



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

### 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.*

### BOE GOALS

- Ensure the completion and implementation of the Portrait of a Graduate Report.
- Foster a culture and climate that supports high levels of learning and engagement, promotes mental and physical wellbeing, and leads to individual student success.
- Assess our district needs and advocate for resources to meet them, while pursuing non-traditional sources of revenue, ensuring a quality education for all students.
- Nurture and support an inclusive community where every person, regardless of their identity, is acknowledged and respected. This will ensure that Tolland students have the necessary resources to thrive at school, in the community, and in our diverse world.

REGULAR MEETING

7:30 PM

AGENDA  
December 16, 2020

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86358441213?pwd=dUJPbnVDV3BoZW1MT1ZlZ1F1K21XZz09>

Meeting ID: 863 5844 1213

Passcode: 5FgfFH

Dial by your location  
+1 929 436 2866 US (New York)  
Meeting ID: 863 5844 1213  
Passcode: 582724

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86358441213?pwd=dUJPbnVDV3BoZW1MT1ZlZ1F1K21XZz09>

- A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
- C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- none

**D. 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.*

**E. CORRESPONDENCE**

**F. POINTS OF INFORMATION**

**G. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT – Alexandra Costa and Simar Grewal**

**H. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

- H.1 School Status-COVID (no enclosure)
- H.2 Coronavirus Fund
- H.3 Tolland Middle School Partial Roof Replacement Project (#142-0082 RR)-certify as complete (no enclosure)
- H.4 Legislative Update-Tammy Nuccio (no enclosure)

**I. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS**

**J. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

**K. BOARD ACTION**

**L. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2-minute limit)**

*Comments must be limited to items on this agenda.*

**M. POINTS OF INFORMATION**

Tolland Town Council Minutes - December 8, 2020

**FUTURE**

**N. NEW BUSINESS**

**O. ADJOURNMENT**

**SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND**

**ITEM:** Coronavirus Fund

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

**FOR BOE MEETING:** December 16, 2020

**ITEM SUMMARY:**  
**Education COVID Relief Fund (CRF) Proposed Agreement**  
**12/16/2020**

The Tolland Town Council is considering the creation of a COVID Relief Fund (CRF) for the use by the Tolland Board of Education to provide funds for COVID related funding needs. This agreement provides an outline of the intended use of these funds by the Board of Education and disposition of any excess funds once the fund is no longer required. I am seeking approval of this agreement by the Board of Education for subsequent submission to the Town Council for consideration.

**Contributions**

Contributions to the fund shall be received from:

- A. Moneys received by the Town from government grants, FEMA payments or payments received from the State CRF fund for reimbursement of COVID related costs from a prior year.
- B. Special appropriations made from savings resulting from the Board of Education budget at June 30, 2020, designated for the purpose of using those savings by the Board of Education, after the completion of the audit and emergency appropriations consistent with the Town Charter.

**Custody of fund; investments**

The fund shall be in the custody of the Treasurer of the Town of Tolland and all or any part of the moneys in said fund may, from time to time, be invested in any securities in which public funds may lawfully be invested. All income derived from such investments shall be paid into the general fund and become a part thereof. The moneys so invested shall at all times be subject to withdrawal for use as provided within this agreement.

**Use of moneys from fund**

- A.** COVID-related activities.
  - (1) Moneys paid to this BOE CRF shall be used solely by the Board of Education for non-budgeted COVID related activities and for those COVID related activities that exceed available resources, provided that all such expenditures shall be approved by the Superintendent of Schools or designee.
- B.** Moneys in the fund may be used to provide matching funds for related programs, if required, by any grants received from the State of Connecticut or federal emergency management programs.
- C.** In the event that the fund is no longer required, the Town Council agrees to transfer the remaining amount up to the amount that was not transferred to the Education Reserve fund for the fiscal

year ending June 30, 2020 allocation. The total ERF allowable amount for June 30, 2020 was \$399,756. The amount allocated by Town Council for that period is to be determined in April, 2021. Any difference between that April, 2021 allocation to the Education Reserve fund and the allowable amount of \$399,756 will be eligible to be transferred to the Education Reserve fund upon closeout of this fund. Any remaining balance will revert back to the General Fund – Unassigned Fund Balance.

- D.** The funds which remain at the close of each fiscal year within the BOE COVID Relief Fund shall remain in the fund balance of said fund and shall not, therefore, be lapsed to the balance of the general fund until such time that the fund is no longer required. The Town Treasurer/Director of Finance shall exercise control over the investment of funds and administration of the fund will be by the Board of Education in accordance with their duties under the Town Charter or School Policies.

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY:**

\$283,508 transferred from FY20 (pending audit verification).

**BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:**

N/A

**BOE ACTION DESIRED:**

Review and approval. First read and/or action.

