

# **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

## **TOWN COUNCIL/BOARD OF EDUCATION JOINT MEETING**

### **HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER 6<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**MARCH 1, 2016 - 7:00 P.M.**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jeanne Schroeder

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sam Adlerstein, Chairman; Patrick Doyle, Vice-Chair; Michelle Harrold; Karen Moran; Susan Seaver and Colleen Yudichak

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS ABSENT:** Kathy Gorsky; Robert Pagoni; Jeffrey Schroeder

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Steven Werbner, Town Manager

- 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 – Explanation of the budget process by the Town Manager**

Steven Werbner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Werbner began by saying a recommended budget was submitted by the BOE. At this time, he is in the process of compiling the town's budget for bringing before the Council. His budget will come out on March 10<sup>th</sup>. He reminded that all budget related meeting dates are posted on the town's website.

In terms of the budget itself, Mr. Werbner advised that what is happening at the State level is impacting municipalities throughout the State. The deficits are rising to nearly \$250 million this year, and will be well over \$1 billion the following year. The aid to municipalities has already been reduced by 5% for the next fiscal year, and they are recommending a reduction of 15% the following year. Both numbers will most likely be increased before they are done. Next year, Tolland is scheduled to receive about \$400,000 in increased revenue as a result of the sales tax, and the following year it will be more. That money will be in jeopardy if the 2.5% spending cap is exceeded. If the 2.5% is exceeded, the town would lose .50 on every dollar that the State gives it under the Municipal Sharing Account. There is also a chance that we'll never see that money due to the increasing deficits at the State level.

The ECS Grant is being kept. Tolland receives about \$10 million from the State from that grant. They have kept that flat for the past five years without an increase, but also without a decrease. He believes that will hold for the next year. After that, the Grant may see some revision, because the State will be looking everywhere to find funds to balance off a billion plus deficit.

That State is also looking at establishing some type of performance criteria for municipalities. Those will be set, and if you don't meet the criteria, there will be a similar penalty in terms of loss of municipal aid. As of now, Mr. Werbner has no idea what that criteria would be.

- 2. Recommendations and suggestions to BOE regarding consolidation of non-education services and cost savings (per State Statutes (Public Act 13-60))**

Mr. Werbner said as a result of this statute, a couple of years ago the Shared Services Committee was created. A number of suggestions have come up with regard to shared services, some of which have been implemented. He said if there was any discussion regarding possible consolidation of non-education services, now would be the time to discuss those.

Mr. Eccles advised that the Capital Plan includes the phone system. He wondered what the possibility would be to do other technology related services as a whole, rather than two individual entities. He wondered if there were any cloud services that could be shared, or could take advantage of the shared services that they have from South Windsor. Mr. Werbner said those were good ideas, and reminded that they are also working on the fiber system.

**3. 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:**  
None.

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

Since the State is experiencing a budget shortfall over the next two years, Mr. Eccles asked the BOE members if there are any programs that are being put into place that would require upkeep and maintenance beyond the two years. He wants to make sure we are not setting ourselves up for failure within the next two years. Mr. Adlerstein responded by saying there are four areas that the budget works in 1) curriculum and instruction; 2) facilities; 3) technology and 4) culture and climate. He believes the budget actually reflects the opposite of what Mr. Eccles is asking. For example, *Facilities*: It doesn't take much of an investment to reduce ongoing maintenance. They have been spending a lot of money reacting in that area. *Technology*: There will be an investment in the phone system. *Curriculum and Instruction*: They are reducing 8.5 staff in this budget. Therefore, they will not have those to pay for in the following years. In their place will be better support for teachers to do what they do in the classrooms. *Culture and Climate*: He spoke of the budget cut in the area of the SRO. Dr. Willett is working out a plan with the Resident Troopers for how they continue policing at our schools. He finished by saying he doesn't believe they are adding anything that will need to be recurring.

Mr. Field asked what the big drivers are. Mr. Adlerstein referred them to a one page summary within their budget that provides great detail. Although, he did point out some of the top costs: salaries, special education and transportation.

Mr. Eccles said he was very impressed with what Dr. Willett was able to do last year in the very short period of time that he was in office. He fully expects that he has given that same diligence to this year's budget, and has full faith in him and his staff for putting together what is good for the school system. Mr. Krasusky commented that he has been a part of the community workshops that Dr. Willett and the BOE have hosted, and he can say that the process has been deeply scrutinized. He feels confident that the budget, as presented on the BOE side, is a very fair and accurate assessment of their need. Ms. Morgan agrees. She believes there has been a lot of community input. It has been very transparent, and a good process. Mr. Field thanked the BOE for putting together a very thought out, easily read budget. He also thanked Dr. Willett for all his work.

**5. Adjournment:** Mr. Werbner adjourned the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

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Steven R. Werbner, Town Manager

Michelle A. Finnegan  
Town Council Clerk