



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

7:00 PM

AGENDA  
March 10, 2021

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86358441213?pwd=dUJPbnVDV3BoZW1MT1ZJZ1F1K21XZz09>  
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=dUJPbnVDV3BoZW1MT1ZJZ1F1K21XZz09>

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- February 24, 2021

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 Monthly Financial Report
- H.2 5 day in person learning plan / COVID Update
- H.3 Finance and Facilities One Page Summary

I. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

J. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

K. BOARD ACTION

- K.1 Paraprofessional Contract (no enclosure)
- K.2 Policy 4120 Electronic Devices

L. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (2-minute limit)

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

M. POINTS OF INFORMATION

N. FUTURE

O. NEW BUSINESS

P. ADJOURNMENT

# TOLLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

## ZOOM Meeting

REGULAR MEETING – February 24, 2021

Members Present: Ashley Lundgren, Chair; Christina Plourd, Vice Chair; Renie Besaw, Madhu Renduchintala, Jacob Marie, Dana Philbin, Sophia Shaikh

Members Absent: Tony Holt, Christine Griffin

Administrators Present: Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent of Schools

A. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Lundgren called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA – no changes

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- January 27, 2021
- February 3, 2021
- February 10, 2021

*Mr. Marie motioned to approve the 3 meeting minutes.*

*Mr. Renduchintala seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

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

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

E. CORRESPONDENCE

- E-mail urging the Board to advocate for prioritization of teachers with the vaccine
- E-mail articulating lessons learned by the writer
- E-mail asking for support for families with a religious exemption to vaccinations in school
- E-mail with information on a webinar on equity
- E-mail congratulating the Board for working together and asking the Town Council to support the budget
- E-mail asking if there is a planned date for getting children back into school 5 days a week; author states remote learning is not productive for his 5-year-old
- E-mail asking the Board to push back on the implementation of standardized testing this year

F. POINTS OF INFORMATION

- Ms. Shaikh commented that she wanted to express her frustrations with the joint meeting with the Town Council. She did not feel like it was a joint meeting but that they were invited to a Town Council meeting. She commented that she was surprised at how ill-prepared the Councilors were. They did not do their due diligence or listen to the Board's meetings. It was apparent they had not asked Dr. Willett any questions in advance. Ms. Shaikh asked if they could have an agenda item to discuss how the Board

could help the Council become more aware of the Board's budget preparation and process in the future. The Council would then be more prepared at a joint meeting and able to have a lively and productive discussion with the Board as opposed to what felt like a grill session of Dr. Willett.

- Ms. Lundgren asked if the Council receives the budget binder. Dr. Willett responded that it is sent to the town and posted online.
- Ms. Philbin commented that one of her concerns, albeit she likes the discussion about having Dr. Willett put together a compressed version to assist the Council in coming to a decision, is that it is one more thing he is tasked to do.

G. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT – Alexandra Costa & Simar Grewal

- National Honor Society – community service project of the donation of donated books to a hospital so children can read more
- Student Council – setting up a drive-in movie event at THS as the COVID-friendly spring project
- DECA – the virtual state competition is March 3<sup>rd</sup>

H. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

H.1 COVID Update (no attachment)

Dr. Willett presented and reviewed the Connecticut School Model Indicators. He explained that they are heading into the next pandemic education period and he and the staff have been working to get everything lined up to move the district forward. There are a lot of considerations to ensure they are doing things carefully, correctly, and fulfilling the obligations to students with exceptionalities while providing appropriate support. Further, there are still hundreds of remote students and they need to ensure everything is in place to support them. The state has indicated that it would support the exemption for families which would allow students to engage remotely into next year. Thus, the district's plan needs the capacity to handle the current load and the potential moving forward.

Dr. Willett reviewed what he does in preparation for the Friday COVID meeting which includes getting information from all of the stakeholders. Dr. Willett then makes the determination for the next pandemic education period and communicates the decision to the community on the following Wednesday. This is all part of the Pandemic Continuity of Learning Plan.

Dr. Willett explained that some of the indicators he looks at are percentage of test positivity, the number of new COVID hospitalizations, and COVID-like influenza illnesses. The primary indicators include the new number of COVID cases per 100,000 and local data. Dr. Willett reviewed the flowchart of where a district should be in terms of having more in-person or less in-person learning based on the data. Interpretation of data and decisions are then made based on input from various sources including the Eastern Highland Health District (EHHD) and the Department of Public Health (DPH). Dr. Willett noted that Tolland is in a relatively good position and has reduced its level of risk category to moderate. He explained that when compared to the early stages of the pandemic, the numbers appear high however the state and DPH have changed their perspective and modeling. Dr. Willett noted that the Connecticut School Model Indicators are not the same as the municipal indicators. Schools systems have greater

controls and more aggressive tracing. He reviewed data points and added that Tolland is doing very well when compared to other districts. Tolland's school system has been complimented on having a system, structure, and approach that has contributed to its current position. Pragmatic decisions are being made that keep students' and families' best interests at heart. Lastly, as a percentage of population, more students in Connecticut are in a hybrid model than other options but this is because some cities and towns with hybrids have larger populations, so the data is skewed in that direction. Dr. Willett explained that data suggests that hybrid is not the safest option. Tolland is a green district and considered mostly in person.

Dr. Willett explained that he is consistently receiving information on rates of prevalence, and maximizing scheduling to support remote learners as well as cleaning, and compliance actions for all students. Communication to parents/guardians about the education options will take place on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. He noted that they are working with the EHHD to make vaccinations for staff available and he is working to bring the vaccination process to the schools. Further, Dr. Willett has reached out to childcare centers in Tolland and offered assistance in helping to get their staff registered for vaccinations.

Mr. Renduchintala noted that while a vaccine is not yet available for kids, he asked if the district would mandate that students be vaccinated before entering school full time. Dr. Willett responded that the last communication he heard from the state was that the 35 and below age group would be eligible for vaccinations as of May. He does not know if vaccinations have been vetted for children. If it becomes possible to work with the EHHD and offer vaccinations for different age groups, he will bend over backwards to make it happen. Mr. Renduchintala asked if the vaccinations were available, whether or not it was mandated, if the district would discuss requiring it. Dr. Willett responded that they would look to the guidance of the DPH. That said there is a precedent in CT in that certain immunizations are required before a student can enroll. He added that he does not believe that as a district they would be in a position to do this without state authorization.

Ms. Plourd commented that she is surprised the indicators remained the same because the hybrid model data showed it was potentially a more dangerous model, but she is glad to hear that it has been recognized and that they are working to get students in person as much as possible. That said, she advocates for 5 days if the district can get there. In regard to having the remote option into next year, it is difficult for teachers to bounce between in person and remote students. Since it will go on for the foreseeable future, is there a way to have remote learners have a remote teacher and the in-person teacher focus on the students in class. She asked about the spike last year in March, April, and May and if the EHHD expects it to happen again. Dr. Willett responded that in terms of the numbers he believes they are higher than they were at that time last year and attributes this to the ubiquitous testing that is now available. Mitigations are effective against the spread and people are better at compliance now. In regard to the remote learning, Dr. Willett believes the intent of the state for next year is more for special populations who are in particularly vulnerable.

Ms. Besaw commented that she would like to see students back in school 5 days. While the remote was good when needed, it is not the same as students being in school. She

added that she would like to get rid of the half day Wednesdays. They have lost a lot of time already and this compounds it. Ms. Besaw noted that she understands that this may not be an option. Further, she likes the idea of having remote teachers as it must be challenging to do both at the same time. Dr. Willett commented that when looking at the data, Tolland is at the higher end of the in-person model and in the aggressive end of the green because they are working hard to have the most time possible in person while being careful. The team effort is going very well. Ms. Besaw thanked everyone involved for giving Tolland this opportunity which, in some cases, is head and shoulders above other districts. This is beneficial for the students and the hard work is appreciated in a difficult situation.

Ms. Philbin commented that many e-mails have been received on the topics such as the hybrid model, 5-day in-person, and Wednesdays. The staff has been phenomenal through all of this and she is grateful. The goal is to get students back to some semblance of normalcy, but they need to be cognizant of what may be given up if they go back to 5 days for some of the students and staff. She cited the cleaning of schools as one factor. She added that some of the principals and others have spoken about the mental health of the educators. They are teaching 3 different types of classrooms at a single time and Ms. Philbin has heard that Wednesdays afford educators an opportunity to discuss curriculum and game plans with others as well as an opportunity to meet with students one-on-one. She added that they need to be cognizant of remote learners and ensure they too have an opportunity for one-to-one time, and this may be lost if school returns to 5 days and Wednesdays are lost. Ms. Philbin noted they have discussed retuning to 5 days and keeping Wednesdays as half days during the period. She wants people to be cognizant of the remote learners who cannot be in person for whatever reason. This is an opportunity for them to have a positive impact in their education.

## H.2 Policy 4120 Electronic Devices (first read)

Dr. Willett reviewed attachment H.2. He noted that this is designed to replace the current language and was discussed at a Policy meeting. It has been updated to cover new terminology, new vernacular, and that users should not have any expectation of personal privacy when using district equipment. The district has an obligation, and often is, looking through computers for a variety of maintenance, productivity, and security reasons.

This item is being presented as a first read. Dr. Willett noted that the regulation is included as an attachment. This regulation is recommended by Shipman & Goodwin under Policy 4120 and will be incorporated upon approval of the policy by the Board. This includes the accompanying Notice Regarding Electronic Monitoring.

Mr. Marie asked about the standards for students. Dr. Willett responded that there is a student version. He added that district staff are considered in loco parentis in certain situations which allows reasonable search to ensure they are safe.

## H.3 State Standardized Assessment (no attachment)

Dr. Willett provided an overview and reviewed the Assessment and Accountability information from the state for 2020-21, highlighting pages 9-12.

Dr. Willett reviewed the Current Status on Assessment. He explained that much like the grace on the teacher evaluations this year, the current status on standardized assessments is that health and safety is the number one priority for the State of Connecticut. It is committed to administering the state assessments to the fullest extent possible but also recognizes that there is a problem with validity right now because there is no real monitoring technology for students who are remote learners. Thus, data will be collected but it will be used to learn what happened during the pandemic rather than for accountability ratings.

Dr. Willett reviewed the Current Status on Accountability. He explained that state assessments do not have to be synonymous with school and district accountability. Dr. Willett explained that the state will probably waive accountability and may publish data about how people performed in a different way. While there will be data, from a validity standpoint, it would be difficult to compare remote learning with in-person administration. Dr. Willett explained that CSDE expects universal participation of students when the state assessments can be delivered safely. The normal expectation is 95% compliance, but Dr. Willett expects there to be some grace with respect to this requirement due to possible technical issues, compliance issues, or validity of data. Dr. Willett believes the state will have some aspect of a waiver with respect to participation requirements and remote learning. Dr. Willett explained that Connecticut state assessments appear to be headed in the direction of performance based assessing and monitoring progress more regularly than one time a year. This is known as progress monitoring assessment and assessments would be given by teachers to students multiple times per year to monitor progress, adjust instruction, and address needs. Generally, in education that is seen as a far superior model. The district currently does activities similar in nature to progress monitoring interim assessments.

Ms. Lundgren asked if the Board would like to advocate for the waiver for accountability. She noted that she would like to advocate for the students and the test is not appropriate right now.

Mr. Marie commented that this will be discussed at the next curriculum meeting. He believes it is a good idea to wave a lot of the standards this year and added that some sort of diagnostic is useful albeit a rough measurement. That said, he is in favor of waiving the formal parts and using it to help students improve.

Mr. Renduchintala commented that this will be discussed at the next Curriculum Committee meeting. He is in favor of the waiver. He asked if the SBAC would be replaced by the Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs). Dr. Willett responded that he is unsure but the philosophy of those in charge is moving towards the progress monitoring methodology.

Ms. Shaikh commented that she is in favor of waiving the testing especially from a mental health point of view. The children have been through a lot and this kind of testing in regular days is stressful for them. They do not need the additional stress. Ms. Shaikh asked if this would affect funding. Dr. Willett responded that the district does not stand to gain or lose any funding. Even when accountability is done, it tends to benefit districts other than Tolland because it does not fall in a certain category. Dr. Willett

noted the caveat that there was a suggestion in the past that non-compliance (less than 95%) could result in a loss of federal funding.

Ms. Plourd commented that when she has brought up unfunded mandates in the past, this was always brought up as an example. She asked for the Curriculum Committee's input on what they should advocate for or against. While it may not be the best test for students to take this year, perhaps it was never the best test for them. She asked if they get rid of an accountability measure in terms of state standardized testing, what TPS is doing to ensure students are advancing. Dr. Willett responded that they have many assessments. Some are universal where they are taken by all students and other assessments are targeted to specific developmental levels. This allows the district to monitor progress and address areas where students are struggling.

Ms. Philbin commented that she does not believe this should be on students' plates right now. Students are doing assessments throughout the year and teachers can speak most intelligently about progress monitoring. She asked if any penalties for not having 90-95% compliance this year would be waived. Dr. Willett explained that in the past, if a district does not hit compliance of 95%, there was the possibility of federal and state funding being cut. Additionally, if they are not at 95%, intensive help is provided and the administrative team is trained on how to achieve compliance which takes a significant amount of time.

Ms. Besaw asked about progress monitoring and if there is a standardization of this in the district. With standardized tests, everyone takes the same exam. Dr. Willett explained that the IABs are designed to have consistency and be tethered to priority standards. It is done in a way where a meaningful comparison can be done. He noted that longer single implementation standardized assessments are not necessarily accurate with respect to a child's skills or level of knowledge. He added that IABs have more flexibility with respect to the varying learners. In regard to Ms. Besaw's question, they are successful in making items such as the IABs consistent.

Ms. Lundgren asked that the Curriculum Committee draft a letter to present to the Board advocating for a waiver on accountability and items of that nature.

#### H.4 Honeywell Update (no attachment)

Dr. Willett provided an update to the Board.

The warranty language is in the process of being finalized and resolution is expected fairly soon. The document will be presented to the Board for its approval.

Ms. Besaw thanked Ms. Shaikh for introducing the warranty concern. Ms. Besaw asked about the settlement funds. Dr. Willett responded that his understanding is that it will be put into the UISF. Capital expenditures, such as boiler replacement, are often paid for from this fund as well as efficiency projects. Ms. Besaw asked who approves the projects. Dr. Willett responded that it has been in cooperation with the town – a town and Board endeavor to select the items. He noted that they have worked well together.

#### H.5 Superintendent Check In – Board Member Reflections and Roundtable (no attachment)



Ms. Lundgren requested that the Board members come up with a list of topics and then they will be discussed.