Motion: Motion to approve and endorse the **Education COVID Relief Fund (CRF) Agreement** between the Board of Education and the Tolland Town Council as presented in the BOE meeting of December 16, 2020

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:**

None attached, but reference "Phase" documents from end of FY20 BOE minutes for historical perspective.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND**

**ITEM:** Tollard Middle School Partial Roof Replacement Project (#142-0082 RR)

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

**FOR BOE MEETING:** December 16, 2020

**ITEM SUMMARY:**

The Tollard Middle School Partial Roof Replacement project is eligible for reimbursement. As part of the process the Board of Education must certify completion of the project in order for the district to complete the reimbursement process with the State of Connecticut. This agenda item requests that action of the board.

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY:**

State funds 48.3% on a 2.4-million-dollar project (approximately \$1,159,200).

**BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:**

N/A

**BOE ACTION DESIRED:**

Proposed motion: Motion to certify that project # 142-0082 RR for the Partial Roof Replacement at Tollard Middle School is complete.

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:**

Pending (will be provided in person – unavailable at time of agenda publication):

Meeting Minutes TMS School Building Committee – 12/14/2020 @ 10 AM.

## MINUTES

### TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL ZOOM REMOTE MEETING December 8, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tammy Nuccio, Chair; Steve Jones, Vice Chair; Brenda Falusi, Cassandra Forsythe, Lou Luba, John Reagan, Kurt Schenher (arrived at 7:08 PM)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** none

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Michael Rosen, Town Manager; Beverly Bellody, Director, Human Services; Jason Lawrence, Assessor; Lisa Hancock, Director, Finance & Records/Treasurer

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Nuccio called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Recited
3. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Observed
4. **PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS:** none
5. **PUBLIC PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** *(on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Town Council) (2 minute limit)*

Bob Rubino, 296 Weigold Rd, commented that he would be speaking to agenda item 8.1. He is in favor of the continuation of Ordinance 60. He explained the genesis and intent 2 decades ago of the formulation of Ordinance 60, also known as the tax freeze program for qualifying seniors and the permanently disabled. In the 1990s the town was experiencing a building boom with 1 new house every 3 days. While some would log this as a boon to the grand list, by the end of the decade this boom and its increase of over 1,000 new homes resulted in a staggering demand for services. The new homes were principally built for white collar younger families and the additions to the grand list could not keep up with the demand for services. Mill rates and property values began to rise. The seniors in town, many of whom arrived in the 1960s, felt the squeeze. Mr. Rubino explained that he was on the Council at the time and they discussed how to equitably address the growing divide and do right by the seniors who in large part built the town. The Council established a committee comprised of community stakeholders ranging from ordinary citizens, clergy, business owners, and members of town staff to formulate a program that would do the most good for those most at risk. They conducted a statewide review of 20 municipalities and their programs. Mr. Rubino reviewed one of the programs that was not successful. He explained that the result of the Council's efforts became Ordinance 60. Because the Council was unsure as to what the program's success would be, it put a sunset provision of 10 years on the Ordinance. Spreadsheets included in the packet pertaining to item 8.1 show the nightmare of administering the program and one can only imagine the nightmare of what the tax collector at the time had to deal with before the advent of computers. Mr. Rubino explained that he suspects that now many wheels are moving and a lot of data is being entered by hand. He believes it is time to establish a committee to review Ordinance 60 to make it easier to administer and to make it more predictable. He offered to put his name in the hat if the Council would like to establish such a committee.

Ms. Nuccio thanked Mr. Rubino. She explained that she is fond of the Ordinance and supports any way to make it easier to manage. She thanked Mr. Rubino for throwing his hat in the ring.

6. **PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:** none
- 7a. **REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES RESPONSIBLE TO THE COUNCIL** - none
- 7b. **REPORTS OF TOWN COUNCIL LIAISONS**
  - Land Acquisition Committee – Ms. Falusi noted they will meet next week.
  - Blight Committee – no meeting
  - Sustainable CT – no meeting
  - Permanent Celebration Committee – no meeting
  - WPCA – no meeting

