure and other items. He asked if the money needed could be taken from there. He is not aware of the status of the building. *It was noted that the developer withdrew.* He apologized and noted he was just looking for possible ways to get money. Any money for projects around Town should be considered because he does not want to see a negative impact on the school system.

*Dr. Willett noted that many people ask what they can do to help. He explained that the state budget has a lot to do with a shortfall, and a wealth redistribution in CT and how*

*ECS and other funds are distributed in the state. It would be useful for people to research how and why this is happening and the justifications. Information can be found in the minutes of committee meetings as well as information being put out by the Governor and legislative offices. This will provide talking points to consider when approaching legislators. Right now, what happens to Tolland and the budget is pretty much in the hands of the legislators. If they hear from a lot of people about the impact, it would be a good place to start.*

Fisher Thompson, 533 Buff Cap Road, explained that he is a rising sophomore at THS. Music has been a big part of his life and he asked Dr. Willett to elaborate on possible cuts to the music program. *Dr. Willett explained that in an average building there is 1 band teacher and 1 chorus teacher. If one of those is eliminated the program goes away. One's seniority and qualifications for different levels could determine what building would be impacted.*

Liz Costa, 54 Josiah Lane, encouraged everyone to review the meetings where the 2.45%, 2.41%, and 2.14% were discussed. The 2.14% provided significant investment in the school system that will eventually generate revenue and if none of these dire situations with the state come to fruition, it would be a great reason to ultimately support the 2.14% budget. The worst case scenario – a 10% tax increase has never been supported in Tolland. What the Town Council put together last week was based on approving 10%. If 19.8% is supposed to come back on the Governor's budget to Tolland, the numbers don't add up. What happens then? She also noted that the library is not big enough for next Monday. Further, the Board and the Town Council need to show tiers of levels. Additionally, if rifts have to be done and the situation is not as bad as anticipated, how do you put teachers back in the classroom? What is the impact on the students and how bad can it get? There are people in the room who support education but will not support at 10% increase. *Dr. Willett explained that when he says he has tuition dollars coming in and tuition-generating programs, these will support the education budget and offset some of the financial impact but are not solutions to the various challenges of the Town and are not offered as such. He can offset costs fairly significantly by 2022 and modernize Tolland's educational model to match the landscape in CT today, but there are a complex set of things going on here. Many of the questions asked would be ideal for the joint meeting. If things go in the other direction, things would get very ugly. What happens to the kids if it does not come to fruition as badly? A recall would be done but it would have a negative impact on the students and create a difficult dynamic. That said, his goal is to protect the students as best as he can and if he can recall people it would be great. He is trying to preserve LEAP and the Lighthouse concepts because they preserve crucial resources, help with cost avoidance, and bring students and revenue to the District.*

Linda Necci, 122 Anthony Road, commented that she has a special needs child and asked how staffing reductions would affect the programs. Certain teachers have certain qualifications for certain types of students. *Dr. Willett explained that Tolland spends millions more than similar districts in terms of special education and outplacement services. The District is making investments in special education now so it can provide better and more expansive services internally and more efficiently so students do not have to go out of the District. This provides a better experience for the child because*

*he/she does not have to go outside of the community and there is transportation savings of up to \$50K per child. If a teacher was recently hired but has the qualifications required by the IEP, would the teacher still be reduced? Special education teachers with special certifications that could not be covered by others would probably not be bumped. He will do his best to answer detailed questions privately.*

*Katrin Hinrichsen, 192 Goose Lane, inquired about SRBI intervention being cut in grades 6-12. She has two students with IEPs in that grade span. Dr. Willett noted an IEP is a special education contract-like agreement that is not necessarily in place for students who receive SRBI or RTI services. The state recognized a few years ago that too large a number of students were being identified for special services and schools systems needed to do a better job within the general education population of providing services. School districts should have excellent SRBI and RTI programs with multiple reading and math support people aka interventionists or coaches. In Tolland, in such a budget situation this would take a hit in grades 6-12. Tolland will have to find a way to manage the situation.*

*Dr. Willett noted that while they are discussing a lot of negative items, he does not want to give the impression that we are "in the last days of the planet". The people working for the community are working very hard and they love, care, and will work with the students. The people in Tolland work harder than anywhere else he has ever worked. The impacts are negative but the District is pointed in the right direction for success if given the chance.*

*Steve Browning, 609 Merrow Road, noted that he also teaches in a school system (not Tolland). He inquired as to how much aid was received from the state last year and if the state has given the Town a specific number of reduction. Dr. Willett replied that ECS was \$10.7M. The Governor's budget was not favorable to Tolland. There were reductions as high as \$8M. Republican and Democratic budgets have a different approach but still take millions from communities. The range of impact is between \$1M and \$8M. Where it lands will have a lot to do with where it lands in the Legislature. Another item that will be impactful is the referendum. Currently, the Town Council asked the Town Manager to explore and go forward with making a budget under the assumption that a 10% referendum will go to the people of Tolland. If the 10% is voted in, the impact would be \$3.7M with \$3.0M affecting the District. He added that teacher pensions are another component. The full teacher pension in Tolland is \$1.9M. Mr. Browning commented that the district has excellent principals who are very smart and it is difficult to understand how they are going to cut 6 teachers from each school. The goal of protecting teachers is admirable but the hiring season is over and those teachers who receive a RIF are at a disadvantage. He expressed concern about laying teachers off when there is not a number in place. It might be better to wait for a state number. Further it would be fair to tell the people of Tolland that cuts will be made but that we are going to ride out this year and there will be tax increases. There will be sustainable cuts and we are not going to create total chaos. Whatever is going on at the state level and its chaos we need to be stewards in Tolland and not hack away randomly and shoot out numbers that may or may not exist. It may be better to pay more this year and if the numbers are bad then we have 6 months to plan next year. Dr. Willett asked where the money would come from. Mr. Browning responded that he received a notice that he*



may have to pay more taxes in Tolland. He is saying this would be a short term situation.

*Dr. Willett encouraged people to look up the MBR (Minimum Budget Requirement). Typically this is renewed for two years, but has yet to be at this point. There has been some legislation and conversations on this item. Normally there is only supposed to be a certain level of impact on any given town's school budget but when you have legislators budgets that could go very deep beyond the MBR, you have a contradiction with past practice. Towns have done different things based on their characteristics and this too is something that could be researched and questions could be asked at the joint meeting in this regard.*

A resident at 145 Charles Street commented that she appreciates all of the hard work the Board and Superintendent have done and their approach with caution. We are in a historical moment in CT with the state of the budget. The 0% budget is crippling. She can see the impact that it will have on her TMS student. There will be a long lasting impact even when she is in high school and this is a concern. Further, she understands the numbers are huge but in regard to interventionists, they fill in the building blocks that students are missing. If you do not address those areas in middle school, the students will fall further behind and will not be prepared for high school or college readiness. The impact on the school climate work is appalling. It is imperative for the social and emotional wellness of all students. That said, she understands that the Board has been handed a request of an 80% hit. She asked if the Board could say no to the 80% and look at other options. The Town is asking the Board to cut 80% of the \$3.7M while the Town cuts 20%. This is completely out of balance. *Ms. Gorsky replied that it is not acceptable to the Board but it has to be examined in regard to proportionality. The Board takes up 80% of the Town's budget.* The resident would still like the Board to ask this question of the Town Council. *Ms. Moran recommended that the commenter communicate this question to the Town Council.* Town Council Liaison Kristen Morgan explained that 80% of the Town's budget is given to the Board and the other 20% is for the Town. Both are taking the same reduction. The resident explained that she understands why it is 80/20 but commented that it did not have to be that way. She inquired if 60/40 of the \$3.7M had been discussed. *Dr. Willett emphasized that people are working very hard and there are no bad guys. Topics will come up at the joint TC / BOE meeting and people will have to decide what to do with the information they are receiving.*

*Dr. Willett spoke in regard to the fund balance. The argument against using the fund balance is that if you use it this year then next year you are still down. The counter argument is to distribute funds in a graduated fashion lessening the immediate impact and next year there will be other items such as retirements that will provide an offset. Another argument is then how long will that go on? A discussion in regard to fund balance is another area where people can have conversations.*

Shirley Gerich, 73 Kozley Road, commented that the District spends \$14,500 per student. She inquired how much is spent to outpace a student. *Dr. Willett responded that transportation for a student is between \$35K and \$50K. The student placement could be anywhere from the tens of thousands to \$100K depending on the situation.* Ms.