- Mr. Renduchintala noted the topic of Monday night's meeting.
- Ms. Besaw commented that she would like to discuss strategic planning as well as student performance and the weaknesses and strengths as well as plans for remediation. She would like to discuss how they can draw on other districts for ideas and programs that could be implemented to help Tolland. She would like to discuss items that would move the district forward and support students.
- Ms. Philbin commented that she would like to discuss mental health and adapting into the next school year. She would also like to talk about equitable and equal education. Some graduates spoke about the challenges that they faced entering in the world after leaving TPS and some ideas they had for implementation in education so they would have been more prepared.
- Ms. Plourd noted that she and Ms. Shaikh have been coordinating agendas for the Communications Committee and Ms. Plourd would like ideas of what the Board would like to see in terms of action items.
- Ms. Shaikh commented that she noted her idea earlier, joint meeting reflections, and likes everyone's ideas.
- Mr. Marie commented that he would like to discuss and have a Board presentation on the Pathways Programs.

#### Town Council and Joint Meeting Reflections

Ms. Lundgren noted that this is in regard to Monday's meeting. She feels they need to create a more efficient joint meeting. Perhaps another meeting could be run by the Board and it could provide information.

Mr. Renduchintala commented that he is proud of the work that they did together, and they worked well as a team. He is pleased everyone defended what the Board feels is a responsible budget that will help serve the community and students at large. He commented that he was disappointed with how the meeting went on Monday. They continuously heard that the Council was just trying to get an understanding of the budget and needed documentation. Mr. Renduchintala commented that there were 10 weeks to understand the budget and get the documentation. If there was truly interest in understanding the adopted budget, homework could have been done ahead of time. Some attended the meeting with little to no knowledge and expected to leave a 3-hour meeting with a firm grasp on what took 10 weeks to cultivate. This is not how the process is supposed to work. The meeting was supposed to be about non-educational expenses and suggestions for efficiency. Instead, the Board heard a redoing of work that has already been done. Mr. Renduchintala explained that he does not have an issue with wanting to understand, question, or critique the budget but the time to do so was within the 10 weeks. It would help if Councilors were actively engaged in the budget process from the beginning. He knows the intent was to be good stewards of the community, but this is not the way to do it.

Ms. Lundgren commented that she agrees on some points. A lot of homework goes into every meeting and they need to move forward and determine how to make everyone

more efficient and get them on the same page. She feels that every year they are in the same position. Mr. Renduchintala commented that he would like the Council to have a set liaison that would attend the Board meetings and present a report of what was discussed. Another option would be to have a Board member attend the Council meetings and provide an overview of what took place at meetings.

Ms. Philbin commented that the Board challenged each other and were respectful and listened. They challenged Dr. Willett and his team as well. The Board has many meetings and workshops that several people attended. She likes the structure currently in place where Ms. Murray periodically attends Board and Council meetings and provides updates on the Birch Grove Primary School Project. Perhaps through budget season, the Board could request that the Council have an agenda item where the Board could answer questions and address concerns. Ms. Philbin commented that the Board is an elected body to serve as leaders to serve the community, students, and staff and she felt attacked as a Board member and that what the Board did was not trusted or quality. She noted that she is ok with the questions but not the manner in which they were asked. She felt Dr. Willett and the entire Board were on trial. She believes there is an opportunity to figure out a cohesive team and work atmosphere. She likes the idea of having a liaison. She would also like at some point for the Council to be able to see the questions submitted with the answers. She feels that some did not attend workshops, meetings, or do their homework and they are asking the Superintendent to do it for them and this is not fair. He has to run the district.

Ms. Lundgren commented that she would like to have more Board members involved in the joint meeting and have more questions go through the members. It should not only be Dr. Willett answering questions.

Ms. Plourd commented that she felt frustrated at the meeting for several reasons. She noted that it may have been a misunderstanding as she did not remember hearing about the statute until this year. She felt the meeting was a time for the Board to communicate with the Council and for them to ask questions. She did not feel that the Councilors did not do their homework because for 10 weeks the Board did its homework, and the meeting was an opportunity to answer the Council's questions and get them to buy into the budget. She felt they fought over what questions were allowed and not allowed for 20 minutes before reaching an agenda item. Ms. Plourd explained that if the purpose of the meeting is to discuss non-educational topics and this is tied state statute, then it needs to be the only agenda item. The fifth agenda item was regarding questions pertaining to the Board's budget. She did not see it as the Board was being grilled and added that she felt most of the answers were in the packet. Ms. Plourd commented that they need to discuss how they can move forward so it does not happen again. She asked how the process could be improved such as having 2 meetings where one sticks to the statute and another where they can communicate and sell the budget. She believes the team can work together to get the Council to buy into the budget and taking a less defensive approach would sell better.

Ms. Besaw commented that she too felt that they started arguing from the get-go. She thinks they would do well to examine the process and come up with something better such as opening a dialogue with the Council and asked them what would work better and

then work with them. Ms. Besaw explained that in her mind this is the goal. The goal is to have the Council understand the budget and approve it. The Board communicated that it went through the budget with a fine-toothed comb and she believes they got this point across but perhaps the presentation could have been different. She commented that perhaps she did not understand what the meeting was supposed to be about, and the Council did ask some non-educational questions in the beginning and the fifth agenda item seemed to allow for any kind of question. Ms. Besaw commented that perhaps the presentation could include the top 10 questions the Board asked. She does not feel the Board can expect the Council to have the level of detailed knowledge of the Board or attend all of the meetings and read the minutes. They have their own meetings and liaison assignments. She explained that they should be a team and support each other.

Ms. Lundgren commented that the Council receives multiple budgets, but this is a board. She asked how they could efficiently get materials to the Council that the Board has already gone through. Ten weeks cannot be summarized even in the question-and-answer document. Ms. Besaw suggested that perhaps the Council could submit questions. The Board would then know in advance what direction the presentation should be taking. She respects that they need answers. They need to answer to the public and if she were on the Council, she would need to understand it as well. It is incumbent upon the Board to help the Council understand it. It is a lot of money and the biggest part of the entire budget.

Ms. Philbin commented that she agrees that this was the Board's chance to sell the budget the Board unanimously approved. While throughout the process they did not agree on everything, they united as a group of 9 individuals, in addition to Dr. Willett, and put together the best budget of recovery and forward thinking for students and staff. They need to figure out how to present this and perhaps discuss it in FFC. Ms. Philbin noted that she respectfully disagreed with some of the comments. The first questions from the Councilors were about regionalizing a counselor, LEAP, and special education. While she understands the need to understand the budget, they need to follow the statute and they should have advised that the questions were going beyond what was supposed to be asked. Questions were asked that were not under the Council's purview. Ms. Philbin commented that she respectfully disagrees with the statement that the Board should not have been defensive. Her thought is to have the Council get a copy of the budget in advance and give them an opportunity to ask and submit questions. The way for the Board to support the budget is to be prepared to answer the questions. Lastly, she suggested having liaisons. Ms. Philbin added that she likes the idea of having 2 meeting and that they should be joint meetings. They are peers serving the community.

Ms. Lundgren commented that she feels that a lot of Board members did not have a chance to say anything. More members should have been involved in answering questions.

Mr. Renduchintala commented that most of the initial questions were educational related and this set the tone for the evening. He thinks they need to do a better job of utilizing the liaisons and adding an item for a Council liaison to ask questions.

Ms. Plourd commented that over the next year this is something the committees can work on.

Dr. Willett commented that this bothers him more than anyone. He read the minutes and does not believe they fully represent the full context of the conversation. What he is most bothered by is that those who know him well know that one of his most important roles, aside from protecting children which is his main objective, is to steer the district clear of problems and inadvertently created pain for people, or structural legal vulnerabilities knowing that the human condition is the number one thing he cares about. Conservatively, the Board's budget process was about 10 weeks in this year with COVID. In a normal year, it would have started in October. During this time, there were 7 Board meetings, 3 FFC meetings, and 2 open forums where anyone could attend, ask any questions, and interact with the administrators and cost center managers without his involvement or even direct presence all the time in the second forum. Another body cannot replicate those 10 weeks in a period of 10 days or 1 day. February 10<sup>th</sup> was the adopted budget and February 22<sup>nd</sup> was the meeting. The challenge is that these are not trucks, sand, salt, auxiliary lifts, roofs, or facades. They are human beings. They are children. He does not believe the intent of the law was to have in that public session whether a program addressing a child's exceptionality was worth funding in one manner over another. He thinks the problem is the premise that another body can determine whether an in-house program is valuable or works on the timeline provided. The Board of Education and its subcommittees have the obligation under law to provide the required education program and it is immersed in the process. This is why it is statutorily different – it is not another department. To use such terminology creates a misunderstanding of the relationship. He does not think people are doing this purposefully but it is part of the challenge. Regulatory compliance and administrative consolidation matters are entirely within the scope of a charge and are questions that should be asked. Dr. Willett explained that anything can be asked of him directly and his contact information is available, and he meet with people frequently. The challenge does not have anything to do with not wanting to answer questions, this is his concern. Framing this as not wanting to answer questions, or labelling it as defensive, is an inadvertent dismissal of the core issue and concern. Having questions about special services are seen as questions about a child or children who have faces and names and whose parents listen and watch. They know the program their child is in and they construe whether the children are valued by the district or town out of their interpretation of what is shared or discussed. Dr. Willett explained that this will impact whether they feel Tolland fairly serves them and can impact requests for outside services. There are ways this can be approached but it is not under the guise of a regulation, administrative consolidation, or similar items. He does not think it is being navigated carefully despite what he is asking. It does not serve the town or district well to have some matters in the context of a public session. This is why he offered to meet with people and engage with them any day of the week. He has offered this directly numerous times to some people and they have not taken him up on it. Dr. Willett explained that he is responding in an attempt to help, and these efforts being construed as defensive dismisses important considerations, they go in the trash. He is trying to protect children and the 2 elected bodies. He encourages interaction in a way that it can be done comprehensively. A statement that the district is like any other department understates the complexity of the relationship, statutory and otherwise. It fosters a

misunderstanding and positions the Board in a manner that suggests that due diligence may not be present at best, or that the process was inept at worst. Items like regulatory practices, compliance, administration, and financing make sense for public session. Dr. Willett explained that it is tricky otherwise. It is not because he does not want to answer questions; it just may not be the best methodology to do so. Literacy programs and special populations are not typical regulatory matters. Dr. Willett explained that the history he is afraid of, and he noted that he used this term because he feels that he may have failed the Board in the past by not succeeding in communicating this distinction more clearly. He may not have highlighted it enough and they have had over the last 4 years the following: FY18, 0%; FY19, 0.78%; FY20, 0.84%; FY21, 0.1%. Dr. Willett commented that he feels that he has not said that he is worried this year. If they cannot make this investment, they will probably pay for it outside of what a budget book shows. He gave the example of if he cannot sustain the literacy programs, it can be challenged that they have not done enough and it can result in outplacements. If he cannot acquire the SLPs, they will have to contract for those services which can cost much more. They will need to do it whether on paper it looked like it was supported or not. Dr. Willett explained that he is trying to steer the district and town clear of problems. He is not saying that people should not be able to ask questions and anyone who has engaged with him knows he will communicate with and try to help them. Dr. Willett explained that he felt that it was not being framed in a context that was fair, but in the context that suggested there was a desire to not answer questions, to not be transparent, and to not be cooperative and thus railroading the process. He does not feel this was a fair characterization.

Ms. Lundgren commented that Dr. Willett hit on a few points and it is important to hear from him being that he is their employee. She appreciates this and it is a lot to consider and think about how they can move forward and become more efficient and ease some of the questions that are outside of the scope. Maybe some people say it is trust or the issues he stated. Ms. Lundgren explained that as a Board they need to review it and take what Dr. Willett said to heart as well as what the Board members say and come up with a solution.

#### Strategic Planning

Ms. Besaw explained that she was thinking about discussing this more broadly over the next several months or long range. Ms. Lundgren asked what kind of achievements she would like to see and her ideas for strategic planning going forward. Ms. Besaw explained that sometimes it is difficult to know what is needed in the district during budget season because they do not discuss where the shortcomings lie. For example, when she was on another board, they discussed a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade cohort and what was needed. This is a strategic understanding of where the school system needs support. Ms. Besaw commented that she does not have a strong grip on the district's needs. They talked about some of the same reading programs and the district seems to have a lot of them. She explained that she needs to think a bit more about what she is trying to convey.

Mr. Marie commented that they have spoken about, after the dust settles from COVID, having monthly reports during the Superintendent's report with aggregated data on student performance. He thinks this would help advance strategic goals. Dr. Willett

noted that there was a monthly Superintendent's Report that included this data until the arrival of COVID. Monthly updates on a variety of data points will resume next year.

Ms. Shaikh commented that she likes the idea of learning what the district needs as she too does not have an understanding. She added that perhaps they could put it in a strategic chronological order in relation to budget planning for next year. This would allow them to learn the needs early on and build them into the budget.

Ms. Philbin agreed with learning more about what the district needs. She understands that the Curriculum Committee will be having some upcoming presentations by the math department. This will help the Board see the state of the district and what the students need. She asked if having the presentations is part of the Curriculum Committee's game plan. Mr. Renduchintala responded that it is part of the plan and he believes the math and science presentations are scheduled for May. This is a good time to ask what is needed and how they can be supported. Dr. Willett noted that the ELA presentation has already taken place and added that they used to do instructional rounds until prevented by the pandemic. Ms. Philbin commented that COVID has derailed some of the opportunities but looks forward to attending them. COVID has put the district in survival mode rather than growth mode.

#### Mental Health

Ms. Lundgren noted that the Town Council has a task force on this item. Mr. Marie, Mr. Renduchintala, and Mr. Holt are on the task force.

Mr. Marie commented that he is looking forward to seeing what the task force can come up with and how it can be integrated into the schools.

Ms. Lundgren commented that the mental health of students during a pandemic is taking its toll so this is good work and they will see where the task force takes it.

Ms. Philbin commented that she is excited for the volunteers who elected to join the task force and she is excited to see what comes out of it. Not only are they worried about mental health due to COVID, but it has been a topic of conversation prior to everything happening. She believes it will be an infinite conversation and it is the right thing to do by the community as a whole.

#### Equitable and Equal Education

Dr. Willett recommended continuing instructional rounds at some point; if possible, that immerse the Board in some of the CRE and culture climate activities. Members will be able to get a sense of things similar to when they had the technology initiative and they can see some teacher meetings and groups in action. They will be able to see activities such as the Skills for Adolescents class and have a debriefing. In the broader sense, Dr. Willett said the district acquired some funding that will allow him to bring speakers into the district. This will get people talking and allow the district to offer community forums. Dr. Willett noted that the counselor position is supported for 2 years on a grant and is a pivotal part of this. The position will cover the Skills for Adolescents class and such items

that are crucial. Additionally, he is hoping to get some of the groups together for the Portrait of a Graduate program.

#### Communications Committee

Ms. Plourd asked members to e-mail the Committee with ideas to improve communication with the community.

