

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

TOLLAND TOWN COUNCIL TOLLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM MARCH 26, 2015 - 7:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jack Scavone, Chairman; George Baker, Vice-Chair; William Eccles; Richard Field; Paul Krasusky; Jan Rubino and Ben Stanford

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Steven Werbner, Town Manager

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

2. Public Hearing Item:

2.1 2015-2016 Budget Proposed by the Town Manager

Town Government	\$11,575,109
Capital Improvement Reserve Fund	\$ 183,814
Board of Education	\$38,297,831
Debt Service	<u>\$ 4,542,176</u>
Total Proposed Budget	\$54,598,930

Mr. Werbner thanked those in attendance for coming to tonight's meeting. He began by explaining the budget process with the use of a PowerPoint. The Referendum will be held on May 5, 2015. If it is defeated, votes are every two weeks until a budget is passed. He reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule concerning the budget.

The Town Manager's budget goal for FY 2015-16 is to produce a budget that takes into consideration the expenses of all town departments and available revenues, and is realistic in light of the economic times and can be sustainable in the future. He added that this has been a challenging goal over the last 4-5 years, and continues to be so. The outcome of the review of the Governor's budget by the State Legislature may put some things at risk such as: municipal aid, funding for resident troopers, funding for the Tolland County mutual aid, increased cost for monitoring storm water impacts, new costly unfunded mandates and motor vehicle tax revenue. Tolland won't know the effect of this review until the state budget is adopted, which could be as late as June 6th, or later.

In terms of revenues, they are a bit higher than last year. This is due to an uptick in building permit fees. There has been an increase in activity within the construction area, so they are relying on that in terms of additional revenue. With regard to expenditures, Tolland is at 1.91% for the town, and 2.98% for the BOE. This equals a 2.68% townwide increase, which is similar to last year's. The Grand List growth has decreased by 3.51% as a result of the revaluation. This is a loss of \$1,418,664 in revenue. This has to be made up with an increase in the mill rate of 2.31 mills. In 2014, 19 houses were built, which is the highest since 2007. Hopefully, Tolland can meet or exceed the estimates that the building inspectors have put forth for this year.

Mr. Werbner said he is recommending the use of \$250,000 from Fund Balance as revenue. Tolland has been fortunate that what has been recommended over the past several years hasn't needed to be used. The end result has been reduced expenditures, or increased revenues from other sources. The Fund Balance was a goal of his when he first came here. He wanted to get to a level that the fund manager's and credit agencies find acceptable. It has been built up to 12.2%, which is at a level that is recommended by our financial advisors, as well as the review agencies. For Tolland, we have a triple A rating. In order for us to maintain that rating, they look at how strong our fund balance is, as well as the overall management practices. The account has been built up since 2003.

Mr. Werbner read from a slide entitled "Revaluation". It reviewed the details concerning the revaluation that occurred in Tolland. In total, the town's Grand List of taxable property declined by 3.51% or a loss of \$1,418,664 in actual tax dollars. With a decline in the Grand List, a corresponding increase in the mill rate must occur in order for there to be sufficient tax dollars to fund current and/or future budgetary expenses. He urges residents to go to the town's website, www.tolland.org, where they can find a tax calculator that will show the impact of the revaluation and this budget on your property tax payments. Each home will be different.

Town Expenditure Drivers: Insurances, salaries, utilities, street sweeping, revaluation, technology support & improvements and capital improvements. With regard to the State Police, currently 70% of the expense is paid by the town and 30% by the State. After some research, the town has determined that the troopers leave the town of Tolland about 37% of their time. The Governor has changed this arrangement and is recommending that the town pick up 100% of the cost. If that is to happen, Mr. Werbner could not justify keeping the five (5) troopers (a sergeant and 4 troopers) that Tolland currently has. If the Governor's proposal is passed by the Legislature, he would suggest eliminating the resident sergeant and one trooper from the resident state trooper program. Until it is known what the state is going to do, Tolland will need to wait. If the Governor's proposal does not go through, everything can remain status quo. With regard to the School Resource Officer, if the Governor's proposal goes through, he would recommend to the BOE that they strongly consider hiring someone independent of the resident trooper program to be a SRO. The cost would be much less than \$200,000.00. This item is being heavily lobbied by the 60+ towns in the state that are part of the resident state trooper program.

The operational goals for the town over the next year are: the expansion of Library, expansion and renovation of the highway garage, development of a cooperative facility management arrangement with the BOE, implementation of the town's five-year technology plan, enhance the capabilities of public safety's ability to address state mandated inspection of property with the creation of a full-time deputy fire marshal position and the conversion of the former Parker School to 37 units of elderly housing.

With regard to the BOE: The recommended funding level for the BOE is \$38,297,831 or 2.98% over current year budgeted amounts. The total dollar increase is \$1,108,250. Any decrease that has occurred since the BOE adopted their budget has been arrived at in conjunction with the Superintendent and the interim business manager. It is agreed that the reductions are the result of adjustments to either the health insurance fund or post-employment benefit liabilities. There is nothing in terms of the reduction that impacts the education plan that was put forward by the Superintendent and adopted by the BOE.

Dr. Willett spoke with regard to the BOE side. He said it has been a pleasure working with the Town Manager, the BOE and the Council. The BOE budget is focusing on District priorities. He will not go into detail tonight, but referred the public to the Town Manager's budget. Or, he may be contacted directly. The priorities: focus on literacy, focus on math, and a relentless focus on

curriculum development. The budget this year is conservative, lean and effective. This budget reflects insurance rate adjustments, declining enrollment, and an adjustment of workforce (15 staff positions). All the details are contained in the Town Manager's budget. They are going to improve the calendar, being more considerate of parents work and time needs by having fewer half days. There will be more professional development days at a lower overall cost, and they will have a more effective professional development model. They will have superior math instruction, professional development and support; and superior language arts instruction, professional development and support.

Moving forward, this budget will set the stage for multi-year planning:

- ~organized vision, mission and goals;
- ~cooperative and shared facilities efforts;
- ~science, technology, engineering, arts and math academy;
- ~new volunteer structures;
- ~strategic, purposeful and aligned grant writing for school, town, and community; and
- ~sustainable and mutually beneficial bargaining unit agreements.

Mr. Werbner continued his presentation by outlining the major items in the capital budget: pollution abatement, replacement of station 140 roof, renovation of the BOE building, extension of existing sidewalk at Birch Grove and replace master fire alarm control panel at TIS.

He reviewed Tolland's debt management plan scheduled for 2015-16 through 2024-225. The debt service for the budget year is \$4,542,176, which is 32% town, 68% BOE.

He closed by reviewing the remaining budget schedule. It is important for people to get out and vote. They cannot assume that the budget is going to pass, because the budget is more transparent.

The budget referendum is May 5, 2015.

3. Public Participation: None.

4. Adjournment: George Baker moved to adjourn the meeting; Seconded by Ben Stanford at 8:11 p.m. All were in favor.

Jack Scavone, Council Chair

Michelle A. Finnegan
Town Council Clerk