Gerich inquired if the new program would bring some of the students back to Tolland. *Dr. Willett explained that years ago the state put upon the schools requirements and Tolland did an awesome job complying with this. In return, the outplacements skyrocketed. The district can create more robust programs at a lower cost and keep students in their community. One program is LEAP but it will not save the district from all of the challenges.*

Jackie Thompson, 533 Buff Cap Road, inquired about staff cuts. She would like to know the percentage coming from attrition vs. layoffs. *Dr. Willett explained that the level 1 is covered by attrition. The other levels are not.* Ms. Thompson asked if the honors program or UConn classes would be impacted at THS. *Dr. Willett explained that if they have to transfer resources to cover SRBI or RTI requirements of the state, it may be that they cannot offer some of those courses. One of his roles has been to expand AP offerings but there is a shifting of resources. They want to keep what they have but it could be impacted. Anywhere they can make an AP program they will do so.*

Jaime Holder, 16 Peter Green, inquired if there is somewhere that residents can find line by line items. *Dr. Willett responded that line items can be generated but in regard to the gross number, one does not know who will bump whom thus numbers are generalized at this point in the process.*

Nicole Croteau, 14 Adam Lane, inquired when the community will find out about the teachers assigned and student schedules. *Dr. Willett replied that the information will be provided most likely the last week that they can release it before school, as they will need the time to adjust. There is a process which needs to be undertaken but schedules will be available the week before school starts. To say otherwise, he would not be frank with people.*

Amy Raccagni, 21 Woodfields Drive, inquired as to when THS is due for accreditation and if there are severe cuts if the district has thought about the impact on accreditation. *Dr. Willett explained that they will do everything possible not to allow there to be any impact. The impact would affect the district's ability to address items on the accreditation list but as the Superintendent he would explain the monetary loss and get an attorney if necessary. That said, he does not believe there would be a problem. People are generally understanding and cooperative. He added that the items that are suggested are good things and not being able to comply is a negative for Tolland. He added that he will work tirelessly for students in Tolland. There are great things going on in the District but what is going on now is challenging.*

Edward Gervasi, 351 Old Post Road, explained that he has two students in the District and knows what he is getting for his money. He is willing to pay more. They say you cannot equate money to education – he says you can and he sees what is being done. He does not know one parent who does not think their child is worth \$500 or \$600 a year. If it is not spent on education, it will be spent on items after school and they will have to pay more for police and extracurricular activities. The money that is being paid on education is accounted for. They need to advocate for more money for the school system by asking everyone who had a child in the system to pay behind or those who will have children and ask them to pay forward so the robust school system can keep

going. When other towns see what Tolland is doing then Dr. Willett will be able to sell more programs that will generate additional income. It should be looked at with positive energy. The District has a great Superintendent, educators, and special education teachers and this has to be sold to the other parents in Town. *Dr. Willett explained that the community is struggling with something that is very difficult. Working as a community to respond to it is an important component. It is important that the local economy be supported. One item not to ignore is why does the state spend millions on the SBAC and why is the SAT subsidized. The latter is not free – and it is during the school day now. The dollars for this are coming from state and local budgets. The kids who perform poorly are typically from areas in poverty and those who perform well are typically from affluent locations. Why is a test needed every year to show the same result and pay millions for it? The NAEP (federal test randomly sampled) is enough. He encouraged parents to call federal and state legislators about this as it is something else to consider. He noted that a great book is Diane Ravitch's Reign of Error.*

Dan Whalen, 165 Willie Circle, inquired if any of the cuts would affect the FRC program. *Dr. Willett noted that the FRC program has already been cut by close to half by the state. They are doing everything they can to keep the program alive. It is extremely well managed with an amazing staff.* Mr. Whalen commented that everyone should go to YouTube and watch the videos on standardized tests by John Oliver. Many large companies make millions of dollars on standardized tests and have large lobbying groups. Further, the state has left a lot of money on that table that would bring in revenue streams and he encouraged people not to depend on them to do anything and not to vote for the same people as they only care about themselves. The voters put people in office and have the power to make change. The children are the future and people need to do what is best for them.

Jackie Kolb, 34 Susan Drive, commented that she knows everyone there is committed to the well-being of the children or there wouldn't be this difficult conversation. She appreciates that she received the e-mail and phone call. She will attend future meetings and hopes others will as well. It would be helpful to have a quick fact sheet with information such as who she can contact. Further, she asked Ms. Morgan for a list of pros and cons. For example, at a budget of x% this is what will be in place and this is what will be cut. People want to know and do not want to go back to Dr. Willett and say they did not know something was going to happen. She would like this to be sent out by the Town. *Town Council liaison Ms. Morgan responded that based on the poll at the last meeting it was determined that 10% is what the Town might accept. In turn they asked the Town Manager to make a detailed budget.* Ms. Kolb asked if that would include the schools. *Ms. Morgan explained that it would only represent the Town.* Ms. Kolb commented that this is where there has always been a disconnect. *Ms. Morgan explained that the Town Council can only provide the Town side of the budget.* Ms. Kolb explained that people need to know the impacts so they know what to support. She added that it should be on one document.

*Dr. Willett explained that items valued in our culture are taking time away from people being able to attend Town Council, BOE, and other meetings. The more who pay attention, the more hope the community has. The Town Council members are working*

*very hard just as the BOE members are. The Town is going to get to the end together. He encouraged everyone to continue to engage and continue attending meetings.*

Andy Powell, 21 Clearbrook Drive, addressed his question to the Board. The Board members were elected to be leaders and they have done a wonderful job in regard to looking at education in Tolland in a different light and providing opportunities and brought a Superintendent who has expanded the capabilities of the Town and can make Tolland an example. In CT, regionalization will take place and if the District is not in a position to be a leader, students will go elsewhere. The strategic work by the Board and the Superintendent has shown a great amount of leadership. Some will challenge that as leaders they need to make the cuts but they have already been the leaders and the responsibility of how it is going to be funded falls to the constituents. Mr. Powell has 3 boys – one who has graduated and two that are still in the school system. Over 12 years his family has extracted over \$360K worth of value from the school system and has not paid anywhere close to that in taxes. The value that his family has gotten has been significantly higher than the taxes he has paid in. Even if there was a 10% or 20% increase, it would not be close to the amount of money his family has pulled out. For those without students, the value of their homes is predicated by the market value. In reality, people move to Tolland for the education system. Ongoing investment in education requires sacrifice but it protects one's investment. Thus, he asked the Board if it is willing to say that it has done its leadership job and this is what we want to have for funding and these are the reasons why. The responsibility is then the 1,500 number – 1,500 people will always vote "no". The community needs to tell the Town Council that they are not willing to cut any more money from the programs because they are not only sacrificing their kids but also their investments in their houses. Is the Board willing to let the Town take that responsibility? *Ms. Yudichak explained that the dilemma is that the decision has to be made now, not when it goes to referendum.* Mr. Powell noted that he will say the same thing at the joint meeting. He understands the predicament they are in to be the moral component of reducing head count ahead of time to give people the opportunity to find another job. If it comes back better and as a Town it grows up and understands the responsibilities of what it pays for, then there can be more money in October and Dr. Willett can bring people back in. As citizens people have to understand their responsibilities to the kids and themselves. The argument of the cost of referendums is a false one. He recommends that it be put high and voted down.

*Ms. Gorsky commented that one of the letters received noted that though there has been a good working relationship with the Town Council, such a relationship does not always involve cow-towing to the other. It is time that the Board stands up and fights for what it feels is necessary to keep kids in schools in Tolland and have good, strong schools for them. Ultimately the decision is not up to the Board. It will do its part to stand up for the kids in Tolland.* Mr. Powell responded that this is not an investment in the kids but in Tolland. He recommended couching in terms of people's more valuable financial investments – their homes; otherwise, those who do not have kids will continue to vote "no".

*Dr. Willett explained that everyone should continue to think of ways to enrich Tolland. While he does not like to put it this way, in education heads are dollars. In regard to*

*business sense, every head that comes in brings money and some of that is spent at local businesses and supports the economy. Working together and having robust systems are important for every community. The key to succeeding is keeping minds open to all opportunities.*

A resident commented that she would like to see side by side documents – one for the Town Council and one for the BOE with percentage increments and information on the meaning of the tax increases.

Ms. Yudichak thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

**F.1. Obsolete and Surplus Equipment**

Dr. Willett spoke in regard to the list of items.

Ms. Gorsky motioned to move item F.1 to item I.1 for action. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**F.2. Two Year Leave – Dana Kukucka**

Dr. Willett explained that one of the educators has requested a 2 year leave of absence to teach internationally. In the contract there is a provision for a teacher to take a 2 year leave and this fall under those guidelines.

Ms. Gorsky motioned to move item F.2 to item I.2 for action. Mr. Schroeder inquired about the June 30<sup>th</sup> date. Dr. Willett responded that it was waived. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**F.3. Vote on Secretary Contract**

Dr. Willett noted that this is the second reading of the contract and the Board members had access to the document.

Mr. Schroeder motioned to move item F.3 to item I.3 for action. Ms. Seaver seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**F.5. Resolution**

Dr. Willett reviewed attachment F.5. Mr. Schroeder motioned to move item F.5 to item I.4 for action. Ms. Harrold seconded the motion. It was noted that other Boards of Education had passed a similar resolution. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**G. COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS**

Town Council – Mr. Vachon attended last night's meeting. The Council approved some expense resolutions that do not impact the Board. Ms. Morgan reviewed the 10 items. Mr. Vachon noted that the Town Council asked that the Board look at Dr. Willett's plan and see what it would look like with a 10% tax increase.