Mr. Marie asked about the internal direction of the Communications Committee. Ms. Plourd responded that there are a few upcoming items including Board communication through e-mail and communication with other boards in town.

Ms. Philbin suggested setting up times with the PTOs and asked if they attend. Ms. Plourd responded that they have discussed rekindling the relationship with the PTOs and this will be revisited.

#### Pathways/Lighthouse

Dr. Willett noted that sometime in May would be a good time to have a presentation on this concept and provide comparative numbers. It is a success story and they have made great progress they can be proud of.

Mr. Renduchintala commented that he is excited about the Lighthouse and coming up with ways to advertise it so the district can get some tuition-earning students.

Ms. Philbin commented that she does not want to task the students, but she would like to open it up for Simar and Alexandra to chime in if they have any thoughts on these topics. Ms. Lundgren responded that this is fine but she does not want to put them on the spot. Ms. Philbin explained that their perspective is valuable on many topics discussed this evening.

#### I. COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

- Birch Grove Building Committee – Ms. Philbin provided an update and highlighted items including that they are working on change orders and reviewing the budget. She noted that everything was on target and highlighted some features seen on the walkthrough.

#### J. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Ms. Lundgren enjoyed her tour of Birch Grove today. It was fantastic and she is very excited for it.

#### K. BOARD ACTION - none

#### L. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Liz Costa, 54 Josiah Lane, commented that the meeting was good and it was good to hear some discussion of strategic measures versus just tactical ones. To that end, she appreciates that Ms. Besaw wanted to discuss things to improve. Ms. Costa asked the Board to put 2 items on the agenda when they discuss improving Tolland schools. The first is World Language. She commented that it is imperative for children to learn other languages at the right time and they have put themselves backwards compared to surrounding communities. The second item is

computer science. Ms. Costa commented that, with all respect to Ms. Plourd who does not want her child on a screen, there are activities kindergarten students can do with a mouse and kindergarten through 12th grade students know how to use a computer now through Zoom but Ms. Lundgren's daughter may not have the same advantage. Ms. Costa commented that she does not believe the district keeps up with the surrounding communities.

Collen Yudichak, 12 Blueberry Hill, commented that there was great conversation tonight. In regard to SBAC testing, she has a child in special education and she opts him out of it because it is too stressful for him and they already know his level from his IEP and PPT. She is pleased they are thinking about waiving the test. Ms. Yudichak asked about the IAB. One of the biggest problems with the SBAC is that the results were not available until the following school year. She asked how quickly they would get the results and from whom. Ms. Yudichak commented that she brought up a lot of the points made this evening about Monday night's meeting to the Town Council last night. She felt that the Board, and especially Dr. Willett, was put on trial. Words like "discovery" do not feel fair. She appreciates all the hard work that was put in but she does not feel that Dr. Willett should have to have additional work with everything going on. She noted that the Board can instruct him that he does not have to do this.

M. POINTS OF INFORMATION

- Tolland Town Council Minutes – February 9, 2021
- Tolland Town Council Special Minutes – February 9, 2021
- Capital Budget Meeting Minutes – February 11, 2021
- Dr. Willett apologized and noted that he may not have been clear. They have not waived the test for students. They are probably waiving the accountability component meaning that they are not going to use the data to rate districts on accountability measures but they do expect districts to administer the exam. Dr. Willett commented that what Ms. Yudichak expressed is what some parents are frustrated with. This is traumatic in some ways for their kids to have the test in the way it is done. The IABs are designed to help teachers monitor progress and adapt to it. Whatever the state comes up with will likely have a data collection element that would result in some standard data that could be shared about the district. He does not believe they will abandon some level of comparative data even if it is progress monitoring. When he does the monthly data reports, he will present information that will help people understand the vast and different areas where data is collected in aggregate form. There will also be survey data as well. Dr. Willett noted that he is here to serve the community and is willing to engage with anyone at any time.

N. FUTURE

- School rounds/tours (briefings/tours/debriefings)
- Superintendent's Monthly Report – addition of data points on performance
- Culturally responsive education/culture/climate

O. NEW BUSINESS – none

P. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Renduchintala motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:58PM.



Mr. Marie seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Pascuzzi

Clerk



## TOLLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

51 TOLLAND GREEN • TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT 06084  
860-870-6850 • FAX: 860-870-7737

OFFICE OF THE  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Walter Willett, Ph.D.  
*Superintendent*

**TO:** Board of Education

H1

**FROM:** Mark S. McLaughlin, Tolland Public Schools Business Director

**RE:** Monthly Financial Report for February 2021

**Date:** March 3, 2021

**CC:** Walter Willett, Ph.D. Superintendent of Schools

Please find attached the monthly financial report for the FY 2020-2021 fiscal year. The month of February 2021 is the 8th month of the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The monthly financials for this school year may look a little different due to the COVID pandemic but the goal remains to provide for student needs and success. The attached report is only a temporary financial snapshot identifying eight months of activity. As with any financial report generated during the school year, not all purchase orders have been created, not all materials purchased and not all staff hired. This monthly financial attachment is provided in an object format to clearly show the adopted budget and the YTD expenditures. This summary report provides the essential groups of accounts so the BOE can better understand the functional areas of the budget. The object line items follow the reporting format required by the State Dept. of Education. The line items show the approved budget, 8 months of expenses, encumbrances and available balances as generated through the financial software.

Since this report identifies many line items such as salaries, health insurance, FICA/Medicaid & Social Security, retirements, legal and audit services, utilities, tuition, transportation, textbooks, professional services etc. have not all been encumbered or spent. This is normal for this time of year. The budget balance of \$1,121,167 will be converted into encumbrances or expenditures over the next several of months.

The attached February 2021 financial report shows an available balance of \$1,121,167 or 2.80% of the BOE's current budget. As previously stated, this amount will reduce over the next several months. It is extremely important to understand that this available balance is somewhat normal occurrence considering the worldwide COVID19 pandemic. Currently the timing of budget spending, needs of the students and expense patterns are cyclical in nature. Items like, health Insurances will only be booked after teachers return to school, substitute expenses start in September, special education student tuitions will continue to increase, utility transfer to the town is complete, transportation routes are still being booked or adjusted, and instructional supplies will be spent as needed for the balance of the year. Some line items cannot be encumbered and will always have

available balances such as substitutes, overtime, course reimbursement, consultants, unemployment compensation, workers compensation, and severance.

Considering the worldwide pandemic, the current school budget is impacted both positively and negatively. There could be additional financial shake out on the current and long-term budget resulting from the impact of the virus. Since the virus continues, all preventative measures will also remain in place. The continued impact from the virus will change how we track, spend, monitor, and educate our students. The situation remains fluid and changes are based on health guidelines, government closure or reopening directions and the safety of the community. The Superintendent will be the focal point to distribute information when it becomes available.

In a typical year, the budget is built 18-20 months from implementation, based on the best know data and assumptions from the town, state of Ct, grants, interest rates, market conditions, contacts, negotiations, Department of Ed. Mandates, and professional services etc.

The Budget for FY20-21 was Town Council approved for \$40,017,290. The BOE is anticipating spending the allocated budget by year-end in accordance with CGS 10-222. As in the past, any budget balances, may be returned to the town or the BOE will request to transfer the balance to the Educational Reserve Fund after final approval. The district received the first excess cost payment in February 2021 from the state for \$548,825. The second payment is due in May 2021.

The FY21-22 Superintendent's budget was submitted to the BOE in January 2021 and the BOE approved a budget in February 2021.

# Tolland Public Schools

## MM OBJ A Expenditure Report Summary (by OBJ - ???)

From Date: 7/1/2020

To Date: 2/28/2021

Fiscal Year: 2020-2021

☐ Subtotal by Collapse Mask
 ☒ Include pre encumbrance
 ☐ Print accounts with zero balance
 ☒ Filter Encumbrance Detail by Date Range

☐ Exclude Inactive Accounts with zero balance

Account Number	Description	GL Budget	Range To Date	YTD	Balance	Encumbrance	Budget Balance	% Bud
0100.0000.110.00.000.1	Salaries	\$22,522,117.53	\$12,946,641.07	\$12,946,641.07	\$9,575,476.46	\$9,163,549.29	\$411,927.17	1.83%
0100.0000.120.00.000.1	Substitutes	\$367,228.00	\$154,577.25	\$154,577.25	\$212,650.75	\$78,004.00	\$134,646.75	36.67%
0100.0000.130.00.000.1	Overtime	\$218,870.00	\$153,448.46	\$153,448.46	\$65,421.54	\$0.00	\$65,421.54	29.89%
0100.0000.150.00.000.1	Stipends	\$389,839.90	\$185,382.08	\$185,382.08	\$204,457.82	\$247,987.66	(\$43,529.84)	-11.17%
0100.0000.190.00.000.1	Pension/Severance	\$205,561.00	\$58,572.44	\$58,572.44	\$146,988.56	\$51,572.40	\$95,416.16	46.42%
0100.0000.200.00.000.1	Employee Benefits	\$535,750.00	\$491,058.38	\$491,058.38	\$44,691.62	\$0.00	\$44,691.62	8.34%
0100.0000.210.00.000.1	Health/Life/Disabl Ins	\$5,252,093.00	\$3,611,775.41	\$3,611,775.41	\$1,640,317.59	\$1,656,926.85	(\$16,609.26)	-0.32%
0100.0000.220.00.000.1	FICA/MED/Soc Sec	\$727,048.40	\$371,261.08	\$371,261.08	\$355,787.32	\$229,331.72	\$126,455.60	17.39%
0100.0000.240.00.000.1	Retirement (ICMA)	\$262,917.61	\$141,432.84	\$141,432.84	\$121,484.77	\$81,083.45	\$40,401.32	15.37%
0100.0000.250.00.000.1	Course Reimbursement-Degree Ch	\$50,000.00	\$15,770.00	\$15,770.00	\$34,230.00	\$0.00	\$34,230.00	68.46%
0100.0000.260.00.000.1	Unemployment Compensation	\$50,981.00	\$15,959.12	\$15,959.12	\$35,021.88	\$84,496.00	(\$49,474.12)	-97.04%
0100.0000.270.00.000.1	Workers' Compensation	\$265,612.00	\$192,700.17	\$192,700.17	\$72,911.83	\$64,237.95	\$8,673.88	3.27%
0100.0000.300.00.000.1	Purch Prof & Tech Servcs	\$55,842.00	\$26,557.55	\$26,557.55	\$29,284.45	\$0.00	\$29,284.45	52.44%
0100.0000.310.00.000.1	Benefits Consultant Services	\$65,280.00	\$40,028.30	\$40,028.30	\$25,251.70	\$26,390.00	(\$1,138.30)	-1.74%
0100.0000.320.00.000.1	Prof Educ Servcs	\$241,004.00	\$170,396.70	\$170,396.70	\$70,607.30	\$307,054.47	(\$236,447.17)	-98.11%
0100.0000.330.00.000.1	Professional Tech Srvs	\$34,482.00	\$7,436.63	\$7,436.63	\$27,045.37	\$14,167.55	\$12,877.82	37.35%
0100.0000.340.00.000.1	Legal/Audit/Consult Servcs	\$203,145.00	\$115,935.66	\$115,935.66	\$87,209.34	\$51,850.45	\$35,358.89	17.41%
0100.0000.350.00.000.1	Tech Services	\$470,460.50	\$401,318.15	\$401,318.15	\$69,142.35	\$98,127.95	(\$28,985.60)	-6.16%
0100.0000.410.00.000.1	Sewer/Water	\$33,931.00	\$33,931.00	\$33,931.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
0100.0000.420.00.000.1	Cleaning/Rubbish Services	\$135,458.00	\$50,354.36	\$50,354.36	\$85,103.64	\$55,479.98	\$29,623.66	21.87%
0100.0000.430.00.000.1	Repair and Maint Servs (Facili	\$246,783.00	\$61,054.40	\$61,054.40	\$185,728.60	\$39,008.77	\$146,719.83	59.45%
0100.0000.440.00.000.1	Rentals	\$173,565.00	\$112,516.46	\$112,516.46	\$61,048.54	\$19,046.27	\$42,002.27	24.20%
0100.0000.510.00.000.1	Student Transp Srvs	\$2,808,995.00	\$882,409.21	\$882,409.21	\$1,926,585.79	\$1,910,805.92	\$15,779.87	0.56%
0100.0000.520.00.000.1	Property/Liability Insurance	\$204,069.00	\$155,638.32	\$155,638.32	\$48,430.68	\$45,007.87	\$3,422.81	1.68%
0100.0000.530.00.000.1	Telephone/ Postage	\$66,870.00	\$32,340.66	\$32,340.66	\$34,529.34	\$23,387.40	\$11,141.94	16.66%
0100.0000.540.00.000.1	Advertising	\$18,000.00	\$15,985.00	\$15,985.00	\$2,015.00	\$6,112.00	(\$4,097.00)	-22.76%
0100.0000.550.00.000.1	Printing and Binding	\$19,327.00	\$12,338.40	\$12,338.40	\$6,988.60	\$4,779.62	\$2,208.98	11.43%
0100.0000.560.00.000.1	Tuition Educ Agency	\$1,844,555.00	\$933,198.24	\$933,198.24	\$911,356.76	\$636,600.18	\$274,756.58	14.90%
0100.0000.580.00.000.1	Travel and Conference	\$26,159.00	\$4,710.84	\$4,710.84	\$21,448.16	\$3,196.00	\$18,252.16	69.77%
0100.0000.590.00.000.1	Public Officers & State Troope	\$91,994.00	\$4,984.42	\$4,984.42	\$87,009.58	\$2,500.00	\$84,509.58	91.86%
0100.0000.600.00.000.1	General Supplies	\$140,753.00	\$43,718.20	\$43,718.20	\$97,034.80	\$96,324.12	\$710.68	0.50%
0100.0000.610.00.000.1	Instr Supplies/Mat'l's	\$317,986.37	\$213,575.74	\$213,575.74	\$104,410.63	\$107,702.35	(\$3,291.72)	-1.04%
0100.0000.620.00.000.1	Energy	\$1,611,759.00	\$1,456,477.94	\$1,456,477.94	\$155,281.06	\$150,151.02	\$5,130.04	0.32%
0100.0000.640.00.000.1	Textbooks	\$121,123.99	\$73,353.13	\$73,353.13	\$47,770.86	\$24,691.81	\$23,079.05	19.05%
0100.0000.650.00.000.1	Films and Videos Supl	\$1,050.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,050.00	\$500.00	\$550.00	52.38%
0100.0000.660.00.000.1	Computer Software	\$44,690.00	\$53,141.95	\$53,141.95	(\$8,451.95)	\$266.05	(\$8,718.00)	-19.51%
0100.0000.690.00.000.1	Misc Supplies	\$49,059.00	\$11,437.03	\$11,437.03	\$37,621.97	\$35,117.20	\$2,504.77	5.11%
0100.0000.730.00.000.1	Equip Instruct - New	\$89,734.00	\$199,494.84	\$199,494.84	(\$109,760.84)	\$77,293.37	(\$187,054.21)	-208.45%
0100.0000.760.00.000.1	Equip - Spec Ed - Instr - New	\$850.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$850.00	\$0.00	\$850.00	100.00%
0100.0000.810.00.000.1	Dues and Fees	\$52,346.95	\$48,152.00	\$48,152.00	\$4,194.95	\$4,310.00	(\$115.05)	-0.22%
<b>Grand Total:</b>		<b>\$40,017,290.25</b>	<b>\$23,499,063.43</b>	<b>\$23,499,063.43</b>	<b>\$16,518,226.82</b>	<b>\$15,397,059.67</b>	<b>\$1,121,167.15</b>	<b>2.80%</b>

End of Report

**SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND**

**ITEM:** 5 day in person learning plan COVID Update

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

**For BOE meeting:** March 10, 2021

**ITEM SUMMARY:**

Documents were provided on 3/2 and 3/3 regarding the next pandemic education period, and information is available through the following documentation and links:

<a href="#"><u>Pandemic Education Options and Registration for Period 6</u></a>	<a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eI0pKgX2pvKIAAxK-Libw1WALKTp82aC/view?usp=sharing"><u>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eI0pKgX2pvKIAAxK-Libw1WALKTp82aC/view?usp=sharing</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>TPS 5 day in person information and Q and A</u></a>	<a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cGtQY1AwV8QrJJPqajVIN0svOWJlpw4iASDo-l7xspl/edit?usp=sharing"><u>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cGtQY1AwV8QrJJPqajVIN0svOWJlpw4iASDo-l7xspl/edit?usp=sharing</u></a>

The [Tolland Public Schools Pandemic Continuity of Learning Plan](#) stipulates that any [new education options](#) were announced to the school community on or before March 3<sup>rd</sup>. The [registration](#) for the [new education options](#) is open from March 3<sup>rd</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> for the [sixth Pandemic Education Response Period \(PREP6\)](#) that **starts March 29<sup>th</sup>**.

