

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

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TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL TOLLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM MARCH 23, 2016 - 7:30 P.M.

Shela M Bailey

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rick Field, Chair; Robert Green; Paul Krasusky, Kristen Morgan

MEMBERS ABSENT: William Eccles; Jeanne Schroeder and David Skoczulek

OTHERS PRESENT: Steven Werbner, Town Manager; Michael Wilkinson, Director of Administrative Services

1. **Call to Order:** Steven Werbner called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. **PUBLIC HEARING ITEM:**

2.1 2016-2017 Budget Proposed by the Town Manager

Town Government	\$11,901,533
Capital Improvement Reserve Fund	\$ 100,578
Board of Education	\$39,420,471
Debt Service	<u>\$ 4,550,000</u>
Total Proposed Budget	\$55,972,582

Mr. Werbner began his presentation by pointing out that Tolland was nationally recognized as an outstanding town to live, work and play in. Tolland was ranked number 34 by Money Magazine in 2015 as a Best Place to Live, and Connecticut Magazine ranked Tolland #1 out of 46 towns in the \$200,000 - \$249,000 median home value category. Tolland far exceeds the median household income (\$103,000 - \$104,000). Tolland County is at \$80,000, and the State of Connecticut is at \$69,000.

A slide was shown comparing expenditures, revenues, grand list growth and the mill rate for 2012 – 2017. The budget that he is recommending has revenues of \$12,672,015. The estimated revenues are subject to change as the budget process proceeds. When the bill was introduced to put a cap on motor vehicle taxes, we were impacted greatly on the revenue side due to the fact that we were in a revaluation process. Tolland was impacted to the tune of \$280,000 - \$300,000. We are trying to be made whole for that amount of money through this session, but it is very difficult due to the financial situation. The expenditures remain consistent at a 2.52% increase, there was a \$319,000 increase on the Grand List and the mill rate increase is .98.

He reviewed the budget process. The Referendum will be held on May 3, 2016. If it is defeated, votes are every two weeks until a budget is passed. He reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule concerning the budget. Mr. Werbner's budget goal is to produce a budget that takes into consideration the expenses of all town departments, available revenues, is realistic in light of the economic times and can be sustainable in the future.

As of now, the town and BOE services are of the highest quality, yet our cost for such services are in most cases lower than other comparable municipalities. Tolland provides top notch services that

are recognized by outside entities and many of our residents at considerably lessor amounts than the statewide averages. For example:

Category	Tolland	State
Town Expenditures	\$11,901,533	\$23,981,102
Education Expenditures	\$39,420,279	\$45,547,838

The impact of the Governor's budget on Tolland is potentially a nightmare. Most state revenues remain status quo; however other statutory changes could impact our budget significantly, such as new unfunded state mandates and a cap on motor vehicle taxes.

A slide was shown outlining grant estimates for key programs within Tolland. Mr. Werbner also mentioned that in the next fiscal year they will be imposing a spending cap of 2.5%. If they are to go over, there will be penalties.

Town Revenues 2016 – 2017

As of now, Tolland is behind in residential building. Some people may think this is a great thing, because the population trends have slowed down and the number of kids coming into the community has slowed down, but it will have a substantial impact on the grand list.

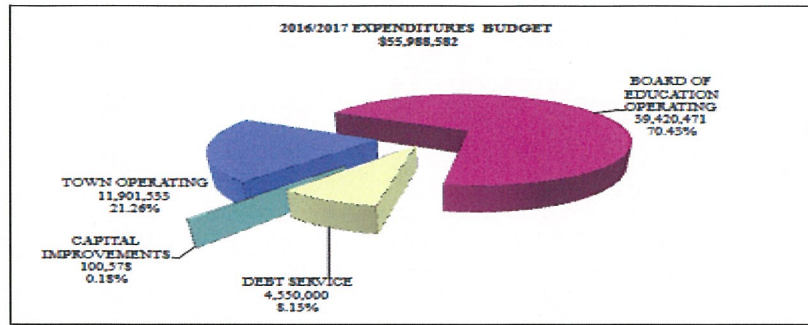
Fund Balance: Tolland is one of the few communities in Connecticut with an AAA rating, and one of the only communities who have an AAA rating that doesn't have a large commercial base. It is because of the sound financial practices and policies that are in place. The Fund Balance has gone down a bit over the last couple of years. Tolland needs to be careful on how they use it; to be sure it is not depleted. As of June 30, 2015, the Unassigned Fund Balance was 11.9%, and the estimated year end Unassigned Fund Balance is at 11.6%.

Expenditures

The Town is at 2.62%, a slight reduction in capital expenditures, debt service is flat and the BOE is at 2.99% for 2.52% overall increase.