**MOTION**

Ms. Moran motioned to extend the meeting past 10PM. Ms. Gorsky seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**H. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

The joint Town Council/Board of Education meeting is on Monday evening.

I. BOARD ACTION

I.1. Obsolete and Surplus Equipment

Ms. Gorsky motioned to determine all items included in this report as obsolete and/or in disrepair and to turn the identified items over to the Town according to Board Policy 3040. Ms. Moran seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

I.2. Two Year Leave – Dana Kukucka

Ms. Seaver motioned to approve the two year leave of absence for an international teaching experience for Dana Kukucka as identified by the Superintendent. Mr. Vachon seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

I.3. Vote on Secretary Contract

Mr. Schroeder motioned to approve the proposed contract beginning July 1, 2017 and extending through June 30, 2021 as presented; negotiated between the Board of Education and the United Public Service Employees Union – Tolland Clerical Employees. Ms. Moran seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

I.4. Resolution

Mr. Schroeder motioned to support the resolution. Ms. Gorsky seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

J. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - (see item after F.4)

K. POINTS OF INFORMATION - none

L. CORRESPONDENCE

- Town Council Meeting – July 11, 2017
- Special Meeting – July 18, 2017

M. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

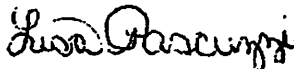
- Budget

N. NEW BUSINESS - none

O. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Moran motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10.04M. Mr. Vachon seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Pascuzzi  
Clerk

## **TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Tolland High School Auditorium  
One Eagle Hill  
Tolland, CT 06084

**SPECIAL MEETING – August 2, 2017**

**Members Present:** Mr. Sam Adlerstein, Chair; Ms. Colleen Yudichak, Vice Chair; Ms. Kathy Gorsky, Secretary; Ms. Michelle Harrold, Ms. Karen Moran, Mr. Jeff Schroeder, Ms. Susan Seaver, and Mr. Cliff Vachon.

**Administrators Present:** Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools – via phone

**Also Present:** Steve Werbner, Town Manager; Rick Field, Town Council Chair

**A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Adlerstein called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Mr. Adlerstein explained that in order for Dr. Willett to open school on time, the Board needs to make a decision on the staffing and program levels so that Dr. Willett may guide his staff.

**B. BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Mr. Werbner explained that the Board is under a tight time table and he has spoken numerous times with the Superintendent. They discussed that planning the budget scenario now is better than waiting until November and December and making adjustments at that time. The Town Council has approved \$330K in expenditure reductions on the Town side and Mr. Werbner has recommended an additional \$400K in reductions. It is better to put these in place now so adjustments can be made and impacts may be known. Mr. Werbner has been listening to discussions by the Board in regard to the budget and has been thinking of alternatives. He explained that he does not expect to see a budget from the State until sometime in September or beyond. He added that there will be a serious cash flow problem over the next two months. They believe they will be able to get through January but after that there will be a serious risk of falling behind in payments. The Town needs to send out revised tax bills in December and need a mill rate by December 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Town Manager's revised budget (attached presentation) will be presented to the Town Council at its next meeting. He noted that it is out of order to present this to the Board first but is doing so due to the time constraints. The tentative budget schedule is as follows:

- August 8<sup>th</sup>-Council Discussion-Council Chambers, 7:30 pm
- August 15<sup>th</sup> – Council Discussion – Budget Finalized, Council Chambers, 7:30PM
- August 22<sup>nd</sup> – Advertise Budget
- August 29<sup>th</sup> – Annual Budget Presentation, THS Auditorium, 7:30PM
- August 30<sup>th</sup> – Budget Presentation, Senior Center, 12:30PM
- September 12<sup>th</sup> – Annual Budget Referendum (*corrected to September 19<sup>th</sup>*)

Mr. Werbner reviewed the "Revised Budget Plan from the Town Manager, August 2, 2017". He started by providing an overview and identified his recommended budget as a, "Hope and Prayer (H&P) Budget". Some highlights are below. See attachment for full details, explanations, and rationale.

- H&P budget reduces ECS funding by 50% or \$5,435,521 (item 1)
- The Town Manager's budget prepared in March reduced Town expenditures by \$343,291, a 2.89% reduction in overall Town spending. These reductions are part of the H&P budget. (item 2)
- The Town Manager will discuss an additional \$440K in additional cuts with the Town Council on Tuesday evening. (item 2)
- The H&P budget keeps the BOE at the same level as 16/17 expenditures and assumes the Special Education grant will be \$600K (would go directly to the BOE). In turn, the Town Manager is reducing the 16/17 expenditure level of the BOE by \$600K. If the noted grant is in excess of \$600K, the BOE will have additional funds to utilize at its discretion not to exceed the original budget request of 2.14%. If the grant is not funded or funded by a lesser amount, the BOE will need to make expenditure adjustments. (item 3)
- The H&P budget contains no increase in General Fund dollars for capital improvements. (item 4)
- Most years the Town budgets for \$150K to \$200K from the General Fund fund balance but has not needed to use it. (item 5)
- The H&P budget contains \$1.4M from fund balance (\$1,006,660 from the existing General Fund fund balance and \$393,340 from unspent FY16/17 BOE funds that were scheduled to go into the 1% fund) to make it more palatable for the Board and the taxpayers. The Town Manager noted that he is reluctant to use those funds for operating expenses rather than emergencies. (item 5)
- Mr. Adlerstein noted that the Superintendent has been using the \$393,340 as part of his budget planning. (item 5)
- There is a direct correlation between the Town's bond rating and the interest rates on capital projects, the majority of which are education related. The bond rating means a lot to the financial well-being of the community and the Town's rating has saved it millions of dollars. (item 5)
- The H&P budget has a 7.17% tax increase (2.45 mill rate increase). With this scenario there is no need for further expenditure reductions by the Town or the BOE. (item 6)
- If voters reject the 7.17% increase and it drops to 5% (1.71 mill rate increase), a further decrease of expenditures in the amount of \$926,515 will be required and should be split 80/20 by the Board/Town respectively. (item 6)
- If the H&P budget is adopted and the State budget, when approved, provides the Town with more revenue than anticipated, the following is recommended in this priority order:
  - The money taken from the General Fund fund balance shall be replenished.
  - The money that was requested to go to the BOE 1% reserve fund shall be funded.
  - Up to 50% of the remainder shall be set aside as reserved for tax relief in FY 18/19, 19/20, and 20/21 in equal amounts
  - The remaining additional funds shall be allocated to the BOE and Town on an 80%/20% basis capped at the BOE original request amount (2.14%) and the amount of expenditure reductions of the Town as recommended by the Town Manager.
- If the State budget, when approved, provides the Town with less revenue than budgeted, then the difference would come from decreased BOE and Town expenditures on an 80%/20% basis. (item 8)
- A review of the methodology for the recapture of reserve funds. (item 9)



- The proposed mill rate increase of 2.45 mills is 4.75 times the average mill rate increase over the last ten years. A comparison of 16/17 mill rates was reviewed. (item 10)

A resident commented in regard to item 6, "the value of education, shouldn't that be placed at a higher priority over the Town spending?" *Mr. Werbner responded that he is presenting a mathematical way of expressing expenses and revenue that has always been 80/20 in Town and this is the number he is using.*

A resident commented in regard to item 6 and inquired if there are tax relief options available for residents given the potential tax increase. *Mr. Werbner noted there are 6 or 7 statutory-allowed rebates or freezes available for those who qualify. There is a good participation rate for these programs.*

A resident commented in regard to item 7 and inquired if the priorities would be voted on by the Town Council. *Mr. Werbner replied that these are his recommendations and they would need to be voted on by the Town Council.*

*At the request of a resident, Mr. Werbner clarified that residents will receive a tax bill in January that will be payable in January and another tax bill in July.*

A resident inquired in regard to item 9. She asked if the Town Council can vote to bind the future Boards and Town Councils. *Mr. Werbner explained that this is a recommendation and there is a fund balance policy. It is recommended that the policy be reviewed and amended to incorporate this type of recapture policy.*

*Based on a resident's inquiry, Mr. Werbner clarified that the use of the fund balance does not have to go to referendum. It is authorized by the Town Council.*

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

How much was spent on Special Education in 16/17? *Dr. Willett responded that it was approximately \$7-8M. \$1.3M was received from ECS.*