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY:** N/A

**BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:** N/A

**BOE ACTION DESIRED:**  
Informational

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:**

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eI0pKgX2pvKIAAxK-Libw1WALKTp82aC/view?usp=sharing>
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cGtQY1AwV8QrJJPqajVIN0svOWJlpw4iASDo-l7xspl/edit?usp=sharing>

H3. Tolland Board of Education  
2021-2022 BOE Proposed Budget Summary

\$1,275,999 for a 3.19% increase

Salaries:

- Certified salaries increase of \$611,213 comprises contractual obligations of \$423,521 and \$187,692 for the following 3.5 positions:
  - 1.0 Special Education Teacher (\$58,703)
  - 1.0 Speech and Language Pathology Professional (\$58,703)
  - 0.5 English Language Learner Teacher (\$29,351)
  - 1.0 Behavior Intervention Specialist (\$40,935)
- Non-certified salaries increase includes the new Chief Personnel Officer at \$40,011 total as reconfiguration of a current position with no net FTE increase. The BOE determined this position was necessary for TPS to be run efficiently and allow Dr. Willett necessary time to focus on academic and curricular needs.
- Paraprofessional salaries increased to \$177,692 as part of the negotiated settlement.
- Certified substitutes increase of \$43,569 due to an increase in the per diem compensation rate as Tolland was the lowest of any neighboring district.

The aforementioned total \$872,485 and comprises approximately 2.2% of the 3.19%

FY21/FY22 investments

- As result of a budget freeze and planning, an end of year balance was available to make up for the modest FY21 increase of \$41,685. This was accomplished through a series of investments at the end of FY20 for FY21 needs extending through that time, and that would need to be reintroduced to the budget in FY22. These include literacy and ELA programming, coaching, and supplies for approximately \$147,030.

Other lines and highlights

- 325: 129.65% increase that includes restoring the aforementioned FY21/FY22 investments.
- 359: 31.53% increase that includes a shift to online resources for student Chromebook/laptop devices.
- 641/646: 228.30%/149.09% increase to accommodate material text and workbook needs as it will take several years to transition to fully electronic resources.
- 730: 56.20% increase that includes staff computer equipment and promethean boards that replace outdated smartboards. The BOE approved a reduction in this account of \$55,000 from the Superintendent's Proposed Budget. This amount will be instead incurred through use of the ERF. The current amount budgeted is now \$141,491.

COVID Expenses:

COVID expenses comprise about \$80,000 of the budget and are tracked to identify expenses that, to the greatest extent possible, can be funded through grants if the opportunity arises.

Other items to note:

ESSER I funds are expended, and ESSER II funds are utilized to reduce the staff request in the Superintendent's Proposed Budget by 2 positions (School Counselor and Social Worker).

**SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND**

**ITEM:** Paraprofessional Contract

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

**For BOE meeting:** March 10, 2021

**ITEM SUMMARY:**

Negotiations with the paraprofessional union *CSEA SEIU* have been completed. The paraprofessional union has voted to accept the agreement, and this agreement is now presented to the Board of Education for approval.

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY:**

This contract adjusts wages appropriately providing an excellent balance between competitive compensation and fiscal prudence. Other features include:

- The three-year average for the increases is 6.6%
- Reduction over three years of Board contribution to H.S.A. from 62.5% to 50%
- Professional development / training provisions
- Creation of a sick bank

Also see contract specifics.

**BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:**

Reviewed

**BOE ACTION DESIRED:**

First read, move to action when ready.

Proposed Motion: *Motion to accept the bargaining unit agreement between the Board of Education and the Tolland Paraeducator Union CSEA SEIU Local 2001 extending from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2023.*

*Second. Discussion. Vote*

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:**

none

**SUPERINTENDENT'S AGENDA ITEM BACKGROUND**

**ITEM:** Regulation 4120 Electronic Devices (first read)

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

**FOR BOE MEETING:** March 10, 2021

**ITEM SUMMARY:**

Replacing existing with the following language:

**POLICY REGARDING EMPLOYEE USE OF THE DISTRICT'S COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Computers, computer networks, electronic devices, Internet access, and e-mail are effective and important technological resources. The Tolland Board of Education (the "Board") has installed computers and a computer network, including Internet access and an e-mail system, on Board premises and may provide other electronic devices that can access the network such as wireless and/or portable electronic hand-held equipment that can be used for word processing, wireless Internet access, image capture and recording, sound recording, information transmitting and/or receiving, storing, etc. (including, but not limited to, personal laptops, Smartphones, network access devices, Kindles, Nooks, cellular telephones, radios, personal cassette players, CD players, iPads or other tablet computers, walkie-talkies, Blackberries, personal data assistants, iPhones, Androids and other electronic signaling devices). The Board's computers, computer networks, electronic devices, Internet access, and e-mail are referred to collectively as "the computer systems" and are provided in order to enhance both the educational opportunities for our students and the business operations of the district.

These computer systems are business and educational tools. As such, they are made available to Board employees for business and education-related uses. The Administration shall develop regulations setting forth procedures to be used by the Administration in an effort to ensure that such computer systems are used for appropriate business and education-related purposes.

In accordance with applicable laws and the Administrative Regulations associated with this Policy, the system administrator and others managing the computer systems may access email or monitor activity on the computer system or electronic devices accessing the computer systems at any time and for any reason or no reason. Typical examples include when there is reason to suspect inappropriate conduct or there is a problem with the computer systems needing correction. Further, the system administrator and others managing the computer systems can access or monitor activity on the systems despite the use of passwords by individual users, and can bypass such passwords. In addition, review of emails, messages or information stored on the computer systems, which can be forensically retrieved, includes those messages and/or electronic data sent, posted and/or retrieved using social networking sites, including but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Incidental personal use of the computer systems may be permitted solely for the purpose of e-mail transmissions and access to the Internet on a limited, occasional basis. Such incidental personal



use of the computer systems, however, is subject to all rules, including monitoring of all such use, as the Superintendent may establish through regulation. Moreover, any such incidental personal use shall not interfere in any manner with work responsibilities.

**Users should not have any expectation of personal privacy in the use of the computer system or other electronic devices that access the computer system. Use of the computer system represents an employee's acknowledgement that the employee has read and understands this policy and any applicable regulations in their entirety, including the provisions regarding monitoring and review of computer activity.**

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-40x  
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-48d  
Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53a-182b; 53a-183; 53a-250

Electronic Communication Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 through 2520

ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

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**CURRENT POLICY TO BE REPLACED:**

***TOLLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Tolland, Connecticut***

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**BOARD POLICY**                      *REGARDING: Notice Regarding Electronic Monitoring*

*Number: 4120  
Personnel*

*Approved: 2/28/01*

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*In accordance with the provisions of Public Act 98-142, the Board of Education hereby gives notice to all its employees of the potential use of electronic monitoring in its workplace. While the Board may not actually engage in the use of electronic monitoring, it reserves the right to do so as the Board and/or the Administration deem appropriate in their discretion, consistent with the provisions set forth in this Notice.*

*"Electronic monitoring," as defined by Public Act 98-142, means the collection of information on the Board's premises concerning employees' activities or communications, by any means other than direct observation of the employees. Electronic monitoring includes the use of a computer, telephone, wire, radio, camera, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical systems. The law does not cover the collection of information (A) for security purposes in any common areas of the Board's premises which are open to the public, or (B) which is prohibited under other state or federal law.*

*The following specific types of electronic monitoring may be used by the Board in its workplaces:*

- *Monitoring of e-mail and other components of the Board's computer systems for compliance with the Board's policies and regulations concerning use of such systems.*
- *Video and/or audio surveillance within school buildings (other than in restrooms, locker rooms, lounges and other areas designed for the health or personal comfort of employees or for the safeguarding of their possessions), on school grounds and on school buses and other vehicles providing transportation to students and/or employees of the school system.*
- *Monitoring of employee usage of the school district's telephone systems.*

*The law also provides that, where electronic monitoring may produce evidence of misconduct, the Board may use electronic monitoring without any prior notice when the Board has reasonable grounds to believe employees are engaged in conduct that (i) violates the law, (ii) violates the legal rights of the Board or other employees, or (iii) creates a hostile work environment.*

*Questions about electronic monitoring in the workplace should be directed to the Superintendent.*

*Legal References:*

*Connecticut General Statutes:  
Section 31-48b  
Section 31-48d]*

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY:**

NA

**BOARD ATTORNEY REVIEW:**

*Model policy utilized (S&G)*

**BOE ACTION DESIRED:**

*First read.*

*Proposed motion: Motion to approve the changes, modifications, and updates to the Policy Regarding Employee Use of the District's Computer Systems and Electronic Communications*

**SUPPORTING MATERIALS ATTACHED:**

**Regulation 4120**

## ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS 4120

### REGARDING EMPLOYEE USE OF THE DISTRICT'S COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

#### Introduction

Computers, computer networks, electronic devices, Internet access, and electronic mail are effective and important technological resources. The Tolland Board of Education has installed computers and a computer network, including Internet access and an e-mail system, on Tolland Board premises and may provide electronic devices that can access the system, such as personal laptops, Smartphones, I-Pads or other tablet computers, I-Phones, Androids or other mobile or handheld electronic devices, to enhance the educational and business operations of the district. In these regulations, the computers, computer network, electronic devices, Internet access and e-mail system are referred to collectively as "the computer systems."

These computer systems are business and educational tools. As such, they are being made available to employees of the district for district-related educational and business purposes. *All users of the computer systems must restrict themselves to appropriate district-related educational and business purposes.* Incidental personal use of the computer systems may be permitted solely for the purpose of e-mail transmissions and similar communications, including access to the Internet on a limited, occasional basis. Such incidental personal use of the computer systems is subject to all rules, including monitoring of all such use, set out in these regulations. Moreover, any such incidental personal use shall not interfere in any manner with work responsibilities.

These computer systems are expensive to install, own and maintain. Unfortunately, these computer systems can be misused in a variety of ways, some of which are innocent and others deliberate. Therefore, in order to maximize the benefits of these technologies to the district, our employees and all our students, this regulation shall govern *all* use of these computer systems.

#### Monitoring

It is important for all users of these computer systems to understand that the Tolland Board of Education, as the owner of the computer systems, reserves the right to monitor the use of the computer systems to ensure that they are being used in accordance with these regulations. The Tolland Board of Education intends to monitor in a limited fashion, but will do so as needed to ensure that the systems are being used appropriately for district-related educational and business purposes and to maximize utilization of the systems for such business and educational purposes. The Superintendent reserves the right to eliminate personal use of the district's computer systems by any or all employees at any time.

The system administrator and others managing the computer systems may access email or monitor activity on the computer system or electronic devices accessing the computer systems at any time and for any reason or no reason. Typical examples include when there is reason to suspect inappropriate conduct or there is a problem with the computer systems

needing correction. Further, the system administrator and others managing the computer systems can access or monitor activity on the systems despite the use of passwords by individual users, and can bypass such passwords. In addition, review of emails, messages or information stored on the computer systems, which can be forensically retrieved, includes those messages and/or electronic data sent, posted and/or retrieved using social networking sites, including, but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Notwithstanding the above and in accordance with state law, the Tolland Board may not: (1) request or require that an employee provide the Tolland Board with a user name and password, password or any other authentication means for accessing a personal online account; (2) request or require that an employee authenticate or access a personal online account in the presence of a Tolland Board representative; or (3) require that an employee invite a supervisor employed by the Tolland Board or accept an invitation from a supervisor employed by the Tolland Board to join a group affiliated with any personal online account of the employee. However, the Tolland Board may request or require that an employee provide the Tolland Board with a user name and password, password or any other authentication means for accessing (1) any account or service provided by Tolland Board or by virtue of the employee's employment relationship with the Tolland Board or that the employee uses for the Tolland Board's business purposes, or (2) any electronic communications device supplied or paid for, in whole or in part, by the Tolland Board.

In accordance with applicable law, the Tolland Board maintains the right to require an employee to allow the Tolland Board to access his or her personal online account, without disclosing the user name and password, password or other authentication means for accessing such personal online account, for the purpose of:

- (A) Conducting an investigation for the purpose of ensuring compliance with applicable state or federal laws, regulatory requirements or prohibitions against work-related employee misconduct based on the receipt of specific information about activity on an employee's personal online account; or
- (B) Conducting an investigation based on the receipt of specific information about an employee's unauthorized transfer of the Tolland Board's proprietary information, confidential information or financial data to or from a personal online account operated by an employee or other source.

For purposes of these Administrative Regulations, "personal online account" means any online account that is used by an employee exclusively for personal purposes and unrelated to any business purpose of the Tolland Board, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, social media and retail-based Internet web sites. "Personal online account" does not include any account created, maintained, used or accessed by an employee for a business purpose of the Tolland Board.