- Birch Grove Building Committee – Mr. Luba deferred to Ms. Murray.
- Economic Development Commission – Mr. Schenher provided an update.
- Commission on People with Disabilities – Ms. Nuccio provided an update.
- Board of Education – Ms. Nuccio and Ms. Falusi provided an update. Upcoming meetings: December 9<sup>th</sup> and December 16<sup>th</sup>
- Birch Grove Building Committee – The Committee Chair Katie Murray provided an update.
  - The project is running on schedule and is on budget.
  - Once the unsuitable soil (on this evening's agenda) is taken off the project budget, the Committee will be able to reinstate several items that it previously delayed including furniture, fixtures, and equipment as well as technology.
  - The Committee is moving forward and creating the purchasing packets for furniture, fixtures, and technology. Ms. Murray provided an overview of the process. She explained that the architect forms a small committee with members of the school system so they can work together and discuss the furniture and technology needs. The architect will then bring a packet of items to the Committee for its approval.
  - The "mockup" room (kindergarten classroom) will be completed in the next 2 or 3 weeks. This will be the next time the Committee walks the site and Ms. Murray noted that walkthroughs are public meetings so anyone who is interested may attend.
  - Most of the Committee's time over the past 2 months has been spent addressing change orders. In June, the contingency for change orders was \$430K (contractor's side). As of last night it is approximately \$415K and the Committee has authorized about \$150K in additional charges but a number of credits have come through as well. Prior to last night's change order the construction contingency was running \$5K more than it was in June. Ms. Murray credited this to the hard work of the contractor, the owner's rep, and the architect in finding savings. They are advising what should be invested in as well.
  - Mr. Luba noted that that Committee has been very much on top of the finances.
  - Ms. Murray will provide the date of the walkthrough to the Town Council and Mr. Rosen when scheduled.

## 8. NEW BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):

### 8.1 Discussion of the history of the Local Tax Relief Program for Permanently Disabled and Senior Residents (Tax Freeze-Ordinance 60)

Mr. Rosen provided background information on this item and noted that this was brought to his attention by Mr. Lawrence. Mr. Rosen explained that Ordinance 60 is supposed to be reviewed after the reevaluation and noted that the Ordinance was last amended in 2007. The program's intent was to do right by the town's most vulnerable population, so they are not priced out of town. It freezes taxes for those who are no longer able to pay the increase in taxes. Mr. Rosen explained that Mr. Lawrence will lead the discussion and share his experience in managing the program.

Mr. Lawrence presented information on the background of the program. It started out as the state program which was phased out in 1988. At that time, towns were allowed to adopt a local ordinance. Tolland did so in 2000. Mr. Rubino, Ms. Bellody, Mr. Lawrence's father, and others formed a committee and developed the program including the income requirements and benefits. In 2007, the program was revised to clarify items such as income. As written, the total benefits of the program cannot exceed .5% of the current budget. Mr. Lawrence reviewed data going back to 2009 and noted that they have never reached the cap. In 2019, the benefits were at .26% of the budget. Mr. Lawrence noted that the average adjustment is \$810.

Mr. Lawrence reviewed the difficulty of administering the program and provided an example. In the example, the applicant's first year of application was in 2013 and the gross assessment was \$171,150. The home had a crumbling foundation on a portion of the home which Mr. Lawrence inspected but forgot to include on the grand list. After the grand list was signed, Mr. Lawrence did the correction in the amount of \$7,300 which reduced the assessment to \$163,850. Mr. Lawrence explained that he learned from the software company that the assessment correction was not taken into consideration and the data is taken from the grand list. In turn, the applicant's tax bill will be incorrect.

Mr. Lawrence reviewed the process and explained that the values of the house, the lot the house sits on, and the outbuildings are frozen at the current tax amount. Thus, in the example, there was excess land which is taken out. Mr. Lawrence explained that in the example the excess land is in the PA 490 Program which is taxed at the current mill rate. Further, in the example, the applicant had a veteran's exemption which reduced the assessment. The net assessment times the current mill rate is what the tax should be. Mr. Lawrence reviewed the TBEN (town benefit) and the CB (circuit breaker – state program). The program is supposed to look at the previous year's taxes and determine if the next year's tax bill will be higher or lower. If lower, that amount is taken. If it is higher, it defers back to the old tax amount. The only addition would be the excess land at the current tax rate but due to the number of moving parts what should be billed and what is billed may vary. Other variables in the example included an increase in the assessment due to the repair of the crumbling foundation 2 years later and a change in the veteran exemption. Mr. Lawrence explained that the program should always look to the lower tax amount and if there is a change to the house, such as the addition of a deck or garage, it should establish a new base assessment but, in the example, it did not do so. He noted that out of the 183 properties that fall under Ordinance 60, 12 had issues like what he presented in the example albeit not to the extent of the one used for illustration. In turn, Mr. Lawrence approached Mr. Rosen to discuss reviewing if there is a simpler way to handle the benefits. He noted that a good deal of time is spent working on issues such as the example provided.

Mr. Rosen noted that the software vendor is used by 160 towns in Connecticut including Tolland and some manual oversight is needed for the program. He added that they want to fix the issue and move forward – not go back and collect money from past errors. Mr. Lawrence noted that they have spoken with some of the homeowners to let them know that a correction will be made and what happened, but it can be difficult.

Mr. Rosen explained that the ask of the Council is to review, or have a subgroup of the Council review, how this can be made less cumbersome and easier such as possibly having an assessment freeze rather than a tax freeze. Mr. Lawrence noted that he is not trying to create policy but wants to let the Council know that administering the program is difficult.

