

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER 6TH FLOOR COUNCIL ROOM

APRIL 2, 2013 – 7:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jack Scavone, Chairman; Richard Field, Vice-Chair; Sam Belsito; Joshua Freeman; Mark Gill; Jan Rubino and Benjamin Stanford

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Steven Werbner, Town Manager; Michael Wilkinson, Director of Administration Services; Beverly Bellody, Human Services; Clem Langlois, Public Works; Linda Farmer, Director of Planning and Community Development; Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance and Records; John Littell, Public Safety/Fire Chief; Barbara Pettijohn, Director of Library Services

1. Call to Order: Jack Scavone called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance: Recited.

3. Moment of Silence: Observed.

4. Public Participation (2 minute limit)

Ken Kittredge of 37 Farm Brook Drive – At the TC/BOE joint meeting, the message was very clear. The message at the public hearing was also very clear. The message is the residents want a higher budget. No one has asked for a lower budget. It is your job, as our town leaders, to pass a budget the residents want.

Jackie Kolb of 34 Susan Drive – She wants to hear what some of the assumptions were that helped in determining what the percentage was. She knows there has been talk of a surplus account, and maybe the surplus being larger than the anticipated \$200,000 that was allocated. She wants to know if that is part of your decision in staying with this budget. She asked if something would be put on The Patch communicating what this budget is about.

Sam Adlerstein of 164 Pine Hill Road – He follows this process closely, although admits to following the BOE side more than the town side. He wants them to think about how this budget is sustainable and how it will remain sustainable. He has spoken with the school principals, and they will tell you these cuts will have a big impact on our schools.

Susie Lotreck of 12 Holly Road – She has witnessed, observed and heard people asking for add back into the budget. They are not agreeing that the .9% budget is maintaining services for the town or schools. Parents would like to see more money added back. She asked if they have received e-mails saying, “I want to see a 0%, and I don’t support a

.9%.” She asked if they have received e-mails saying, “I want to see more than 1%.” Mr. Gill answered yes to both. She asked if the majority of those e-mails have been from those who support the .9%. She keeps seeing people want more. She wants to know why she should bother coming to the meetings and writing e-mails. What is the point of this process?

Andy Powell of 21 Clearbrook Drive – He is hoping the .9% increase will be increased. The .9% does not represent the true needs of the town. He doesn’t believe all the needs are being looked at appropriately.

Bob Rubino of 296 Weigold Road – As the Fence Viewer, he is qualified to look at both sides of problems. He is wondering if the Council heard what the six people before him said. He is wondering if The Patch reporter is reporting what the public is speaking. When the Council says public input is welcome, he wonders how they are reconciling everything that they’ve heard with what their position is tonight in serving this community. He is a member of the Friends of Tolland Schools. He currently has no children in the Tolland schools. He did, and they did well by it. One of the kids was a special needs child, who without the special TLC would have gone a different trajectory than where she is now. He is committed to this community. He hopes in the past week they heard something. He hopes that they heard 1% is not acceptable.

5. Consideration of the Town Council’s Proposed FY 2013-2014 Budget

For discussion purposes, Mr. Gill read the following draft resolution:

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed the Town Manager’s proposed budget and has made certain modifications to estimated revenues and expenditures, the details of which will be properly incorporated into the total budgetary document by the Town Manager and Director of Finance and Records;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Tolland Town Council that it hereby adopts a FY 2013-14 Town Operating and Capital Budget in the amount of \$51,844,725 to be appropriated as follows:

CATEGORY	AMOUNT
Town Government	\$10,907,859
Board of Education	\$36,059,250
Debt Service	\$ 4,735,625
Capital	\$ 141,991
TOTAL	\$51,844,725

Said appropriations shall require a .20 increase in the mill levy for a 0.67% increase in the current tax rate, or 30.19 mills.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Manager, pursuant to the requirements of the Town Charter, is authorized to advertise this budgetary outlay as part of the April 23, 2013, Annual Budget Presentation Meeting at the Tolland High School Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.

Ms. Rubino asked the Council majority if there was room for movement and discussion. Mr. Gill said he would welcome the dialog. Ms. Rubino started the discussion and said the following: She has heard from more than one Council member that 1% is not sustainable. She commented that Mr. Belsito said he would not support anything higher than 0%. People are coming out and saying they want to vote higher. She doesn't believe 1% is sustainable. She is concerned with the town side. She sees where they are making a big mistake. She feels she hasn't been heard. She believed there was good dialog, but feels it has stopped. She feels undermined to some degree. She may not agree with all those that stood up tonight, but she has gotten e-mails saying people want to see the number higher. We represent our community. We have an obligation to listen to them. She was disappointed tonight when she found out this was a done deal before she even got here.

Mr. Field said his problem with this budget is that we are not letting the town decide to cut services and programs. He would have liked to have seen a budget that came in that kept us level. Whatever that percentage was, he would have sent that to the town and let them decide if it was too much money. If that failed, we could have come back and done it again. He echoes what Ms. Rubino said. The only people that come out, are those telling us they want money back in. He isn't saying there isn't a ton of people out in the town that want to see it less, but they are not here. These are the people that come out and talk to us. We should let them decide what level of services they want.

Mr. Gill said a lot of people are coming out asking for more money, and yes they have received some e-mails. They are run by the town, and the vote is everybody in the town. It's not just the people that show up at the meetings. Mr. Freeman agreed that that is the point. The town gets to vote, but only if they give them a number to vote on. If they give them a number that says this is the lowest starting point, they don't really get a vote. They are voting to not make it worse. We should be giving them a number they can fight for, get behind and support. To start this low is a flaw. We are hearing that they are not getting that vote.