#### Why Monitor?

The computer systems are expensive for the Tolland Board to install, operate and maintain. For that reason alone it is necessary to prevent misuse of the computer systems.

However, there are other equally important reasons why the Tolland Board intends to monitor the use of these computer systems, reasons that support its efforts to maintain a comfortable and pleasant work environment for all employees.

These computer systems can be used for improper, and even illegal, purposes. Experience by other operators of such computer systems has shown that they can be used for such wrongful purposes as sexual harassment, intimidation of co-workers, threatening of co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, copyright infringement and the like.

Monitoring will also allow the Tolland Board to continually reassess the utility of the computer systems, and whenever appropriate, make such changes to the computer systems as it deems fit. Thus, the Tolland Board monitoring should serve to increase the value of the system to the district on an ongoing basis.

#### Privacy Issues

Employees must understand that the Tolland Board has reserved the right to conduct monitoring of these computer systems and can do so *despite* the assignment to individual employees of passwords for system security. Any password systems implemented by the district are designed solely to provide system security from unauthorized users, not to provide privacy to the individual system user.

*The system's security aspects, message delete function and personal passwords can be bypassed for monitoring purposes.*

Therefore, employees must be aware that they should not have any expectation of personal privacy in the use of these computer systems. This provision applies to any and all uses of the district's computer systems and electronic devices that access same, including any incidental personal use permitted in accordance with these regulations.

Use of the computer system represents an employee's acknowledgement that the employee has read and understands these regulations and any applicable policy in their entirety, including the provisions regarding monitoring and review of computer activity.

#### Prohibited Uses

Inappropriate use of district computer systems is expressly prohibited, including, but not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Sending any form of solicitation not directly related to the business of the Tolland Board of Education;
- ◆ Sending any form of slanderous, harassing, threatening, or intimidating message, at any time, to any person (such communications *may* also be a *crime*);
- ◆ Gaining or seeking to gain unauthorized access to computer systems;

- ◆ Downloading or modifying computer software of the district in violation of the district's licensure agreement(s) and/or without authorization from supervisory personnel;
- ◆ Sending any message that breaches the Tolland Board of Education's confidentiality requirements, including the confidentiality rights of students;
- ◆ Sending any copyrighted material over the system;
- ◆ Sending messages for any purpose prohibited by law;
- ◆ Transmission or receipt of inappropriate e-mail communications or accessing inappropriate information on the Internet, including vulgar, lewd or obscene words or pictures;
- ◆ Using computer systems for any purposes, or in any manner, other than those permitted under these regulations;
- ◆ Using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube in a manner that violates the Tolland Board's Social Networking policy.

**[If the Tolland Board does not have a formal social networking policy, the last bullet may be revised as follows:**

- ◆ **Using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube in a manner that disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the school district; is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications; creates a hostile work environment; breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees; or violates the law, Tolland Board policies and/or the other school rules and regulations.]**

In addition, if a particular behavior or activity is generally prohibited by law and/or Tolland Board of Education policy, use of these computer systems for the purpose of carrying out such activity and/or behavior is also prohibited.

#### Electronic Communications

The Tolland Board expects that all employees will comply with all applicable Tolland Board policies and standards of professional conduct when engaging in any form of electronic communication, including texting, using the district's computer system, or through the use of any electronic device or mobile device owned, leased, or used by the Tolland Board. As with any form of communication, the Tolland Board expects district personnel to exercise caution and appropriate judgment when using electronic communications with students, colleagues and other individuals in the context of fulfilling an employee's job-related responsibilities, including when engaging in remote teaching or use of a digital teaching platform.

#### Disciplinary Action

Misuse of these computer systems will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Because no two situations are identical, the Tolland Board reserves the right to determine the appropriate discipline for any particular set of circumstances.

#### Complaints of Problems or Misuse

Anyone who is aware of problems with or misuse of these computer systems, or has a question regarding the appropriate use of the computer systems, should report this to his or her supervisor or to the Superintendent of Schools.

Most importantly, the Tolland Board urges *any* employee who receives *any* harassing, threatening, intimidating or other improper message through the computer systems to report this immediately. It is the Tolland Board's policy that no employee should be required to tolerate such treatment, regardless of the identity of the sender of the message. *Please report these events!*

#### Implementation

This regulation is effective as of \_\_/\_\_/\_\_.

#### Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-40x

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-48d

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53a-182; 53a-183; 53a-250

Electronic Communication Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 through 2520

## **NOTICE REGARDING ELECTRONIC MONITORING**

### **[For Posting]**

In accordance with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Section 31-48d, the Tolland Board of Education hereby gives notice to all its employees of the potential use of electronic monitoring in its workplace. While the Tolland Board may not actually engage in the use of electronic monitoring, it reserves the right to do so as the Tolland Board and/or the Administration deem appropriate in their discretion, consistent with the provisions set forth in this Notice.

“Electronic monitoring,” as defined by Connecticut General Statutes Section 31-48d, means the collection of information on the Tolland Board’s premises concerning employees’ activities or communications, by any means other than direct observation of the employees. Electronic monitoring includes the use of a computer, telephone, wire, radio, camera, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical systems. The law does not cover the collection of information (A) for security purposes in any common areas of the Tolland Board’s premises which are open to the public, or (B) which is prohibited under other state or federal law.

The following specific types of electronic monitoring may be used by the Tolland Board in its workplaces: **[modify as appropriate for the school district in question]**

- Monitoring of e-mail and other components of the Tolland Board’s computer systems, including monitoring of electronic devices such as PDAs, Smartphones, and mobile or handheld devices that access the computer systems, for compliance with the Tolland Board’s policies and regulations concerning use of such systems.
- Video and/or audio surveillance within school buildings (other than in restrooms, locker rooms, lounges and other areas designed for the health or personal comfort of employees or for the safeguarding of their possessions), on school grounds and on school buses and other vehicles providing transportation to students and/or employees of the school system.
- Monitoring of employee usage of the school district’s telephone systems.
- Monitoring of employees when employees are engaging in remote teaching or use of a digital teaching platform.

The law also provides that, where electronic monitoring may produce evidence of misconduct, the Tolland Board may use electronic monitoring without any prior notice when the Tolland Board has reasonable grounds to believe employees are engaged in conduct that (i)



violates the law, (ii) violates the legal rights of the Tolland Board or other employees, or (iii) creates a hostile work environment.

Questions about electronic monitoring in the workplace should be directed to the Superintendent.

#### Legal References:

##### Connecticut General Statutes:

Section 31-48b

Section 31-48d

## MINUTES

### TOWN COUNCIL/BOARD OF EDUCATION JOINT BUDGET MEETING ZOOM REMOTE MEETING February 22, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.

**TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tammy Nuccio, Chair; Steve Jones, Vice Chair; Brenda Falusi, Cassandra Forsythe (arrived at 8:19 PM), Lou Luba, John Reagan, Kurt Schenher

**BOE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ashely Lundgren, Chair; Christina Plourd, Vice Chair; Renie Besaw, Christine Griffin, Mahdi Renduchintala, Jacob Marie, Dana Philbin, Sophia Shaikh

**TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:** none

**BOE MEMBERS ABSENT:** Tony Holt

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Michael Rosen, Town Manager; Lisa Hancock, Director, Finance & Records/Treasurer; Dr. Walter Willett, Superintendent; Mike Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services

1. Call to Order: Pursuant to Section § C9-4 of the Town Charter the Town Manager is required to call and attend a joint meeting of the Town Council and Board of Education for the purpose of discussing the appropriation request of the Board of Education

Mr. Rosen provided an overview of this evening's meeting.

This evening's discussion is about the February 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Board of Education budget which has a \$1,275,999 increase (3.19%) over last year's budget (2020/2021).

Mr. Rosen provided an overview of the budget process including timing.

All meetings will be held virtually via Zoom.

- March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Town Manager submits recommended overall town budget (FY 21/22) to the Town Council
- March 4<sup>th</sup>, Advertise Public Hearing
- March 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, Budget Discussions with Departments about Operating Budgets
- March 17<sup>th</sup>, Public Hearing
- March 23<sup>rd</sup>, Council Finalizes Budget
- April 19<sup>th</sup>, Annual Budget Presentation
- May 4<sup>th</sup>, Annual Budget Referendum (Mr. Rosen noted that they anticipate having a referendum this year.)

2. Board of Education Budget Presentation

Dr. Willett reviewed the following presentation:

Tolland Public Schools, Joint TC/BOE Meeting, 2-22-2021

- Purpose under PA 13-60
- Tolland Charter: Obligations of the Manager
- Tolland Board of Education Goals
- Portrait of a Graduate
- District Goals
- Pandemic Exacerbation
  - Mental Health Needs Before the Pandemic
  - Mental Health Needs During the Pandemic
- FY22: Recovery, Remediation, Reform
- Benefits/Highlights of this budget
  - Recovery
    - Recover previous budget offsets purchased from the end of year FY20 for FY21, that are now restored to the FY22 budget
  - Remediation
    - Speech & Language Services
    - English Language Learning Services
    - ABA Services (Autism support)

- Social and Emotional/Mental Health
    - Reform
      - Cost avoidance programs and investments
      - Attrition reduction/elimination
      - Lighthouse "Pathways" programs (e.g., Engineering, Business)
  - Tolland Public School Education – an excellent return on investment
  - Non-Educational Program Collaborations
    - ECHIP Collaborative (Eastern Connecticut Health Insurance Program)
    - UISF (Utility Internal Service Fund & Agreement)
    - Town and BOE Field and Grounds Agreements
3. Recommendations and suggestions to BOE regarding consolidation of non-education services and cost savings (per State Statutes (Public Act 13-60))

Mr. Rosen explained that non-education services would mean not asking questions about the number of books, teachers etc. Non-education services would include insurance, capital, or regionalization. Dr. Willett added that the nature of the Public Act is such that there is a moment in time when the BOE completes its adoption process. Under Section 10-222, it is the Board's obligation to determine and present what is needed for education. The Town Council makes the allocation decision. Non-education expenses include supplies, grounds, facilities, and back-office consolidation.

Ms. Shaikh asked about the difference between items 3 and 5 on the agenda. Ms. Nuccio explained that item 5 would be any other general questions. Mr. Rosen added that this is at least the second year where the split has been enumerated on the agenda into two business items. Ms. Nuccio recommended that this section cover questions on items such as UISF, technology, insurance, transportation, lighthouse, classroom sizes, the chief personnel officer, and administrative additions. The next section would be those items outside of these topics. Dr. Willett commented that he PA 13-60 is meant to be a reminder of the statutory division of this type of conversation. Ms. Nuccio expressed concern that the Council will have questions and if they cannot take this opportunity with the Board being present to ask those questions, when may they do so. She explained that they need answers to the questions prior to deliberation. Dr. Willett responded that it depends on the nature of the questions. The role of the Town Council is to ask about non-educational expenses. The rest is part of the Board's budget process and there are further opportunities for discussion.

Mr. Luba asked about PA 13-60 and if Dr. Willett's office or the Board has discussed consolidation opportunities and if anything such consolidation or regionalization has been recommended or identified that could fall under this public act where they could find cost savings without a loss of personnel. Dr. Willett responded that items considered in the past have included back-office consolidation. Tolland has a history of addressing this via items such as the healthcare collaborative, the creation of the UISF, and the Building, Grounds, and Fields Agreement. Thus, efficiencies are part of the current picture. Dr. Willett explained that the back-office consolidation conversation has taken place in the past and there was a feeling that there would not be added value. Everyone is fully utilized and one could not reduce staff without straining those who remain and with consolidation the current functional systems may not work well. Mr. Rosen noted that they are applying through CROCOG for the grant from the Regional Performance Incentive Program (Office of Policy and Management) that looks at back-office consolidation. Mr. Luba asked about other positions such as school counselors and if they could be regionalized and shared among other schools. Dr. Willett responded that he will provide a written answer to this question and provided an example where a counselor needs to address the needs of 20 students which is a large number to handle. He added that in regard to social workers in the school system, there is overlap and the work the staff member does with the student's family benefits the town. The town's Human Services Department and the schools work closely together on a number of items.

Ms. Plourd commented that there was a Shared Services Committee and a white paper was done in town. A lot of work has been done in this area and she believes software should be looked at. While it does not pertain to this budget, it is something to look at in the future.

Ms. Nuccio asked if there is a way to determine how much of the budget increase is directly attributable to the COVID pandemic. Mr. Marie commented that the answer depends on the definition of COVID expenses. At the first budget meeting, he believes 0.2% of the increase was due to the need for additional cleaning. He added that another .4% was recovery from last year's budget. In terms of positions, he noted the speech pathologist position as well as 2 additional

## Joint Budget Town Council/Board of Education Meeting

FTE positions. Dr. Willett explained that positions that were directly COVID-related where they could leverage ESSER II, were those that cannot be supplanted. For example, the positions of social worker and counselor this year were from grant funds and thus ESSER II funds may be used. The positions of the ABA, ELL, and SLP are necessitated by what the district needs to provide in terms of special services. Dr. Willett explained that the ABA program has grown over the years and now it is a logical extension to the high school. In a normal year, the ABA, ELL, and SLP would be part of the picture. Due to the pandemic, they are now more broadly needed. Ms. Nuccio explained that her impetus for the question is to learn if additional funds become available, if anything could be shifted to a different source of funding for a year or two to alleviate the pressure and then a re-evaluation could be done. Dr. Willett responded that until codified, they cannot count on this.

Mr. Luba asked about the most cost effective ways to provide appropriate counseling and measures to meet the needs of students. While it is great to have it in-house, he asked if a cost benefit analysis has been performed regarding outsourcing vs. the wages and benefits of staff. Dr. Willett responded with historical information about the philosophy going back a decade ago. He noted that currently, many districts are creating programs to more adequately serve student populations because the special education costs outside of the district are astronomical and no one has done anything to control those costs. Dr. Willett noted that it is an act of self-preservation and professional, ethical, and moral correctness to have programs in district that serve students' needs. In terms of cost avoidance, Dr. Willett commented that they cannot have a 3 year or 5 year average below 1% without having found cost avoidance measures. A standard maintenance budget is 2.5% - 3% and there has been a 5-year average of less than 1%. The average outplacement cost is \$69K (excluding transportation) and one teacher is \$42,055.