Mr. Luba clarified that Mr. Lawrence would like the Council to review what is going on and streamline it. For example, base it on exemption. Mr. Lawrence explained that he is not looking to make less work for himself. He wants the program to continue at its current level but noted that the nuances are a bit much to keep track of – there is too much room for error. Mr. Luba asked if this could be addressed at the executive level where Mr. Lawrence could head up a group to study this and present proposals/recommendations to the Council. The Council members are not experts on this and would be recreating the wheel. The Council could then look at the recommendations and decide if it will review it or create a Council committee to do so.

Mr. Rosen explained that it is written into the program that Council and staff would do the review but agrees this could be addressed at the staff level. Mr. Luba responded that he understands but rather than starting at the Council he would like the staff to make recommendations. It would still ultimately be a Council action.

Mr. Jones noted that it was mentioned that the software is used by 160 towns and asked if the company that administers the software is aware of the issues being faced or if other towns are experiencing similar issues with the software. Mr. Lawrence explained that the spreadsheet is an extract from the software that they provided to him. They gave him a breakdown of every applicant going back to 2000. The data was extracted from the spreadsheet and then he filled out the information based on the mill rate to make sense of what should happen versus what happened. When he spoke with the company, they explained that not all of the towns have adopted freezes but all have some variation of them. They say some of the problems stem from the state program which had a freeze of assessments. It was not designed for freezing taxes although he understands the freezing of taxes. When assessments are frozen taxes increase every year when the mill rate increases. One only benefits every 5 years when there is a revaluation. Mr. Lawrence explained that he cannot speak for other towns regarding if they have had software issues but the simpler it is the easier it would be for them to write a program that mimics what the town adopts.

Mr. Jones noted that Mr. Lawrence stated that there are 183 applicants in the program and there could be an additional 166. Mr. Jones asked how residents are notified (new applicants and reapplication). Mr. Lawrence



responded that it is on the website, e-blasts are sent, and it is included in the newsletter from the rec department just prior to the application period. Further, Ms. Bellody and the senior center promote it. He noted that people reapply every other year. This year everyone was automatically extended. Mr. Lawrence explained that if someone is over income one year and reapplies then they start over. For example, if someone takes money from an IRA or 401K for a roof repair it puts them over the income limit for that year. He suggested having perhaps a 1-year forgiveness.

Mr. Jones asked about the review process and why it was not put to the Board of Assessment Appeals for review. Mr. Lawrence explained that this needs to be acted on before the Board meets. They have had 1 person who had to go to the Town Manager and this was due to a late filing. Mr. Jones asked if the Council were to create a committee what Mr. Lawrence believes would be the ideal timeline for a process review. Mr. Lawrence responded that he could reach out and learn about other freeze programs. Options could be shared and he could run some scenarios for a presentation. Mr. Rosen added that the application period is February through May so there would not be much time to implement changes before the period would normally go live. He asked Mr. Lawrence if they could wait until next year to make any amendments. Mr. Lawrence responded that this would be fine.

Ms. Falusi asked about section E where it lists that it is based on the low median income in Hartford County but they are in Tolland County. She asked if there was a reason they selected Hartford County. Ms. Bellody explained that they use the same housing rehab guidelines which deem Tolland to be in Hartford County. It is based on housing stock and other items.

Ms. Falusi commented that this is an important program for many residents and she wants to ensure they are reaching everyone they can. She would like to find some other ways to reach out to residents.

Ms. Falusi commented that she likes the idea of seeing what other towns are doing and ensuring that what is selected does not negatively impact people who are already in the program. She does not want to change people's benefits because something is easier to do. She also likes that they would look at forgiveness for a 1-year fallout. She asked if they would also look at increasing the income amount based on inflation. She added that she is in favor of Mr. Rubino adding comments and any historical information as well as having a committee review at this.

Ms. Nuccio asked Mr. Lawrence about the freeze on the assessments and the freeze on taxes. She would think that the purpose of the Ordinance is that taxes are frozen at one level and if there are improvements to the home this would be taken into account but they would not pay higher taxes than when they entered the program. Mr. Lawrence explained that if a home is assessed at \$150K and a \$10K deck is added then they would add the assessment of the deck portion to the assessment. It is supposed to increase only the increment in which the property is increased. If the change is not manually done it creates a problem. Ms. Nuccio commented that the intent of the Ordinance is that taxes freeze when one enters the program but understands where a revaluation would adjust this. Mr. Lawrence explained that through the program if a revaluation is lower or the tax bill will be lower then that value is used and is now the tax base amount. Ms. Nuccio noted that the software only looks at the grand list and they want to keep it this way because it is the standard software that is used in multiple communities and municipalities and asked Mr. Rosen to confirm this. Mr. Rosen responded that this is seen as the vendor for this service and he does not believe they are looking to change vendors at this time but deferred it to Mr. Lawrence. Ms. Nuccio asked about the PA490 Program and if it is taxed at a lower rate. Mr. Lawrence explained that the values are lower but it is taxes at the same mill rate.