At the July 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Town Council agreed to start at 10% as well as nearly everyone who is pro-education. Why was there a change in direction to 7.17%? Starting at 7.17% is like cutting off your arm. *Mr. Werbner explained that this is his recommendation. He has presented what he believes is the most reasonable and responsible budget that has a chance of passing. He advocates and recommended the 7.17% budget and associated mill rate increase. But the people the Town Manager works for recommended 10%. Mr. Werbner explained that those people asked that he prepare a scenario in regard to the impact on the Town using the Governor's original resource allocation numbers and 10%. Those same people asked, based on input from the BOE if he could come up with another scenario. He believes his proposed H&P budget is sounder than going with the 10% budget based on the information in the Governor's original budget.*

Given that it is an unprecedented time, should they not now look at how money is being allocated differently than how the Town has always done things in regard to the prioritization of money? *Mr. Werbner explained there is not a fair way in the time they have, to determine the*

*equities between the various functions of the Town. This group is passionate about education as he is but he spoke with 75 seniors at a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party at the Senior Center last week. These residents had an opportunity to interact with each other – how can one value one service over another? Anyone is welcome to present to the Town Council their recommendations for the value of one service over another.*

An expression of concern regarding using the General Fund was made given that the Town will go through a reevaluation and the crumbling foundation problem. How will the grand list be affected? *Mr. Werbner noted that he has been sensitive to this issue from day 1. Financially, he believes they can absorb the \$1M from the fund as long as there is a way to replenish it and a willingness by the community to understand that in subsequent fiscal years there may be higher than normal mill rate increases.*

In regard to items 1 & 2, what makes the Town Manager think the \$2M will be available and when it is not, how will cuts be made once the school year has started? *Mr. Werbner explained that he has been told by the Assembly and some members of the BOE that the Governor's numbers will never happen. If it were to happen, everyone would have to figure out how to adjust and it would be tough. An inquiry was made in regard to teacher pensions. In regard to the teacher pensions, he believes in 5-7 years the Town will be absorbing the teacher pensions.*

It was asked if this "Hope and Prayer" approach is common to municipalities. *Mr. Werbner explained that Tolland is further out on the edge based on the amount of money the Town could potentially lose. Many communities which have adopted budgets have done so with potential losses based on the Governor's budget of \$900K; Tolland could face a potential loss of \$1M - \$8M.*

What are some examples of emergencies that the General Fund is reserved for? It would seem that the current situation is a pretty big emergency. *Mr. Werbner explained that emergencies would include: tornados, hurricanes, damage to a school, if a crumbling foundation was found at Birch Grove, a road cave-in, if a million dollar fire engine was demolished and needed replacement. These would be things that would be a one-time payment.*

The H&P budget in regard to the BOE would be 0% minus \$600K – what does that look like in regard to operating expenses for the Board? *Dr. Willett explained the reductions would be in the range of 6 teaching staff, 1 custodian, 2 secretaries, 1 assistant principal at THS, the Director of Curriculum position, and potentially some paraprofessionals. This is in addition to little to no dollars for curriculum materials or professional development as well as a list of non-personnel reductions. Mr. Adlerstein inquired if this assumes the \$600K would be offset by special education costs. Dr. Willett replied yes based on looking at the scenario as he understands it. During the year, for any student who received services there is a threshold above which the municipality is partially reimbursed. The threshold is being raised in 17/18 and Dr. Willett does not know how much Tolland will receive – the state education grant funds provided will not be fully actualized if fewer reimbursements are possible due to the increased threshold. Mr. Willett felt this grant number from the state is potentially misleading. Mr. Adlerstein summarized that there are two reductions to last year's BOE budget. One piece is the 1% or \$400k which is approximately the list that Dr. Willett has presented of what will be lost. The second piece is the \$600K reduction. There is an assumption that the \$600K will come from the State to pay for special education. If this does not happen and the money is not received, the list of reductions will be much longer. Mr. Werbner noted that the special education grant being proposed was not*

*based upon a formula or threshold but was an automatic allocation based on distribution – a direct grant to Boards to offset money being used for special education. Mr. Adlerstein explained that the \$600K was based on a 5 year historical average of what was paid out and it was peeled off the ECS. Mr. Werbner noted that there is an opportunity for the BOE to recover the \$600K or possibly more. The Town does not have any chance of recovering the \$330K that has been cut.*

*Mr. Field recommended that the public bring their questions to the Town Council. There are at least 3 more opportunities for the public to express concerns. At this meeting the Board needs to deliberate on what it wants to do.*

An inquiry was made in regard to the August 22<sup>nd</sup> date – Advertise Budget. How is the Town Council and the Board going to market and sell the H&P budget to the Town? It is all about “spinning” and “marketing” it. She has lived in Tolland for 24 years and has seen budgets at 5-6% that do not pass. She supports this budget and supported 10% and wants to see 7.17% pass but does not believe it will. *Mr. Werbner noted that a small ad will be placed in the Journal Inquirer on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. The state law is that once the Town Council adopts a proposal for a referendum, neither it nor the Board can advocate as a body or spend town funds for the passage of an item. A political action committee may be created and individuals may share their positions but it cannot be on town time or use town dollars.*

An inquiry as to if the H&P budget is on the Town website was made. *Mr. Werbner will need to double check. Once the Town Council adopts a budget it will replace the plans currently on the website. The H&P budget will be presented to the Town Council at its August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.*

A member of the public noted that the Board is implementing a new special education program (LEAP) in 17/18 at a cost of \$412K and asked if possibly they should consider waiting a year. *Dr. Willett explained it is being implemented mostly with people already in the district which saves money vs. hiring consultants and with funds the district has. With the program there is more flexibility and an opportunity to serve students in district which is always preferred. They will need to hire a social worker. Currently, Tolland spends \$2M more than similar districts on outplacements.*

It was asked if the Lieutenant Governor has provided any information on the progress of the State budget. *Mr. Werbner noted that he has a meeting with her next week and encouraged the public to continue to reach out and write letters to the legislators.*

Mr. Adlerstein noted that the Board belongs to CABA whose legal counsel gave an interview in regard to phasing in any changes to the ECS grant. The Board started this resolution and there have been discussions regarding organizing a rally and bus for interested residents. Ms. Seaver passed out a sign-up sheet for interested parties who would like to be on the e-mail list. Ms. Harrold thanked Mr. Werbner for providing parameters. Mr. Field thanked Dr. Willett for calling in from his vacation.

An inquiry of the impact of the H&P budget and the impact on classes and pay-to-participate was made. *Dr. Willett explained that there will still be a reduction of a teacher in grade 2, a teacher in grade 5, as well as 4 additional teachers. He believes pay-to-participate would still be subsidized by the District. (The grade 2 and 5 teachers are the ones that were listed as “rehires” and represent a loss of positions that have been vacated. Some of the other positions are covered by*

*attrition.) The four teachers include 3 at THS and 1 at TMS. The RIF notices will be executed tonight and will be based on what the Board, as an elected body, recommends. He recommends the path of least harm to the children in the community.*

*An inquiry was made regarding if there would be changes to IEPs and 504s. Dr. Willett noted that he has every confidence that they will be maintained.*

*Ms. Yudichak inquired as to which level of impact would they be at if the H&P budget is adopted. Dr. Willett explained that it would be between levels 2 and 4 but there may be movements among the levels. He cannot say for certain until he reviews the numbers.*

*An inquiry was made as to if there is any reason to believe the school year will not start on time. Dr. Willett believes the school year will start on time. If the Board wishes to wait the members would have to give that direction and he would need to start that process tomorrow. There are contracts in place that would need to be reviewed for logistics, discussions with the unions would need to occur, and the State does not allow the school year to extend past June 30<sup>th</sup>. Further, the district must hold 180 school days. Additionally, there are costs that would continue even if school is not in session.*

*Mr. Adlerstein reviewed the financial/budget data. He added that he does not see what Mr. Werbner presented as being locked in but will use what Mr. Werbner used tonight as direction for the Superintendent.*

- Current ECS grant = \$10.6M; the Governor's budget has proposed reducing it to \$2.5M; the Town Manager's original proposal assumed it to be \$8.2M; the Town Manager's current proposal is for \$5.2M.
- Mr. Adlerstein presented a comparison of other towns. Just about every town is being reduced and while Tolland has a large reduction so do some others. Mr. Adlerstein does not see the legislature voting for this given the impact it would have on towns. It would be very irresponsible. In turn, he does not believe the impact will be as great as proposed by the Town Manager.
- The Town Manager stated a use of \$1.4M of the fund balance but it is really \$1,006,600 and \$343K from the BOE's 1% fund. The latter is the Board's money because Dr. Willett cut way back and was forward looking. There is no logic to call the \$393K fund balance.
- The average passed budgets of presented towns have a 1.37% increase; in DRG B (Tolland is in DRG B) the average passed budgets have a .47% increase.
- The Board discussed directing the Superintendent to base his planning on a budget of \$38,340,608.
- Mr. Werbner has been the Town Manager for many years. He is conservative, risk-averse, and careful with assumptions. Mr. Adlerstein noted that one cannot say those assumptions are set in stone.
- Based on the law Minimum Budget Requirement, the budget cannot be reduced by more than the MBR (600k to 800k estimated) but the law has not been passed this year. It is renewed two years at a time.