EXPENDITURE SUMMARY

Category	Adopted 15/16	Recommended 16/17	Dollar Change	Percentage Change
Town Depts.	11,597,109	11,901,533	304,424	2.62%
Capital Expenditures	183,814	100,578	(83,236)	(45.28)%
Debt Service	4,542,176	4,550,000	7,824	.17%
Board of Education *	38,275,831	39,420,471	1,144,640	2.99%
Grand Total	\$54,598,930	\$55,972,582	\$1,373,652	2.52%



The drivers are insurance, salaries, professional services, tree trimming, street sweeping, snow and ice control materials and machinery and equipment repairs. Expenditure revisions include adding the position of Assistant Planner/Zoning Enforcement/Wetland Officer, fill the position of laborer in the Parks Department, add in ½ time custodial position, add in part-time clerical position in Public Safety, eliminate the position of Town Engineer, eliminate the Resident State Trooper assigned as the School Resource Officer and increase the budget for salt.

Dr. Willett spoke about the BOE's budget:

The BOE's request is at 2.99%, or an increase of \$1,144,448.

The priorities for the school district are in literacy, math, technology and a relentless focus on curriculum development:

Literacy: High quality, well vetted programs (Writers Workshop).

Math: They have a well-articulated and aligned curriculum; high quality, well vetted programs (Singapore Math).

Technology: Strategy around a cost effective product/method: Google Apps for Education, expansion of VDI (Virtual Desktop).

Curriculum Development: Emphasizing high rigor, comprehensive coverage of content and skills.

Dr. Willett said the budget is conservative, lean, efficient and effective.

2.99% budget

Responds to declining enrollment

Contains a downward adjustment in the workforce: 8.5 staff positions

Maintains facilities, finds efficiencies in staffing and keeps a laser focus on academics.

Returns include: improved calendar, superior math instruction, superior language arts instruction and awesome performance. Tolland Public Schools ranked in the top 10% of all school districts in Connecticut, and Birch Grove was one of 11 schools that received a full 100% school grade from the state.

Moving Forward:

They are going to continue with an organized vision, mission and goals;

Cooperative and shared facilities and technology efforts;
Science, technology, engineering, arts and math programs;
New volunteer structures;
Strategic, purposeful and aligned grant writing for school, town and community; and
New sustainable and mutually beneficial bargaining unit agreements.

Mr. Werbner spoke of the Capital Budget: There are some smaller items, but the biggest initiative of the budget that he presented goes along with the BOE and the excellent work that is being done. There are a large number of costly facility improvements that need to be made (roof replacements, window replacements, asbestos removal, and ceiling tile replacement). They are proposing a program of \$9.6m worth of work to be done over the next several years in the school systems. 50% or so is eligible to be reimbursed by the State of Connecticut. Hopefully, the Council will support a referendum in November for the public to decide on \$9.6m worth of financing both through state grants and through bonding. Slides were shown outlining the BOE's capital needs.

The mill rate impact of the financial plan Mr. Werbner proposes would be 34.34. This is an increase of 0.98 mills compared to the current mill rate of 33.36. Examples of different household scenarios were provided. The residents are urged to go to the Town's website, www.tolland.org, to use the Tax Calculation Form to figure out what their new taxes will be based on this new budget.

3. Public Participation

Archie, a Resident of Tolland: He spoke of an article in the paper, which Mr. Werbner said contained incorrect information regarding the budget increase. With regards to the schools, he pointed out that the enrollment is down, the staff is down and yet the cost continues to rise. He spoke of declining incomes and the resident's budgets are stretched. He applauds the money savings from the Town Engineer's position, but he questioned the wisdom of it. Who is going to oversee the sewer system, the water system, the roads and the huge development being planned? With regard to the Blight Ordinance, is there one? He thinks if the public thought they would need to hire someone to oversee that, they may not support it.

Mr. Field said the Blight Committee has been meeting and working. As of now, there is no Blight Ordinance, and they are not even sure there will be one. They are looking at the problem and trying to figure out how to solve it.

Andy Powell of 21 Clearbrook Drive: He spoke of the budget item for the integration of new technology. One component in the budget is a new phone system. There is also a line item for the newly formed CERT team. The CERT team consists of volunteers who could take the place of highly trained volunteers so that they can take care of what they are really trained to do in a crisis situation. He applauds the combined work by the BOE and Council in finding areas of beneficial cooperative work. We are seeing ourselves as one entity providing services to the town. He hopes this budget is pushed forward.

4. **Adjournment:** Bob Green moved to adjourn the meeting; Seconded by Paul Krasusky at 8:20 p.m. All were in favor.

Steven Werbner, Town Manager

Michelle A. Finnegan
Town Council Clerk