Ms. Nuccio clarified that the TBEN limit is the household total amount and the circuit breaker is an individual income amount for qualification. Mr. Lawrence explained that on the circuit breaker one can file as single or married and the income levels are dependent on this. The freeze is household income. The income level for the freeze in 2019 was \$60,400 for a household. Ms. Nuccio asked if it would be easier if the mill rate is frozen. Mr. Lawrence responded that this is essentially what they are doing. If the prior year's amount was less then that is the amount that is used. The caveat is that the taxes on the excess land need to be incorporated.

Ms. Nuccio asked what would happen if the program had more applicants and exceeded the .5%. Mr. Lawrence explained that either a lien is would be placed on the property or the tax bill for everyone who is in the program would be prorated.

Ms. Nuccio confirmed that the income requirement is based off Hartford County and in 2019 it was \$60,400 per household. She asked about the asset requirement. Mr. Lawrence responded that the asset test is ten times that amount. The values of the home, its lot, and motor vehicles are not included in the asset test. Ms. Nuccio asked if the Hartford County numbers are based on state or federal income levels. Ms. Bellody responded that they are HUD numbers and are the same numbers used for housing rehab. She will forward a copy of the income standard to Mr. Rosen. Ms. Nuccio asked if many people apply who do not qualify. Mr. Lawrence responded that a handful every year does not qualify.

Ms. Nuccio asked if Mr. Lawrence envisions them looking at different towns' programs and determining best practices. Mr. Lawrence responded that they can do so but because there is a program in place they need to set the level based on what is already being offered. He would like to see what other towns have done and if it has been able to be easily administered.

Ms. Nuccio commented that she would like to learn what other towns are doing and if there is a simplified way to do this but her intent would be not to make it any more restrictive than it already is. She is trying to work with people at the Capitol legislatively to find a way to put in a sliding scale for programs like these rather than a drop ledge. She noted that there are some tricks that can be done in Excel that would allow numbers to flow through all of the formulas but it does take a little programming and confirmed that Mr. Lawrence is not doing all of this in Excel. Mr. Lawrence explained that Mr. Rubino ran with the spreadsheet but they do not do it manually. It is done in the system and the issue is getting the system to work correctly. He added that there is a bit of a communication breakdown with the company they work with. They are very good at everything else and the root of the problem is the multiple moving parts.

Mr. Jones asked about section 136-28 and if for accounts such as the 12 noted if there is a process to reclaim funds albeit they do not want to go that route. He asked if such issues would fall under this for remediation. Mr. Jones asked if this should be refined or reworded in a way that provides leniency to the homeowner. Mr. Rosen explained that they are trying to remove errors from the scenarios and the intent is to establish a new baseline in the coming year.

Mr. Rubino commented that the original intent was to help those most in need – a broad brush – the bottom third of senior households which was about 200. The data suggests that this demographic is the only one that is growing in Tolland so this indicates to him that the original charge is not being met. The program is out of sync. He suspects that the income threshold is too low. They are trying to anchor it to something that is defensible. Originally it was set at 3 times the federal poverty level. If this program was up for review, which it is at revaluation, then it is at purview of the Council to do a COLA adjustment on the \$54,400. He believes there are over 700 senior households in town so if they wanted to get to 250 participants on a program capped at \$250K that is max benefit of about \$1K per participating household. This would be the most straightforward way to get there. Mr. Rubino added that by making the program a function of the mill rate, the total cost of the program is like a circular do loop. When the mill rate is set they do not know the impact on the program. The mill rate has been relatively flat but the other aspect of the program is to address the value of the home. For the past 10 years the real estate market has been flat or down but of late it has been hot as people move from the cities to the suburbs. He is worried the elderly will see another squeeze not only from the mill rate side but from the value of their home. Mr. Rubino commented that if he was on the committee he would present a couple of options with an focus on providing a deterministic way of knowing exactly what the program is going to cost and the participants need to understand it as well.

Mr. Rosen explained that this was presented tonight for discussion and they would like to bring it back on an agenda for the Council to consider if it would like to create a committee/task force and its composition.

Ms. Falusi commented that she is prepared to say that they should figure out what they did last time and vote at the next meeting.

Mr. Jones recommended having a straw poll on whether Councilors want to move forward with recommending language be drafted for Council review to have a committee or task force review Ordinance 60.

Mr. Luba commented that before they move forward with a task force etc. that it should be reviewed on the executive/town manager's level to make some recommendations as far as language and provide guidance to the Council. He would like to have some recommendations first.