Ms. Nuccio asked Dr. Willett about the increase in spending for ABA, Tolland Transition Academy, and LEAP and if they have seen a corresponding decrease in special education costs that offset the significant increase in the spend for those programs. If so, she asked if they have a net for the new programs or the ROI from a fiscal dollar perspective. Additionally, she noted that Dr. Willett spoke of the average cost of outplacement but not of the per child cost of these programs in district. She believes last year the staffing for LEAP was over \$1M and more is being added. Dr. Willett responded that this information has been provided in the past and they are starting to venture down the road of an educational expense. He asked if the Council is not going to move the Board's budget forward because it is perceived that an adequate savings is not coming from the ABA program. He asked if the Town Council is prepared to do this. Dr. Willett explained that the Board spends a lot of time working with him on such items and he does not believe it is the Council's position to determine if a particular program is doing what is needed. He added that the fact that the students are not being outplaced is the cost avoidance factor; otherwise, the budget would be much greater. Ms. Nuccio commented that the task of the Council is to approve the overall budget. In order to do so, the Council needs to understand. In this case, it means understanding the numbers that are in the budget that have been there for the last few years and the programs being put in place to remediate or mitigate those costs so the Council can review it and say that it believes this is a reasonable ask. She noted that there are a lot of additions in the budget that are somewhat related to special education costs; there are no additional teachers. Dr. Willett responded that SLPs are more or less teacher adds and ELLs may be considered a general class of this as well. The statutory obligation of the Board is to determine student needs. When the Board presents a budget, the assumption is that those groups that can caucus have discussed these items and they have been vetted. Under PA 13-60, conversations about special education services are in the domain of the Board. The PA 13-60 is not about deciding whether students with autism could be more cost effectively served somewhere else, which they cannot. It raises questions in this forum that do not belong. Ms. Nuccio responded that in Section C9-4 of the Charter, the meeting is for the purpose of discussing the appropriation request of the Board of Education. The questions will be asked because the Council needs to understand the budget. Dr. Willett responded that the Charter does not override the Public Act and explained why it was set up this way and its purpose. Mr. Renduchintala commented that the Board has gone over the questions that are being asked in recorded sessions and the budget line by line. Ms. Lundgren requested that the questions be contained to non-education questions and added that she is sure Dr. Willett would be willing to address program questions in a conversation. The meeting should be about what can be done to increase efficiency.

Mr. Luba commented he has reviewed the Public Act and as a legislative body the Council should be able to get explanations on expenditures. They are not pointing at a specific expense but questioning overall for a better understanding.

Ms. Falusi thanked the Board, Dr. Willett, and everyone who worked on the budget. Many of the questions posed have been answered at the budget presentation in February and at other meetings. At this point on the agenda, the Council

## Joint Budget Town Council/Board of Education Meeting

should be making recommendations and suggestions, not asking questions. She added that the budget has been supported and backed by every member of the Board. The Board approved the Superintendent's budget after a couple of adjustments. The Board did some consolidations and cost avoidance and is ethically and morally taking care of the students and providing the needed education. Thus, Ms. Falusi commented that she does not have a problem with what is suggested for the non-educational services. She thanked them for their work and added that she would like to free up their time so they can continue to do the good work they have been given and entrusted to do by the town.

Ms. Philbin commented that some of the questions raised were brought up in FCC, at meetings, in public comment, and submitted online. She asked if this information is still available online so the Council may access it. Dr. Willett explained that the Board has had a chance to question, review the information during public sessions, and ended in the Board's adoption of the budget. The energy now shifts to questions from the public and the Q&A form is developed. Mr. Luba's question about the back-office is about an administrative expense; however, Dr. Willett noted that he gets concerned when they start discussing evaluation of special education programming which takes a long time to understand and is an educational expense. Ms. Philbin commented that hours and days have been spent on the budget and asked if the online submissions were available. Dr. Willett responded that now that the Board's questions have been answered, the site will be propagated with information and the questions with answers will be posted. He noted that some may be combined when the same question is being asked.

Ms. Griffin commented that as the Chair of the FCC, she has reviewed the budget extensively. They have had a lot of discussions with Dr. Willett and she supports this budget. It balances the interests of students, staff, and the community. She has dug into the weeds to gain an understanding and understands why the Council wants to do so as well.

Ms. Nuccio asked about technology. The district now has about 4,800 devices and she asked if there is a phase-in plan for device replacement. Dr. Willett explained that it is in the same range of replacing equipment as in prior models of technology in education. About 2 years out they will start a replacement cycle in each of the schools that will amount to approximately \$40K-\$50K to replace antiquated equipment and put new ones into the cycle. Overall, for the district it would be about \$100K - \$200K. Additionally, there will be a shift from printed to electronic media. He added that there will be some credits from trading in old equipment as well.

Ms. Nuccio asked about managing and consolidating printing services. Dr. Willett responded that they are consolidating who they use for repairs and printing services.

Ms. Nuccio asked if the insurance costs and repairs for the devices are built into the budget. Dr. Willett responded that it is part of what parents/guardians pay. They can buy into insurance for the repair of damaged machines. That said, the district has equipment not being used by students and repairs will be needed.

Ms. Nuccio asked about transportation – specifically why it is going down and the extension of the contract. Dr. Willett responded that they are in a new 3-year contract. With the extension of the transportation contract, the district has been able to achieve consistency of personnel and improve on-time performance and driver familiarity. The language in the budget is in regard to the 3-year extension. The reduction is due to being able to do transportation more efficiently; but, this can fluctuate. If they have a number of outplacements, the cost can be \$20-30K each.

Ms. Nuccio asked if the elimination of the Honeywell fees is in UISF or in the district's energy budget. Dr. Willett responded that the budget includes what the district was obliged to pay. If the loan amount was transferred to the town under a bond, it would reduce the Board budget by \$670K. Ms. Nuccio clarified that under the Honeywell contract, the district was paying the M&V (Measurement and Verification) fees. Dr. Willett explained that based on the notes at the bottom of page 31, it appears that the fees were eliminated as of February 12<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Griffin asked about the Honeywell contract and where the \$200K settlement would go. Mr. Rosen explained that the Council gave authorization for him to negotiate and sign an agreement with Honeywell. The funds will be placed in the UISF. Mr. Rosen noted that this is not yet a "done deal".

4. Questions from the public (2-minute limit) specific to the Board of Education budget with questions being directed by the Town Council Chair to the appropriate body for response

## Joint Budget Town Council/Board of Education Meeting

Kate Vallo, 80 Tolland Green, commented that she has had the pleasure of following the Board of Education budget closely during the budget season and has seen the work that has been put into it. She fully supports it and hopes the Town Council will as well.

Kate Howard-Bender, 3 Goose Lane, thanked the Board for putting the budget through in a unanimous fashion. It gives her hope for the kids and the community that they are worth the investment. She asked the Council if it will have the political will to support the community. *Ms. Nuccio responded that this is the beginning. They are asking questions and will have to look at the entire town and then decide on funding and what can be supported. From her perspective, the question cannot be answered at the first budget meeting. Mr. Luba responded that he is in agreement. They need to do their due diligence and review the information to make a determination. It is not a matter of political will but looking at what is before the Council and if it is appropriate for the budget, what the town can afford, and what the town is willing to accept. They will hopefully have a town referendum and it is a matter of putting something together that the Council and Board feel is appropriate. Ms. Falusi responded that she believes the Board did its due diligence. The Board submitted a modest investment in the community and she believes it is morally and ethically valuable. It is the correct programming for the schools and the correct answer to have a unanimous approval. The Board should be commended on a wonderful budget season for creating and crafting the budget for the community. She does not see anything that would move her from supporting the Board's budget. Mr. Jones responded that he concurs with Ms. Falusi. Going back to the capital budget public hearing, there is political will and political capital that can be expended to encourage turnout. There is an opportunity for Councilors to be engaged and work with the Board to encourage the greatest turnout.*

Liz Costa, 54 Josiah Lane, thanked the Board for putting together the budget. She saw a collaborative effort and tone. She added that the budget supports the teachers, paraprofessionals, and staff who have given so much to the town in a year that has been difficult. Ms. Costa asked the Council to support this and commented that the outcome of the pandemic will likely not be seen educationally or in a mental health capacity for years. She asked the Council to support the budget and not include potential dollars from the federal government. Those dollars will be needed to in the future for students who have fallen behind or have mental health issues as a result. She hopes the Council will support the budget.

Linda Scheidel, 81 Morgan Lane, commented that she respectfully does not view ranking 133 out of 166 on per pupil expenditures as long term great value. She added that over the years they have lost many programs in the schools due to unsupported budgets or the push for a 0% increase. Some programs include art in high school, health at TIS, and foreign language at the elementary level. Ms. Scheidel added that the students in high school now had more support in their earlier years of education than the current elementary students do. If the Council does not support the Board's budget and/or continues to push for a 0% increase, they will not continue to see the success at the high school level as they do now. They also will not be able to attract the amazing teachers. She explained that if the Council does not want to put this on residential tax revenue, then it needs to do a better job bringing in commercial tax revenue.

Annelise Cyr, 34 Columbine Road, commented that the children in schools spend most of their time throughout the week between the walls of the school. They are not there only to learn science, math and reading. They are a whole person and need social, mental, emotional, and physical support. She explained that they need wholesome and holistic support. She added that Dr. Willett explained there has been an increase in students' mental and emotional struggles. She commented that she has had many situations where she needed a counselor at the school for her son. Ms. Cyr wondered why between COVID, race relations, bullying, and other things children are seeing why they are looking for a counselor to share accounts. Why are they not seeing that it is a basic necessity? She commented that the children need the support. Don't they want the children to have all the support they need? Integrating and including all children regardless of special needs is the only ethical and fair solution. Why are they looking to consolidate in this area? *Ms. Nuccio responded that they are not suggesting any cuts to anything yet; they are trying to understand the budget. It is the role of the Council to understand the budget in full because ultimately the budget decision is made at the Town Council level from a whole dollar perspective. What the Board does with it is their purview. In order for the Council to pass through a \$1.3M increase, it is incumbent upon them to ask questions, understand what is in the budget, and whether the whole town can support it. The purpose of the meeting is for the Council to ask questions and the Board to present the budget. Questions are not an indication of what the Council is doing. It is an indication of the Council trying to understand. Ms. Falusi commented that her trust is in the Board, Dr. Willett, the administrators, and everyone who worked together to create the budget. She does not support outsourcing anything to do with mental health. The support is needed especially now. She does not believe it is her responsibility to understand everything line by line and*

*micromanage what the Board has done during the budget process. Listening to the Board formulate the budget has been an eye-opening experience and educational. She added that she has followed budgets for over 12 years and it is a many year process to become familiar with everything under the BOE purview. If she has questions on programs, she knows where to find the answers. Mr. Luba commented that the Council is morally and ethically bound as well to ask such questions so they can understand and when they propose the overall budget, it is a sound overall budget for the entire town of which the Board is a part. It does not mean pulling the budget apart line by line. The Board has done an outstanding job presenting the budget. He explained that when he brought up the issue of possibly splitting the social worker or counselor, it was just a question and example to see where they stood with the push. It is something that has been going on and growing in the state legislature for a period of time – looking to cut costs and regionalize assets. It was to see where they are and if there are other avenues. His objective was not to eliminate it; it was to ask the question to learn where this stood. They ask similar questions of all of the town's departments. Mr. Reagan commented that it is not a matter of having political will to pass a budget or going line by line through a budget. It is a matter of trying to gain the best understanding so they can make an informed and intelligent decision on what is best for the town. As they work through the process, questions will be posed, and may be repetitive, but the Board has put in a lot of work on the budget. He added that no one has said anything about a 0% budget. As questions come up, they appreciate the answers. Dr. Willett noted that if anyone wants to meet he is happy to do so. He added that no one has a problem with the questions. Public Act 13-60 speaks to a process that is non-education expenses. The Board is elected to provide oversight on education and provide the best budget that considers complicated issues such as special education. Ms. Philbin thanked the public for their participation, her peers who worked tirelessly on the budget, and the Council for asking questions. As a member of the public she would not want elected officials to represent members of the town inappropriately. She is appreciative of the questions and the digging but regarding the latter, they may need more clarity. She commented on Ms. Scheidel's comment regarding the low expenditure and added that she would expect to move up the ranks. The Board has a lot of work to do to recover from lost opportunities in years past and previous budgets. They were lucky to have TEPTO fund \$30,000 of the Chromebooks to help them through the pandemic to get one-to-one technology and the people in the community for supporting the Board. She hopes the Council will continue to do its due diligence and work as the team as the Board did.*

5. Petitions and/or questions to the Board of Education from Town Council members specific to the BOE Budget

Mr. Luba commented the during last year's budget discussions, they discussed cutting back on staff. Specifically, they discussed cutting the art and 5th grade teacher. He asked if there were any reductions in teachers in last year's budget. Dr. Willett responded that there were but they also transferred people for coverage. This year, with respect to losses, they have been careful not to compromise programs. They have tried to take reductions from retiring positions or those that would not have a tremendous negative impact. Last year, they made a reduction in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and a team was consolidated. They made an interventionist out of that job and reduced it. Dr. Willett believes the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and art teachers were reduced and he believes this was via retirement. Mr. Luba commented that based on the initial presentation, Dr. Willett stated that they were down to an average class size of 21-22 students. Looking at the overall student population, they have lost approximately 90-100 students overall and Mr. Luba asked if this was accurate. Dr. Willett responded that there has been a reduction of teaching staff commensurate with enrollment. When talking about FTE, there are different kinds of staff who are brought in for one-to-one, SRBI, and RTI. Regarding teacher ratios, Tolland has made the adjustment and the ratio is about 1:20. He noted that enrollment is targeted to increase in the lower grades. They have reached equilibrium with respect to enrollment and the district should not be making downward adjustments in the name of enrollment at this point. Dr. Willett added that special services requirements have increased exponentially in the last decade. If people such as paras are not put in place, the district is not fulfilling the educational program and people will challenge this resulting in a greater cost in the long run. Mr. Luba commented that last year when discussing the teachers' contract and what became a 9% increase over a period of 3 years, there was also a discussion of \$330K that was listed as an increase in wages based on the wage. He believes it was stated that by Dr. Willett and the Board that they would look to find ways to offset this expense. Mr. Luba asked if they were able to find any offsets. Dr. Willett explained that data suggests that the bargaining unit agreement was very favorable towards Tolland and is included in last year's budget document. In the Board's minutes from the end of last year, there are phase documents which describe how the Board was going to try to offset the impacts and transfer funds to create the Coronavirus Relief Fund. They have continued to work on the offsets including him not taking a raise this year and having the athletic director act as the vice principal to come within the range. Every day the consideration is how can they make the most out of a dollar? In the little things, and the big things, they are constantly trying to find a way to stretch a dollar. He added that in budget cycles, if there are a few years less than 1%, there needs to be a higher point than that to ensure they are not compromising the education process the town wants. Mr. Luba explained that



constituents have asked about this and he will review the documents. Ms. Lundgren added that on pages 24-25 there is more information on enrollment and staffing.