*Mr. Adlerstein explained that the Board is not trying to fight with the Town Council or the Town Manager. It wants to preserve property values in Tolland 3, 5, and 10 years out but has a*

different perspective. With the potential impact to the schools there is a lot of risk to property values. A 0% increase, while not good, would maintain the quality of the schools. A reduction of \$1M changes this. He encouraged the public to bring questions to the Town Council meeting.

Dr. Willett explained that in any case the Board is taking a measured risk. The question is which assumption it wants to select. He needs a target and time to review the items on the levels of impact document and the financials.

Mr. Adlerstein proposed planning for \$38,340,608. This is \$393,340 below zero with the assumption that the loss of \$600K will be covered by a special education reimbursement of \$600K. Further, the \$400K is in addition to the 1% fund which the Superintendent had already planned on using.

Dr. Willett clarified that the District pays \$195K toward Pay to Participate. The Director of Curriculum salary and benefits is in the zone of \$150-160K.

Ms. Yudichak inquired what would happen if the budget does not pass and staff had to be cut after school started. Ms. Harrold commented that she has received feedback from parents that they would be more comfortable making adjustments mid-year based on the hiring season. Mr. Adlerstein commented that this is something that should be asked of the Town Council. The risk should not be put on the BOE. One should not be putting grants into the Board budget because it does not have any recourse if the funds are not received.

Mr. Schroeder inquired if they can assume, based on precedent, that the law of MBR will be passed. *Dr. Willett responded that there is a reasonable chance that it will be continued in some form.*

Ms. Moran clarified that even with the discussed reductions that the District would still be able to go forward with LEAP and other opportunities. *Dr. Willett confirmed that they will not let these go unless there is an extreme scenario – they are key to the future of Tolland.*

MOTION: Ms. Gorsky motioned to continue the meeting past 10PM. Ms. Harrold seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

A member of the public explained that one of her greatest concerns is that in September or October she will receive a call asking if they can move her child to another class because they were able to hire another teacher and in turn can reduce class size. Worse would be if her child's teacher's position was reduced and her child had to change classes. She respects the horrific position the Board is in but she and countless people are concerned about the risk. *Ms. Gorsky commented that some reasonable assumptions have to be made and the budget proposed by the Town Manager makes those assumptions. She does not believe the risks the Board is taking with the proposal are unusual. She believes the risks are worth it as opposed to going to the level discussed a week ago. She supports going with this proposed budget – the \$600K is a reasonable risk. The biggest concern at this point is getting the budget to pass.*

Mr. Schroeder referred to item 6 and what would happen if the 7.17% did not pass. What would be the impact? *Dr. Willett explained that you would be looking at impacts including a further reduction of staff.*

Ms. Harrold commented that she is comfortable going with the budget proposed by the Town Manager.

Ms. Seaver inquired if the Town Council historically accepts what the Town Manager presents. The Board nodded in agreement that the Town Council does so. Ms. Seaver asked if historically the residents have voted for a 7% increase. Ms. Harrold said no. The Board and supporters will need to rally around the 7% increase.

Mr. Adlerstein commented that the Board needs to lock into a number and align with it. The one item they should ask for however is to take the risk out of the BOE's budget. There is a lot of legalese language in the document that puts a lot risk on the BOE. The district cannot change once school has started and it is irresponsible to put this on the Board.

Ms. Moran commented that she is comfortable with the Town Manager's proposed budget, and the number \$383,340,608 discussed in the meeting.

Mr. Adlerstein recommended that the Board review the proposed budget and it will be discussed at the next Board meeting. A motion will be held at that time. Dr. Willett will move forward with the RIF notices to get the district to the \$383,340,608 number.

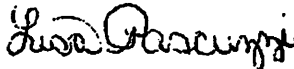
Nancy McGrath, a resident and head of the World Language Program, is very concerned that if Dr. Willett moves ahead with 2 RIF notices tomorrow for World Language teachers the program will be decimated. The teachers will not be able to be retrieved and the language department at THS will be impacted. *Dr. Willett commented that the World Language teaches are not at this level. There may be some impact on interventionists. At this time the Music position will not be affected. The noncertified staff at level 4 would be reduced as well as the Director of Curriculum position. Dr. Willett still needs to review the situation and the numbers.*

Mr. Adlerstein reminded everyone to attend the Town Council meeting on Tuesday evening and they will review the actual reductions at the next Board meeting.

D. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Harrold motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10.18M. Mr. Schroeder seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Pascuzzi  
Clerk

## MEETING MINUTES

### TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER 6<sup>th</sup> FLOOR COUNCIL ROOM JULY 25, 2017 – 7:30 P.M.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rick Field, Chair; William Eccles, Vice-Chair; Robert Green; Paul Krasusky; Kristen Morgan and David Skoczulek

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Joseph Sce

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Steven Werbner, Town Manager; Mike Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services; Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance and Records; Beverly Bellody, Human Service; John Littell, Fire Chief/Director of Public Safety; Linda Palmer, Chair of the Ag Commission

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Rick Field called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Recited.
3. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Observed.
4. **PROCLAMATIONS:** None.
5. **PUBLIC PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (*on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Town Council*) (2 minute limit): None.
6. **PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:** None.
- 7a. **REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES RESPONSIBLE TO THE COUNCIL:** None.
- 7b. **REPORTS OF TOWN COUNCIL LIAISONS:** **Rob Green, TWC:** The meeting was very productive; a good report overall, financials are good. **Paul Krasusky, BOE:** (July 12<sup>th</sup> meeting): There was a great turnout from the public, Representative Ackert was in attendance, there was some reaffirmation of the Superintendent's proposed tiers of potential decreases and the impact of what each of those increases would have. **Cliff Vachon, BOE:** They are putting together an agenda for a joint meeting to be held on Monday, July 31<sup>st</sup>; he said that the BOE asks that the Council hold off on any major budget making decisions until they can get together as a group to discuss some items. **Mr. Field** advised that three Council members are unavailable to attend the meeting on July 31<sup>st</sup>. He would like to have all Council and BOE members at that meeting, so he asked them to reschedule. **David Skoczulek, PZC:** There was a public hearing for the creation of one additional building lot at 174 Kozley Road – this hearing was held open for more information, they continued to review proposed zoning regulations.

Mr. Field advised that he is in receipt of a letter from a resident advising that it is difficult to hear the Council members in their mics on the televised meetings.

8. **NEW BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):**
  - 8.1 Consideration of a resolution to authorize the Town Manager to proceed with the Expenditure Reduction Plan for the FY2017-2018 Town Budget.

Mr. Werbner said when he had prepared his recommended budget; he included some \$300,000 in reductions that he thought should be put in place to offset any potential loss of revenue from the State of Connecticut. If Tolland is going to receive a loss of revenue and adjustments need to be made, the fiscal year has commenced and every day that goes by without making those adjustments makes it that much harder to recapture money later on in the fiscal year. So, he is recommending that the following be put into place immediately (these pertain only to the recommendations that he has made for town services in his recommended budget):

- Keeping the free bulky waste day in October, but eliminating the May date, \$24,500.
- Reducing by two (2) the Resident Troopers, the savings is \$256,956 on a yearly basis, prorating the savings on a monthly basis is \$21,413. So, for July and August Tolland has already lost in terms of savings approximately \$43,000, which decreases the projected savings to \$214,130. He is also suggesting that they move the Troopers' location to a conference room in the Town Hall. It would require some retrofit. It would allow the closure of the building they are currently in. That building could be turned into cold storage in the meantime. This would be effective September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Eliminate the position of Assistant Director of Public Safety, \$73,392. This position has not been filled since Doug Racicot left about a year ago.
- Eliminate secretarial assistance for certain commissions, \$3,300.
- Eliminate video streaming of the Town Council meetings, \$1,251. The meetings would continue to be videoed and live broadcast would be provided.
- Eliminate funds for Celebrate Tolland, \$6,000. A sponsor has been secured.
- Perform the next revaluation in-house, \$41,000.
- Reduce health insurance payments by \$56,000 based on further refined projections for the next year. This reduction is offset by an increased expenditure of \$59,920 to our solid waste budget due to the delays in implementing every other week recycling and maintaining one free bulky waste pickup day.

Mr. Werbner recommends that they move forward with these changes at this point in time.

Mr. Wilkinson said the first week of 'no recycling pickup' would be the week of August 7<sup>th</sup>. The week of August 14<sup>th</sup>, there will be a pickup. Delivery of the bigger bins will start on August 7<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Werbner advised that the bins are all numbered and identified. He asks the residents not to swap with their neighbors. The barrel goes with the home. If residents would like to change their barrel size, he asks that they call Willimantic Waste.