Mr. Belsito said in the past the Council was representing the Friends of Tolland, and the referendums got voted down. He is hearing that people are willing to vote for this increase, but nothing higher. He said for those who feel the schools are not being adequately supported, than maybe an additional fund can be set up for those certain people who want to contribute above and beyond what the tax rate is. If you feel that strongly that the schools are falling, than maybe you need to step up and put your money where your mouth is. Some people have not had a raise for 3-4 years. Maybe you have a good salary, but some can't even afford this small increase. If you feel the schools are not adequately supported, than why don't you send more money in.

Mr. Gill said this is one of the most frustrating things he has had to do. State and Federal funding is a huge question mark. We could be short funded millions next year. We have some issues. Not knowing what is coming next year weighs into this decision considerably. We have increasing needs and decreasing funds.

Mr. Freeman said we are looking at a modest increase to this proposal, so that it will get people talking. He suggested \$100,000 be added onto the town-side, and \$200,000 to the BOE's priorities listing.

Mr. Field commented that the seven of them have worked together very well so far this term. They are in different parties for a reason, and there had to come a time that they would all disagree. Unfortunately, this is the time. He has no doubt that the four Republicans believe that what they are doing is best for the town, and he has no doubt that the three Democrats think what they are doing is best for the town. They disagree on this. He suggested moving on to the vote. He doesn't believe anyone's mind is going to be changed tonight.

Mr. Scavone said the public has been heard. He added that the Superintendent's original budget of a 4.87% increase had 100% of all the program and staff cuts in it. The BOE instructed him to come back with a 1% budget, with no further program or staff cuts. They added the music teacher back in and they instructed him to put a \$200,000 surplus into the budget. Which, he did. Either the \$200,000 surplus needs to roll forward into the new fund; it can be used to pre-purchase things or to restore some of the cuts that were in the original 4.87%. As far as the educational side goes, he feels pretty good about the number. Going forward, he believes the most important thing they can do as a Council, is to listen to Steve Werbner's recommendation to form a Blue Ribbon Committee of town residents and prioritize what we need, what we want, what it will cost us and where we are going to go in the future.

Ms. Rubino stated that she would ask for a 2% increase. She doesn't feel this number is ridiculous. Mr. Freeman said the public is asking for a moderate increase. Ms. Rubino wondered why they are so fearful to put out a 2% increase. Mr. Gill said their job is to put forth a budget that is representative.

Mr. Scavone said he has spoken to many people in the last 30 days. There are people in this town that are barely surviving.

6. Approval of Budget Resolution

Mark Gill read the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed the Town Manager's proposed budget and has made certain modifications to estimated revenues and expenditures, the details of which will be properly incorporated into the total budgetary document by the Town Manager and Director of Finance and Records;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Tolland Town Council that it hereby adopts a FY 2013-14 Town Operating and Capital Budget in the amount of \$51,844,725 to be appropriated as follows:

CATEGORY	AMOUNT
Town Government	\$10,907,859
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Said appropriations shall require a .20 increase in the mill levy for a 0.67% increase in the current tax rate, or 30.19 mills.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Manager, pursuant to the requirements of the Town Charter, is authorized to advertise this budgetary outlay as part of the April 23, 2013, Annual Budget Presentation Meeting at the Tolland High School Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.

Seconded by Ben Stanford.

Jack Scavone; Sam Belsito; Mark Gill and Benjamin Stanford were in favor.
Jan Rubino; Josh Freeman and Rick Field were opposed.

- 7. Approval of a resolution authorizing the form of the ballot for the May 7, 2013 budget referendum and any subsequent budget referendum; the time and place for the budget referendum; authorizing the Town Manager or his designee to place the required legal notices in the local newspapers; and authorizing the preparation and printing of an explanatory text and the mailing of same to local residents in accordance with the provisions of CT General Statutes 9-369b explaining the budget referendum question.**

Rick Field read the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Tolland Town Council has adopted a proposed FY 2013-2014 Town Operating and Capital Budget to be considered by the Tolland electorate at a May 7, 2013 budget referendum; and

WHEREAS, the Council must now establish the appropriate ballot language for this referendum and the date, time and place of said referendum;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Tolland Town Council the following:

1. The ballot question for the May 7th referendum shall be worded as follows:

“Shall the Town of Tolland’s proposed 2013-2014 budget of \$51,844,725, reflecting a spending increase of \$482,491 or 0.94% which is equal to a 0.67% tax increase of .20 mills compared to the current mill rate and requiring a tax rate of 30.19 mills, be adopted? Yes/No.”
2. The time and place for the referendum shall be between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on May 7, 2013 at the Hicks Memorial Municipal Center Gymnasium and the Tolland Senior Center. The vote shall be conducted using paper ballots.
3. The Town Manager or his designee is hereby authorized to place the required legal notices in the Journal Inquirer and other places as conditions permit, advertising the May 7, 2013 Referendum and the April 23, 2013 Annual Budget Presentation Meeting.
4. The Town Manager or his designee is authorized to prepare and print an explanatory text and mail same to local residents in accordance with the provisions of CT General Statutes 9-369b explaining the budget referendum question.

Seconded by Ben Stanford. All in favor. None opposed.

8. Adjournment: Rick Field moved to adjourn the meeting; Seconded by Mark Gill at 8:18 p.m. All were in favor.

Jack Scavone, Council Chair

Michelle A. Finnegan
Town Council Clerk