Ms. Nuccio clarified that Mr. Rosen wants to add this to a future agenda to discuss establishing a task force to review what other towns are doing and return to the Council with some ideas. Mr. Rosen explained that it should be on a future agenda for additional discussion and possible direction. He recommended the Council consider this and bring back their thoughts to the next meeting. Mr. Rosen will work with Mr. Lawrence and finance to discuss how this may look. Mr. Lawrence noted that it would be difficult to get a lot of participation right now given what assessors are doing right now with the motor vehicle supplemental grand list and other items. Ms. Nuccio explained that they would not be able to implement anything for the next cycle given the timeline and the town has a program that, while complicated, is working and hopefully it can be revamped to make it more accessible, easier for the assessor's office, and better for the software that is in place. Ms. Nuccio asked that any background information be gathered and presented to the Council.

8.2 Consideration of a resolution to declare equipment as surplus property within the Town.

Mr. Rosen provided background information on this item.

Mr. Rosen noted that this is in regard to the policy regarding disposal of surplus public property. Property with little to no value is sent to auction and GovDeals (vendor) is used. The Public Safety Director proposed putting this item before the Council this evening for surplus.

*Mr. Jones motioned:*

*BE IT RESOLVED that the following attached list of equipment is hereby declared surplus and may be disposed of in accordance with Policy A176-4, Policy Concerning Disposal of Surplus Personal Public Property.*

*Mr. Luba seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

8.3 Consideration of a resolution modifying scope of Birch Grove Primary School Project and authorizing an appropriation of \$1,869,941 for the excavation and replacement of soil and the financing of said entire appropriation by the state grants and the setting of a Public Hearing thereon for December 22, 2020.

Mr. Rosen explained that this item is being presented to introduce it into the record and set the public hearing for the next regular meeting so it can be advertised. This is in regard to the code violation (unsuitable soil) issue. Through state legislation it is going to be 100% reimbursed and the work has already been performed. The public hearing will be to accept that the scope of the Birch Grove project is modified to remove the unsuitable soil issue from the main project and make it its own project at a fully fundable reimbursement rate of 100% thereby freeing up the projects that were deferred from the main project to come back into the main project. Mr. Rosen noted that they are appreciative of the state for coming through for Tolland with the 100% reimbursable rate for this unforeseen expense.

*Mr. Jones motioned:*

*Consideration of a resolution modifying scope of Birch Grove Primary School Project and authorizing an appropriation of \$1,869,941 for the excavation and replacement of soil and the financing of said entire appropriation by the state grants and the setting of a Public Hearing thereon for December 22, 2020.*

*MOTION that the following resolution be introduced and set down for a Public Hearing on December 22, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Remote Meeting:*

*WHEREAS, on May 7, 2019, the Town of Tolland (the "Town"), by referendum of the voters, approved a resolution entitled:*

*"RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$46,000,000 FOR THE BIRCH GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECT AND THE FINANCING OF SAID APPROPRIATION BY THE ISSUANCE OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS OF THE TOWN AND NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCH BONDS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$46,000,000, OR SO MUCH AS MAY BE NECESSARY AFTER DEDUCTING GRANTS THEREFOR" (the "School Project Resolution"); and*

*WHEREAS, pursuant to such School Project Resolution, the Town Council is authorized to reduce or modify the scope of the Birch Grove Primary School project (the "Birch Grove Project"), and that the entire appropriation authorized by the School Project Resolution may be spent on the Birch Grove Project as so reduced or modified;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,*

*(1) That the scope of the Birch Grove Project is hereby modified to remove and exclude the excavation, removal and transport of soil not suitable or able to support structurally the school building to be constructed as part of the Birch Grove Project and the replacement of such unsuitable soil with soil fill capable of supporting the school building, and all costs related to excavation, soil purchase, exportation of unsuitable soil and importation of suitable soil (the "Soil Excavation and Replacement Project"), from the scope of the Birch Grove Project.*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,*

*(1) That the Town appropriate the sum of \$1,869,941 for costs related to the Soil Excavation and Replacement Project with such changes as the Town Council may approve. The Town Council is authorized to determine the scope and particulars of the Soil Excavation and Replacement Project. The Town Council may reduce or modify the scope of the Soil Excavation and Replacement Project, and the entire appropriation authorized hereby may be spent on the Soil Excavation and Replacement Project as so reduced or modified.*

*(2) That said appropriation for the Soil Excavation and Replacement Project shall be financed by grants received from the State of Connecticut.*

*(3) That the Town Manager is hereby authorized, on behalf of the Town, to execute any contracts with engineers, contractors, architects and other persons for the Soil Excavation and Replacement Project.*

*(4) That the Town Manager and other proper officers of the Town are authorized to take all other actions which are necessary or desirable to complete the Soil Excavation and Replacement Project consistent with the foregoing and to utilize grants received from the State of Connecticut to finance the aforesaid appropriation.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

8.4 Appointments to vacancies on various boards/commissions.

Mr. Rosen introduced the first appointment.