Mr. Eccles wanted to let the residents know why it is important that they start the budget process now. He used an example: If a service is \$100 per year, and since the fiscal year started a couple of months ago, the \$100 is already being spent. Half-way through the year when the supplemental tax bill goes out, we will have gone through half of that money. If it comes out that we need to save \$100, we can't save the \$50 already spent. So, another \$50 would need to be found somewhere else to try to save it. For budget planning, they considered the Governor's budget and what they felt the town would accept as a tax increase. They are guessing that a 10% tax increase is what is going to come as a result of all the budget numbers that they are seeing.

Bill Eccles motioned to accept the following resolution:

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Town Council authorizing the Town Manager to proceed with the Expenditure Reduction Plan for the FY2017-2018 Town Budget as discussed at their Special Meeting of July 18, 2017.

Seconded by Robert Green.

Mr. Green asked Mr. Werbner what Commissions would be eliminating secretarial assistance. Mr. Werbner said they are the ones that are not required to record their votes for any official actions, such as the Conservation Commission, the EDC, the Historic District and a few others. Mr. Green said at the last meeting he had advocated



a complete adoption of this. He now would advocate it with the exception of this. He heard that this could affect record keeping issues, FIOA issues, and problems with Commissioners needing to multitask. Mr. Green wondered what the rest of the Council members thought. Mr. Werbner said he understands what Mr. Green is saying, but he said if someone on the Commission can take cursory minutes; a town staff employee would provide assistance transcribing those notes to meet FOIA requirements. Mr. Eccles said he'd like to see what happens. If a Commission finds it to be a problem, they can come back and let us know. Mr. Werbner said any Commission can certainly can come back and ask the Council to reinstitute a clerical person. They would just need to find the funds to do it.

All in favor. None opposed.

8.2 Consideration of a resolution to support an application for the Connecticut Department of Transportation's Community Connectivity Grant Program.

Mr. Werbner commented that the Connecticut Department of Transportation is soliciting grant applications under its Community Connectivity Grant Program. The program provides grants to construct projects that make conditions safer for pedestrian and bicyclists, thereby encouraging more people to walk and bike. For many years, and many years ago the idea was raised to construct a permanent pathway to connect the Hicks Memorial Municipal Center and Library with the Tolland Intermediate School and the Tolland Recreation Center. Push for this pathway emerged again in 2016 during the public meetings for the Parker Place Elderly Housing Project. The grant will allow the Town to finally implement this long-desired pedestrian connection. The ADA-compliant pathway would provide easy and convenient access, not only between the two sites, but also to other uses on the Green. The grant would cover construction. The Town would pay for design of the pathway. The Town's consultant engineer, BSC Group, estimates the design will cost \$23,000. We expect the funds would come from the capital budget in FY 19.

Bill Eccles motioned to accept the following resolution:

WHEREAS; the Connecticut Department of Transportation is soliciting applications for its Community Connectivity Grant Program, which provides funding for the construction of projects that make conditions safer and more accommodating for pedestrians and bicyclists,

WHEREAS; the Town of Tolland strives to improve pedestrian facilities to make it convenient and safe for people to walk to destinations;

AND FURTHER; it has been a long-term goal to provide an accessible connection between the Hicks Memorial Municipal Center and Library, Tolland Recreation Center, the former Parker School (soon to become Parker Place Elderly Housing) and Tolland Intermediate School;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council supports the submittal of an application for construction of an ADA-compliant pathway.

Seconded by Robert Green. All in favor. None opposed.

8.3 Consideration of a resolution to repeal Section 132, Subdivision Fees and amend Section A173-9, Planning and Zoning Application Permit Fees and A173-10, Zoning Permit Fees of the Code of the Town of Tolland and setting of a Public Hearing thereon for August 22, 2017.

Mr. Werbner said this is a request to make certain changes to the Planning Code for clarity and simplification and to add a new fee for the zoning permit fee for accessory dwelling units. The amendments will reduce the costs to the town in reviewing and processing land use applications. Ms. Samokar will be at the next meeting to provide more detail if necessary.

Bill Eccles motioned that the following resolution be introduced and set down for a Public Hearing on August 22, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. in the Tolland Town Council Chambers:

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Town Council hereby repeals Chapter 132, Subdivision Fees and approves the attached amendments to Chapter A173-9, Planning and Zoning Application Permit Fees, and A173-10, Zoning Permit Fees of the Code of the Town of Tolland.

Seconded by Robert Green. All in favor. None opposed.

#### 8.4 Presentation by the Tolland Agriculture Commission on local Right-to-Farm ordinance.

Linda Palmer, Chair of the Ag Commission, and members Archie Tanner and Sarah Farrell were in attendance. With the use of a PowerPoint, Ms. Palmer spoke about the creation of a 'Local Right to Farm' ordinance. Her presentation spoke about the importance of the ordinance to the community. By adopting a local version, it would:

- Re-enforce support for local farming;
- Declare farming as a valued activity in Tolland;
- Provide procedure for mediating disputes;
- Provide guidance to municipal staff when they receive farm-related complaints; and
- Require some property sellers of nearby properties to alert buyers that they are next to a farm.

Why does agriculture in Tolland matter:

- Growing products = economic development
- Demand for local products
- Tradition
- Scenic landscapes
- Supports our farmers

They would welcome feedback from the Council members, and their approval to draft a Right to Farm Ordinance for the Council's consideration.

Mr. Field said the Commission has been doing a great job, and welcomes them to write a draft ordinance.

#### 8.5 Consideration of a resolution to recognize and forward the WPCA's adopted Plan for Addressing Wastewater in Tolland and Sewer Service Area Map to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for its consideration in lifting Consent Order WC 5083.

Mr. Werbner they have a short term opportunity to resolve what has been a 25 year issue between the town and DEP. About 25 years ago, there was a consent order placed on the town that limits the ability of new uses or buildings connecting the sewer system in the Hockanum River Water Shed. It was primarily because there was a concern 25 years ago that there were a number of failed septic systems in that area that could not be repaired and could only be addressed at that point in time through sewerage of the areas. The town and its Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) have been working to address concerns so that the Order can be lifted. Over the last ten years the WPCA and the town have engaged the services of a consultant and held many public meetings to develop solutions to minimizing potential impacts from the use of on-site sewage systems. The consultant's work culminated with a draft "Wastewater Facilities Planning Report" in 2011. At that time, the town and DEEP could not reach agreement on acceptable and practical solutions.

In the past two years, the town re-focused efforts on addressing this Consent Order and has had additional meetings with DEEP. DEEP advised us that we should undertake the following steps so that they can consider lifting the Consent Order:

- Revise the Sewer Service Area Map to eliminate properties that the state deems as conservation areas on the State Plan of Conservation and Development. The WPCA made these changes and readopted the map at its July 18, 2017 meeting.
- Prepare a “plan” outlining what actions the town will take to proactively minimize the potential failure of on-site septic systems and how failures will be aggressively addressed. The remainder of this document is that “plan”.

The WPCA has prepared the plan, and they would like to get it to the State as soon as possible. They are asking for the Council’s affirmation.

Bill Eccles motioned to accept the following resolution:

**WHEREAS;** the Town of Tolland has been subject to a Consent Order (WC 5083) negotiated between the Town and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection since 1992 and such order limits the ability of new uses or buildings to connect to the sewer system in the Hockanum River Watershed;

**WHEREAS;** the Town has been working with DEEP over the last few years to address concerns so that the order can be lifted;

**AND FURTHER;** based on the recommendations of DEEP, the WPCA has adopted a “Plan for Addressing Wastewater in Tolland” and updated the Sewer Service Area Map;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Town Council recognizes the Plan and Map and authorizes the Town Manager to forward said documents to DEEP for its consideration in lifting the Consent Order.

Seconded by Robert Green. All in favor. None opposed.

- 8.6 Consideration and action on authorizing the renewal of a contract with the State of Connecticut for Resident State Trooper services for the period of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019.

Mr. Werbner said every two years, the State requires that they have a contract in place for the resident trooper program. Mr. Werbner is suggesting that they make the amendment that they will be reducing the number of Troopers from four to two from the prior resolution. The contract will be effective September 1, 2017.

Bill Eccles motioned to accept the following resolution *as amended*:

**BE IT RESOLVED** that Steven R. Werbner, Town Manager, be and herewith is authorized to execute a contract on behalf of the Town of Tolland with the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of State Police for the services of ~~five~~ **two** Resident State Troopers for the period of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019;

And that the Town of Tolland hereby adopts as its policy to support the non-discrimination agreements and warranties required under Connecticut General Statutes § 4a-60(a)(1) and § 4a-60a(a)(1), as amended in State of Connecticut Public Act 07-245 and sections 9(a)(1) and 10(a)(1) of Public Act 07-142.

Seconded by Robert Green. All in favor. None opposed.

- 8.7 Consideration of a resolution to declare various equipment in disrepair or obsolete from the Board of Education.

Mr. Werbner said this is a list of equipment received from the BOE. The equipment is recommended for disposal in accordance with Board of Education Policy 3040, Disposal of Obsolete or Surplus Equipment/ Materials.