Ms. Nuccio asked about the enrollment data. Dr. Willett explained that there is a note that indicates this is the enrollment as reported to the SDE as of October 1<sup>st</sup> of every year. The actual enrollment is from a data run on January 12<sup>th</sup>. On October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment was 2,281 and on January 12<sup>th</sup> it was 2,308. Ms. Nuccio commented that the projection shows a loss of 91 students. Dr. Willett explained that while they are projecting down over the short term, over the long term the district numbers are not decreasing and will increase in the lower grades in 2025/26. He does not believe the district will leave the 2,200 zone over the next 10 years.

Mr. Reagan asked about some outliers on the object budget information. He asked about the increase in line 325, PD and other professional services. Dr. Willett explained that this includes approximately \$75K for autism programming, \$72K for Literacy How, and \$25K for EastConn co-teaching program (training special education staff) and reviewed the programs. He added that Literacy How was included in last year's phase documents and had to be brought back. Mr. Reagan asked if these items were in the district previously. Dr. Willett explained that these are items were not previously in district but they see them as a need coming over the horizon. Mr. Reagan asked about the increase in line 641, textbooks. Dr. Willett explained that the increase is driven by language arts, math, and science. While companies are moving toward a digital product, this is still in transition. Dr. Willett noted that some consumables are included in this line as well. Mr. Reagan asked about the increase in line 646, Curriculum workbooks materials. Dr. Willett responded that it is mainly language arts and math. Mr. Reagan asked about the increase in line 730, equipment. He asked if the lift is included in this line item. Dr. Willett responded that the articulating lift is not part of this. This line includes Promethean boards, Apple products, and connecting supports.

Mr. Schenher asked about remediation of problems arising from COVID and remote learning. He asked if the associated expenses for intervention and support will return to a baseline. Dr. Willett responded that speech and language needs are significantly up and may drop and be rebalanced in 2-3 years and be offset with retirements but it is difficult to know how long the impacts will last. He added that there can be times of lower budgets but every once in a while, within them, there has to be a higher one and this is an example. This year there is not a single position in the budget that would not cost more in the future if it was lost.

Ms. Plourd commented that many of the questions are answered in the Board document. She asked if this is a publicly posted document accessible to the Council. Dr. Willett explained that they are currently transitioning this to the public Q&A available under Budget at <http://www.tolland.k12.ct.us/>. Ms. Plourd asked if this could be sent to the Council. Dr. Willett explained that often people do not ask questions in the venue thinking that it will be shared and there may be grammatical and other errors. Thus, he edits and may combine similar submissions. Ms. Plourd commented that she would like the Council to have the information for deliberations and assumes everything is subject to FOIA. Mr. Luba commented that he would like to see all of the documents in their raw form. Dr. Willett explained that they can and everything is available via FOIA. That said some questions ask the same thing and the answers can be consolidated. Mr. Luba explained that it has been said that questions were posed by the Board but the Council only has the information that has been made available and does not know what has been asked. Thus, he feels it would be helpful for the Council to have the information in advance. Dr. Willett explained that it has been more efficient to provide a summary. The purpose of the meeting is non-educational expenses and some of the questions go deeply into educational expenses.

Ms. Griffin commented that she printed out the first 37 budget questions posed by the Board. A lot of questions posted this evening are on the list and there are duplicates. She asked Ms. Lundgren if at the next meeting they could address allowing the Council to have access to the document. Ms. Lundgren commented that the Board reviewed the line items and discussed them. The Board has done its due diligence to get the answers and they should try to condense the information and make it available to get them to the Town Council. Dr. Willett explained that it is designed to be part of a process that ends in the Board's adopted budget document and is not a final document. The Q&A document will be published to the website in the next week and will likely answer a lot of the questions posed in a more precise manner. Ms. Lundgren noted that there are videos and minutes of meetings. The information is already available. Perhaps a document of where to find the answers would be helpful. Dr. Willett recommended waiting until the information is posted in a week or so.



## Joint Budget Town Council/Board of Education Meeting

Ms. Shaikh commented that all of the information the Board has reviewed and worked with is available both on YouTube and in the minutes. The Council's questions are nearly all the same as those posed by the Board and dissected to the n<sup>th</sup> degree. She added that general statutes Section 10-4-B points out the ramifications a school district can face if state needs and recommendations are not fully funded.

Ms. Falusi commented that they have very good subject matter experts on the Board and she suggested that the Council Republicans reach out to the Board Republicans and ask them questions. Ms. Nuccio responded that that is not allowed. Ms. Falusi recommended asking the Republican cohorts where the information can be found i.e. at which meeting was this discussed. The information is available, there is a pandemic, they are building a new a school, and in the next week she is sure Dr. Willett will be inundated with getting the educators and staff vaccinated. Anything they can do to alleviate what is on Dr. Willett's plate would be appreciated.

Mr. Luba commented that they are looking to ensure there is free and appropriate education. They understand the statutory requirements but they need to understand the budget and that there is not anything in it that could be deemed as not fully appropriate, or additional, expenses. He explained that the main reason why the document needs to be made available quickly is because on March 3<sup>rd</sup> the Town Manager will present his final budget. The Council will have less than a week to understand all of the budgets. If there is a document that answers the questions asked by the Council, while the Board has been thorough, the Council needs to be able to understand as well. Had they already received the document, this evening the questions could have been very precise. Thus, he would like to get the information in its raw form so he can ask pointed questions. Dr. Willett responded that under the process, the Council makes suggestions and the Board responds in writing. In regard to the timing of less than a week, this is why members are elected to the Board. The Council is not supposed to do the job of the Board. The Board asks the questions and provides the adopted budget to the Council. The timeline does not allow for the Council to understand everything the Board went through in 2 months or longer. The Board does the due diligence. The Town Council can get answers and it would be more valuable to have more concise and direct answers. The way they are asked, some information will not provide clarity. It is about trust. If the Council trusts the Board has done its due diligence, then it should trust that the Board is presenting a document that will get to what the Council seeks. Mr. Luba responded that it is not a matter of trust. The Council can ask questions but they do not know if they have been asked by a Board member. He trusts them completely but needs to see what has been asked so he can understand and be sure he is not missing anything. The Council has asked questions of all of the departments.

Ms. Nuccio explained that the Council would like to see whatever questions have been asked so it can review them and not ask repetitive questions however it is done. In the next stage, the Town Manager will present the budget and the Council will meet again with all of the departments. If the Council can get the questions and answers, it will limit the questions during that meeting.

Mr. Renduchintala commented that the Board spent dozens of hours on this and it was passed unanimously.

Ms. Nuccio commented that at the last Board meeting Dr. Willett projected to possibly have \$1M left at the end of the year. She noted that she understands this is tentative and may change but asked if there is an update on actuals for this year and if there are any pre-purchasing opportunities as there were last year. Dr. Willett responded that the Board will continually discuss this as it did last year. The goal, to the greatest extent possible, is to do all they can to consolidate and have available resources at year-end because it would be beneficial. Dr. Willett provided the example of the discussion of going to five days a week. To stay within the guidelines, they need to increase the human resources in order to do the cleaning which will impact the bottom line. Dr. Willett explained that while he hopes to have funds available, things may come up. Thus, it is a tentative and cautious "yes". He will create phase documents similar to those drafted last year as they approach year end. He added that if there are resources, a good place for them would be the Coronavirus Relief Fund for unanticipated expenses.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Jones motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:06PM

Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lisa A. Pascuzzi".

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Lisa Pascuzzi  
Town Council Clerk

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Town Council Chair

## MINUTES

### TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL ZOOM REMOTE MEETING February 23, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tammy Nuccio, Chair; Steve Jones, Vice Chair; Brenda Falusi, Cassandra Forsythe, Lou Luba, John Reagan, Kurt Schenher

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** none

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Michael Rosen, Town Manager; Lisa Hancock, Director, Finance & Records/Treasurer; Mike Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Nuccio called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Recited

3. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Observed

4. **PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS:**

4.1 Proclamation request Recognizing February as Black History Month

Mr. Rosen noted that 2 e-mails were sent via the website regarding recognizing February as Black History Month. As per the Council's proclamation process, a new proclamation that does not fall into one of the standard categories needs to first be heard and vetted by the Council. This request does not fall into any of the standard categories.

A discussion regarding the process took place.

Straw Poll: Are the Councilors are in favor of the proclamation recognizing Black History Month?

Result: All were in favor.

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:**

6.1 Consideration and approval of a lease renewal for 52 Tolland Green (Jail Museum) between the Town of Tolland and the Tolland Historical Society for the period April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2031.

Mr. Rosen provided background information and introduced Kathy Bach from the Tolland Historical Society.

Mr. Rosen noted that items 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 are for 10-year lease renewals at a rate of \$1.00/year.

A public hearing is necessary because it is considered real property and is an asset of the town. The public has an opportunity to weigh in on whether it would like to see these assets used in these ways for another 10 years.

*Mr. Jones motioned to open the public hearing.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

Public Comment: none

*Mr. Jones motioned to close the public hearing.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

Discussion: Ms. Bach spoke regarding the properties in items 6.1 and 6.2. She believes the relationship between the town and the Historical Society in the case of both museums has been a good collegial one. The town has been wonderful in maintaining the properties on the outside and the Society had does its best to maintain the inside through restoration and renovation and invested heavily in both museums. Where they can, they help with grants and financial support as well. She believes they have been good tenants and worthy of the town's support. Additionally, they have worked to find organizations that will invest not only financially but also through community support and awareness. Ms. Nuccio thanked everyone for not only maintaining the buildings but keeping Tolland's historical references and history alive. Mr. Jones thanked Ms. Bach for coming and the Guess the Artifacts program on social media during the pandemic. Ms. Falusi commented that the museums are an integral part of the Town Green and an asset to the town. She always learns something new when she visits and recommended looking into Sustainable CT for information on matching grants.

*Mr. Jones motioned:*

*BE IT RESOLVED, by the Tolland Town Council that it hereby approves a resolution authorizing the Town Manager to sign the lease renewal for 52 Tolland Green between the Town of Tolland and the Tolland Historical Society for April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2031.*

*Mr. Luba seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

- 6.2 Consideration and approval of a lease renewal for 749 Tolland Stage Road (Military Museum) between the Town of Tolland and the Tolland Historical Society for the period April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2031

Mr. Rosen provided background information.

This is a lease between the town and the Tolland Historical Society and has the same stipulations as item 6.1.

*Mr. Jones motioned to open the public hearing.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

Public Comment: none

*Mr. Jones motioned to close the public hearing.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

Discussion: Mr. Luba thanked everyone for maintaining the museums. It is a true tribute to the Town of Tolland. Mr. Jones commented that he recalls the former uses of the building and it is great that it has been repurposed.

*Mr. Jones motioned:*

*BE IT RESOLVED, by the Tolland Town Council that it hereby approves a resolution authorizing the Town Manager to sign the lease renewal for 749 Tolland Stage Road between the Town of Tolland and the Tolland Historical Society for April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2031.*

*Mr. Luba seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

- 6.3 Consideration and approval of a lease renewal for 22 Tolland Green (Arts of Tolland) between the Town of Tolland and the Arts of Tolland Inc. for the period April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2031.  
Mr. Rosen provided background information and introduced Mary Hoskin, President, Arts of Tolland and Mike Wyman, Treasurer, Arts of Tolland.  
This lease has the same stipulations as in items 6.1. and 6.2.

*Mr. Jones motioned to open the public hearing.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

Public Comment: none

*Mr. Jones motioned to close the public hearing.*

*Mr. Luba seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

Discussion: Ms. Nuccio commented that she loves the Arts of Tolland building and misses not being able to go to shows. It is a great use of an old town building. They have done an amazing job of maintaining the building and bringing in some great shows. Mr. Jones asked about the use of the building and if there are any updates based on state regulations due to COVID. Mr. Rosen responded that when capacity limitations are increased this will be something to revisit. A brief discussion took place. Ms. Falusi thanked them for bringing art into the community and hosting events.

*Mr. Jones motioned:*

*BE IT RESOLVED, by the Tolland Town Council that it hereby approves a resolution authorizing the Town Manager to sign the lease renewal for 22 Tolland Green between the Town of Tolland and the Arts of Tolland, Inc. for April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2031.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

**7a. REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES RESPONSIBLE TO THE COUNCIL**

Tourism – Ms. Falusi noted that 2 meetings took place. One was a board meeting and the other was about advertising. Regarding funding, it will be the same as last year and they are ensuring that information is available to help with recovery and reopening. She added that many people have moved into CT and they will be invited into communities to learn about tourism and hospitality. Additionally, videos will be released next week, and online brochures will be made available.

Sustainable CT - Ms. Falusi noted that a meeting needs to be scheduled to ensure they meet the quarterly requirements.

**7b. REPORTS OF TOWN COUNCIL LIAISONS**

- Blight Committee – upcoming meeting cancelled
- Planning & Zoning – Ms. Falusi provided an update.
- Permanent Celebration Committee – will meet on Thursday
- Conservation Commission – Mr. Jones noted that the February 11<sup>th</sup> meeting was cancelled due to technical difficulties. A meeting is scheduled for February 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Water Commission – Mr. Jones provided an update of the February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- WPCA – no meeting
- Birch Grove Building Committee – Mr. Luba provided an update.

- EDC – next meeting March 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Commission on People with Disabilities – Ms. Nuccio provided an update.
- Eastern Highland Health District – Ms. Nuccio provided an update. Mr. Rosen noted that as of March 1<sup>st</sup> those who are in the age group of 55-64 will be eligible for vaccinations. Tolland residents may go through the Vernon Call Center: 860-896-4568.

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

**8.1 Appointments to vacancies on various municipal boards/commissions.**

**8.1.a. Appointment to Tolland Non-Profit Housing Corporation**

*Mr. Jones motioned to appoint Christine Irizarry, 71 Rolling Meadow, for the remainder of the term 7/1/2020 – 7/1/2025 to the Tolland Non-Profit Housing Corporation.*

*Mr. Luba seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

**8.1.b. Appointments to Tolland Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force**

Mr. Jones thanked everyone for reaching out. While they did not fill the entire slate, the hope is the vacancy will be filled for the thirteenth position (an alternate). He is excited about the diversity and experiences the group will provide. Mr. Luba noted that they were blessed to have an outstanding slate of candidates and it was great to speak with them. They have outstanding qualifications and dedication and will do an outstanding job putting together some solid recommendations for the Council and all town organizations to incorporate. He fully endorses the slate being put forward. Mr. Rosen noted that all members run on the same term of 03/24/2021 – indefinite. The task force is made up of 6 members at large, 1 alternate at large, and 1 vacancy for an alternate as well as 2 Councilors and 3 members of the Board of Education. All are voting members.

*Mr. Jones motioned that the following individuals be appointed to the Tolland Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force for a term of 02/24/2021 – indefinite as follows:*

*Tracy DeCarli, Darrell Irwin, Becky Moore, Carleen Oehmsen, Susan Salem, Amanda Sharkis, Gerald Gianutsos, John Reagan, Kurt Schenher, Tony Holt, Jacob Marie, Madhu Renduchintala.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

**9. OLD BUSINESS (ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS):**

**9.1 Continued discussion and consideration of a statement against racism by the Tolland Town Council.**

Mr. Rosen thanked the Councilors who provided wording and their thoughts in draft form. This evening he is presenting a draft where he combined the responses provided and tried to make it as fluid as possible in his own stylistic approach. He noted that everything is negotiable.