He explained that this first item has been discussed at prior Council meetings and a presentation of the Four Town Regional Economic Vitality study, performed by Advanced CT, took place.

The plan yielded that a best practice would be to form an implementation steering committee with representatives from Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield, and Tolland. While there were no guidelines on whom to

appoint, Mr. Rosen reached out to economic development and conservation which both fall under the umbrella of what this plan is looking to further for all of the four towns to create a regional brand/identity. The Chair of the Conservation Commission and the new Chair of the Economic Development Commission are both interested in joining Mr. Rosen on the steering committee. All 4 towns will formally appoint their respective members. In turn, he is asking that the Council appoint the following:

Four-Town Regional Economic Vitality Steering Group  
Michael Rosen, Town Manager or Designee  
Caitlin Gordon, Economic Development Commission  
James Hutton, Conservation Commission

*Mr. Jones motioned to appoint the following individuals to a term of January 2021 to January 2023: Michael Rosen, Caitlin Gordon, and James Hutton to the Four-Town Regional Economic Vitality Steering Group.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

**Reappointments:**

*Mr. Jones motioned to reappoint Jan Rubino to the Blight Review Committee for a term of January 1, 2021 to January 1, 2024 as well as Robert Tyndall to the Ethics Commission for a term of December 31, 2020 to December 31, 2023.*

*Ms. Forsythe seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

**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)**

- The Council received an e-mail at 2:00 PM with the budget memo for capital. This is the virtual counterpart to what is normally done at the first December Council meeting where the budget information is hand delivered to the Council to begin the review in anticipation of the Capital Budget Public Hearing on February 11, 2021. The Firehouse Improvement Project will debut at the next Council meeting due to the important nature of this project and its scope.
- Eversource is having an important meeting on December 23<sup>rd</sup> via Zoom at 6:00 PM. It is called "Solutions to Help with Your Energy Bill" and will be an interactive information session to raise awareness around payment assistance programs and ways to save on energy costs with energy efficiency. Login details were sent via an e-blast and are available on the town website and Facebook page. The town will co-host the meeting.
- Town Hall and the Tolland Public Library will close at 4:30 PM on both Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>, and New Year's Eve, December 31<sup>st</sup>. This is part of the personnel rules for Friday holidays.
- Greg Bordonaro, the editor of the Hartford Business Journal, is doing a piece on Tolland in the near future. He interviewed Brian Miller and Mr. Rosen who highlighted all the good things that are going on in Tolland. The hope is that Tolland will be shown in a favorable light and Mr. Rosen believes it will be.
- A 2020 US Census Bureau thank you webinar will be held on Thursday. Mr. Rosen will be in attendance. The webinar will feature statistics, stories, and more pertaining to involvement in the 2020 Census.
- Mr. Rosen showcased a letter received by the DPW from a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student at TMS. The letter shared drawings for a possible snow plow and rescue vehicle. The student hopes that someday his design could be used to help the people of Tolland. Mr. Rosen noted that Mr. Lappen wrote back and thanked the student for sharing the drawings of the vehicles that the student believes would benefit the residents of the town. He noted that they were very interesting and shared a picture of one of the most recent capital purchases which incorporated many of the specifications in the design including high-powered lights, strobe lights, a snow plow, and other items. He thanked

the student for taking a special interest in the vehicles and how they serve the residents of the town. Ms. Nuccio thanked Mr. Lappen for doing this.

Mr. Jones gave kudos for the photographic evidence of the removal of the tree on route 74 near Burbank Road. It was addressed after a lot of work by Chief Littell. Mr. Jones gave kudos to him for his CCMO program certification as well as Ms. Hancock for her CCMO certification that was successfully completed. He also gave kudos to Debbie Grondin who is retiring after 36 years and thanked her for her service.

Ms. Nuccio asked about the 2019 Supplemental Motor Vehicle Grand List which has been received from the DMV. Historically they have seen much higher numbers than were anticipated and asked if they are on track and will continue to see growth. Ms. Hancock responded that she has not yet received an update. Mr. Rosen noted that from an industry-wide standpoint anecdotally that during the pandemic people are driving less and in turn deferring potential maintenance and replacement of vehicles. He spoke with CRCOG about this and industry-wide it is down about 20% in terms of new vehicle purchases. They do not yet know if the town is in line with this figure.

Ms. Nuccio noted that the second installment of taxes for the grand list is coming up and she asked if the town has received any inquiries about delaying payment of January bills. Mr. Rosen and Ms. Hancock responded that they have not heard of any but will check.