Bill Eccles motioned to accept the following resolution:

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the list of equipment attached is hereby declared obsolete and may be disposed of in accordance with Board of Education Policy 3040, Disposal of Obsolete or Surplus Equipment/Materials.

Seconded by Robert Green. All in favor. None opposed.

8.8 Appointments to vacancies on various municipal boards/commissions.

David Skoczulek mentioned that they are in receipt of a resignation letter from Deb Campbell from the Agriculture Commission. He also commented that they should have a slate for the Council to consider for the Charter Commission at the next meeting.

9. **OLD BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):** None.

10. **REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER (A WRITTEN REPORT SHALL BE PROVIDED THE 1<sup>ST</sup> MEETING OF THE MONTH ONLY):** Mr. Werbner had nothing to add.

11. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

11.1 July 11, 2017 Regular Meeting Minutes: Bill Eccles moved to adopt the minutes; Seconded by Robert Green. All in favor. None opposed.

11.2 July 18, 2017 Special Meeting Minutes: Bill Eccles moved to adopt the minutes; Seconded by Robert Green. All in favor. None opposed.

12. **CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL**

12.1 E-mail from Bob Martin re: the poor audio on the Council's televised meetings;

12.2 E-mail from Rachel Axler re: in support of budget increase;

12.3 E-mail from Eric O'Brien re: questions regarding the town budget;

12.4 E-mail from Yvonne LeBlond-Brennan re: town budget; and

12.5 E-mail from Liz Costa re: town budget.

13. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Mr. Field had nothing to report.

14. **COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILPERSONS:** Mr. Skoczulek asked that discussion regarding the next steps in the search of a town manager be added to the next Council agenda.

15. **PUBLIC LISTED PARTICIPATION** (*on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Town Council*)  
(3 minute limit)

**Archie Tanner of Buff Cap Road** – He is happy to see the WPCA resolution was approved. He was on the Sewer/Water Waste Management Commission 30 years ago when this all came about. At the last meeting, he heard comments that 25% of employee's time is spent shuffling vehicles around at the town garage. He would hope that in a couple of years, when the new garage is up, some personnel could be saved since there will be no shuffling of vehicles. He also thanked them for doing the Ag Commission thing tonight.

**Deb Goetz of 176 Kate Lane** - She referred to the BOE's meeting minutes wherein they state that the 1<sup>st</sup> referendum could be mid-August. Is that possible?

*Mr. Werbner said there is absolutely no way, and it would be impossible. He believes it will take at least six weeks. The entire process will be redone according to Town Charter.*

Ms. Goetz asked if he knew what was going on with the State.

*Mr. Werbner said he has heard nothing good.*

16. **ADJOURNMENT:** Bill Eccles moved to adjourn the meeting; Seconded by Robert Green at 8:18 p.m. All were in favor.

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Richard J. Field, Council Chair

**Michelle A. Finnegan**  
**Town Council Clerk**

**TOWN COUNCIL/BOARD OF EDUCATION  
JOINT MEETING  
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 31, 2017**

**TOWN COUNCIL**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Rick Field, Chair; Bill Eccles, Paul Krasusky, Kristen Morgan, Joseph Sce

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sam Adlerstein, Chair; Michelle Harrold, Karen Moran, Jeffrey Schroeder, Susan Seaver, Cliff Vachon, Colleen Yudachik

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Steven Werbner, Town Manager; Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools; Public

1. Call to Order: Town Council Chair Rick Field called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Tolland High School Auditorium. He provided an overview of how the meeting would be conducted and set ground rules. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. Budget Discussion: Mr. Field introduced Board of Education Chair Sam Adlerstein, who asked attendees to consider what Tolland would look like in one, five and ten years and what will maintain their property values. He asked attendees to participate in an exercise and greet those around them, highlighting the age old tension between trying to manage costs while also investing in its schools. He showed a slide comparing Tolland's equalized mill rate ranking (49 out of 169 towns) vs. Tolland's per pupil spending (154 out of 169 towns).

Dr. Willett said the town is at the point where they need to elaborate on the impact of a massive cut in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) from the state, and name some of the elephants in the room. He said Tolland has enjoyed an excellent reputation for some time but is seeing competition from magnet and charter schools. They need to be able to modernize their system to remain competitive. Dr. Willett said that because there are so many unknowns that the town tends to react to hyperbole. He said losing 35 to 40 teachers from the district would be a situation from which they could not recover, and they need to demand that their state legislators prevent this from happening, but also to think creatively.

Dr. Willett referred to the MBR (Minimum Budget Requirement) for Tolland. This is the maximum financial amount ethically and financially that the town should be asked to absorb, and is tied to a percentage of towns' per pupil expenditures. He said at \$3 million,

which is what the Board of Education is expected to cut from their budget, it is about four times the MBR. He said the State has essentially set Tolland on fire with no guidance, and they need to figure out how to move forward without eviscerating their schools. He asked that the town be able to use some money from the General Fund balance to protect Tolland's future.

Mr. Adlerstein said Mr. Field had asked for a proposal from the Board of Education and Dr. Willett presented his Lighthouse Vision proposal. He also developed out some scenarios based on the Governor's budget which would have a \$3 million negative impact on Tolland Schools. He noted the budget is now in the hands of state legislators who have several competing proposals. One of those proposals holds funding to Tolland flat. He said there will be an education grant reduction, but at this point they don't know what the amount will be.

Mr. Adlerstein said the Board of Education would like to ask for a phased-in reduction and other towns have passed similar resolutions. He said Dr. Willett's original budget called for a 2.14 percent increase which was verbally supported by both the Town Manager and Town Council. The Board is now recommending a zero percent increase to the BOE budget. He said the General Fund (Reserve Fund) is designed to be used for emergencies and he hopes they won't have to tap into it.

Mr. Field asked if Town Council members had any questions. Ms. Morgan asked Dr. Willett if he had an exact figure for what the Minimum Budget Reduction is for Tolland. Dr. Willett said it depends on enrollment, but it is about \$826,000. The \$3 million figure presented to the BOE, he said, is far more than they can sustain. Ms. Morgan asked Mr. Adlerstein if he knew what kinds of increases other towns similar to Tolland, such as Coventry, had been looking at. Mr. Adlerstein said he didn't have the data, but no one knows what the outcome will be yet because the State does not yet have a budget.

Ms. Morgan also asked what a zero percent increase in the Board of Education would mean in terms of tax increases to residents. Mr. Adlerstein said there are too many variables to know, as they don't know what reduction in funding will ultimately come out of the State. Ms. Moran noted that a zero percent increase would still require cuts. Mr. Field noted that the ECS does not include teacher pensions. Dr. Willett said even with a zero percent increase, the Board of Education must still meet their contractual obligations, and that differential will result in the need for staff reductions.

Mr. Eccles asked what the legal ramifications would be for exceeding the MBR. Dr. Willett said it would be a violation of the Connecticut General Statutes, but could not be sure what would happen as a result of that. Mr. Werbner said there is the possibility that the MBR could be reduced by as much as the ECS is reduced. The penalty would be a loss of revenue from other sources. Dr. Willett said the MBR was designed for a reason, because taking any more than the maximum would result in destroying a school system. He urged residents to contact their legislators about this.

Mr. Sce said he understood the teachers' union was approached about a salary freeze and asked what they had decided. Dr. Willett said they have been approached and they are reaching out to their membership. He expects to hear back from them soon. He was asked

what the average pay increase would be this year, and Dr. Willett said he would need to look it up.

Mr. Adlerstein called for a five minute recess after which the meeting would be opened up to public comment.

3. Public Comment: When the meeting resumed, Dr. Willett said he had looked up the pay increases and found the average would be about 3.05 percent, with many teachers scheduled to receive only 1 percent in the step program. He noted Tolland has lost a number of teachers to other neighboring districts that pay more, and they don't want to lose the good teachers that they have trained and invested in. From this year to the next, the increase would be about \$366,000.

Mr. Field opened the meeting up to public comment.

Tom Parker of 16 Stacy Lane, said he was listening to the conversation about possibly taking money from the General Fund to help balance the budget this year and while some people seem to think it would be a one-shot solution, he is less sure as he expects the situation in Hartford will not be resolved in a year. He asked how sustainable that solution would be over multiple difficult years.

Mr. Werbner said this has been a concern of his also. He said it would be very difficult to make up that hole in the General Fund in a year and they simply cannot take \$1 or \$2 million from the fund each year. He said he approaches looking at a budget on a two- to three-year basis and they need to look at how this would impact the mill rate. He said, theoretically, they should have over \$9 million in their fund and they currently have about \$7.3 million in their fund balance. Mr. Werbner said Tolland has a very good credit rating and they cannot sustain a large hit on their fund balance for more than one year.