Ms. Nuccio commented that for her it is important that the statement be measurable and be something they can actively work toward and show what they are doing in regard to the statement.

A brief discussion took place. It was determined that the statement would be reviewed section by section. Ms. Falusi commented that she is a little embarrassed that it is 7 white people, probably all cisgender, creating a statement on racism without input from the BIPOC community or those with experience and training. She recommended having someone from Sustainable CT come in and have a conversation as well as having a conversation with the BIPOC community to work together to come up with a statement. Mr. Luba commented that over the past month and a half or so they have received input from people at many levels including members of the BIPOC community on issues of racism. He believes the draft incorporates all of the input and reflects the issues. He added that this is the Council's statement, and it needs to be measurable. Mr. Reagan

commented that he considered the community's responses and those developed the input for the document. It is a white Council creating the document with input from the community which helped to form the suggestions he made for the document and were included by Mr. Rosen. Ms. Nuccio noted that this is the Council's statement, and she is comfortable with the statement and input that was provided.

The Council reviewed the draft provided by Mr. Rosen section by section and had discussions. The following is the edited draft:

[First statement was removed.]

As elected representatives of the Town of Tolland, we condemn racism, bigotry, and discrimination in any form and look to promote authentic dialogues about race, diversity, and inclusion.

As elected representatives, we will endeavor to uphold these values and standards:

- Evaluate the policies/ordinances we implement or update to ensure they guard against racial bias;
- Look for opportunities to provide education to our community on the negative impact racism has on our town;
- Ensure our municipal government has policies and practices in place that safeguard employment and that services are not denied based on race;
- Purposefully identify, discuss, and challenge issues of racism and the impact it has on our community

It is through fair and open discussion, humility, and respect that we can learn from each other and from the community where we live and work to appropriately address racism facing our town, state, and nation. We encourage the respectful exchange of ideas from all members of our community with the goal of helping all residents of Tolland understand that they belong to a welcoming community that values diversity and rejects racism, bigotry, and discrimination.

We resolve to develop and implement strategies that dismantle racism where we find them.

Mr. Rosen noted that he will prepare a clean draft for the Council's next meeting.

A discussion took place regarding if a vote or straw poll would be held this evening.

A straw poll was held regarding if the Councilors would like to vote on it this evening or wait until the final language is available.

The results were as follows:

Ms. Falusi – wait

Ms. Forsythe – wait

Mr. Jones – wait

Mr. Reagan – prepared to vote

Mr. Luba – prepared to vote

Mr. Schenher – prepared to vote

Ms. Nuccio – wait

This item will be on the next agenda under Old Business.

**10. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER (A WRITTEN REPORT SHALL BE PROVIDED THE 1<sup>ST</sup> MEETING OF THE MONTH ONLY)**

- Budget
  - Joint Town Council/BOE meeting was held last night
  - Capital Public Hearing was held last Thursday
  - Budget will be submitted to the Council in March
  - Department meetings: March 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup>
  - Working on a website tool to make information more accessible to the public via online budget software; more interactive
  - Town Manager's budget book will be the same
- Clarification on questions raised at the February 9<sup>th</sup> Town Council meeting
  - Mr. Rosen spoke with the Director of Administrative Services, the acting Town Clerk, and the Freedom of Information Commission, Public Education Officer Tom Hennick.
  - Minutes are a summary of what happens in a public meeting. It is a statement of issues that are discussed or acted upon. All that is required of a public agency's minutes is the following: the time of

convening and adjournment, the date and place of the meeting, names of the members attending and how they vote on each issue, and the purpose of any executive session and who attended.

- Minutes of the meeting must be made available within 7 days and the votes of each member must be available within 48 hours of the meeting.
- Although the Council's minutes are detailed, they are not a transcript of what occurred.
- The videos of Council meetings are recorded and available for public display so people can see what transpired verbatim and at their own leisure.
- Minutes cannot be amended to reflection intention – only what actually happened at the meeting. For example, if the recording clerk makes a mistake, the minutes can be amended to make the correction. If a speaker misspeaks, and the clerk accurately reflected the misspoken statement, the speaker could make a statement at the following meeting clarifying the misstatement from the previous meeting to be captured in the current set of minutes.
- Correspondence is not mandated by local law or statute. Tolland does not have an existing correspondence policy and each public body has the ability to handle correspondence as it sees fit. All correspondence to the Town Council is discoverable under the Freedom of Information Act. Nothing forces the Council to either publish all letters to Council either outside or within the agenda packet or read, even summaries, into the record.

Ms. Falusi commented 2 e-mails were received. One of which requested that changes be made to the minutes. The other noted that she combined 2 e-mails into one statement. The first was about a story someone shared about his wife's immigration. The other stated that racism does not matter in town and they should not do the proclamation. Ms. Falusi clarified that the first e-mail author did not make the statement about racism.

#### 11. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 11.1 January 26, 2021 Remote Regular Meeting Minutes
- 11.2 February 9, 2021 Remote Special Meeting Minutes
- 11.3 February 9, 2021 Remote Regular Meeting Minutes
- 11.4 February 11, 2021 Remote Capital Budget Public Hearing Minutes

*Mr. Jones motioned to approve the minutes in 11.1, 11.2, and 11.4.*

*Ms. Falusi seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

*Mr. Jones motioned to approve the minutes as amended in 11.3 updating "emotion" to "a motion". [item 8.4]*

*Mr. Luba seconded the motion.*

*Discussion: none*

*A roll call vote was taken.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

#### 12. CORRESPONDENCE TO COUNCIL

(as of February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5 PM)

- E-mail from a non-resident (assumed) about negative views on how they legislate a certain item
- E-mail from a resident with information on the electric grid and decarbonization
- E-mails from 2 residents with concerns about the scheduling of the 2 meetings last night
- E-mail from a resident about support for the Board of Education budget
- Resident sent information about racism
- Resident sent information about glyphosate
- Resident sent information about a webinar series declaring racism as a public health emergency
- Resident asked the Council not to use generalized terms on racism – for example systemic, structural, and institutional
- Town organization requesting them to fly the Pride Flag
- Resident wrote in to support the Board of Education budget



- Resident wrote in to request that the Council support the Board of Education budget
- Resident wrote with observations on the February 9<sup>th</sup> meeting and forwarded e-mails
- Resident asked for Black History Month recognition and a revision on a statement
- Resident thanked the Council for not moving forward on the proclamations the Council saw in the last month; added that if they wanted to do a proclamation, they wanted one for the canine officer

13. **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT** - none

14. **COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILPERSONS**

- Mr. Luba thanked everyone for considering the proclamation for African American History Month. Mr. Luba thanked all of the members of the Tolland Resident State Troopers Office, Troop C, the Tolland Fire Department, and specifically Trooper Hoyt and Trooper Kaelberer and his dog Drago for the outstanding service to the Town of Tolland this past weekend. They went above and beyond to ensure town residents were kept safe. They did an outstanding job and Trooper Hoyt put himself in harm's way. Mr. Luba wished him the best for a speedy recovery. Based on their actions, Mr. Luba has submitted a request for a proclamation addressing this issue and their actions.
- Mr. Reagan thanked the members of the community who stepped up for the Mental Health and Substance Use Advisory Task Force. Mr. Reagan brought this to the Council in late 2019 as part of the goal-setting discussions. Initially, he brought it forth as a substance use disorder task force because this is something that is near and dear to him as it is for many members of the community. Now that COVID is here, he believes substance use and mental health issues have increased. He thanked Tracy, Darrell, Becky, Carleen, Susan, and Amanda. Mr. Reagan is looking forward to starting this work. He thanked Mr. Schenher for volunteering as well as members of the Board of Education – Tony Holt, Jacob Marie, and Madhu Renduchintala.
- Mr. Jones concurred with Mr. Reagan's comments. It was reported in the Connecticut Mirror that there has been a 13% increase in fatal overdoses over the past year. He believes COVID is going to have impact on this for many years to come. Mr. Jones commented that he received a request from the person whose father was the resident who helped detain the suspects from escaping during the incident allowing the troopers and canine units to return in time and apprehend the suspects. Mr. Jones encouraged this person to submit a request for a proclamation to recognize the individual for his heroic acts as well as preventing further crime and potential threat and injury. Mr. Jones commented on last night's joint meeting. While it was productive, there seemed to be concerns about the document the Board of Education has that outlines questions that could have been answered in advance. Mr. Jones requested that in the future the Town Manager and Superintendent work together to have Councilors submit questions in advance so they can have a more succinct and efficient meeting. Mr. Jones commented on the remote participation policy. He would like this re-established and expanded to include the Commission on Persons with Disabilities. Mr. Jones asked how the Cemetery Policy has been working for Public Works in terms of its language. Mr. Jones commented that he made a request to the Town Manager and appreciates Trooper Eklund and his office for researching crime data over the past year to identify trends and changes due to COVID or other issues. Mr. Jones thanked the CERT team. They recently had their last testing event. The organizer thanked them for the safety they provided during the months of testing. Ms. Nuccio commented in regard to the proclamation for the resident. Mr. Rosen noted that it was received. Mr. Jones commented that he encouraged the people to advocate that the referendum vote be in person or through a hybrid model that allows COVID-19 to be used for immunocompromised residents and those who have concerns so they can vote via absentee.
- Ms. Falusi commented on Mr. Jones' statement. Including Zoom in future meetings is an equity issue for seniors or those who have trouble driving at night and those with trouble hearing inside Council Chambers. It is more accessible for many households to go into another room at home and jump into a meeting when other things are happening. She would like to find a way to continue this platform when they return to Council Chambers. Ms. Falusi commented that there are outstanding items that Councilors have petitioned for and they are running out of meetings. Ms. Nuccio requested that Ms. Falusi send her the list. Ms. Nuccio spoke in regard to the remote policy. They are waiting to see what happens at the state level and she has spoken with Mr. Rosen. While they are still meeting remotely, they are going to continue with the way things are. Mr. Rosen noted that town staff has looked at updating the survey and they are trying to find the right time to release it. Due to the pending nature of the Legislature possibly codifying this and the Governor's executive orders expiring on April 19<sup>th</sup>, unless further extended, it may have an impact on future remote meetings when they revert back to the Freedom of Information law which could also be amended. He expects the survey will

be sent to chairs of the town's boards and commissions again to learn when they would be comfortable with hybrid meetings and how comfortable they are with remote participation in general.

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

Kate Vallo, 80 Tolland Green, commented that she is interested in any reluctance or controversy that she heard about using the term "antiracist" in the statement on antiracism that the Council is putting together. She shared information from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Race does not biologically exist yet how one identifies with race is powerful. It influences experiences and shapes lives. In a society that privileges white people and whiteness, racist ideas are considered normal throughout media, culture, social systems and institutions. Historically, racist views justified the unfair treatment and oppression of people of color including enslavement, segregation, internment etc. People can be led to believe that racism is only about individual mindsets and actions yet racist policies also contribute to polarization. Racist ideas and policy have a widespread impact by threatening the equity of systems and the fairness of institutions. People must commit to making unbiased choices and being antiracist in all aspects of their lives. Being antiracist is fighting against racism. Racism takes several forms and works most often in tandem with at least one other form to reinforce racist ideas, behaviors, and policy. Types of racism are individual racism, interpersonal racism, institutional racism, and structural racism. Ms. Vallo continued and explained that no one is born racist or antiracist – this results from the choices that are made. Being antiracist results from a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, and equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as people move through life. In the absence of making antiracist choices, people unconsciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white dominant culture, and unequal institutions in society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who one is, but about what they do. On an unrelated note, Ms. Vallo asked what happened to the Teen Center. It has been on the website for a long time, but she does not believe they have one. Additionally, she asked how Nancy Dunn's position is being filled.

Annelise Cyr, 34 Columbine Road, commented that she supports the budget of the Board of Education and hopes the Council does as well. She hopes the Council will revisit the proclamation to declare racism a public health crisis in town. Last week her son was threatened by a student whose father is a cop. Ms. Cyr's noted that her son is black, and the student's father is a cop so he could easily hurt him without any issues. These things are real. Racism is real in town and is hurting the minority children. Because the situations are not heard on a daily basis does not mean that they are not happening. Regarding tonight's meeting and the statement against racism, she appreciates everyone's effort. She sees everyone was trying. She appreciates that time was taken, and that the Council voted to declare February Black History Month in town. These are baby steps, and it is great, but she struggles with the Council. She understands it is their statement, but it is ok for the Councilors to educate themselves and reach out and find other sources to help them make a well-rounded statement. She hopes the Council, as they move forward with conversations, that there is more openness to reaching out to the minority population and people who can help everyone understand the difficult conversations and topics. There is a lot for everyone to learn. She hopes in the future they can have more personal conversations such as a special meeting to discuss this dense topic of racism.

Colleen Yudichak, 12 Blueberry Hill, commented that it was great hearing the entire Council come up with a statement against racism. Regarding last night, the Board of Education is responsible for determining what is needed for education and the Council is responsible for determining what can be afforded. She added that using words such as "discovery" sounded like the Board of Education and the Superintendent were on trial and she believes many people who listened to the meeting felt the same way. It is fine to ask questions, but the Board's role is to put forth what it thinks is good for the town. Ms. Yudichak expressed concern and noted that school counselors are needed in the schools. Mental health and substance abuse is a problem. They cannot afford to share counselors even though it costs money. The students are worth it. Ms. Yudichak asked the Town Manager if he was directed to have departments have a 0% increase.

Kenny Trice, 53 Doe Run, thanked the Councilors for what they do. He knows it is hard. He commented in regard to yesterday's meeting with the Board of Education. He stated that the Council should trust the team. He commented that he watched the Councilors try to go through the statement. A lot of time was put into it. Mr. Trice explained that he has told the Council that this would be hard. It is a hard topic. He referred back to his rhetorical question from about a month ago about how many of the Councilors have been in a tenement fire. If they have not been in one, they do not have a clue of what to write about being inside. Mr. Trice suggested that they find people, ask them, and listen. This is a new topic for most of the Councilors. It is ok if they do not know. They should ask people who experience it

for their opinion. He explained that they cannot give a summons to everyone who is racist, but they are leaders and set the tone, which can be subtle, and should call something out when they see something that is wrong. Everyone has biases. It is a tough subject, and the Councilors should reach out. They are not going to fix it in one session. Mr. Trice commented that they have only been free for 156 years and that he has time.

16. **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Jones motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 PM

Mr. Luba seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,



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Lisa Pascuzzi  
Town Council Clerk

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Town Council Chair