Ms. Nuccio noted that the FEMA money (the 75%) was received and Ms. Hancock said they would apply to the state fund for the remaining 25%. She asked if the town is still on track to receive the 100% which will go back into the Emergency Storm Account. Ms. Hancock confirmed that the town received the state money. The FEMA funds have been approved but the payment has not yet been processed. Ms. Hancock is in the process of trying to do another application to FEMA for September 30<sup>th</sup> but it is a very small amount (under \$12K) and she is unsure if the town will be eligible. The state is looking at possibly doing the rest on an allocation basis. In regard to the 2019 Supplemental Motor Vehicle Grand List question Ms. Hancock noted that Mr. Lawrence confirmed that it was down 20%. He does not yet have the value. The 2020 list was released this afternoon but there is no information yet about early estimates. Ms. Nuccio asked if this would be a problem for the town from a revenue perspective. Ms. Hancock responded that she will need to review it.

Ms. Nuccio congratulated Ms. Hancock and her team for the CCMO Certification. Ms. Hancock noted that Mr. Rosen and Chief Littell received it as well. Ms. Nuccio extended her congratulations to Chief Littell and Mr. Rosen.

## **11. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

### **11.1 November 24, 2020 Remote Regular Meeting Minutes**

*Mr. Jones motioned to adopt the November 24, 2020 Remote Regular Meeting Minutes as outlined in item 11.1.*

*Mr. Schenher seconded the motion.*

*Changes: none*

*A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.*

## **12. CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL**

Ms. Falusi noted the following:

- Correspondence from a resident asking the Council to ensure there will be funding to prepare for applying for grants for ADA projects. Specifically, the sidewalks on the Green were noted.
- E-mails from a resident with information on climate emergencies and asking for the Council to declare a Climate Emergency. Examples were provided.
- Other correspondence from organizations asking Council members to sign up for events and programs.

## **13. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Ms. Nuccio explained that she is the representative-elect for the 53<sup>rd</sup> district. They need to have ideas for bills and legislation in by the end of the month. She has been meeting with towns' boards of finance, boards of education, and boards of selectmen. She is reaching out to the Council members in this capacity to ask what they would like her to focus on in the upcoming session. She asked that they send the information to her so they can have conversations and

she can find ways to work with people to bring it forward as legislative ideas. Ms. Nuccio will be meeting with Mr. Rosen and Dr. Willett as well.

Ms. Nuccio encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming Board of Education meetings – especially the community workshops for the budget.

Ms. Nuccio noted that the tree lighting ceremony took place last weekend. The Permanent Celebration Committee found a way to keep the holiday tradition alive. She thanked them for this.

Ms. Nuccio will send information out about some items in the Town Manager's Report including information about the Holiday Care and Share Program and the Local Prevention Council's free drug deactivation bags.

**14. COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILPERSONS**

- Mr. Jones asked if Ms. Nuccio has an official e-mail address that residents or Council members could use for communication. Ms. Nuccio responded that her e-mail address will not be available until she is sworn in. Until then people can send communication to her personal e-mail address: [tammy.nuccio@yahoo.com](mailto:tammy.nuccio@yahoo.com)
- Mr. Jones extended thanks to Public Safety, Troop C, and Public Works for their response to the first notable winter storm. Everyone worked well together.
- Mr. Jones noted that this Sunday there will be another COVID testing event at THS, 12:00PM to 3:00PM
- Ms. Falusi commented that the Council members received an e-mail about a month ago. It was sent to each Council member. The e-mail asked the Council to declare racism as a public health emergency. Currently, fifteen towns in CT have done this and a few have added an ad-hoc committee or created a diversity and inclusion commission on racial justice and equity. Ms. Falusi noted that she would like to look into creating a racism in public health crisis proclamation. It would help the Council be cognizant on every decision it makes to ensure there is equity when it comes to racism and that everybody receives the same benefits. She would also like to learn from residents how they feel about this. Ms. Falusi explained that from what she has seen at rallies and demonstrations in town that this seems to be important to residents. She encouraged residents to send e-mails to [towncouncil@tolland.org](mailto:towncouncil@tolland.org) to share how they feel about this. If they have more residents formally asking, Ms. Falusi would like the Council to consider this.
- Mr. Jones noted that a resident who is interested in serving on the Parks and Rec Advisory Board intends to meet at next week's Zoom meeting. He recommended that this person reach out to Mr. Schenher for more information.
- Mr. Jones inquired if a close off date should be established for the Task Force on Mental Health and Substance Use for the end of the calendar year. After a brief discussion the date of January 7, 2021 was selected.

**15. PUBLIC LISTED PARTICIPATION** *(on any subject within the jurisdiction of the Town Council)*  
*(3 minute limit) - none*

**16. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Jones motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 PM

Mr. Luba seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.