Dr. Willett agreed, saying it is a conundrum. He said Hartford thinks Tolland has too much money and their attitude seems to be that towns should tap into their fund balances. However, he said Tolland is in an emergency situation and they will lose people to charter and magnet schools. He said he has introduced some cost saving programs, but these cannot turn things around in just one year. He recommended taking some money from the fund balance to help offset the hit they expect to take.

Patrick Doyle of 8 Lakeview Drive Extension said they need leadership from the Town Council and they should not give up on the town. He said he does not want to see their schools decimated, and that the challenges at the State level make the current model unsustainable. He said the town needs to have a difficult conversation and is asking the Town Council to use some of the fund balance to stabilize this year's budget, then going forward work to create a more sustainable model.

Mr. Field said he feels the Town Council and Board of Education have been open and have worked hard to get input. He noted that no one has said they won't touch the fund balance and no one has given up on the town.



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Mr. Krasusky said the recommendation not to use the fund balance did not come from the Town Manager or Town Council. He said they have their records audited regularly and the auditors do not recommend the fund to be used for this type of situation.

Jackie Kolb of 34 Susan Drive said she appreciates the efforts of everyone on the Boards who volunteer for the town. She said she would like to explore the use of the fund balance. She said she attended Dr. Willett's Lighthouse concept workshop and learned how it can bring revenue into the community. She recommended utilizing the Lighthouse concept, which she feels will help maintain the vitality of the town. She said they need to consider how much they could take from the fund balance vs. its impact on the mill rate.

Mr. Werbner said he wanted to make clear that he is not opposed to touching the fund balance simply because he wants to preserve their AAA bond rating. He said as Town Manager he is the financial steward of the community, a role he takes seriously. He must, however, look at the budget on a multi-year basis and is very concerned about the multi-year impact if they use money from the fund. If they do end up taking \$1 million or more from the fund, they need to do so with their eyes wide open and look at the long term impact.

Andy Powell of 21 Clearbrook Drive said he supports limited use of the fund to help the town with a soft landing. He said they should use it in conjunction with adopting a zero percent budget increase, and that he hopes it will help them marshal their resources. He said the State is moving in the direction of regionalization and Tolland could be in the forefront of that kind of change.

Dr. Willett said he does not want to do anything that could cripple the town. He said he is looking to make changes between now and 2022 with regard to cost avoidance measures and his plans are articulated online. For example the LEAP program has already started. He also reported some good news, in that the State legislature just approved a state employee concession deal, with a tie-breaking vote by Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman, which will save the State more than a billion dollars.

Ramadad Gherri of 31 Stags Trail said residents need to consider making sacrifices as well and combine that with some money from the fund balance.

Edward Gervasi of 351 Old Post Road said all of these matters will take a long term effort. He said during the Great Depression people learned to get creative. He suggested as they move forward to look at ways other towns have dealt with the situation to see if any of their efforts might work in Tolland. He said education is a big reason, but not the only reason, people stay in town and he praised teachers who regularly go beyond the call. He said the whole crux of these meetings is to get creative.

Dale Kasai of 32 Marbella Lane thanked Mr. Werbner for staying on through this crisis as well as the Town Council and the Board of Education for their efforts. He said there has got to be a better balance between the mill rate and per pupil expenditures. He recommended taking \$1 million from the fund balance along with adopting a 2.14 percent BOE budget increase. He said he believes all but about three towns in the state now have adopted a budget. He also said he feels Tolland is being penalized for doing a good job and that negative impacts on their schools will negatively impact property values. He said they need

to stay competitive and they don't want to lose a lot of teachers. He also does not want to see the town lose students to magnet and charter schools. He wants Tolland to stay competitive.

Erin Reed of 28 Willowcreek Drive said she has been in education for 20-plus years and feels that strong schools make for strong towns. She said that between the crumbling foundation issues and the state budget impact on the Tolland schools, they are taking a one-two punch. She said she was in favor of taking some money from the fund balance for this one year as she feels there is no other alternative. It will give the town time to implement some other cost-saving measures.

Suzanne Casey of Wildwood Road said she has seen Tolland make some good investments in education over the years and recommended taking some distribution from the fund, while also finding ways to increase their tax base.

Katie Murray of 8 Lisa Lane noted there are no legislators here at the meeting this evening. She noted that Nancy Wyman, with her tie-breaking vote, saved the state some money this evening, which will get them a little closer to a budget. She said when the State does approve a budget, it will be a two-year budget so that will put the town in a little better position next year as far as knowing what to expect. She said preserving the integrity of their schools is essential and she thanked the Town Manager and others involved in the process for their efforts.

Katrin Hinrichsen of 192 Goose Lane said she attended the BOE meeting last week and understands the district is facing the possibility of being decimated with one out of ten positions possibly being lost. She said she feels this is a true emergency, albeit a human-created one, and finds it entirely appropriate to use the fund to help soften the blow.

Amy Raccagni, a resident, said she would hate to see the schools have to cut programs, noting that many of their programs include the earning of college credits which students can then use to save on college tuition. She asked Dr. Willett how much he would need from the fund to protect their programs. Dr. Willett said the BOE is asking for a zero percent increase in their budget, but that he would have to work with Mr. Werbner to figure out the dollars needed.

Two eighth grade middle school students spoke in favor of doing what is necessary to maintain the school budget. They said they feared that some programs may be cut if teachers are eliminated, and that they need a variety of programs to help students at various learning levels.

Joe Overkamp of 139 Wildwood Road suggested tapping into the general fund to help with what he sees is an emergency situation. He encouraged people in the audience to talk to their neighbors and friends and to unite as a town to help resolve the problem.

Mr. Field said he would not expect a decision to be made tonight on the budget but that he expects the Town Council to be presenting a budget soon, probably at next Tuesday's meeting.

Dr. Willett said that in order to open the schools on time, they need to know what to do very soon-preferably today or tomorrow. Staff and students will need to know the situation.

Mr. Eccles said no matter what they commit to, right now it is pure conjecture. He said his guess is that the budget will get shut down in referendum and they cannot sign up for an unlimited liability on the fund balance. He encouraged the BOE to make its own guess. He said he is in favor of doing what is needed to keep Tolland whole, but that they do it responsibly. He also suggested offering enticements to residents if they can find some savings for the town.

Dr. Willett explained the process he needs to follow. He said if the town is looking at taking a \$3.7 million reduction in funding from the state and the Board of Education's share is 80 percent of that, they are looking at a \$3 million cut in funding to the BOE budget. This is unprecedented and he does not feel the town can make it through without taking some money from the fund balance.

Ms. Morgan said that whether or not they take money from the fund balance, there will still need to be a big tax increase and she said she does not feel it will be supported by the larger community at referendum. Anything they do will have to go hand in hand with a large tax increase, and many are unwilling or unable to pay that.

Mr. Sce said people come to Tolland not just because of its educational system and to blindly raise mill rates will hurt the town. He said it is important to try to keep the mill rate down as that hurts businesses. He said they need to plan not to take from the fund next year as that will impact their credit rating and their debt.

Dr. Willett said this is a hard conversation and they are talking in extremes. He said they need to consider what would be a reasonable amount to take from the fund to help offset the impact without destroying the town. He said they do not have to take all of it in one year and if they can figure out a number they could take over a span of three years, it would help with stabilization.

Mr. Werbner said this is a very complicated subject. There is also the looming crisis in terms of teacher pensions on the horizon and he expects the pensions will be turned over to towns to pay for at some point. He said he also expects the trend will be to lose Educational Cost Sharing funds in the next five to seven years. He said he understands the devastation to the Board of Education and to town services. He noted that town serves are being depleted as well, but has not heard anyone talk about that this evening.

Mr. Werbner said he would like to reflect on what has been discussed this evening and to submit his recommendation to the Town Council, and he hopes people will take the time to digest that recommendation. He said they need to get residents to support the proposal at referendum, and that is the biggest elephant in the room.

Mr. Werbner said the Governor has said if there is no State budget by September 1, then ECS payments will be drastically slashed. He said the Governor does not expect to have a budget until the fall and so Tolland will have to make an educated guess about what they can

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expect in funding. He said he hopes his recommendation will be acceptable to the Town Council.

Mr. Adlerstein said they did not talk about the Town budget side of the equation this evening because the focus was on the need for Dr. Willett to get some direction quickly so schools can open on time. He said everyone here cares about town services as well. Dr. Willett said his target date was Tuesday (tomorrow), but he cannot go past Wednesday without knowing what to do.

Mr. Field said he understands the Board of Education's predicament but cannot guarantee anything this evening himself. He is not ready to make a decision tonight and needs to see Mr. Werbner's recommendations and meet with the Town Council. Mr. Eccles said he is willing to say he feels the situation is an emergency and is okay with using some of the fund balance but with the understanding that this is a one-time use of it. Nor, he said, can he pick a dollar amount that they could take. He said they need to preserve the fund balance for other reasons as well.

4. Adjournment: Mr. Field thanked everyone for their input and adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile  
Clerk (substitute)